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Chair: Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve(Belgium)

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

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Alghunaim** (Observer for Kuwait), in a pre-recorded statement, said that the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) alone were not enough to tackle such important issues as internally displaced persons, climate change and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The entire international community needed to join forces to assist persons of concern to UNHCR, support host communities and promote the settlement of conflicts by peaceful means. His Government remained firmly committed to sharing the burden of responsibility for providing the development and humanitarian assistance and the political support needed to resolve humanitarian crises. Over the years, Kuwait had contributed some \$450 million to UNHCR alone for development and humanitarian action.

2. **Mr. Panoeiro** (Brazil), speaking via video link, said that, in order to address the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, his Government had launched a cash assistance programme to support those most vulnerable. The total amount invested in that programme had been \$38 million, and, with the support of international organizations, a further \$400 million had been spent on health and other services for migrants, refugees and other vulnerable persons throughout the country, in the context of the pandemic.

3. **Mr. Naanda** (Namibia) said that Namibia currently hosted nearly 10,000 persons of concern and had thus far recorded six cases of COVID-19 among them. Four of the persons affected had recovered, but one, who had had a pre-existing medical condition, had died. She thanked UNHCR for providing personal protection equipment for the country's refugee settlement. Namibia had made considerable efforts to follow up on the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in the areas of education, health, statelessness and sport, and was striving to achieve its goals within the set time frames. The Governments of Namibia and Burundi, together with UNHCR, were making progress on a joint initiative that would ultimately lead to the voluntary repatriation of a considerable number of refugees currently living in Namibia. His Government was also making progress with the local integration of the remaining former Angolan refugees living in the refugee settlement, and to that end had waived the permanent residence permit fees. Namibia was determined to uphold its international obligations and play its part in creating more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing solutions for refugees, as outlined in the global compact on refugees. However, it would require additional resources to respond to the increasing number of applications received from asylum seekers and to provide them with the necessary support and protection.

4. **Mr. Zolfaghari** (Islamic Republic of Iran), in a pre-recorded statement, said that the Islamic Republic of Iran had been hosting numerous refugees for over four decades. However, the increasing needs of refugees, the intensification of unilateral coercive measures taken against his Government and the COVID-19 pandemic had seriously undermined the country's capacity to support them. The sanctions on his country were a major obstacle to providing vulnerable individuals, including refugees, with access to education and livelihood services and to the medical equipment and pharmaceuticals needed to prevent and deal with the COVID-19 virus in host and refugee communities. Nevertheless, the Government had continued to provide services, including free education and health care, to many vulnerable people. The Islamic Republic of Iran had always supported the voluntary return, sustainable integration and resettlement of refugees as the most durable solution. It was, therefore, regrettable that the number of voluntary returns and the number of refugees accepted under resettlement programmes had decreased sharply in the past few years.

5. Given the increasing number of refugees worldwide and the fact that more than 86 per cent of refugees were hosted by developing countries, it was now more important than ever for the international community to accept collective responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees, in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. He urged the international community to take action to reduce the unilateral coercive measures against his Government and to remove obstacles to the provision of humanitarian aid to the needy. Resources must be mobilized and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must facilitate cooperation with relevant partners in order to provide an effective response to sanctions and economic threats against refugees and host communities. A road map should be drawn up to ensure the fair

participation of all members of the international community in the voluntary return and resettlement of refugees. Lastly, the voluntary return of Afghan refugees and their permanent reintegration in Afghanistan should be expedited, and a larger number of refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran should be resettled to third countries.

6. **Mr. Stournaras** (Greece) said that the recent fires that had led to the total destruction of the reception and identification centre in Moria on the island of Lesbos had been devastating. Fortunately, thanks to the coordinated emergency response of the Greek authorities, no one had died and no one had been hospitalized or gone missing. The main priority had been the safety of all asylum seekers, the staff of the centre and the local community. In less than two weeks, a new temporary centre able to accommodate up to 10,000 people had been constructed, and all those who had been living in Moria were now housed in the new centre. The Government had been working closely with the European Union to identify appropriate funding and protection mechanisms in order to provide emergency support and improve the living conditions of those affected by the fires. It was also working with the European Commission to establish a task force to improve the situation on the Greek islands in the long term.

7. Thanks to financial support from the Commission, the vast majority of unaccompanied minors at the reception and identification centres in the five Aegean islands and in Evros had been transferred to housing facilities on the mainland. He welcomed the initiative launched under the German presidency of the European Union, together with the European Commission, to relocate unaccompanied minors, refugees and other vulnerable groups. In late November 2020, under the auspices of the European Commission, Greece would organize a conference on unaccompanied minors arriving in European Union member States. Any attempt to exploit humanitarian situations for political purposes must be firmly rejected; abuse of the asylum system served only to undermine it.

8. **Mr. Majawar** (Yemen) said that, for six years now, Yemen had suffered the brutal consequences of a war carried out by the Houthi militia. Some 24 million people required humanitarian assistance owing to shortages of food, water and medicine, there were 4 million internally displaced persons and around 1 million Yemenis had left the country. Despite the dire situation, the Government remained committed to sharing the responsibility for refugees and other persons of concern and continued to grant refugee status to vulnerable individuals, mainly from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. He appealed to UNHCR to promote the equal treatment of refugees everywhere and to work more closely with the Yemeni authorities to develop a comprehensive action plan, based on the needs of the most vulnerable groups. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government had adopted an emergency plan, which had included building isolation facilities and providing hand sanitizer in camps. He called on the international community to support host communities, to share the responsibility for taking in refugees and to contribute additional financial and human resources to improve the refugee situation.

9. **Mr. Schröer** (Germany) said that Germany was the fifth largest refugee-hosting country in the world and that, despite COVID-19-related restrictions, it planned to welcome as many resettlement refugees as possible in 2020. The pandemic had affected displaced persons and host communities, but also UNHCR field staff, and he wished to express his sincere respect for all those who continued to deliver essential services in increasingly dangerous conditions. The global compact on refugees was a blueprint for a comprehensive response to refugee situations; it was therefore not despite, but because of, the pandemic that all countries should endeavour to implement and potentially adjust and fast-track the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum.

10. In 2019, Germany had once again been the second largest bilateral donor to UNHCR. At the Forum, it had pledged a contribution of €100 million and substantial development-oriented funding for displacement contexts. In 2020, it had provided over €360 million in humanitarian funding to UNHCR operations worldwide, including a dedicated flexible contribution of €55 million to the UNHCR COVID-19 response plan, and would be able to at least maintain the previous year's development-oriented funding levels of €1.3 billion, which also supported partner countries in responding to the pandemic and tackling its medium- and long-term effects. However, humanitarian needs were quickly outgrowing available funds – a trend that was being exacerbated by the pandemic.

11. He encouraged UNHCR to continue prioritizing its protection mandate and assistance for the most vulnerable and to increase efficiency through effective coordination and

cooperation with partners. The proposed revisions to its budget structure, multi-year budget planning and a stronger focus on the impact of its operations were steps in the right direction. He also called on UNHCR to further adjust its systems in line with the new global reality of remote management and implementation. Transparency and accountability would be crucial to ensuring continued trust in the humanitarian system and the international refugee protection regime. Noting lastly the indispensable role played by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the global response to the pandemic, he said that Germany had substantially increased its funding to that organization.

12. **Mr. Aala** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic had fallen short of the promises made in terms of solidarity and cooperation and was inconsistent with the principle of avoiding politicization in the provision of humanitarian assistance, as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The refusal to lift unilateral coercive measures to allow affected States to deal more effectively with the pandemic had exacerbated already difficult conditions in Syria. Addressing the root causes of forced displacement was a prerequisite for creating the appropriate conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity, in line with the objectives of the global compact on refugees. At the regional level, the ongoing Israeli occupation had caused the forced displacement of half a million Syrians from the Syrian Golan and millions of Palestinian refugees. In his country, takfirist terrorism and economic terrorism in the form of unilateral coercive measures were key factors in the forced displacement of Syrians.

13. With most regions now liberated from terrorist control, the Syrian Government was working to restore normal life, rebuild infrastructure, reopen services and adopt legal and administrative measures to facilitate the return of the displaced population. To date, more than two million displaced persons inside and outside the country had been able to return to their places of origin. His Government was grateful to UNHCR for its assistance and urged it to play a more active role in supporting efforts to repatriate displaced Syrians, mobilizing financial resources and working with the countries concerned to ensure the lifting of unilateral coercive measures and the depoliticization of the issue of refugee returns.

14. **Mr. Ambrazevich** (Belarus) said that his delegation wished to pay tribute to the work carried out by UNHCR over the past seven decades. Its mandate remained as important as ever, as wars and conflicts continued to force many people to leave their homes. Tackling the root causes of displacement was key to resolving the refugee situation. To that end, Belarus was actively promoting the idea of a comprehensive global dialogue on security issues. Such a dialogue would be all the more relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had exacerbated many negative trends, including the growth of nationalism, xenophobia and discrimination and hostile attitudes toward migrants. Belarus had not closed its borders during the pandemic, and all international agencies represented in the country, including UNHCR, had been able to continue their operations effectively. The Government considered that it had struck the right balance between preserving the viability of the economy and protecting the population from the virus to the greatest extent possible.

15. **Ms. Nzenze** (Observer for Gabon) said that, despite the difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic, the Government of Gabon, in partnership with UNHCR, continued to show solidarity with refugees, providing them with multifaceted support to allow them to live in dignity and without discrimination. The Government was working to find durable solutions for refugees: since 2018, 297 long-term refugees had obtained residence permits, and a number of refugee children born in the country had acquired Gabonese nationality. In an effort to support socioeconomic integration and self-reliance, some refugees had been granted finance to set up revenue-generating activities.

16. Thanks to the preventive measures taken by the authorities, there had been no registered cases of COVID-19 among the refugee population. Low-income households, including refugees and asylum seekers, had received food assistance and free water, electricity and public transport during the lockdown. Her delegation called on the international community to respect the principles of responsibility- and burden-sharing set forth in the global compact on refugees.

17. **Mr. Klymenko** (Observer for Ukraine) said that his Government aligned itself with the statement delivered by the European Union the previous day. In its national capacity, it wished to commend the comprehensive and integrated approach taken by UNHCR in helping countries to respond to the pandemic. During the pandemic, the country had introduced a number of social and economic measures aimed at protecting the most vulnerable groups.

18. The Government supported the increased UNHCR focus on internal displacement. Over the past six years, the ongoing Russian aggression and illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions had caused the internal displacement of 1.4 million persons. The humanitarian situation in the conflict-affected areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions remained dire, yet the Russian occupation authorities continued to block access for international humanitarian organizations. The Government of Ukraine was committed to the integration of internally displaced persons and the implementation of durable solutions, and was considering extending and updating its existing strategy to take into account new challenges. Legislation was being developed that would allow internally displaced persons to vote in the upcoming local elections; access to higher education for internally displaced high-school graduates had recently been simplified; and draft laws were being considered to further simplify access to birth and death registration and to pensions.

19. The Government of Ukraine was grateful to UNHCR for its consistent attention to the humanitarian situation in the country and was counting on the support of partners for appropriate funding for the United Nations-led Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 for Ukraine. The international community must respond more effectively to the root causes of existing and emerging crises and strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

20. **Ms. Mansfield** (Australia) said that her delegation commended UNHCR for its rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its efforts to ensure that national health and socioeconomic responses, including future vaccination programmes, were inclusive of refugees. It applauded the progress that UNHCR had made in implementing the localization agenda and meeting its target of delivering at least 25 per cent of its programmes through local and national responders. In Bangladesh and Myanmar, Australia and UNHCR were working together to develop localization plans that would strengthen the institutional capacity of local and national partners. Her delegation also welcomed the continued efforts to increase efficiency and accountability, and encouraged UNHCR to give concrete examples in future reports of how monitoring informed programmes and of the extent and impact of multi-year planning and budgeting.

21. While the strong health and border response to COVID-19 was affecting its capacity to resettle refugees, her country had long demonstrated a generous commitment to resettlement. Working with UNHCR, Australia had resettled more than 900,000 refugees and other persons in humanitarian need since the end of the Second World War. Over 25,900 visas had been granted to vulnerable women and their dependents under the Women at Risk programme established in 1989, and 20 per cent of humanitarian visa places remained reserved for women in that category. Australia welcomed the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and looked forward to working with UNHCR on the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

22. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), speaking via video link, said that Brazil was to be commended on the measures it had taken to deal with the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in recent years. He welcomed the efforts made by Namibia to fulfil the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and stressed the importance of ensuring that any refugees who returned to Burundi, where the situation remained fragile, did so voluntarily and with the necessary support. The representatives of both Syria and Yemen had highlighted the importance of providing humanitarian assistance even in politically complex conflicts. He encouraged Kuwait to continue to provide leadership on humanitarian efforts in the region. He was grateful to the delegations of Gabon and Belarus for sharing their experiences during the pandemic. The upcoming 2020 Afghanistan Conference would provide an important opportunity to discuss solutions for Afghan refugees, including those hosted by Iran.

23. He encouraged Australia, which had an exemplary record, and other countries to resume their refugee resettlement activities as soon as conditions allowed. He commended the steps taken in the aftermath of the fire at the centre in Moria. It was to be hoped that the new European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum would help alleviate the burden on Greece and other front-line countries. UNHCR was grateful to Germany for its very substantial financial contributions and its leadership at the European level. The measures taken by the Government of Ukraine in respect of internally displaced persons, such as their inclusion in local elections, might serve as an example to other States and should be shared with the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement.

24. **Mr. Johnson** (Togo) said that his delegation wished to pay tribute to the commitment of UNHCR teams in the field who had remained in place and had continued to deliver on their mandate during the global health crisis. The Togolese authorities were determined to find durable solutions for the country's almost 12,700 refugees. The Government had introduced a new 10-year special residence permit for refugees and had granted Togolese nationality to 1,000 refugees born in the country. Although many measures had been hindered by the pandemic, humanitarian corridors had been put in place to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, and refugee status determination procedures and the issuance of identity and travel documents were continuing. With the support of UNHCR, food and protection kits were being provided to all refugees, and an inclusive communication strategy ensured that refugees were well informed about COVID-19. A national commission to combat statelessness had been established in 2018 and had developed a national action plan for eradicating statelessness by 2024.

25. **Ms. Di Giovanni** (Holy See), speaking via video link, said that her delegation wished to call for strengthened international cooperation and solidarity with refugees and host communities through more equitable and predictable burden-sharing. There was also an urgent need for a more coherent approach on internal displacement. The Holy See was seriously concerned by the way the pandemic had been used to ignore and even undermine certain fundamental norms of refugee law, particularly the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement.

26. Refugee camps must remain what they were intended to be, namely, temporary solutions to emergencies. Unfortunately, protracted refugee situations were increasingly leading to overcrowding and poor security, living and sanitary conditions. Her delegation was particularly concerned about the human rights abuses and deplorable conditions experienced by migrants and refugees detained in Libya. It supported efforts to transfer them to safe third countries and calls for their asylum claims to be processed in a timely manner.

27. The adoption of policies that invested in young refugees and their access to continuous education was critical. Existing durable solutions must be strengthened, and the number and range of alternative legal pathways for safe and voluntary resettlement must be expanded. The most comprehensive and effective durable solution was, of course, ensuring the right of all persons to live and thrive in dignity, peace, and security in their countries of origin. Achieving that goal required an unyielding commitment to tackling the root causes of forced displacement.

28. **Ms. Costa** (Uruguay) said that, since most of the world's refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons came from, transited through or lived in developing countries, equitable burden-sharing could be postponed no longer. In Latin America, the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework had shown that it was possible to address human displacement in a coordinated manner. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, Uruguay maintained its historical commitment to protecting persons in urgent need. Persons in need of international protection had been able to enter Uruguay despite the restrictions introduced to contain the virus and a simplified asylum procedure had been developed to facilitate new applications. Such actions were a reflection of the country's humanitarian tradition and the spirit of multilateral cooperation with which it faced the pandemic and its consequences.

29. Because most refugees and displaced persons lived in urban areas, the engagement of local authorities was essential to their heightened protection and socioeconomic inclusion. The Cities of Solidarity initiative, designed to enhance coordination between the public and private sectors and civil society, had proven successful and would now be extended to other key locations in Uruguay. Meanwhile, a recently implemented rural resettlement programme that provided jobs and housing had allowed for a number of Central American families to be resettled. However, as Uruguay had limited human and material resources, access to funding was essential if it was to provide durable solutions and to strengthen its institutions and programmes.

30. **Mr. Youssef** (Egypt) said that, despite the dramatic economic impact of the pandemic, which had caused food insecurity and loss of livelihoods throughout the world, Egypt had remained steadfast in its commitment to hosting and protecting refugees and had included all refugees and migrants in its national COVID-19 response. However, its inclusive approach had undoubtedly exacerbated economic pressures, underscoring the need for sustainable and equitable burden-sharing. In addition to 250,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, Egypt hosted an estimated 5 million persons who had fled situations of crisis and generalized

violence but in most cases did not apply for refugee status. All those persons enjoyed complete freedom of movement and equal access to basic services such as education, primary health care and entrepreneurship opportunities.

31. Since the first Global Refugee Forum, Egypt had been working to fulfil its pledge to develop national institutions and legislative frameworks that improved refugee protection. Through a comprehensive approach, it aimed to address the root causes of refugee crises and create conditions conducive to voluntary return. Egypt was heavily involved in African Union efforts in the areas of post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable peace and development. It continued to advocate the “one refugee” approach, intended to ensure that burden- and responsibility-sharing benefited all refugee communities equally, without discrimination on grounds of nationality. It called upon the international community to bridge the funding gap and to step up its commitments to resettlement.

32. **Mr. Müller** (Austria) said that the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for human life could only be addressed through a coherent multilateral response. The health emergency had demonstrated the importance of the global compact on refugees and the commitment to international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing. Austria was gravely concerned about the increasing numbers of forcibly displaced persons in the world and the protracted conflicts that were causing enormous humanitarian challenges in many countries. Moreover, large numbers of people continued to move across international borders in irregular and dangerous circumstances, thus confirming the need for a comprehensive approach that entailed deeper cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, better protection and prospects in regions of origin, and measures to prevent and combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking. The international community must also create a credible system of return for those who were ineligible for international protection.

33. Austria had committed to long-term cooperation with UNHCR in several areas, including international advocacy for legal, safe and regular pathways to States neighbouring crisis regions; support for humanitarian relief operations; evaluation of the security situation in countries of origin; and the development of fairer and more efficient asylum procedures. In 2020, it had provided significant financial contributions to assist UNHCR operations in Colombia, Syria, Libya and Greece and it had decided to quadruple its core contribution.

34. **Mr. Rivasseau** (France) said that, despite the efforts of UNHCR, refugees were highly vulnerable to the propagation of COVID-19 and to the economic and social consequences of the health crisis. France had responded to the UNHCR appeal for contributions and would remain mobilized until the threat was overcome. It was doing its utmost to meet its commitment to resettle 10,000 people in 2020 and 2021 and had gradually resumed resettlement operations following their suspension in March.

35. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons had never been so high. A human tragedy was unfolding in the Sahel, Venezuelans continued to flee to neighbouring countries, and the number of refugees and forcibly displaced persons in the Middle East, Asia and Africa – already in the millions – continued to grow. In troubled times, the international community had a moral and ethical duty to protect persons fleeing political persecution, war and conflict. Yet States did not shoulder that responsibility on equal terms. Countries neighbouring conflict zones, transit countries and refugee-hosting countries were all dealing with flows of people that they could not manage alone. France, therefore, was firmly committed to solidarity and responsibility-sharing with a view to better managing population movements. Displacement attributable to natural disasters was a particular focus of its efforts, and it had been participating in the Clean Energy Challenge launched by UNHCR. At the European level, meanwhile, it was working with partners to reform the Dublin Convention with a view to adopting a better-coordinated approach to asylum. France had significantly increased its contributions to UNHCR over the previous three years and would continue to do so until 2022. It also stood ready to strengthen its partnerships with development actors, while supporting efforts to diversify the donor base.

36. **Mr. Al-Mansouri** (Observer for Qatar) said that the pandemic had created new challenges for migrants and displaced persons and that, because they mostly lived in countries with fragile infrastructure, solidarity was needed to protect them from the virus and address its economic and social impact. A comprehensive approach that addressed the root causes of migration while finding durable solutions and sharing responsibility was also essential. Qatar was committed to developing its strategic relationship with UNHCR and had signed an agreement for UNHCR to open an office in Doha, among other agreements. It stood ready to

continue its work to contain and reduce the impact of regional and international conflicts, to find solutions and to facilitate reconstruction. In 2018, Qatar had introduced new legislation to support migrants and help them to live in conditions of dignity. It would continue to support UNHCR programmes and would work with the international community to address common challenges and achieve the objectives of the global compact on refugees.

37. **Mr. Jespersen** (Denmark) said that Denmark feared that refugees and host communities would bear the brunt of the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. For that reason, it had shown solidarity with the global response by contributing more than \$85 million in humanitarian assistance, including almost \$15 million to the UNHCR COVID-19 appeal. Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls, Denmark called on UNHCR to ensure that sufficient resources were channelled towards addressing gender-based violence and providing sexual and reproductive health services.

38. While the fundamental challenges in global displacement remained unsolved, the Government of Denmark saw a need to reduce the incentives that led people to make dangerous journeys, to combat migrant smuggling and to return those found not to be in need of international protection more effectively. Asylum systems should be fair, humane and in conformity with international law. Denmark remained fully committed to the global compact on refugees and would welcome efforts to ensure that age, gender and diversity considerations were mainstreamed in its implementation. At the Global Refugee Forum, Denmark had made a number of pledges, including in support of durable solutions, education and clean energy, which either had been or were in the process of being fulfilled. In addition, it had joined the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, and it would host a ministerial round table on the humanitarian situation in the Sahel, at which it hoped to secure tangible support to address the crisis in that region.

39. **Mr. Czech** (Poland) said that, despite the restrictions introduced in the context of the pandemic, Poland had adopted legislative solutions designed to benefit foreign nationals residing in the country legally and had continued to process asylum applications and return procedures. Health and safety solutions had been implemented in migrant reception centres, and all relevant information was duly communicated to foreign nationals, including through a dedicated telephone hotline. Poland continued to focus on child refugees, including nationals of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, who accounted for a large proportion of persons applying for international protection in the country.

40. His Government was seriously concerned about the situation in neighbouring Belarus, which had seen an outpouring of social discontent following the recent presidential elections. It was therefore preparing for a possible influx of Belarusian citizens and had taken steps to facilitate their entry. By mid-September 2020, 157 Belarusians had entered Poland and Polish consulates had issued 600 humanitarian visas. The focus of the country's humanitarian agenda was protecting civilians and providing assistance on the ground. Poland continued to support European Union trust funds and other initiatives, as well as United Nations humanitarian agencies. It was also supporting in-kind projects to provide housing units for refugees in Syria and Greece. Poland had responded to the COVID-19 appeal of the United Nations Children's Fund and had helped operationalize the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

41. **Mr. Lorenz** (Luxembourg) said that the world faced simultaneous humanitarian crises, characterized by record displacement and a growing number of refugees, that had been further exacerbated by the pandemic. The pandemic had shown that the international community must be prepared for systemic shocks that overlapped with existing crises, and that there was a need to rethink the current humanitarian system. Collective efforts to develop global and multisectoral strategies should continue, taking into account the need for an inclusive dialogue that involved all political actors at all levels. The global compact on refugees was an important tool that provided a structure for that dialogue. It was reassuring to know that the partnerships concluded at the Global Refugee Forum would increase the resilience of refugee communities and host countries, in keeping with the 2030 Agenda.

42. Luxembourg continued to contribute to responsibility-sharing initiatives. In coordination with UNHCR, it had resettled about 50 refugees and had agreed to resettle 20 unaccompanied minors following the recent fire at the Moria refugee camp. It had also led the development of "emergency.lu", a satellite-based communications platform that could be rapidly deployed to support humanitarian operations in the field. Luxembourg welcomed and

supported the ongoing reform of UNHCR, including efforts to regionalize the agency in order to increase its effectiveness.

43. **Ms. Paik Ji-Ah** (Republic of Korea), speaking via video link, said that the Republic of Korea recognized the need for a more effective, efficient and transparent humanitarian endeavour and the importance of supporting UNHCR more predictably and flexibly. Her Government had recently decided to provide about \$6 million in voluntary contributions to support UNHCR activities in Yemen, Iraq, Colombia, Bangladesh, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as an additional \$2 million multi-year contribution to activities in Turkey in 2020 and 2021, supplementing the \$5 million pledged as multi-year funding for the comprehensive refugee response framework in Uganda at the Global Refugee Forum. Noting that in 2019 private sector contributions from the Republic of Korea had been the third largest of any State, she encouraged UNHCR to broaden and deepen its already successful efforts to forge partnerships with the private sector. She commended the reforms in which it was engaged, notably its regionalization and decentralization initiatives and its efforts to improve internal control and oversight. Lastly, noting the importance of a more balanced geographical representation among UNHCR staff to a proper understanding of regional contexts, she called on UNHCR to pay particular attention to significantly underrepresented areas such as the Asia-Pacific region.

44. **Ms. Norton** (Canada) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had had particularly profound impacts on refugees. Border restrictions had compounded existing challenges to the international protection regime; the pandemic's economic effects had placed livelihoods in jeopardy; and women and girls faced an increased threat of gender-based violence. Despite the challenges, refugees and refugee-led organizations had been at the fore of the country's COVID-19 response, demonstrating the value of their full and equal inclusion, as advocated in the global compact on refugees. Canada was committed to more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing and, with that end in mind, wished to highlight the importance of sustaining the progress towards self-reliance already achieved and delivering on the hundreds of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. Building on its own pledges, the Government of Canada would further its efforts to promote education for refugee children and internally displaced children and would continue working with the members of the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (MIRPS) support platform to advance the principles of the global compact in Central America. Meaningful refugee participation in the work of the international refugee system must also remain a priority; at the Global Refugee Forum, the Canadian delegation had included a refugee adviser, as had the delegation to the Executive Committee.

45. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that the global compacts on refugees and migration underlined a global call to build an inclusive society in which no one was left behind, yet the international community had collectively failed to find a durable solution for the millions of people worldwide who had been forcibly displaced. Developing countries continued to bear the lion's share of the burden, and the COVID-19 crisis had exacerbated the challenges as their fragile health systems struggled to cope. Enhanced international cooperation and assistance, driven by a spirit of international solidarity and the principle of burden-sharing, was essential to provide for the needs of host communities, refugees and forcibly displaced persons. However, global refugee policy planning should not be biased towards protection to the detriment of sustainable solutions involving countries of origin that addressed the root causes of displacement.

46. Bangladesh currently hosted 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals from the Rohingya community. Its Government was doing its best to care for them and had included them in its COVID-19 response plan. It appreciated the international community's support in keeping the number of infections and fatalities in the camps low. Nonetheless, the refugees prolonged stay was causing social instability and environmental degradation, and Bangladesh could not bear the burden for long. The Rohingya crisis had been created by Myanmar, and its resolution must lie with Myanmar. Bangladesh had become involved because its Government had opened up its border to a people fleeing a situation labelled by many as an act of genocide. It was the responsibility of Myanmar to disprove such assertions by creating an environment conducive to repatriation. Regrettably, it had so far failed to do so, despite hollow promises made on numerous occasions, including before the Executive Committee. The situation was compounded by continued persecution in Myanmar and the denial of access to humanitarian actors. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, government administrators in Myanmar were reclassifying areas where

Rohingya villages had previously been located, removing the names of the villages from official maps and altering how the land could be used. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, had recently called upon the international community to play a more effective part in finding a just and durable solution to the Rohingya crisis. He now reiterated that call before the Executive Committee.

47. **Mr. Maza Martelli** (Observer for El Salvador) said that the Government of El Salvador had recently adopted a new law on the prevention of internal forced displacement and protection of internally displaced persons that was intended to provide durable solutions for people forced to leave their homes or at risk of displacement owing to violence within the country. The law had been adopted in the context of the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (MIRPS). During its pro tempore presidency of MIRPS, assumed in November 2019, El Salvador had formulated an annual plan of work, which had been approved by all MIRPS member States, as well as a national plan for the protection of victims of forced displacement that included 49 priority actions. The COVID-19 pandemic posed an additional challenge in the region and had worsened the plight of the most vulnerable groups, placing a new burden on the region's Governments as they strove to protect and support persons in situations of vulnerability. That notwithstanding, the MIRPS countries had continued implementing both their national plans and the annual plan of work established by the pro tempore presidency. Under the Cities of Solidarity initiative, they were also working to strengthen alliances with local governments in order to foster dialogue at the community-level. The private sector played a key role in generating work and livelihood opportunities, facilitating access to financial services and encouraging the local integration of displaced persons. The existence of a platform to share experiences and knowledge was a priority for the MIRPS countries, whose working group on internal displacement, which included a panel of experts from Colombia and Italy, issued recommendations in line with international standards. The establishment of the MIRPS support platform, which was chaired by Spain and included representatives of all its member countries, was a concrete example of shared responsibility and cooperation within the UNHCR framework.

48. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), speaking via video link, said that he wished to thank the representative of Uruguay for the support and solidarity that her country had shown for regional initiatives such as MIRPS, and the representative of El Salvador for highlighting the importance of adequate response plans and legal framework for addressing situations of internal displacement. It was heartening to see the rapid development of those plans, which UNHCR would support in the future. It would work closely with El Salvador during its pro tempore presidency with a view to leveraging international resources. He also wished to commend Canada for its commitment to supporting MIRPS and mobilizing resources for countries hosting Venezuelan refugees and migrants, its emphasis on effective responsibility-sharing, and its inspiring policy of refugee participation in forums on refugee matters.

49. He thanked the representative of the Holy See for its strong advocacy in favour of people on the move. The strength, courage and vision of that advocacy was indispensable to the work done by UNHCR. The representative of the Holy See had been quite right to state that the COVID-19 pandemic must not be used as a pretext to erode the principles of refugee protection. He welcomed the increase in financial contributions from Austria and thanked the Austrian representative for putting forward some very interesting suggestions and proposals for asylum reform. He was pleased to note that France remained committed to refugee resettlement, despite having suspended its programme owing to the pandemic, and hoped that emergency resettlements would resume in the near future. He was also pleased to note the reference to aspects of displacement related to climate change, and to the Clean Energy Challenge, which was an initiative of particular importance that required more support. He wished to thank the Danish Government for having increased its financial contributions to unprecedented levels and responding promptly to numerous special appeals that required urgent support. Noting that many aspects of the suggestions for asylum reform put forward by Denmark, including ways to combat smuggling and make the return of rejected asylum seekers more efficient, were addressed in the new European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, he said that UNHCR would continue to insist on the importance of building an asylum system that was fully respectful of international refugee law. He thanked the representative of Poland for highlighting the importance of protecting refugee children and for the country's readiness to receive refugees from other countries in the region and to provide increased support for countries hosting large numbers of refugees, emphasizing, at

the same time, that support for those countries did not obviate the need for European countries to keep their borders open in an efficient manner, consistent with the law. Thanks were likewise due to Luxembourg for the flexibility of its non-earmarked contributions and its participation in resettlement and relocation programmes, and particularly for its support for the UNHCR innovation and technology and telecommunications programme that had proven such an important part of the COVID-19 response.

50. He saluted the Togolese Government for having taken a number of legislative initiatives aimed at reducing statelessness. The increase in contributions mentioned by the representative of Qatar, which were incidentally supplemented by the most generous philanthropic contributions among the States in that region, were likewise welcomed. The opening of a local office in Qatar, as the State had requested, would facilitate coordination and cooperation in the region, notably in the area of education. The representative of Egypt had mentioned inclusiveness, and, during his visits to Egypt, he had indeed noted a high level of inclusion of the refugees that it hosted, including Syrian refugees. The country's location in a sensitive area of migration close to various conflict areas placed it in a specific situation that should attract the attention of donors. He welcomed the recent announcement by the Republic of Korea of important financial contributions and the mention by the country's representative of contributions from the private sector, for which UNHCR was extremely grateful. UNHCR was working to improve the composition of staff in terms of regional background and hopefully results would soon be visible.

51. Bangladesh was one of the most important host countries, and he wished to thank the Government for its patience and generous hospitality in sheltering hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees. It was reassuring that, with UNHCR support, it had successfully stemmed the spread of the pandemic in the very crowded refugee camps. The search for durable solutions was not at all at odds with the mandate of protection; they were intertwined, and UNHCR would continue to seek solutions in Myanmar that made it possible for the refugees to return home. Some timid progress had already been made along those lines, while, in the meantime, the Government of Bangladesh was making important efforts to increase the opportunities available to the refugees during their time in exile.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.