

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

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Summary record*, Tuesday, 28 June 22, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Baddoura(Lebanon)

Contents

International protection (continued)

- a. Note on international protection
- b. Oral update on Executive Committee conclusion(s)

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

International protection *(continued)*

Note on international protection (EC/73/SC/CRP.10) *(continued)*

1. **Mr. Rose** (Australia) said that given the alarming rate of displacement from climate change and disasters, as well as conflict and violence, UNHCR's role was critical to the broader humanitarian system for delivering vital assistance guided by humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.
2. He welcomed UNHCR's commitment to recognizing age, gender and diversity of refugees and integrating that diversity into its work, and looked forward to the results of the relevant policy evaluation underway, including the application of similar policies to other United Nations humanitarian organizations.
3. The disturbing reported increase in sexual and gender-based violence globally, particularly for refugee women and girls, underscored the vital importance of ensuring that women and girls in situations of displacement had access to quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, along with information and counselling. UNHCR should continue its commendable efforts to protect all persons, including children, from sexual abuse and exploitation. Such populations should retain full access to the services they need to protect their human rights, health and wellbeing.
4. Australia deeply appreciated the efforts of all refugee-hosting countries in the face of the additional ongoing challenge of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which had disproportionately affected displaced and stateless groups – particularly women and girls. In that regard, he especially commended Bangladesh for including refugees in its COVID-19 vaccination rollout, enabling the vast majority of Rohingya refugees to be vaccinated.
5. It was of grave concern that over a third of Ukraine's population had been displaced following the Russian Federation's unlawful invasion in February 2022, forcing over 6.3 million people to flee Ukraine. He commended the European response's embodiment of the values underpinning the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR): international cooperation and burden- and responsibility-sharing.
6. The work of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees was also important in connecting Ukraine's digital transformation ministry with a range of Member States at that crucial time to assist with identity verification. UNHCR's ongoing work in developing a remote registration tool that digitally recognized Ukrainian identification documents would assist with registering Ukrainian refugees.
7. Australia had long been one of the world's major contributors to international refugee resettlement efforts, successfully settling more than 930,000 people in humanitarian need since the end of the Second World War.
8. His country expected to grant around 13,000 visas under its Humanitarian Program 2021–22, maintaining its long-term commitment to a generous resettlement programme and continuing to offer one of the largest on both an absolute and per capita basis. Australia continued to focus on providing resettlement for women and children in vulnerable situations, unaccompanied minors, LGBTQI+ people and refugees willing to settle in regional Australia, all while maintaining strong border protection policies consistent with its international obligations and rights as a sovereign nation.
9. **Mr. McNicholas** (United States of America) commended UNHCR's commitment to stay and deliver in the face of record conflict, political instability and the climate crisis. Ahead of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in 2023, the international community must recommit to the principles embodied in the GCR: refugees, asylum-seekers, voluntarily returning refugees and stateless persons should be able to enjoy rights enshrined in international law without obstruction or discrimination.

10. For its part, the United States of America was rebuilding its own asylum and refugee resettlement systems and improving protection for stateless persons within the country, as well as working with partner Governments to facilitate safe, orderly and humane migration processes throughout the western hemisphere.

11. The United States of America was proud of its vibrant, diverse refugee communities. The international community had a shared responsibility to provide refuge free from discrimination and underpinned by humanitarian assistance, including promoting sustainable livelihoods, leveraging local and refugee-led partners to benefit from their unique and essential experience, including refugees in national development programmes, and working to eliminate gender-based violence in all its forms.

12. His country stood in solidarity with the millions of people fleeing the Russian Federation's unprovoked and brutal war in Ukraine, applauding UNHCR's work and the generosity of Ukraine's neighbours. Additionally, his country stood with Afghans fleeing Taliban repression, and with the Governments in the western hemisphere who had adopted the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. The international community must not, however, lose sight of urgent displacement crises elsewhere: newly emerging and ongoing violence and insecurity in Ethiopia and Myanmar as well as protracted situations in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and South Sudan, Yemen, Bangladesh, the central Sahel, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Somalia must remain a priority. The United States of America looked forward to continuing to raise awareness and advocate for protection solutions at the regional level through its tenure as Chair of the MIRPS Support Platform in 2022 and through its humanitarian leadership and responsible donorship worldwide.

13. He welcomed that the Secretary-General's report and Call to Action for Human Rights had spurred action on statelessness, which still required attention in monitoring, data collection, advocacy, technical assistance, and legal reform. As UNHCR had highlighted in its Note, lack of nationality was itself a particular vulnerability. The United States of America called on UNHCR and its Member States to invest in that critical issue through the Global Appeal process and for UNHCR to fulfil its mandate to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless persons.

14. The United States of America supported UNHCR's long-standing commitment to integrate age, gender, and diversity into its policies, programmes, and advocacy across all operations, as well as its efforts to strengthen accountability to affected populations. He welcomed additional efforts by UNHCR to protect vulnerable LGBTIQI+ persons, as was its responsibility. While he applauded UNHCR's efforts to promote displaced and stateless women in community leadership and management, as well as to prioritize women in the provision of cash-based assistance, more needed to be done to address gender-based violence. To that end, a more inclusive approach to vulnerable LGBTIQI+ persons was needed together with a recognition of the intersectionality of gender identities and sexual orientation with disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

15. The United States of America looked forward to working with UNHCR and Member States to advance those protection imperatives, while continuing to support innovative and effective protection programmes such as the UNHCR–UNICEF Blue Dot support hubs for children and families. The United States of America encouraged deeper collaboration with civil society and NGO partners, including those focused on development, in protection planning. He welcomed the opportunity to focus more on promoting the rights of and programmes for persons with disabilities and prioritizing mental health as critical to the humanitarian response.

16. As the 2023 GRF approached and the international community reflected on growing global humanitarian challenges, focus must be renewed on responsibility sharing, supporting refugee-hosting countries, and comprehensive approaches to solutions. The United States of America looked forward to continuing work on implementing its pledges ahead of the GRF, including a pledge to match 10 pledges by other stakeholders to advance refugee self-reliance and inclusion.

17. **Ms. Nordlund** (Sweden), noting the tragic milestone of 100 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, said that the work of UNHCR, its staff and partners remained more important than ever. The international response to people in need of protection would need to extend to both new and protracted displacement crises around the world, in a sustained spirit of solidarity and

responsibility sharing. Protection for displaced and stateless persons must stay high on the international agenda.

18. Sweden steadfastly supported safeguarding international protection and ending statelessness, responding to the increasing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), addressing protection issues such as sexual and gender-based violence and upholding effective asylum systems.

19. Expanding the availability of durable solutions remained of the essence. Resettlement was a sustainable, safe, and organized way to offer international protection to refugees in the most vulnerable situations, as well as an act of solidarity with host countries. In 2022 her country would resettle 5,000 refugees, remaining committed an expanded and strategic global resettlement response. She welcomed that UNHCR's updated Strategic Directions identified resettlement and complementary pathways as an area in need of additional, accelerated and targeted action.

20. A robust common European Union asylum system was also key for greater solidarity and global responsibility sharing for refugees. Advancing the European Union's New Pact on Migration and Asylum was essential. The system should be efficient, sustainable and safeguard the right to asylum. The overall aim should be a more even distribution of responsibility.

21. The consequences must be closely monitored both of the COVID-19 pandemic and of the war in Ukraine for their broader and long-term impacts on global displacement and humanitarian needs. Food shortages, energy deficiency and a decline in diaspora remittances were already taking a very heavy toll on both countries of origin and refugee-hosting States.

22. Sweden was concerned by the lack of respect for international humanitarian law, human rights and other protection standards and norms. Through its support to national efforts, UNHCR played an important role, not least in ensuring that return and relocation of refugees and IDPs were voluntary, safe and followed international protection standards.

23. She welcomed UNHCR's continued leadership of the Global Protection Cluster. UNHCR had a key role in supporting the international humanitarian system, both in stepping up its response to protection incidents but also in preventing and mitigating risks by striving towards collective protection outcomes.

24. Sweden strongly supported the #Ibelong Campaign to end statelessness. Since the beginning of the campaign in 2014, more than 29,000 stateless persons had been granted Swedish nationality. She commended the progress being made in the global fight against statelessness and in particular accessions to the statelessness conventions, reiterating that much more needed to be done to advance the Campaign's goals of ending statelessness by 2024.

25. Sweden stood firmly behind the GCR. She congratulated UNHCR and Member States on their efforts to make the first High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021 a rich opportunity to take stock, contribute, and learn from each other. Her country remained committed to its pledges and looked forward to actively participating in the preparations for the next GRF in 2023.

26. **Mr. Winder** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) expressed agreement with the Deputy High Commissioner that UNHCR was stretched and, as a leading donor, appealed to those Governments that had yet to step up their contributions to do so to ensure equitable burden sharing. He welcomed the significant results of UNHCR's engagement with the private sector, along with the Deputy High Commissioner's comments on cash and efficiencies and on improving learning and innovation from UNHCR's work. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland strongly supported the reforms being put in place, including decentralization, and looked forward to hearing about their continuing benefits. UNHCR's continued focus on protection against sexual exploitation and harassment was also appreciated.

27. His country welcomed the Note on international protection contained in document EC/73/SC/CRP.10 and commended the work undertaken over the previous year to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance for refugees and other persons of concern, in particular UNHCR staff's work, often in very challenging environments and in the context of the deeply concerning milestone of 100 million refugees worldwide.

28. He commended the achievements during UNHCR's leadership of the Global Protection Cluster, including efforts to convene and galvanize partners on the centrality of protection, localization, accountability to affected populations and collective protection outcomes. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland valued UNHCR's continued leadership on refugees within the international system and agreed that much remained to be done, supporting calls for accelerated implementation of the global compact on refugees.

29. He welcomed UNHCR's engagement in the Independent review of the implementation of the IASC protection policy and looked forward to UNHCR and other Inter-Agency Standing Committee members' response to its findings.

30. His country endorsed UNHCR's ambitions to harness the capacity of the private sector, including through the use of technology. As set out in his country's recently published international development strategy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland would step up efforts to invest and share in good ideas, scientific advances, new technologies, expertise and evidence.

31. Ongoing challenges, including COVID-19, chronic displacement and new displacement situations such as the Russian Federation's brutal and unprovoked aggression in Ukraine, clearly illustrated the importance of the GCR. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had already issued nearly 93,000 visas to Ukrainians fleeing violence through its Homes for Ukraine scheme. His country remained committed to supporting refugees in host countries in other refugee settings and was concerned by the impact of the Russian Federation's invasion on them, particularly from insecurity.

32. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed the High Commissioner's Strategic Directions 2022-2026 and UNHCR's commitment to bolstering preparedness and response capacities while making the critical transition from short-term to longer-term approaches fostering resilience, inclusion and, ultimately, access to rights.

33. His country fully endorsed UNHCR's commitment to combating racism, intolerance and discrimination against displaced and stateless populations, whether for racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or other reasons. Displaced and stateless persons should have access to all basic services essential to life, including education and healthcare, and should be empowered, given the opportunity to become active members of their societies and be protected from gender-based violence.

34. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland supported UNHCR's continued efforts to integrate age, gender and diversity into its policies, programmes and advocacy across all its operations and hoped to see greater mainstreaming of inclusion across all protection efforts. His country fully supported UNHCR's work on diversity, including with the LGBT+ community. He welcomed the continued efforts to use disaggregated data in all UNHCR operations, but called for further advancements on the quality and quantity of disaggregated data with more widespread use across operations.

35. His country was pleased that education remained a key priority for UNHCR. Access to education for displaced and stateless children and youth was clearly a significant challenge in many locations; synergies between initiatives such as Education Cannot Wait would remain critical. As set out in his country's international development strategy, education was one of the three key approaches for unlocking the full potential and power of women and girls.

36. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed UNHCR's 10 new commitments on disability inclusion, building on those shared during the first summit as well as the Disability Action Plan 2020–2024 and through commitments to the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. It was critical to ensure a people-centred international response to increasing conflict, discrimination and oppression.

37. **Mr. Ishida** (Japan), expressing deep concern at the milestone of 100 million forcibly displaced people and paying tribute to all UNHCR staff helping refugees and displaced people in such challenging conditions, said that the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine was causing a global food crisis while the world was still reeling from the socioeconomic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The international community must redouble its support for refugees facing such unprecedented difficulties.

Japan would continue to cooperate with UNHCR and the international community to support refugees and IDPs, and to contribute to the realization of human security and the implementation of the GCR.

38. **Mr. Martins** (Portugal) said that his country remained strongly committed to the protection, assistance, reception and integration of refugees and migrants, based on the principles of responsibility and solidarity, respect for the dignity of the human person, combating human trafficking and illegal immigration.

39. With over 40 emergencies declared in 30 different countries, 2022 had brought an additional humanitarian challenge: the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, with millions fleeing Ukraine after the Russian Federation's unjustified and unprovoked invasion. Portugal commended the solidarity and generosity of countries in the region. As in other humanitarian crises, his country stood ready to share the burden and to welcome those in need of international protection choosing his country to pursue their lives. He acknowledged the support provided by the Ukrainian diaspora proudly hosted in Portugal. Together with the municipalities, and civil society organizations, they played a key role in hosting and integrating the over 45,000 Ukrainian refugees to date and meeting their fundamental needs of housing, jobs and education. Portugal had approved a large package of special measures for arrivals from Ukraine numbering almost 13,000 children of whom 700 were separated from their families and 15 were unaccompanied. Therefore, particular attention had been given to registration and preventing human trafficking.

40. Despite the major refugee crisis in Europe, his country remained committed to assisting in other crises and displacement situations. Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, 859 Afghan citizens had arrived in Portugal and applied for international protection, including one female football team and teachers and students of the Afghan National Institute of Music. Portugal's commitment included receiving 650 people from vulnerable groups. Since 2015, Portugal had been taking part in resettlement programmes, working closely with UNHCR and contributing to the collective effort to create legal pathways for persons in need of international protection. Resettlement and integration had been conducted in successful partnerships between central government, international organizations, local authorities, public and private entities and civil society organizations.

41. In 2022, his country had committed to resettling 300 people from Türkiye, Egypt and Jordan. Portugal had also proceeded with its commitment to receive 500 unaccompanied minors from the refugee camps on the Greek islands: so far, 247 had arrived in Portugal and benefited from a specific programme led by a multidisciplinary team to better integrate them in school and society.

42. Portugal paid particular attention to complementary pathways, being committed to creating opportunities for forcibly displaced persons to access higher education. His country had been an active partner of the Global Task Force on Third Country Education Pathways, contributed to the Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative and supported the Global Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies.

43. He welcomed the topic of the 2022 Executive Committee conclusions. Mental health and psychosocial support were a major challenge in the context of displacement and needed to be properly addressed.

44. **Mr. Karhu** (Finland) said that the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine had led to a humanitarian crisis not seen since the Second World War. Along with many other countries, Finland had demonstrated strong solidarity towards those fleeing their homes in Ukraine: so far, over 25,000 individuals from Ukraine had applied for temporary protection in Finland.

45. The significant resources provided for the crisis in and around Ukraine should not come at the expense of other already unprecedented global humanitarian needs. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the acute food crisis would lead to further distress in many contexts. Finland was concerned about UNHCR's ability to deliver for some of the most underfunded operations.

46. A high percentage of unearmarked funding was required –in 2021, around 46 per cent of his country’s humanitarian funding had been unearmarked. Flexible funding was of critical importance for UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to allow them to respond to emerging needs.

47. Solutions for refugees remained a key challenge. As the Note on international protection stated, less than 1per cent of the world’s refugee population had access to third-country solutions. Host countries commendably bore the biggest burden.

48. Finland had been a proponent of resettlement, which should have a bigger role worldwide, and had been able to increase its refugee quota under its current Government despite COVID-19. His country had successfully used remote interviews and dossier selection to enable resettlement despite major pandemic-related disruptions. Much more, however, remained to be done.

49. A key element of international protection was ensuring that displaced and stateless persons enjoyed the widest possible exercise of their rights and freedoms, without discrimination. His country strongly supported UNHCR in its commitment to integrate age, gender and diversity into its policies, programmes and advocacy. While humanitarian needs continued to rise and resources remained insufficient, it was paramount not to forget persons in the most vulnerable situations.

50. As a long-term proponent of disability inclusion, Finland appreciated UNHCR’s commitment to the matter, including by identifying persons of concern with disabilities, by making its services accessible, and by engaging with organizations representing persons with disabilities. An estimated 9.7 million persons with disabilities were forcibly displaced. Women with disabilities were 10 times more likely to experience sexual violence, and persons with disabilities in general had a 2–4 times higher mortality rate in crisis-affected communities. UNHCR should further operationalize its action plan in disability inclusion and increase awareness within the agency and its partner organizations on the matter.

51. LGBTI+ people – another very vulnerable group –could be disadvantaged in international protection because of discrimination and violence against them. According to some recent reports by LGBTI+ organizations, the war in Ukraine had shown that many trans people for example were facing specific challenges related to travel documentation and healthcare. Further, in many parts of the world, many were unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

52. **Ms. Avornic** (Republic of Moldova) said her delegation was aligned with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. An unprecedented human rights situation had arisen in the past four months, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. She was grateful to UNHCR for its support in tackling the refugee flows and the urgent protection needs of the refugees. Her country had received half a million refugees from Ukraine, of whom 76,000 were opting to remain, mostly accommodated with local families.

53. Moldova had the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, and was the first non-EU country facing such a substantial inflow. There was serious pressure on the local population as a result. Her Government had increased its spending on refugee hosting, but assistance was needed from Moldova’s development partners in order to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the refugees, through access to the labour market, the care and education of the children, and the integration of the refugees into society. Moldova was endeavouring to secure equality, equity and inclusion in its treatment of refugees, and the ongoing support of UNHCR was crucial to those efforts.

54. **Mr. Wimberger** (Austria) concurred with the statement by the representative of the European Union. There were now around 100 million refugees, a wholly unprecedented total which itself underscored the need to address the causes of refugee flows. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. He expressed full solidarity with Ukraine and with its refugees, including the women and children, the sick and disabled and otherwise vulnerable people such as cancer patients. There was a pressing need for safety corridors to enable the refugees to move freely. Russia must cease its military activities in Ukraine, withdraw its troops and respect the integrity of Ukraine’s internationally recognized borders. In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, Austria had enabled over 400,000 Ukrainian refugees to enter the country, including 2,000 displaced people from Moldova, and more than 78,000 of the refugees were choosing to stay

in Austria. He appreciated the life-saving work of UNHCR, including its assistance to refugees from Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Eighty per cent of those still displaced in northwestern Syrian Arab Republic were women and children, mostly suffering food insecurity. He called for the renewal of cross-border assistance in the region. UNHCR had shown that access to education was crucial for the children of refugees, and he emphasized the need to make proper provision for girls. Austria would persevere with its own efforts to prevent displacement. The rights of those displaced internally must also be respected, so that they could not be rendered stateless. The same applied to LGBT asylum-seekers, sometimes forced to flee because of their sexual orientation or gender identity; they were sometimes denied full protection when they became refugees. Austria remained a strong partner of UNHCR in all its work.

55. **Mr. Chemakh** (Algeria) welcomed the report on international protection. Although the causes of global refugee crises were often complex, the needs of the refugees themselves were the same, especially for humanitarian assistance. A firm commitment was needed to share the burdens resulting from mass refugee inflows, and to find lasting solutions to forced displacement, while strengthening the capacity of countries receiving refugees and maintaining open doors while avoiding donor fatigue. His country has been hosting since a half a century refugees from the non-autonomous territory of Western Sahara. It was continuing its efforts to protect and assist them, especially the women and children and vulnerable individuals. Morocco's disinformation campaign was hindering those efforts by distorting the facts. Donors were themselves calling for additional funds to meet the needs of Saharan refugees. He paid tribute to the efforts of UNHCR to alleviate the hardships suffered by displaced people from the Sahel, and to achieve lasting solutions for the people of the Sahel. Since the 2018 inter-agency report, his own country had been committed to finding lasting solutions for the people of the region, while making colossal efforts to meet the pressing needs of the Saharan refugees living in camps.

56. **Ms. Shin** (Republic of Korea) thanked the High Commission for its overview of the protection needs of refugees. The right to asylum was at the core of international protection and must be kept intact, even during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and without discrimination as to nationality, political affiliation, race or gender identity. There were multiple intertwined causes of displacement. She deplored the mass casualties in Ukraine since the Russian invasion, and the forced departure from Ukraine of many thousands of people. On a global level also, refugee flows caused the disruption of supplies and food insecurity. They were also associated with the risk of gender-based violence and human trafficking. She lamented the loss of life caused by the recent earthquake in Afghanistan. She commended the 'stay and deliver' policy for assisting stateless people and those in need, and undertook to continue supporting them.

57. **Mr. Fattal** (France) thanked Ms Tan for the work of her Division on international protection. He also agreed with the statement by the representative of the European Union. UNHCR was continuing to protect the rights of refugees in a climate of unprecedented humanitarian need, which required relief workers to operate in multiple crises and in very complex conditions. In 2022, following the invasion of Ukraine, France had contributed 17 million euros to refugee relief. At the 2021 High-level Resettlement Forum, it had been decided that refugee students from francophone countries, such as Niger, should be able to continue their studies in France.

58. **Mr. Frenkel** (Israel) expressed support for the work done by UNHCR to combat human trafficking. He also welcomed the commitment to integrate refugees according to their needs and without discrimination as to age, gender, disability or other characteristics such as the need for mental health and psychosocial support. He welcomed the focus on youth and on child-friendly procedures; children themselves had rights. He was also glad to note the continuing work within education to combat stereotyping and gender-based violence. Denying the existence of diversity was not helpful for eliminating discrimination, and UNHCR should persevere with its non-discriminatory policies and practices.

59. **Mr. Pomareda Muñoz** (Peru) said his country had received 1,200,000 refugees and had processed 500,000 applications for refugee status. Peru was working hard to integrate refugees into society while respecting their human rights, in compliance with its national and international obligations. Asylum-seeking was a protected right. Refugees needed technical and financial support in order to integrate into society, and his country needed more resources to enable them to

do so. He would be in favour of holding future UNHCR meetings in a hybrid format, so that the people at home could watch them.

60. **Ms. Moussa** (Egypt) agreed with the remarks by the representative of Chad on behalf of the African Group. As a refugee-hosting country, Egypt strongly supported the work of UNHCR, and had launched the Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees with the United Nations. Over 6 million people from 65 countries had fled persecution to seek refuge in her country, and over 70,000 of them were registered with UNHCR. They enjoyed full access to public services, including health care. Equitable burden-sharing was crucial. Refugees from Arabic-speaking countries were able to access educational provision in Egypt on the same basis as its nationals. Attention should be paid to the more recent causes of refugee flows, such as the climate crisis. Since the 1951 Convention, the ‘triple nexus’ had been introduced, to ensure that the interests of refugees were fully upheld, in light of the object and purpose of the Convention. Because of the growing numbers of refugees, especially in African countries, it was essential to protect their rights without regard to their origins. She thanked the countries which had shown solidarity by hosting large numbers of refugees.

61. **Ms. Moruke** (South Africa) expressed her agreement with the statement by the representative of Chad on behalf of the African Group. Conflict and the insecurity it created was a key driver of forced displacement and refugee flows, but those fleeing could also become victims of additional discrimination and risk. High priority must be attached to the principle of non-refoulement and to asylum as an alternative to detention, and to the human rights, healthcare and education of refugees, and their access to justice, without discrimination. She was proud to collaborate with UNHCR in eliminating detention as a solution for asylum-seekers. South Africa had introduced an online system for coordinated service provision for refugees, and was collaborating actively with their countries of origin with a view to preventing recourse to irregular pathways.

62. **Mr. Ali Abadi** (Iran, Islamic Republic of) expressed appreciation of the invaluable protection offered by UNHCR. His country spared no effort to ensure inclusive access by refugees to public health services, including Covid-19 prevention and treatment. The international humanitarian situation had been aggravated by the withdrawal of the United States of America from Afghanistan in 2021, and the resulting refugee flows had stretched the capacity of existing resources in education, healthcare and water supply. Refugee numbers worldwide were now at an all-time record. Iran was continuing to host refugees on a non-discriminatory basis. The language used in dealing with refugee situations must itself be non-discriminatory, and in view of the universal mandate of UNHCR he called on it to avoid divisive or controversial concepts, while expressing full appreciation and support for its efforts.

63. **Mr. Boukhris** (Morocco) remarked on the speed and scale of recent forced displacement, with the total displaced population worldwide now reaching about 100 million. The numbers were exacerbated by the climate crisis. The international community must step up its efforts to meet the needs of all displaced people without discrimination. Morocco was fully committed to countering the humanitarian crisis, while continuing to provide humanitarian support to Lebanon and food assistance to the Palestinian people. He was in favour of registering refugees, which was a means of enabling them to access their rights while also helping to combat fraud and crime, including human trafficking. Worsening conditions in a host country could undermine its observance of international law, as had happened in the Kundu region of Nigeria, where Arab militants had kidnapped and tortured their opponents. In that region, militants had been running camps which isolated the inmates from the local population and prevented their settlement or voluntary return to their countries of origin. Registration of refugees was an important means of improving their security.

64. **Mr. Taha** (Sudan) said that for five decades, his country had kept an open door to refugees, and there were now over 1.3 million refugees in Sudan. Seventy per cent of them received humanitarian aid and were able to access services alongside the local population. However, many refugees were living in terrible conditions, because the existing humanitarian aid covered only 30 per cent of their needs. Sudan had committed to an open-door policy and was currently hosting refugees from the Tigray region. It was seeking to enable refugees wishing to return to their home countries to do so. He confirmed Sudan’s commitment to the international conventions applicable

to refugees, and undertook to work with the High Commission and the international community to find durable solutions for the protection needs in Sudan.

65. **Mr. Doğan** (Türkiye) applauded UNHCR's efforts to address the challenges faced by persons of concern in different parts of the world. His country had historically been a crossroads for the movement of large numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees from different backgrounds. Indeed, in recent months, Türkiye had welcomed more than 202,000 people fleeing the war in Ukraine, in addition to the more than four million refugees it was already hosting from various other regions, all of whom received the necessary protections as well as the country's customary hospitality. It was important to stress that all refugees and asylum-seekers should be treated equally, regardless of their country of origin or their ethnic, religious or racial background.

66. Several international protection issues needed to be addressed, as outlined in the Note on international protection and by previous speakers, all of which deserved equal attention. Protection and respect for human rights were at the core of the whole international refugee regime, and the international community was at a critical juncture with regard to the implementation of the main pillar of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. A number of practices, including pushbacks, which openly contradicted the Convention, were unfortunately becoming standard policy. UNHCR's work as the 'guardian' of the 1951 Convention was therefore more important than ever, and had his country's full support.

67. Each year added another crisis to the list of challenges, all of which should be given equal attention. Türkiye reiterated the importance of providing support in line with the principle of burden- and responsibility sharing, hand in hand with a stronger focus on solutions and root causes.

68. **Mr. Arga** (Ethiopia) said that his country continued to demonstrate its firm commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and the realization of its Global Refugee Forum pledge. It had established an enabling legal and policy environment which allowed for further investment in concrete development initiatives, in spite of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Progress thus far had been promising, but realization of the pledge would require additional collective effort and support, in the spirit of burden- and responsibility- sharing.

69. More balanced focus should be given to the four durable solution areas of the Global Compact, with the utmost focus on self-reliance of refugees and host communities. Most host communities in Ethiopia lagged behind on key development indicators and therefore needed increased support.

70. Internal displacement was a serious humanitarian challenge, with far-reaching consequences for both the displaced people and host communities. Ethiopia had been experiencing large- scale internal displacement in recent years, as a result of both conflicts and natural disasters. Prolonged droughts had affected millions of people in the country, many having been forced to leave their homes as a result of food insecurity. Although his Government appreciated UNHCR's efforts to provide support, he called on the office to strengthen its work on climate change induced displacement.

71. New avenues for increased and effective responsibility and burden- sharing needed to be explored. Underfunding, earmarking, unpredictability and delays in the release of funding hampered the capacity of countries to respond to complex emergencies in a more development-oriented way. He therefore called upon all partners to allocate more unearmarked funding to help alleviate the suffering of refugees and host communities.

72. **The Representative of Yemen** expressed extreme concern about the increasing number of refugees, especially in light of decreasing funding and resources. The impact of disease and climate change was only adding to those pressures.

73. The wars being waged in Yemen by Houthi militias had exacerbated the humanitarian conditions; there were more than five million internally displaced people, and many others had fallen into poverty and required assistance as a result of the lack of food, water and medicines. More than two million Yemenis had emigrated, although they had not been granted asylum in their host countries. UNHCR should condemn the practices of the Houthi militias, and the international community should support all those who were suffering in Yemen.

74. Yemen remained committed to the Global Compact on Refugees. Refugees hosted in the country – from Somalia and other Arab States – were guaranteed international protection, which began by guaranteeing their rights. However, support was needed from the international community in order to fulfil their commitments and pledges. Permanent solutions needed to be found, and more funding allocated. Yemen also requested further cooperation with UNHCR to adopt an action plan to compensate all those who were suffering, in the spirit of transparency.

75. **Ms. Izata** (Observer for Angola) welcomed the High Commissioner's continued commitment to refugees, in view of the increasing number of more and more complex crises around the world, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context.

76. Angola had taken significant measures to continue to improve conditions for refugees, particularly by means of assistance provided for refugees in the Lóvua camp. Efforts had been made to promote greater inclusion and integration, including by combating statelessness through birth registration, facilitating access to education and promoting family reunification.

77. The country had also begun the process of implementing the cessation of refugee status for the more than 4,000 former refugees from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Rwanda who had chosen to remain in the country. During the celebration of World Refugee Day, refugees had been honoured and their contribution to the development of local communities recognized through various activities that also aimed to raise awareness of the responsibilities of the host country.

78. With a view to reducing statelessness, Angola had implemented a civil registration programme and was providing national identity cards for former Angolan refugees in neighbouring countries, with 12 registration sites opened in six countries.

79. The joint project on border mobility agreed between Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR and IOM in December 2021 aimed to promote peaceful coexistence and improve human security along the border between the two countries, while also contributing to effective border management and finding durable solutions for populations on the move, including for returning migrants. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus was particularly important as a tool that could have a significant impact on responsibility- and burden-sharing. It would be interesting to hear more information from the Office about other examples of initiatives to strengthen the nexus.

80. **Ms. Baghli** (Observer, Organization of Islamic Cooperation) expressed concern at the staggeringly high number of displaced people around the world. The drivers of displacement were numerous and complex, and had been augmented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had revealed inequalities between and within countries. Food insecurity was also a major concern. The international protection regime for refugees must be fully implemented, even in the face of the rising numbers, as any attempt to weaken or distort it would only create more problems. Refugees also needed access to basic services, health and education in particular, without discrimination. The Global Compact on Refugees offered a good blueprint by advocating for international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, since the majority of host countries were low-income countries.

81. Since many host countries were also OIC member States, the Organization was working to develop its humanitarian activities, with a particular focus on food insecurity and displacement. It was also mainstreaming development projects, in line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The OIC organs were contributing to the implementation of that vision through a number of projects, including the building of health and education facilities. The Islamic Development Bank was also playing a central role in the delivery of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, through its Humanitarian Trust Fund, which had been established by an extraordinary meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in December 2021. The Islamic Solidarity Fund was providing assistance to least developed countries in the Organization to help address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Islamic Organization for Food Security had recently conducted a visit to the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin to assess the food and water scarcity situation, and would shortly deploy in the region. OIC would also soon convene a pledging conference for that region. The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries had been encouraged to carry out studies and data collection in the humanitarian field.

82. There needed to be a holistic approach in order to build resilience and develop sustainable solutions, with socioeconomic development at the core. None of those objectives could be achieved without the effective participation of women. In that regard, OIC had recently sent a delegation of Muslim scholars to engage with Afghan scholars and officials on basic human rights, including the right to education for women and girls.

83. **Ms. Ali** (International Council of Voluntary Agencies, NGO group statement), said that with forced displacement reaching unprecedented levels worldwide, many international protection issues had arisen. Responsibility-shifting, that is, States evading their obligations to guarantee the rights of forcibly displaced people, including the right to seek asylum, by externalizing those responsibilities to other countries, was becoming increasingly common. The practice was often used by wealthy countries, exploiting their positions of power and potentially undermining refugee law. It was important to note that low-income countries already hosted 85 per cent of the world's refugees. A stark example of responsibility-shifting was the "offshoring" of asylum-seekers to have their claims processed by third countries. UNHCR's strong statements in firm opposition to such policies were welcome. Other forms of externalization also had similar effects, so UNHCR's call to lift remaining pandemic-related restrictions on asylum was likewise welcome. Public health measures must not be misused to deny access to territory or asylum.

84. Responsibility-shifting practices could also exacerbate the problem of statelessness, which was both a cause and a consequence of forced displacement. Stakeholders must more effectively mainstream plans to protect stateless people and prevent statelessness, through increased programming and resource allocation. The timing of the next Global Refugee Forum would provide an important impetus for the final phase of the #IBelong campaign. The Forum should mainstream statelessness as a cross-cutting and intersectional issue.

85. States must end responsibility-shifting practices and renew their commitments to the Refugee Convention, its Protocol and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. States must implement a humane and rights-based approach to international protection and support sustainable, dignified solutions, including by fulfilling commitments to resettlement and complementary pathways. Responsibility-sharing required a whole-of-society approach, which should prioritize the role of organizations led by displaced communities and the participation of persons with specific needs. Meaningful engagement of women-led and rights organizations in the design and implementation of refugee laws and policies was also critical.

86. New concepts and language had emerged around forced displacement, international protection and solutions. However, greater common understanding was needed. UNHCR had a key role to play in that, including by updating the Master Glossary of Terms to include entries clarifying the meaning of "interception and return", "offshore processing" and "meaningful participation". The importance of shared knowledge and discourse in shaping policy and practice should not be underestimated. There needed to be regular, timely updates to UNHCR's resources.

87. Recent developments had shown that sharing – rather than shifting – responsibility for a humane, effective response to forced displacement was possible. States had demonstrated unprecedented solidarity with Ukrainian refugees, which should be the standard response to humanitarian crises, rather than the exception. Wealthy countries in particular should lead by example, investing resources in improving reception conditions in front-line countries and welcoming those seeking refuge. It was also important that the response to the war in Ukraine should not divert attention and resources from other already protracted and underfunded crises. In just three months, donors had pledged far more humanitarian aid for Ukraine than they had in seven years of war in Yemen. The projected disruptions in food and fertilizer production, as well as in trade with Ukraine and the Russian Federation, would cause unprecedented increases in hunger and poverty worldwide. Protection for forcibly displaced populations everywhere must be treated with the same level of urgency and solidarity.

88. **Ms. Tan** (Director of the Division of International Protection, UNHCR), responding to the comments from the floor, thanked everybody for their thoughtful interventions. She thanked those who had expressed support for the key principles of the right to asylum and non-refoulement, as well as responsibility-sharing under the Global Compact on Refugees. She welcomed the overwhelming support for the Global Compact as a framework for action and for ensuring access to rights in many situations, as well as for building capacity, including in the context of the Asylum Capacity Support Group. Non-discriminatory access to safe territory, to asylum

procedures or to grants of status on a group basis or otherwise, and to rights in accordance with international law, were essential in order to maintain the integrity of the refugee protection regime. She welcomed the engagement of States and regional institutions in seeking to advance protection and solutions, as well as to address statelessness, and recognized the need to provide greater support to certain countries.

89. She also welcomed the numerous references to solutions – a crucial challenge and mandate priority for UNHCR. Indeed, while every individual solution achieved was important, solutions were vastly insufficient, and efforts needed to be redoubled. It was good to see relative increases in returns and third country solutions, following reduced numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they were still far from what was needed.

90. UNHCR shared the disappointment that had been expressed with regard to the low numbers of voluntary repatriations. The Global Compact on Refugees acknowledged the important role of the wider international community in addressing obstacles to return and facilitating its sustainability. It was important to note that return was fundamentally about addressing root causes and finding political solutions to conflicts. Several delegations had spoken about the importance of resettlement as a responsibility-sharing tool, and the Office thanked resettlement countries for their ongoing support and welcomed the commitments expressed by several States to support the scaling-up of their own and UNHCR's capacity in that regard.

91. On the issue of statelessness, she thanked those who had highlighted the importance of ongoing work, as well as those who were making progress towards ending statelessness and protecting stateless persons. UNHCR encouraged other States to take further action in support of the global campaign objectives and in fulfilment of pledges made to advance the issue. UNHCR was committed to stepping up its work, as noted in the recent statelessness evaluation.

92. She welcomed the references to the centrality of age, gender and other characteristics in UNHCR's protection and assistance interventions, as displacement and statelessness affected people and their access to rights in different ways. People needed to be put at the centre of activities, in order to guarantee effective protection and equal enjoyment of rights. She also welcomed the emphasis on the importance of engaging local organizations, refugee-led and women-led organizations in particular.

93. Many Member States had highlighted the need to ensure continued prioritized attention to gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response, and particularly the need to ensure access to timely, quality response services for all survivors. UNHCR recognized that women and girls made up a significant proportion of affected populations in crisis, and that gender inequalities were compounded in situations of forced displacement. The Office would soon be publishing an annual online age, gender and diversity accountability report. A number of States had also highlighted the importance of the inclusion of persons with disabilities, while others had emphasized the importance of refugee education, including in emergency situations, notably for women and girls.

94. UNHCR wanted to thank all States and host communities that had responded swiftly and generously to the protection needs of Ukrainians, as well as those that had extended protection to Venezuelan, Rohingya, Syrian and other refugees in protracted situations. She also thanked the States that had highlighted the situation of displaced Afghans. At the same time, it was indeed crucial to pay equal attention to the pressing needs of displaced and stateless persons in all contexts, including those that were less visible.

95. With regard to references to sexual orientation and gender identity, she thanked Member States for frankly expressing their views and welcomed the reference to the principle of non-discrimination, as well as the emphasis on UNHCR's non-political, humanitarian and social mandate and the importance of humanitarian principles. The Note on international protection had always been a document produced for information, and it did not aim to reflect Member States' positions or bind them in any way. Following discussions on the issue in 2021, the 2022 note contained a specific and visible subtitle to confirm that it was a note by the High Commissioner. Hopefully that would leave no ambiguity and would enable substantive discussions to proceed with regard to both the challenges and the opportunities and therefore needed increased support.

96. Internal displacement was a serious humanitarian challenge, with far-reaching consequences for both the displaced people and host communities. Ethiopia had been experiencing large-scale internal displacement in recent years, as a result of both conflicts and natural disasters. Prolonged droughts had affected millions of people in the country, many having been forced to leave their homes as a result of food insecurity. Although his Government appreciated UNHCR's efforts to provide support, he called on the office to strengthen its work on climate change-induced displacement.

b. Oral update on Executive Committee conclusion(s)

97. **Mr. González Mayagoitia** (Rapporteur, UNHCR), presenting an oral update on the Executive Committee conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support, said it was the second and last topic on the multi-year workplan for Executive Committee conclusions, adopted in October 2020. UNHCR had prepared a background note on mental health and psychosocial support, circulated on 3 March 2022, followed by a technical briefing on the topic on 17 March 2022 and a follow-up meeting on 6 April 2022, in which parameters were established for negotiations. After the distribution, on 8 April 2022, of a draft conclusion prepared by the South-East Asia regional group, a total of five informal preparatory consultations had been held, the most recent on 21 June 2022. The level of participation in all of the consultations had been remarkable and confirmed the importance attributed by delegations to the topic of mental health and psychosocial support.

98. Since the start of negotiations, significant progress had been made, as could be seen in the latest draft of the conclusion. That progress was attributable to the constructive engagement of delegations, facilitating compromise on many issues. He thanked participants who had taken an active role in the discussions and efforts to reach agreement on certain parts of the draft conclusion. He also thanked the entire UNHCR team for outstanding support during the process.

99. While much progress had been made, a few important issues still needed to be tackled. To do so, he planned to hold a sixth and final informal preparatory consultation in September 2022, with a view to arriving at a consensus text for formal consideration and adoption by the Executive Committee at its seventy-third session in October 2022. He hoped he could count on the continued commitment of delegations to reaching compromises on the outstanding issues. As he had always stressed, it was a multilateral negotiation in which middle ground must be found on the pending issues, since no delegation would get everything it desired.

100. At the request of some delegations, he also planned to organize an informal meeting in September 2022 to start discussing potential topics for a new multi-year workplan for the Executive Committee.

101. **Ms. Munro** (Canada) said that her delegation welcomed the work done to date and remained hopeful about the prospects for an Executive Committee conclusion that would make a positive contribution to the body of guidance on mental health and psychosocial support. She thanked UNHCR and the Rapporteur for their commitment to that important goal.

102. **Ms. Namono** (Uganda) thanked the Rapporteur and the Secretariat for their tireless efforts, and especially for allowing all delegations to have their voices heard on a multilateral platform. Her delegation was confident that, at the meeting in September 2022, consensus would be reached on the very important topic of mental health and psychosocial support.

103. **Mr. Wimberger** (Austria) said that his delegation appreciated the important work done on the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support. The topic was timely but also timeless: the definition of the term “refugee” in article 1 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees included the important mental element of well-founded fear. Accordingly, international protection meant not only safety from persecution, but also freedom from fear of persecution and all the mental health conditions and challenges to psychosocial wellbeing stemming from such fear. Austria supported the objective of arriving at a strong and meaningful text of a conclusion aimed at bringing about tangible improvements in mental health and psychosocial support for persons of concern on the ground and setting standards for the integration of mental health and psychosocial support into humanitarian work in general.

104. **Mr. Olfato** (Philippines) said he joined in expressing gratitude to the Rapporteur and the Secretariat for steering the work on the conclusion. It had been encouraging to see a wide range of delegations from all regions participating in the negotiations. His delegation was ready to take part in the consultations on a new set of topics for inclusion in a multi-year workplan for the Executive Committee.

105. **Mr. Driessen** (Netherlands) likewise thanked the Rapporteur and the UNHCR team behind him for the excellent work done and emphasized the importance of reaching consensus on the conclusion. WHO had recently produced a report that called for stepping up action on mental health and psychosocial support. The report outlined a grim situation: depression and anxiety had

grown by more than 25 per cent in the first year of the pandemic alone. The discussion on the conclusion was thus very timely.

106. **Ms. Moussa** (Egypt) said she wished to add her voice to those that had congratulated the Rapporteur on a truly consultative and transparent process. Egypt had expressed some concerns in 2021 about a lack of transparency but was grateful to the Rapporteur for his commitment to involving all delegations and hearing all their concerns. She thanked all the delegations that had shown flexibility and very much hoped that the spirit of compromise could be retained with a view to reaching a consensus text in September 2022.

107. **Ms. Arango** (Colombia) joined the delegations who had spoken before in congratulating the Rapporteur and his team for their work. The meetings so far had been extremely productive, and her delegation was very much looking forward to the next discussions, in September 2022, in the hopes of reaching a consensus on the conclusion.

108. **Ms. Kołodyńska** (Poland) expressed gratitude to the Rapporteur and the whole UNHCR team for the excellent work done so far. The discussion of mental health and psychosocial support was very timely and the conclusion needed to be adopted as soon as possible. She encouraged all States to make the further process consensual, constructive and apolitical so as to bring the best possible guidance to UNHCR personnel in the field and persons of concern.

109. **Ms. Rocheteau** (International Council of Voluntary Agencies, NGO group statement) pointed out that one in five individuals worldwide, including people in fragile and conflict situations, suffered from mental health conditions. Estimates were much higher for children, due to the pandemic. Children living in conflict settings and dealing with abuse and economic hardship faced toxic stress leading to potential long-term mental health problems. As seen in the “widow camps” of northwestern Syrian Arab Republic, stress factors were exacerbated by limited freedom of movement, stigma and discrimination. In low-income and fragile States, where over 50 per cent of people with mental health conditions did not receive care, capacity and funding gaps were of serious concern. The Executive Committee conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support could play a critical role in promoting durable solutions for displaced populations with mental health and psychosocial support needs, and the organizations for which she spoke wished to make the following recommendations thereon.

110. States must do more, including with dedicated funding, to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into humanitarian and refugee response plans. COVID-19 had triggered a mental health crisis, and mental health and psychosocial support should accordingly be prioritized in national pandemic responses. Urgent investment was needed to increase the availability and accessibility of essential mental health and psychosocial support services, including for basic psychosocial support and referral services in schools. Mental health and psychosocial support care providers, education providers and community members must have the necessary skills, support and supervision to ensure effective and rights-based mental health and psychosocial support. The mental health and psychosocial support workforce, including female responders, should be supplemented, while simultaneously maintaining its competencies. That implied promoting non-specialist interventions to increase the capacity of communities for increased self-help and resilience.

111. Mental health and psychosocial support policies and overall responses must be designed with an understanding of individuals’ experiences, identities and characteristics that impacted, and often hindered, their access to protective environments and meaningful participation, such as stigma that aggravated childhood trauma. An approach addressing diversity issues such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, language and geographical coverage would improve the ability to leave no one behind.

112. Governments should commit to realising the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with a view to fulfilling the rights of people living with mental health conditions. Children, adolescents and caregivers should be informed about their rights regarding mental health and psychosocial support. Integrating psychosocial support into national school curricula and teacher training was essential to facilitate the recovery and reintegration of children into learning. Children and women often endured human rights violations when receiving mental health and psychosocial support services: they faced discrimination and coercive practices such as institutionalization, forced treatment and other harmful practices with potential lasting negative

impacts. In conflict situations, adolescent girls were subject to risks including sexual violence, harmful practices and human trafficking, while boys associated with armed groups faced unique vulnerabilities. The mental health and psychosocial support needs of girls who were unlikely to have life-saving information and capacities, and the need to facilitate self-reliance in public health emergency contexts, must be emphasized.

113. States should improve general access to national mental health and psychosocial support services for minors and people in protracted refugee situations and low-resourced countries. They should address socioeconomic factors like stigmatization, statelessness, violence and gender vulnerabilities. They should tackle challenges and opportunities to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support prevention and responses at early stages of displacement situations. Quality services needed to be free from discrimination, and communications barriers reduced, through preferred language, sign language and the use of audio.

114. International cooperation, responsibility-sharing and partnerships should be employed to greater effect, while also fostering localization. The engagement of governments and local authorities in systematic monitoring and evaluation of mental health and psychosocial support services and infrastructure, their quality and compliance with human rights standards, must be supported. Opportunities for meaningful engagement of displaced populations in designing and implementing mental health and psychosocial support must be enhanced. Policymakers should invest in decreasing power asymmetries between adults and young people and explore peer-to-peer support. Humanitarian exemptions contained in any restrictive measures should be fully compliant with international humanitarian law and human rights law. States and donors should refrain from screening beneficiaries of aid.

115. **Mr. González Mayagoitia** (Rapporteur, UNHCR) said he was grateful for the clear expressions of support for reaching a consensus conclusion. He welcomed the statement just made on behalf of NGOs, expressing the valuable views of civil society on mental health and psychosocial support. He assured delegations that they could count on his continued commitment to full inclusiveness and transparency in the negotiation process.

116. **The Chairperson** said that the abundant praise voiced by delegations for the Rapporteur and his methods was encouraging, and he invited them all to continue engaging with him in a constructive spirit so as to build consensus on the conclusion.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

117. **Mr. Chemakh** (Algeria) said that the representative of the Moroccan regime had no place at the Committee's meetings and had picked the wrong time to lecture about protection for displaced persons. After having deliberately pushed children into the sea, in a flagrant and deplorable use of migrants for blackmail, the Moroccan regime had now provoked an unprecedented shock to which the international community had not remained indifferent. Reactions had come from UNHCR, the International Office for Migration, the Human Rights Council, the African Union and the Security Council, which was even now holding informal consultations on the subject. The tragedy, which had cost the lives of dozens of Africans including refugees and asylum-seekers, was the most recent illustration of the brutality of the Moroccan regime. The disproportionate use of force contradicted the regime's efforts to burnish its image. Since the oppressor always fell back on the usual practices, those atrocities recalled the ferocious violence and sufferings inflicted on the Saharawi people. Today, the representative of the expansionist regime of Morocco had pretended to deplore the fate of a single Saharawi citizen, even though Morocco had not hesitated to take hostage the destiny of an entire territory and its people and force them to choose between the evils of colonization and exile to Algeria and other countries.

118. No one could still be deceived by the propaganda spewed forth by the representative of the Moroccan regime, which was diametrically opposed to the actual situation of refugees from the non-autonomous territory of Western Sahara. The preposterous arguments cooked up by the Moroccan occupation regime were merely a diversionary tactic aimed at masking both the root causes of the oldest refugee situation under UNHCR's mandate and its lasting solution, which resided in the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of its right to self-determination. Referring to the misguided attempts of the Moroccan regime to misuse the issue of registration to discredit the actions of UNHCR directed at Saharawi refugees, he recalled that a census was merely a

technical element of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. The implementation of such a component could be envisaged only if a referendum was convened to allow the people of Western Sahara to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination. Regarding the other allegations made, they were regularly and roundly refuted by United Nations institutions, donor organizations and other entities present in the camps of Tindouf. The unwholesome attitude of the Moroccan regime would only increase his country's determination to strengthen its solidarity with the Saharawi refugees and with the people of Western Sahara as a whole and bolster its unwavering support for their just cause.

119. **Mr. Atroshenko** (Russian Federation) said that he was obliged to respond to the unjustified remarks made by many delegations about his country. Such politicized discourse was not conducive to a constructive dialogue on humanitarian issues. Russia had been unable to remain indifferent to the fate of people in the Donbas and had been forced to act in accordance with Article 51, as contained in Chapter VII, of the Charter of the United Nations. Its objective had been to rescue the inhabitants of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics from the abuse and atrocities perpetrated by the Kyiv Government, to which they had been subjected for eight years with the connivance of the "collective West." Russia had acted as a result of the Kyiv regime's aggression against the Donbas, its refusal to ensure respect for human rights there, its attempts to discriminate against Russian speakers and its unwillingness to fulfil the Minsk agreements.

120. Russian forces did not attack civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, and when they carried out operations, they provided humanitarian corridors for non-combatants. From 2 March 2022 to the present, more than 37 thousand tonnes of humanitarian aid, including food and medicine, had been shipped from Russia to Ukraine. Any possible problems with food security worldwide were likely caused by Western sanctions and the consequences of COVID-19 and related economic factors; the actions of Russia had nothing to do with them.

121. Expressing concern about the mass exodus of refugees, he said that from 18 February to the present, over 2 million people had decided to flee to Russia from the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and parts of Ukraine. All entrants into Russia were accorded financial and psychological assistance, medical care was provided and schooling was organized for children. Russia was grateful to the staff of UNHCR who had visited temporary accommodations for refugees and had seen for themselves the efficiency of Russian efforts to house them.

122. The true reason for the forced displacement of residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and parts of Ukraine was the actions of the Kyiv regime, which eight years ago had launched an armed internal conflict in southeast Ukraine. With an influx of Western armaments, Ukrainian troops were keeping people trapped in populated areas, using them as human shields, positioning weapons in residential areas and razing civilian infrastructure to the ground. It was those actions that were provoking massive refugees flows, including in Europe.

123. **Mr. Boukhris** (Morocco) said he felt compelled to react to the allegations made against his country, as usual, by the representative of Algeria, for politically motivated reasons having nothing to do with the Committee's core issues. In response, he wished to underline the following elements. His Government's efforts for socioeconomic development in the Sahara were visible in public investment and high-quality infrastructure. It had allocated \$8 billion, representing 8 per cent of GDP, as part of a new development model for the southern provinces. The high-level growth in the modern Sahara had contributed to increased prosperity and stability, reflected in the opening of 26 consular offices and diplomatic representations in the region. The plan of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty was now internationally recognized, more than ever before, as the only realistic solution to the regional dispute over the Sahara.

124. Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Morocco continued to express its serious concern over a number of issues: the devolution of powers and territory by the host country towards a politicized and armed movement that perpetuated an unprecedented situation under international law; the militarization of the camps of Tindouf, in violation of international obligations stipulating that the host country assumed the responsibility to ensure the humanitarian character of asylum; the execution of civilians, including gold miners who had been burned alive because of their activity in an unauthorized excavation site; the forced recruitment of child soldiers into armed militias in the camps of Tindouf, in violation of international child protection rights, and directly implicating the host country; and the continued embezzlement of humanitarian assistance in order to build personal fortunes, finance illicit activities and sustain a heavy military arsenal.

125. He invited the Algerian delegation to provide clarification to the Committee about the inhuman and illegal expulsion of thousands of people from Algeria. As documented just recently by Médecins Sans Frontières, every month, about 2 thousand migrants, including the seriously wounded, women victims of rape and people suffering from serious trauma, were expelled from Algeria and abandoned in the middle of the desert on the Algerian-Nigerian border.

126. **Mr. Chemakh** (Algeria), exercising the right of reply for a second time, said that, lacking the courage to admit its own moral turpitude, the expansionist regime of Morocco was constantly in search of scapegoats in order to deflect responsibility from itself. The statement just made perfectly illustrated that tactic. The representative of the Moroccan regime had insinuated himself into the discussions in UNHCR with no other goal than to laud the benefits of colonization, to question the solidarity of Algeria and donor organizations with the refugees of the non-autonomous territory of the Western Sahara and to cast doubt on the mandate for protection offered by UNHCR. His own delegation could only deplore the repeated lies and hypocritical attacks against the refugees. The propaganda was so egregious that regional and international institutions and other entities present in the camps of Tindouf had repeatedly and categorically spoken out to refute it.

127. He referred the Moroccan delegation to the fact sheet circulated by the Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations in Geneva on 30 September 2021, where he would find documented and indisputable evidence that unfounded allegations had no place in the meetings of United Nations agencies.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.