



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
21 September 2010

Original: English and French

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

**Sixty-first session**

Geneva, 4-8 October 2010

Item 5 b) of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee**

**Programme budgets, management, financial control  
and administrative oversight**

## **Report of the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee (22-24 June 2010)**

**Report by the Standing Committee**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Woolcott (Australia), opened the meeting, and welcomed Slovenia as a new Member of the Executive Committee elected by the Economic and Social Council on 28 April 2010.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda**

2. The agenda for the meeting (EC/61/SC/CRP.9) was adopted.

## **III. Adoption of the draft report of the forty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee**

3. The report of the forty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee (EC/61/SC/CRP.8) was adopted, with amendments to paragraphs 9 and 29.

## **IV. International protection**

4. The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection made an introductory statement under this agenda item, in which she reflected on emerging protection gaps brought to light by this year's Annual Programme Review, including worrying gaps in life-saving sectors, and commented on the fundamental shift in the way in which UNHCR could now identify and express the needs of persons of concern, thanks to the introduction of the comprehensive needs assessment.

### **A. The Note on international protection**

5. The *Note on international protection* (EC/61/SC/CRP.10) was introduced by the Director of the Division of International Protection, who highlighted positive developments as well as a number of current challenges including combatting xenophobia, addressing urbanization, preserving protection space, adapting to the shrinking humanitarian space, and increasing awareness of and support for the statelessness issue.

6. Delegations voiced concern regarding the increase in and complexity of contemporary protection issues facing the Office and welcomed the insights provided in the Note in terms of how to cope with these emerging challenges. One delegation suggested that with the growing number of people displaced by conflict, the right course of action was to continue the enlargement process of the categories of people to be protected by and included in the mandate of UNHCR. However, a number of other delegations expressed reservations about UNHCR expanding its activities, including with respect to internal displacement and displacement as a result of natural disasters. They called for the Office to rationalize and prioritize its activities rather than to contemplate expansion on a broad scale, which was likely to duplicate efforts by other multilateral organizations. Some felt that attention to complex challenges should not come at the expense of UNHCR's core activities and maintained the position that internally displaced persons (IDPs) were first and foremost the responsibility of Member States. Nevertheless, one delegation which was facing its own internal displacement problem, argued that UNHCR's role in protecting IDPs should not be seen to be of lesser importance than its responsibility for refugees: on

the contrary, its activities on behalf of IDPs should be mainstreamed, as there was an ethical and moral duty to assist these populations.

7. Despite the divergent views regarding UNHCR's involvement with IDPs, there was broad endorsement of the role played by the Office in providing protection and assistance to these populations in the context of the inter-agency cluster approach, and UNHCR was encouraged to continue its efforts in this regard. One delegation, however, voiced concern about apparent inconsistencies in the knowledge and experience of different members of the protection cluster which could compromise the cluster's ability to remain focused and effective.

8. Regarding UNHCR's role in providing protection and assistance to the victims of natural disasters, some ExCom Members believed that further analysis was needed to determine the impact of expanded involvement on UNHCR's budget, staffing and other resources. Given the frequency with which such natural disasters had been occurring in recent times, the delegations questioned the Office's capacity to take on such additional responsibilities. Nevertheless, despite such misgivings, a number of delegations also offered support for UNHCR's engagement in natural disasters. One in particular pointed out that UNHCR was well positioned among relevant United Nations agencies to address the issues of IDP protection in the context of natural disasters, in light of its rich experience.

9. The Committee commended UNHCR's efforts to address issues of displacement in urban settings, notably the focus given to this topic at the High Commissioner's Dialogue in December 2009. However, the Office was encouraged to provide more specific guidance to the Field in terms of putting the principles outlined in the urban refugee policy into practice. Furthermore, the Global Needs Assessment should take into account not only the needs of those already identified and registered by UNHCR but also those of the often hidden populations residing in urban areas. One delegation however, cautioned against creating undue expectations in addressing the needs of urban refugee populations in resource-poor settings. Another delegation, noting the experience of the Mexico Plan of Action, underscored the importance of tolerance and awareness-raising activities in the urban context.

10. There were expressions of strong support for UNHCR's mandate to prevent and reduce statelessness and to protect stateless persons, including through birth registration. A number of ExCom Members also welcomed UNHCR's efforts to draw attention to persons of concern with disabilities and hoped that consensus would soon be reached on the draft Conclusion on the topic which was currently being negotiated. Several delegations expressed appreciation for UNHCR's role in helping to ensure protection for unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking, in the asylum context.

11. There were a number of questions and requests for clarification regarding the reference to "advancing modern concepts of protection" in the *Note on international protection*, and the possible role of migration in creating more protection space. On the subject of mixed migration more broadly, concern was expressed regarding abuse of the asylum system and UNHCR was called upon to put in place the proper safeguards. Support was expressed for the 10-Point Plan of Action as well as for regional approaches to asylum and migration issues. Delegations also expressed concern regarding intolerance and xenophobia, the criminalization of migration on refugee protection, trafficking and people smuggling, and the detention of asylum-seekers.

12. The importance of partnership was highlighted and UNHCR was encouraged by many delegations to continue working with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) on joint protection activities, as well as on issues of staff and beneficiary security. One delegation noted the importance of strengthening the civilian

mandates of peace-keeping operations in this respect, although others cautioned UNHCR to maintain a line between humanitarian and military operations and ensure that the latter did not compromise the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian action. There was a call for increased cooperation with States, including host- country Governments, and also in the context of internal displacement. On the issue of burden sharing, one ExCom Member pointed out that self-reliance was not in itself a durable solution and that the final objective should not be one of local integration.

13. In their responses the Assistant High Commissioner and the Director commented on various issues raised by delegations. Regarding IDPs, the Assistant High Commissioner emphasized UNHCR's continued commitment to the cluster approach and to efforts to ensure better harmonization of interventions and identification of the gaps.

14. On the subject of the asylum-migration nexus, UNHCR acknowledged calls for caution regarding potential abuse of the asylum system, and stressed the importance of travel documents in preventing such abuse. UNHCR was also working with the counter-terrorism committee in New York and with Interpol to ensure greater coherence, as well as strengthening the capacity of its field offices to deal with the issue of exclusion. With respect to the phrase, "advancing modern concepts of protection", the Assistant High Commissioner and the Director assured ExCom members that there would be further reflection with States on this topic as UNHCR moved towards the anniversary commemorations and renewed emphasis on addressing gaps in protection. Finally, they expressed particular support for constructive dialogue and partnerships with States and others, including non-governmental organizations, in meeting the various protection challenges currently faced by the Office.

## **B. Progress report on resettlement**

15. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection presented the Progress Report on Resettlement (EC/61/SC/CRP.11), highlighting progress and trends, as well as challenges such as the widening gap between the number of refugees in need of resettlement and the places available. He encouraged the 79 Members of the Executive Committee to assist UNHCR in meeting one of its strategic global priorities by resettling 8,000 additional refugees this year, which meant approximately 102 refugees per State.

16. Delegations echoed UNHCR's concern regarding the gap between needs and availability. They commended the strategic use of resettlement but stressed that this should remain an integral part of a comprehensive solutions strategy. The Office was encouraged to prioritize submissions to ensure that the refugees being submitted for resettlement are those who are most in need, and that resettlement is an appropriate solution for the individuals concerned. A number of ExCom Members voiced concern regarding reports of the *refoulement* of refugees who had already been accepted by resettlement countries, and called for improved dialogue between UNHCR and concerned States, as well as increased flexibility on the part of host governments to permit resettlement countries to carry out their programmes.

17. Broad support was expressed for the establishment of the Joint European Union Resettlement Programme, as well as for the evacuation transit facilities in the Philippines, Romania and Slovakia. One delegation cautioned, however, that the transit facilities should only be used in the absence of any other available solution or resettlement mechanism, in order to ensure credibility and sustained support from the international community. UNHCR was also encouraged to establish a transit evacuation capacity in Africa. A number of countries from different regions informed UNHCR of progress made with respect to newly established resettlement programmes and ongoing initiatives. Several

current resettlement countries offered to share their experiences with others who may be considering or in the process of establishing their own programmes.

18. The Deputy Director cautioned against over-emphasizing the notion of the strategic use of resettlement and recalled that, first and foremost, resettlement was about saving lives. Responding to concerns raised by some Governments regarding financial implications, he cited the cost of human lives, the economic impact on host countries, and the collective security implications of keeping refugees in exile for generations without a solution.

### **C. Protection capacity and delivery**

19. The Chief of the Protection Delivery and Support Section of the Division of International Protection presented the report on *Protection capacity and delivery* (EC/61/SC/CRP.12). She emphasized that, as a highly operational agency, UNHCR had to continually adjust itself to meet new challenges and effectively respond to the needs of persons of concern. She presented current measures set in place for enhanced protection management, including accountability, improved resourcing, staff expertise, and the expanded use of partnerships.

20. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's strategy to enhance its protection capacity and delivery. Their interventions included encouraging the Office to further support States in the development of their national, legal and administrative capacities; to prioritize protection learning for IDPs and urban refugee situations; to enhance the coordination skills of field protection staff involved in the global protection cluster; to ensure that coordination is undertaken in an inclusive manner involving national and local authorities, civil society, other international organizations, and human rights institutions; and to pursue efforts aimed at building the capacity of local partners, which was an important element in addressing gaps and the problem of shrinking humanitarian space. UNHCR was also advised to ensure senior level protection presence in the deep field. While the *ProCap* roster of external protection experts was valuable, it could not substitute for UNHCR building its own capacity to meet global protection challenges. One delegation mentioned the over-proliferation of documents and handbooks which was difficult for people in the Field to cope with, and suggested that UNHCR should streamline its information.

### **D. Agenda for Protection: review and way forward**

21. The Senior Adviser to the Director of the Division of International Protection introduced the update on the Agenda for Protection (EC/61/SC/INF.1), describing how it had made an impact in a number of ways in relation to protection delivery and policy setting. He contributed its success to the participatory way in which it had been developed, including contributions from States, NGOs, and other stakeholders, in a humanitarian and non-political spirit.

22. Delegations welcomed the contribution of the Agenda for Protection in the areas outlined in the update, but also pointed to a number of gaps in implementation and queried how UNHCR would use the Agenda in the future to define protection needs. One delegation encouraged the Office to provide a more thorough accounting, review and analysis of the impact of the Agenda for Protection, including progress not achieved. The Senior Adviser commented that the upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees would be an opportunity to consolidate the initiatives launched pursuant to the Agenda and to identify new activities that may be needed to address gaps.

## **V. Programme/protection policy**

### **A. International protection of children of concern**

23. The Chief of the Community Development, Gender Equality, and Children Section presented the report on International protection of children of concern (EC/61/SC/CRP.13), describing progress achieved in strengthening the protection of children, including through participatory assessments; the identification of gaps; targeted protection and assistance for children at risk; education; and efforts to build child protection capacity within UNHCR and among partners.

24. ExCom Members commented in particular on the need for safe access to education, increased prevention and response for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) among children, better systems for monitoring trafficking, and birth registration as a key component of child protection and durable solutions strategies. Delegations also expressed concern regarding the growing number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and the detention of children, who were often treated in the same way as adults. With regard to the Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child, there were a number of gaps in implementation. UNHCR was encouraged to develop its partnerships in the area of child protection, build an in-house capacity for child protection, and share best practices including on implementation of the Guidelines with governments.

### **B. Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming**

25. The Deputy Director of Pillar II, Protection and Operational Support, in the Division of International Protection, introduced the report on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) focusing her presentation on both the positive elements of AGDM as well as the gaps that need to be addressed. She stressed that AGDM needed to be the lens through which all policies were made and actions taken.

26. Delegations supported the focus on AGDM but regretted that momentum was lacking and called for “firm institutionalization” of the approach in all aspects of UNHCR’s work. There was a need for a timeline with concrete plans, and an official policy paper in order to continue the momentum and ensure AGDM as a long-term priority. UNHCR was also encouraged to allocate sufficient financial and technical resources to support the action plan and this institutionalization, and to provide regular updates to the Executive Committee on progress made.

### **C. UNHCR’s programme in the United Nations: Proposed strategic framework for the period 2010-2013**

27. Delegations took note of UNHCR’s draft programme which formed part of the proposed United Nations strategic framework for the period 2012-2013 (EC/61/SC/CRP.15), and its addendum (EC/SC/61/CRP.15/Add.1) presenting amendments to the text proposed by the United Nations Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). The framework would be incorporated into the United Nations Biennium Budget and pass through several review phases at United Nations Headquarters in New York before being submitted to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly for approval in late 2010.

28. UNHCR was asked to ensure congruence between what was presented to the CPC in New York and to the Executive Committee. The Standing Committee then adopted a draft decision (see Annex I).

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

29. Under this agenda item, there was a discussion on staff and security issues, including refugee security, as well as the *UNHCR security management plan of action and strategy for implementation* (EC/61/SC/CRP.16). The Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS), gave an overview of the review and renewal of security management in UNHCR, following radical changes in the operational environment in the Field.

30. Wide support was expressed for the tireless efforts of UNHCR staff working in places of insecurity and danger to assist and protect people under its mandate. ExCom Members were encouraged by the comprehensive approach and concrete measures that the review of UNHCR's security management had led to, as well as the timeliness of these efforts. The Office was commended for giving renewed attention to information gathering and analysis, using local partnerships and locally adapted approaches, and creating a Security Steering Committee. While recognizing UNHCR's achievement of 89 per cent MOSS compliance in its offices in locations of security phase 3 or above by the end of 2009, several delegations requested further information on the Office's strategy to reach 100 per cent compliance worldwide.

31. Delegations stressed the importance of information sharing. It was suggested that the Office needed to combine a "vertical approach" (the application of UNHCR-specific measures) with a "horizontal approach" (cooperation between UNHCR and other humanitarian actors). Information should be under the common ownership of all humanitarian actors. Others encouraged the participation of beneficiaries in this process.

32. The Director explained UNHCR's efforts to become MOSS-compliant, noting the wide range of measures which were required, some of which were very costly (e.g. blast mitigation measures in the Middle East), and obstacles such as the refusal of some host governments to allow required communications equipment. He also briefed delegations on the collaboration between UNHCR and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), supporting the approach to security as one of "enabling operations", as well as on the Office's close cooperation with NGOs.

## **VII. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources**

### **A. Update on UNHCR's structural and management change process**

33. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the *Update on UNHCR's structural and management change process* (EC/61/SC/CRP.17), highlighting the progress achieved four years after the start of the reform process. His presentation focused chiefly on the comprehensive needs assessment, including prioritization and gap analysis, and results-based management. He also reviewed ongoing developments related to oversight mechanisms, human resources, and information technology.

34. The Office was commended on its reform efforts and encouraged to continue to keep the Executive Committee informed of progress made. Delegations called on UNHCR to fine-tune its global strategic objectives to ensure that they were relevant and could be objectively measured in terms of impact and value for money. The slow roll-out of *Focus* was regrettable as it was important for ExCom Members to understand clearly the impact of UNHCR's programmes based on accessible information so that they could better advocate for robust support for UNHCR. There were questions about how staff members were



reacting to the various reform measures and comments on the importance of buy-in from the staff.

35. Delegations welcomed the matrix on the various oversight mechanisms in UNHCR, which had been distributed prior to the meeting. There were renewed calls for the establishment of an independent, external oversight committee. UNHCR was asked to share the terms of reference for the committee with ExCom Members for comment and to ensure geographical balance in its membership, particularly with respect to the involvement of refugee-hosting countries. One delegation stressed the importance of following up on complaints and feedback from persons of concern, in order to ensure they knew that the issues they had expressed had been taken into consideration or addressed.

36. In closing, and in response to the comment about staff reactions to the reform process, the Deputy High Commissioner said that what would be demoralizing for staff would be to have gone through the process of the global needs assessment and to see that the funding levels had remained the same or decreased. Whereas if staff saw an increase in funding, they would see the benefit in what had been done. He also assured donors that even if it was not through *Focus*, UNHCR would find a way to show the progress made on the implementation of the Global Strategic Priorities.

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

37. The Deputy Controller and Officer-in-Charge of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management presented the Update on the introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) (EC/61/SC/CRP.18), explaining the reasons for the delay in implementation and the move away from phased implementation. The revised target date for full IPSAS compliance was shifted to 2012, at which time UNHCR's Financial Rules would be revised and aligned with the United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules, which are scheduled to be made available only in mid-2011.

38. The majority of delegations taking the floor expressed concern regarding the delay in implementation and urged UNHCR to continue making progress as a priority. Three delegations requested an informal consultative meeting to discuss the Financial Rules and another pointed out that it was difficult to have a position on the subject without more detailed information. The Office was also encouraged to share information and best practices with other United Nations agencies, including those based in Geneva.

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

39. The *Progress report on funding end-of-service and post-retirement benefits* (EC/61/SC/CRP.19) was introduced by the Deputy Controller and Officer-in-Charge of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management. She explained the different approaches that had been adopted across the United Nations system, outlined some of the recommendations made by the legislative and oversight bodies of the United Nations, and presented a number of funding options for UNHCR for consideration by Executive Committee members.

40. Delegations stated that they were not in a position to support any option at this time and there were numerous calls for UNHCR to organize an informal consultative meeting on the topic. Others pointed out that it was important to await the outcome of the current United Nations General Assembly deliberations on the issue. In the meantime, UNHCR was encouraged to evaluate further the best practices of other United Nations agencies and to share this information with the Committee.

## **VIII. Programme budgets and funding**

### **A. Global report on activities in 2009**

41. The Director of the Division of External Relations presented the Global Report 2009, noting that in 2009, UNHCR had received a record amount of US\$ 1.7 billion in contributions thanks to the unprecedented generosity of donors and a favourable exchange rate. The report was generally well received and accepted as UNHCR's main reporting tool. Some delegations, however, called for more detailed information on the Office's achievements against the global strategic priorities in line with calls for greater accountability and effectiveness. One delegation proposed that for advocacy purposes, it would be useful to include specific examples of needs that were not met owing to lack of funding.

### **B. Update on programme budgets and funding in 2009 and 2010**

42. Both the Deputy Controller and the Director of the Division of External Relations presented the Update on programme budgets and funding in 2009 and 2010 (EC/61/SC/CRP.20), including a detailed explanation of the current financial needs and the supplementary budgets for new emergency interventions.

43. Delegations noted that they had had only two working days to review the conference room paper and expressed concern that this was a recurring issue. At the close of the item, after incorporation of an additional paragraph, the Committee adopted a decision on overall programme budgets and funding for 2010 (see Annex II).

## **IX. Coordination**

44. The Director of the Division of External Relations provided an overview of elements for UNHCR's oral update to the July 2010 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which would cover three themes: 1) coordination within the United Nations system and inter-agency fora; 2) bilateral coordination with United Nations and other international organizations; and 3) coordination with non-governmental organizations.

## **X. Governance**

45. A number of suggestions were made with regard to possible topics for inclusion in the High Commissioner's opening statement at the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Executive Committee. These included: the impact of reform on populations of concern; internal displacement and cooperation with the countries involved; and updates on protracted and urban situations. These suggestions would be conveyed to the High Commissioner for his consideration, and delegations were invited to submit further proposals in writing to the Secretariat.

## **XI. Any other business**

46. In the course of the meeting, the Chairman of UNHCR's Staff Council gave a short address to the Standing Committee, focusing mainly on the impact of the human resources reform process on staff members.

## **Annex I**

### **Decision on UNHCR's Programme in the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2012-2013**

The Standing Committee,

*Takes note of Programme 20: International protection, durable solutions, and assistance to refugees* of the biennial programme plan of the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2012-2013, as contained in document A/65/6 (Prog.20).

## Annex II

### Decision on overall programme budgets and funding for 2010

The Standing Committee,

*Recalling* the Executive Committee's decision at its sixtieth session on administrative, financial and programme matters [A/AC.96/1078, para.14] as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the forty-seventh 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,

1. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixtieth session, approved programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's 2010-2011 Biennial Programme Budget amounting to \$2,778,471,100 in 2010 including the United Nations Regular Budget contribution towards headquarters costs, an Operational Reserve (representing 10 per cent of programmed activities under Pillars I and II) of \$196,826,200 and an amount of \$20 million for the "New or additional activities – mandate-related" Reserve; and *notes* that these provisions, together with those of \$12.0 million for Junior Professional Officers in 2010 brought total requirements for 2010 to \$3,007,297,300;
2. *Notes* that the 2010 supplementary budgets currently amount to \$127.4 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs);
3. *Takes note* of an increase to UNHCR's 2010 Annual Budget amounting to \$127.4 million, thereby bringing the revised 2010 Annual Budget to a level of \$3,134.6 million;
4. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2010 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs;
5. *Calls upon* UNHCR to hold an informal consultative meeting on the budget and on the *Financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees* (A/AC.96/503/Rev.9) prior to the 49<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee and *reminds* UNHCR to furnish budget-related documentation at least three weeks in advance of Executive Committee and Standing Committee meetings;
6. *Notes* that projected income for the year 2010 reveals a possible shortfall of \$1,269.5 million under the Annual Budget; and
7. *Urges* Member States, in light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity, and in a timely manner, to his appeal for resources to meet in full the approved 2010 Annual Budget.

## Annex III

### Follow-up action

1. UNHCR to provide a tabular presentation of the figures related to resettlement in future reporting, and more information on the Working Group on Resettlement, including its composition (i.e. participation of refugee-hosting countries) and terms of reference.
  2. UNHCR to arrange policy discussions with ExCom members on various issues related to resettlement, including its use in the context of migration programmes (i.e. skilled labour migration).
  3. UNHCR to provide an update on human resources reform measures at the next Standing Committee meeting.
  4. UNHCR to share the terms of reference for the Independent Advisory Committee on oversight, for comment by ExCom members.
  5. UNHCR to organize informal consultative meetings on various budgetary and financial issues.
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