



United Nations

General Assembly

GA/SHC/4052

 Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-seventh General Assembly
 Third Committee
 32nd & 33rd Meetings (AM & PM)

AS CONFLICTS MULTIPLY, WORLD COMMUNITY'S CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO PEOPLE UPROOTED

BY VIOLENCE BEING TESTED IN 'UNFORESEEN WAYS', THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD

António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Presents Report: Some 40 Speakers Express Strong Support for Agency's Work, Professionalism

As new conflicts multiplied in 2011 - especially in Africa and the Middle East – the collective capacity to respond to people uprooted by violence and persecution was “being put to the test in unforeseen ways” amid increased demand for humanitarian relief and an uncertain operating environment, the United Nations top refugee official told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) today.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) António Guterres issued a strong appeal for support for his Office, whose budget was already stretched. Whereas the biggest humanitarian emergencies in the years prior to 2010 had stemmed from natural disasters, the most significant situations in 2011 and 2012 were refugee emergencies, requiring UNHCR to assume a global coordination role and step in as a provider of last resort. “This puts enormous pressure on our human and financial resources,” he said.

To be sure, he said that in Côte d'Ivoire, the Horn of Africa, Libya and Yemen, an average of 2,000 people crossed borders daily in search of refuge – higher than at any time in the last decade. So far, more than three quarters of a million people had fled as refugees from Mali, Syria, Sudan and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those situations were “radically” testing UNHCR's ability to deliver on its mandate. The millions of people who had been stateless for generations also required solutions. Their plight could be resolved in the next decade by working together.

“We live in dangerous times,” he said, with growing numbers of people forced to flee in search of refuge. The roots of the crises lay, in part, in demographic, climatic and social trends. But, they also stemmed from the absence of an effective global governance system and unclear power relations.

Such pressures – demands rising, with resources remaining at the same level - had not forced the agency to choose between emergency response and care for those living in protracted exile, he said. It had, however, required it to strike the right balance between those equally compelling needs. In the coming year, UNHCR would work with States to address protection gaps and reinforce its own capacity with an updated strategy to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. UNHCR would also invest in robust measures that enabled his staff to operate safely around the world.

When the floor was opened for questions and comments, delegates from around the world

underlined their strong support for UNHCR's work and professionalism in the most trying of circumstances. Many drew attention to their country's financial support to the Geneva-based body, saying that UNHCR also must regularly evaluate its performance, and further strengthen its organizational capacity by pursuing a human resources policy.

Many other delegates outlined the precarious situations of refugees and internally displaced persons, both in their countries and among those seeking refuge elsewhere around the world. On that point, Afghanistan's representative said Afghan asylum seekers awaiting safe refuge in other countries were often attacked by xenophobic and racist gangs. At home, the country was struggling to absorb the nearly 6 million people who had returned home, 60 per cent of whom lacked basic services like healthcare and education.

Similarly, Kenya's delegate said his country was home to the world's largest camp, with more than 600,000 refugees. Kenya had repeatedly asked UNHCR to formulate a lasting solution to the Somali refugee problem, as it had housed those refugees for the last 20 years and the strain was apparent.

Cameroon's delegate recalled the sacrosanct principle that refugee care should be shared by the host Governments and the international community.

Responding to those comments, Mr. Guterres underlined the importance of Afghanistan's voluntary repatriation plan, expressing hope that a concentration of action and investment would allow Afghan communities to better handle those returns. Afghans also had become global refugees and had often fallen into the hands of criminal gangs and smugglers. "They have not always found the protection they deserve," he said. UNHCR was working with Governments to ensure their safety.

Addressing performance issues, he said support from the United States had been crucial to UNHCR's survival, especially its resettlement programme. UNHCR was also engaged in the transformative agenda of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to improve the humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. It also had changed its training programmes and financial rules in order to increase its ability to deliver quickly.

He rounded out his comments by echoing the need for shared responsibility in ensuring that refugees and internally displaced persons were cared for and afforded all of their inalienable human rights.

Speaking in the general discussion on the report of the High Commissioner was the Director of Multilateral Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya.

The representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liechtenstein, Senegal, South Africa, India, China, Thailand, Russian Federation, Japan, Egypt, Kenya, Kuwait, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Angola, Sudan, Canada, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Algeria, Croatia, Serbia, United Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Korea, Morocco, Ukraine, Ireland, Iraq, Montenegro, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia and Azerbaijan also spoke.

A representative of the European Union also spoke.

Also speaking were representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply were the representatives of Myanmar, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iraq.

The Committee will reconvene at 10 a.m. Thursday, 8 November, to continue its consideration of the report of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to begin its consideration of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons, and humanitarian issues.

For its discussions, the Committee had before it the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (document [A/67/12](#)), providing an account of the work carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) between January 2011 and mid-2012. It says 2011 was marked by a “rapid and uninterrupted succession” of large-scale humanitarian crises unfolding against a backdrop of political, social and economic turmoil. Conflicts in Côte d’Ivoire, Libya, Somalia and Sudan alone forced more than 800,000 refugees into neighbouring countries, the highest number in over a decade.

The Middle East continued to experience turbulence, the report says, with more than 127,000 persons from Syria having sought refuge in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and more than 1 million displaced internally. In addition, some 3.5 million people were newly displaced within the borders of their countries in 2011, one fifth more than in 2010. Today, more than 42.5 million people in the world are displaced across or within borders by violence.

“The succession of large-scale emergencies constituted an unprecedented challenge for the Office’s emergency response”, the report says, noting that 780 emergency staff deployed to operations globally, drawn from either the UNHCR’s emergency roster or its partners’ standby rosters. Six UNHCR staff members were killed in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Syria.

While new situations of conflict continued to multiply in 2011, old ones failed to be resolved, the report continues, including in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Iraq. The Somali conflict, already 20 years old, degenerated further and - combined with the worst drought in decades – had driven close to 300,000 refugees into Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen, bringing the total number of Somali refugees in the region to some 950,000 by the end of 2011.

Meanwhile, conflicts have been exacerbated by the simultaneous impact of population growth, urbanization, climate change, and food, water and energy insecurity, the report states. Growing levels of poverty and unemployment have proven to be sources of social and political unrest. In this scenario of continuous new emergencies and drawn-out conflict, solutions can only be achieved through strong commitment from States.

The report concludes that human mobility was a key feature of almost all major world events in 2011 and the first half of 2012, especially in the Middle East and in North, West and East Africa. “The goodwill shown by host and donor Governments has been remarkable,” the report notes. But, the scale and complexity of forced displacement demand even more international support. The commemorations of key refugee and statelessness instruments saw renewed international commitment to persons in need of protection, including through the Ministerial Communiqué and State pledges at the Ministerial Intergovernmental Event in December 2011. Taken as a whole, these pledges pave the way for substantial achievements in protection and solutions for refugees, stateless and internally displaced persons in the decade to come.

The report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (document [A/67/12.Add.1](#)), covers the sixty-third session, which was held from 1 to 5 October 2012. The report outlines decisions of the Executive Committee and lists decisions adopted by the Standing Committee in 2012. A Chairman’s summary of the general debate is also

included.

The Secretary-General's report on Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (document [A/67/323](#)), which covers the 1 January 2011 to 31 May 2012 period, provides updates on information contained in the Secretary-General's report submitted at the Assembly's sixty-sixth session. It has been coordinated by the UNHCR and draws on information received from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Women, World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

The report says that Africa has been the stage of multiple displacement emergencies that have put the United Nations response capacity to the test. In early 2011, the violent aftermath of the disputed elections in Côte d'Ivoire displaced more than 1.2 million people; violence and famine displaced hundreds of thousands of Somalis; and conflict in the border areas disputed by the Sudan and newly independent South Sudan drove almost 200,000 refugees into Ethiopia and South Sudan. Violence, political turmoil and drought in Mali displaced more than 350,000 people in the first six months of 2012, both within the country and across borders into Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger.

At the end of 2011, Africa hosted some 2.7 million refugees - one quarter of the global refugee population - mostly from Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Prior to 2010, refugee numbers had been declining in Africa for nine consecutive years, but this trend had reversed and, by the end of 2011, the number of refugees had increased by more than half a million compared to the beginning of the year. At the end of 2011, an estimated 9.7 million people were internally displaced in 21 countries because of armed conflict.

The report provides a region-by-region overview of humanitarian crises and the inter-agency cooperation in response. It concludes that, while important progress had been made to end protracted refugee situations in Africa, more must be done before the Angolan, Liberian and Rwandan refugee chapters can be considered closed. After the cessation of refugee status, ongoing support is required to ensure that reintegration in the country of origin or local integration in the country of asylum will be durable. At the same time, efforts need to be sustained to improve security and living conditions in areas of origin, so that those who wish to return can do so in safety and dignity.

Statement by High Commissioner for Refugees

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said "our collective capacity to respond to suffering of those uprooted by conflict and persecution is now being put to the test in unforeseen ways." In 2011, as crises unfolded in Côte d'Ivoire, the Horn of Africa, Libya and Yemen, an average of 2,000 people per day crossed borders in search of refuge – higher than at any time in the last decade. So far, more than three quarters of a million people had fled as refugees from Mali, Syria, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "This enormous pressure brings tough choices at a time when the demands on UNHCR are rising, but resources remain at the same level," he said. How did one choose between providing an effective emergency response and investing in solutions for people living in protracted exile in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Myanmar or Somalia?

In reality, it was not a question of choosing, but rather finding the right balance, he said. "In a major refugee crisis, in which people are fleeing across borders and lives are at risk, the emergency response cannot be postponed," he said. But, people living in protracted exile could not be abandoned simply because their plight had fallen off the radar of the media, or political priorities had shifted elsewhere.

Extended investment reinforcing the UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capability was now paying dividends, he continued. The concept of corporate responsibility for emergencies had been embedded throughout the organization. Rosters had been strengthened, and

92 per cent of airlifts made delivery within 72 hours of a request being made. The Office also continued helping pursue solutions to protracted displacement through conflict-sensitive approaches in its operations, advocacy on the humanitarian consequences of conflict escalation, early investment on education and self-reliance, and use of cash and voucher mechanisms to empower displaced people.

The Office continued to pursue new ways of placing displacement firmly on the development agenda, and remained extremely grateful to the 26 States, led by the United States, Australia and Canada, who continued to accept refugees for resettlement. Almost 80,000 refugees were admitted last year, some 61,600 with the Office's assistance.

"It would be a tragic mistake to allow our collective commitment to solutions to lose momentum – both because of the impact it would have on the lives of those living in protracted displacement, and because, ultimately, early investment in solutions reduces the human and financial costs in the long run," he said. Upholding and sustaining the right to asylum required strong, timely and sustained international solidarity and burden-sharing. The succession of crises unfolding in Syria, Mali, Sudan and South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were radically testing the Office's capacity to deliver on its mandate in an increasingly demanding environment, in which budgets were increasingly stretched. Fortunately, the Office, in 2011, ended in a very solid financial situation, spending \$2.18 billion, with an implementation rate of 96 per cent of the operating level. Thanks to donors' generosity, the Office was now projecting for a similar level of voluntary contributions for 2012.

But, the Office was now at a moment when the demands upon it were rising; for several years until 2010, the biggest humanitarian emergencies were the result of natural disasters, while in 2011 and 2012, the most significant crises had been refugee emergencies. "In these emergencies, the distinct responsibilities attached to our refugee mandate require us to assume the global coordination role, and to step in as provider of last resort if all else fails. This puts enormous pressure on our human and financial resources," he said. Even with a conservative estimate for the last two months of 2012, the Office's total expenditure would exceed last year's. "In today's unpredictable operating environment, this is a matter of deep concern", he said, appealing for additional support "at this critical juncture".

Turning to the situation of millions of people around the world who had been stateless for generations, he said solutions were needed now. Working together, he believed statelessness could be ended within the next decade. In the coming year, the Office would continue to work with States to address other critical protection gaps, while reinforcing the Office's own protection capacity and delivery, focusing on a number of priorities, including an updated strategy on preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence, the new child protection framework, a new five-year education strategy, and the urban refugee policy. In 2012, despite the growing number of refugee emergencies, the Office mobilized an increased amount of non-earmarked funding for operations for the internally displaced. Determining whether to prioritize refugee or internally displaced persons programmes sometimes led to very difficult dilemmas, but ultimately, decisions must be driven by the imperative to respond to the most acute needs.

The Office also continued to invest in robust measures to enable staff to operate safely.

Tragically, two Office staff lost their lives in 2012, one in Syria and one in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he said, expressing profound solidarity with their families. "Today's aid workers are exposed to increasing insecurity – in part because of the indiscriminate nature of violence, and in part because of the changing nature of conflict, in which criminal motivations and radical foreign-sponsored ideologies become entwined with political aspirations," he said, adding that the best way to ensure staff safety was by cultivating positive relationships with the communities it served and by adhering strictly to humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence.

"We live in dangerous times, in an unpredictable world," he said. "More and more people are forced to flee in search of refuge. Why are we seeing this proliferation of largely unanticipated crises?" he asked. The roots lay, in part, in inter-connected global trends such as accelerated demographic, climatic, social and economic change; incomplete democratization processes; and competition for scarce resources. But, they also lay in the limited capacity of the international community; there was no effective global governance system, and power relations had become unclear.

“As a result, conflicts emerge where they are least expected,” he said. “Unpredictability has become the name of the game. Violence erupts, often under the most chaotic of circumstances, wreaking havoc and tearing whole societies apart. And in the absence of a strong and effective international consensus aimed at their prevention and early resolution, new crises multiply and chronic ones persist. The humanitarian consequences are increasingly dramatic. We all know there is no humanitarian solution to a displacement crisis. The solution is always political. But current gaps in the collective capacity to generate sustainable political solutions means that humanitarian action is needed more than ever.”

Question and Answer Session

When the floor was open to questions and comments, Afghanistan's delegate said his Government fully supported the UNHCR. His country had among the most complex and protracted refugee situations in the world. In the 1980s, millions of Afghans had left the country, with the following decade witnessing new waves of asylum seekers. Today, many asylum seekers from Afghanistan were awaiting safe refuge in other countries and were often attacked by xenophobic and racist gangs. “They deserve the attention and the protection of the international community”, he said, noting that his country had made progress towards its voluntary repatriation programme.

He went on to say that nearly 6 million people had returned home. Such a substantial increase in population in such a short time had pressured Afghanistan's ability to absorb them. That required socioeconomic development. Some 60 per cent of returned refugees suffered from a lack of land and basic services, like health care and education. An international conference, held in May, offered guidelines for enhancing voluntary repatriation, with a focus on community-based development. He asked the High Commissioner to comment on those issues.

The representative of the Russian Federation said his country recently had celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its cooperation with the UNHCR. A milestone was the High Commissioner's meeting with the Russian Federation's President in 2011. He welcomed reforms carried out in the UNHCR to increase the effectiveness of budgetary resources, expecting the non-politicized nature of its work to continue. The role of the Office must be strengthened so that it could continue to provide protection to refugees. It should also avoid interference in States' internal affairs.

The United States' delegate said her Government would be a strong and reliable partner to the UNHCR in meeting the growing needs of people in Sudan and Mali, among other places. No one Government or agency could meet the challenges alone and she commended the UNHCR's steps to boost cooperation with regional organizations to maximize the impact of assistance and protection initiatives. To stop sexual and gender-based violence, better education and law enforcement, as well as the promotion of women's rights, were needed. She noted the UNHCR's decision to issue an updated strategy on sexual and gender-based violence, expecting more cooperation on that issue.

She also said that to fulfil its mandate, the UNHCR must regularly evaluate its performance to ensure a positive impact on current crises. It must strengthen its organizational capacity by pursuing a human resources policy. It had taken some steps in that direction with the establishment of a shelter and settlement section. The United States placed great importance on accelerated humanitarian reform. She asked for an update on what the UNHCR, as part of the Transformative Agenda, was doing to improve accountability. She also asked for steps that the UNHCR might take to ensure its appeals were adequately resourced.

Norway's delegate said the situation in Syria was of grave concern. Dealing with internal and external displacement required efforts from the humanitarian community at large. Responding to mass displacement called for a holistic approach and required “delivering as one United Nations, one community”. That was the only way to ensure that needs were met in a comprehensive manner. She asked for the High Commissioner's comments on how best to support a host country in upholding key

humanitarian principles in emergency and protracted refugee situations.

Syria's delegate said her country hosted millions of refugees, treating them like brothers. On 5 November 2012, Syria held a meeting in Damascus, in cooperation with Office of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance. During that meeting, Syria reaffirmed it had provided all forms of assistance and had accepted United Nations personnel in all areas unconditionally. The lack of financing was always a main obstacle to the implementation of that plan.

Further, she said donors' commitments had not been respected, noting that the assistance received to date was only 29 per cent of the commitments made. She asked the High Commissioner for his views on States - such as the United States and European Union Member States - which pretended to be concerned about Syrian refugees and displaced persons, on the one hand, and imposed economic sanctions on Syria, on the other. She asked about the exploitation by neighbouring countries of Syrians for political reasons - namely, the transformation of refugee camps into military camps. People were then sent to Syria to perpetrate massacres.

Kenya's representative expressed grave concern about the 650,000 refugees in its main camp. Normalcy was returning to Somalia, and Somali refugees now had an historic opportunity to rebuild their nation. Kenya had repeatedly asked the UNHCR to realize a lasting solution to the Somali refugee problem, as his country had hosted those refugees for the last 20 years and the strain was apparent. Urgent action was needed. It was time to rebuild Somalia. He asked what actions the UNHCR had initiated in pursuing the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees to their home country.

Responding, Mr. GUTERRES underlined the importance of Afghanistan's voluntary repatriation plan, saying that the UNHCR hoped a concentration of action and investment would allow for Afghan communities to better handle those returns. The UNHCR was committed to working with Afghanistan and its partners to ensure the success of that strategy. Indeed, Afghans had become global refugees, and they had fallen into the hands of criminal gangs and smugglers. They had not always found the protection they deserved. The UNHCR was working with Governments to ensure they were adequately protected from those threats. Afghans' resilience had been seen in their commitment to rebuild their lives and futures.

To the Russian Federation's comments, he said the UNHCR enjoyed good cooperation with that country, especially with the federal investigation bureau. The UNHCR understood that the Russian Federation was under pressure from various movements of people, not only with refugees but also from broader migration claims. The UNHCR was firmly committed to abide by the principles of impartiality, independence and other principles of humanitarian action.

He went on to say that support from the United States had been crucial for the UNHCR's work, especially its resettlement programme. Its increased financial support in 2012 was a key reason the UNHCR had survived. The UNHCR had increased its human resources and capacity to deliver, as well as its capacity in the area of information sharing. The UNHCR was engaged in the Transformative Agenda and also had adopted internal procedures. Its roster aimed to guarantee the immediate mobilization of highly qualified staff to meet emergency situations. The UNHCR also had changed its training programmes and financial rules in order to increase its ability to deliver quickly. As a result, the UNHCR had maintained its 72 hour timeframe in 92 per cent of its airlifts. The only way to ensure that its appeals were met was to show results.

To Norway's question, he said the UNHCR had developed new cooperation mechanisms to ensure it was in line with the Transformative Agenda. There were 52 organizations coordinated by the UNHCR in Syria and the UNHCR was in close communication with the team working inside that country. The UNHCR had developed its own coordination mechanisms, and also ensured its work was in line with plans led by the Emergency Coordinator in the Transformative Agenda.

Thanking Syria's delegate for her intervention, he said the UNHCR had enjoyed cooperation with the people and Government of Syria in the protection of refugees inside Syria. The UNHCR was supporting a large number of Iraqis in Syria. He understood there was no humanitarian solution to the conflict there. The solution was always political and the UNHCR's mandate did not allow it to engage in the political dimension. He could only ensure that people received the best possible support. The UNHCR was strongly committed to preserving the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum. He had found a good reception for the UNHCR's clear position on that among Governments. That did not mean there were no armed groups, but those groups had nothing to do with the people the UNHCR cared for or was able to monitor.

To the question by Kenya's delegate, he said he had just met with the Kenyan Government and was fine-tuning a way to work together on the issue of voluntary repatriation. The UNHCR was profiling populations to determine who had come from where. The UNHCR also had started to distribute relief items in the corridor among Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia into a border city in that area. It would scrutinize the areas of return in order to promote return, in close cooperation with the Kenyan Government. On the Somali side, his team had received the same instructions to work with Somali Government. The UNHCR did not want to repatriate people only to see them later return to camps.

In a second round of questions and comments, Mauritania's delegate drew attention to the UNHCR's mention of 14,000 Mauritanian refugees in Senegal, saying his Government had considered that issue closed, especially as a ceremony had been held in a border town, under the auspices of the President and in the presence of the High Commissioner. His country had provided land and compensation to those who had suffered from bombing, among other abuse.

Cameroon's delegate reiterated her Government's support to the High Commissioner. She recalled a sacrosanct principle that refugee care should be provided by the host Governments and the international community. She asked about the priorities of the UNHCR's reforms, and about the reasons behind the more than 1 million complaints registered last year.

Iraq's delegate took issue with the UNHCR's figure of 1 million Iraqi refugees in Syria, saying that many Iraqi refugees had returned to Iraq following the end of the conflict.

Ethiopia's delegate said his country was hosting a great number of refugees from its neighbouring countries. He thanked the UNHCR for its support in such work.

Responding to Mauritania's question, Mr. GUTERRES agreed that voluntary repatriation had been completed. A number of Mauritians had remained in Senegal as they had not wanted to take part in that programme. Local integration was the solution being used at the moment.

To Cameroon's question, he noted the country's remarkable action in providing protection to refugees from neighbouring countries. He had visited Cameroon and seen its hospitality towards those refugees. He echoed the need for shared responsibility. The UNHCR's reform priorities included reductions in Geneva. In one month, the UNHCR would consolidate three buildings into one building, and use the funds saved in the field. The UNHCR had developed capacities to respond to emergencies. Its greatest concerns related to accountability aspects around programme and financial control, as well as in mechanisms for cooperation among agencies and information.

To Iraq's question, he said figures in the UNHCR's report had been provided by the Government. The report included a note about the number of people the UNHCR was supporting. The UNHCR could confirm that a meaningful number of Iraqis were returning to Iraq. Iraq was now also a host country for people fleeing violence in Syria.

To Ethiopia's comments, he said there were many refugee points open to people from Sudan, Blue Nile State and Somalia, among other areas. He noted Ethiopia's openness to assisting those people and its exemplary cooperation with the UNHCR.

Statements

CHARLOTTE OMOY MALENGA (Democratic Republic of the Congo), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said last year the Assembly had resolved to engage African States that had not yet signed or ratified the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally displaced Persons in Africa, in order to promote its timely entry into force. The UNHCR's report said that the number of refugees and displaced people was increasing around the world. She expressed concern that renewed conflicts in Africa had uprooted millions of people and prevented others from returning to their countries.

In that context, she recalled that refugees were protected under the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees. She also highlighted African countries' experience in hosting refugees and dealing with the effects of refugee camps and settlements. She urged that programmes be provided with financial resources, taking into account Africa's substantial needs.

Speaking in her national capacity, she said her country was predominantly a "refugee producing country", particularly amid continued fighting in the east. Internal displacement and fast urbanization were major challenges that carried social protection implications. Due to the deteriorating security situation in the eastern part of the country, the number of displaced persons had jumped to 2.4 million people, up 651,000 since the start of the year. An estimated 285,000 people had been displaced in the third quarter of 2012 alone, mainly in north Kivu and Katanga. The Democratic Republic of the Congo also hosted 208,500 refugees and asylum seekers, half of whom were from Angola. Of the 20,000 Angolans willing to return home, 7,000 had been repatriated. Refugees on Congolese territory enjoyed the same rights as nationals under the Constitution, with the exception of political rights, which were afforded according to conditions set out in treaties and laws.

IOANNIS VRAILAS, of the delegation of the European Union, said despite the best efforts of the international community and the UNHCR, the number of refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons remained alarmingly high. New simultaneous emergencies in 2012 were testing the Office to the limit. "Can we do more? Can we do better?" he asked. Around the world, Governments were generously hosting refugees, or accepting them for local integration or resettlement, and seeking solutions for protracted displacement, while donors mobilized to provide the Office the necessary funding. "But even with these concrete examples of political will, there's still room for more and for better."

The High Commissioner agreed, and was leading an ambitious internal reform aiming to strengthen response capacity, to make the Office a better fit for the enormous challenges today. The Union and its Member States strongly supported these efforts, and were committed to further developing a common policy on asylum based on full and inclusive application of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees. "We will show continued solidarity with third countries, in particular by investing in their capacity to deal with protracted refugee situations within their borders," he said, adding that, convinced resettlement was an important tool in providing durable solutions to refugees worldwide. It was aiming at increased cooperation through the recently adopted Joint European Union Resettlement Programme.

Further, it was doing its utmost to provide the UNHCR with the necessary resources to respond to the needs of refugees and other persons of concern. Given the general context of the financial crisis, it welcomed the steps taken to use available resources more efficiently and encouraged the Office to continue efforts in that regard. It also encouraged the Office to continue efforts to broaden its donor base and further fundraise in the private sector. "We hope that the next year's report will show that the UNHCR and the international community did even more and did even better for the cause of refugees and persons of concern," he said.

Noting that about 15 million people had been displaced by natural hazards and disasters, GEORG SPARBER ([Liechtenstein](#)) said his country agreed with the Special Rapporteur's call for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of climate-induced displacement and create a more systematic response. It was essential to include displaced persons in decision-making mechanisms to ensure the solutions were durable.

More than 26 million people were internally displaced because of conflict, violence or human rights violations, he said. Those people were particularly vulnerable and sexual and gender-based violence was one of the most serious threats to the protection of displaced persons. Ending violence against women and girls in all forms was a priority for Liechtenstein, as those violations of fundamental rights had a severe long-term impact on their physical and mental health. Targeted projects were needed to end the violations, reduce women's and girls' exposure to violence and ensure they obtained legal advice and representation. Further, Liechtenstein remained concerned about the number of stateless persons, which the UNHCR estimated at more than 12 million. No significant progress had been made in the identification of such persons. Only 3.5 million persons had been identified as stateless by the UNHCR and more than two thirds lacked proper registration and were deprived of full protection under international law. He called on all States who had not yet done so to ratify legal instruments that worked to reduce statelessness and to contribute to the High Commissioner's activities to provide more comprehensive statistics.

FATOU ISIDORA MARA NIANG ([Senegal](#)) said the record number of refugees in 2011 could even be surpassed for 2012, given the number of crises in the world. Additionally, the exponential increase in internally displaced persons and stateless persons added to the problem. Facing such a depressing situation, it was more necessary than ever to implement the internationally agreed measures on non-refoulement. Further, the UNHCR must be strengthened to deal with the continued occurrence of gender-based violence against women and girls. It was also wise to emphasize and welcome the increasing commitment of States for stateless persons, she said, welcoming efforts of Governments such as Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Kuwait to confer nationality on them.

The international community, however, must work to counter the appearance of new cases of statelessness. Those concerns must be rooted in the principles of the promotion of human rights, and that was why she welcomed the adoption of the Kampala Convention for protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa. Since the African continent contained 2.7 million refugees, making up one quarter of the refugee population, the refugee issue was urgent and it was necessary to strengthen and improve mechanisms to protect them.

DOCTOR MASHABANE ([South Africa](#)) said that his country adopted a rights based approach to refugees, adding, "these are human beings and we are of the view that we have an obligation to protect and promote their fundamental freedom and rights". In South Africa, refugees and asylum seekers awaiting the determination of their status enjoyed freedom of movement, and both categories of people were allowed to participate in gainful employment and access to basic services. During the long fight against apartheid, many South Africans spent years in exile, hosted by many of the countries represented in the Third Committee today. As a result, South Africa had reaffirmed its determination to contribute towards building a better and safer world and remained unwavering and steadfast in its commitment to the protection of refugees. South Africa had also become a signatory and party to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Statelessness and the subsequent 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, he said.

Referring to the 12 million sub-Saharan African refugees cited in the report, he noted the expanded and recurring emergencies in Africa and encouraged donors and Member States to contribute resources in order to minimize the root causes leading to protracted refugee situations. At the regional level, South Africa was actively involved in efforts which sought to address the harmonization and alignment of the SADC region refugee legislative framework and enhance refugee protection systems and capacity to improve management of irregular migration. In addition, he said, while voluntary repatriation to the country of origin was the preferred option, local integration should also be considered alongside the support of the international community and the international financial institutions.

NAJMA HEPTULLAH ([India](#)), noting the particular vulnerability of refugees, said the international community must address their needs for protection, relief and rehabilitation, with a focus on creating conditions conducive to their voluntary return to their home countries. Particular attention was due to developing countries, who were meeting their humanitarian obligations, often at risk to their delicate economies. The UNHCR should strengthen cooperation on burden-sharing with host States in that regard. She commended the UNHCR's handling of emergencies in the Middle East, and West and North Africa, but said those engagements should include exit strategies to enable States to resume responsibility for their people.

She then said that the international community must ensure that non-State actors respected the humanitarian framework and machinery and did not impede delivery of humanitarian assistance. Further, a clear distinction must be made between refugees and economic migrants to better address the protection needs of the former. Regarding internally displaced persons, she said primary responsibility for their well-being rested with national authorities, so that the UNHCR should only complement State efforts with the State's concurrence. India was host to some of the largest refugee populations in the world, she said, and cared for them from its own resources, while affording them the full protection of its laws.

ZHANG GUIXUAN ([China](#)) said armed conflict, the economic and financial crisis and food security posed serious challenges to international peace and development. Faced with a significant number of refugees and internally displaced persons, international humanitarian relief efforts struggled to cope. In that regard, the international community should take seriously the root causes of the refugee problem, uphold the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and resolve disputes through peaceful means to consequently reduce the number of refugees and displaced persons resulting from armed conflicts. As well, practical measures should be taken to help developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Stressing the importance of "international solidarity and burden sharing", he urged the international community to find sustained solutions to the refugee problem and increase assistance to the Asian and African developing countries, which hosted a large number of refugees.

He called on the UNHCR to deepen its internal reforms, rationally distribute and utilize resources, strengthen its emergency response abilities, assist developing countries in their capacity-building in refugee protection, prevent the politicization and abuse of refugee protection mechanisms, and take practical measures to improve the geographical representation of its staff. Noting that China was playing an active role in international refugee protection, cooperating with the UNHCR and actively promoting domestic refugee legislation, he said his country also stood ready to work with others to strengthen cooperation with the UNHCR and promote international refugee protection.

NORACHIT SINHASANI ([Thailand](#)) said that in collaboration with the UNHCR, Thailand had issued more than 5,000 birth certificates for children born of displaced persons in temporary shelters. His Government did not have a specific time frame for the voluntary return of the 140,000 displaced persons living in the nine shelters on Thai soil, but was mindful of the need to put in place the necessary conditions on both sides of the border to ensure the conditions for eventual return. Thailand supported the UNCR's coordinating consultations with all stakeholders in that regard.

In the meantime, Thailand looked to improve the provision of education and vocational training in those shelters, he said, aiming to ensure health care, particularly for women and children. He encouraged the UNHCR's engagement with relevant global and regional consultative processes, saying that Thailand's cooperation in the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking and Persons and Related Transnational Crime had seen the establishment of a regional support office in Bangkok. Migration trends, which produced asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless people, were intertwined with political and other upheavals.

Mr. ZHEGLOV ([Russian Federation](#)) said his country viewed humanitarian cooperation as an important part of efforts to support international peace and security. He positively viewed the work of

international structures in meeting needs in Syria, saying that agencies also must access camps in neighbouring countries. There should be no violations of basic principles in those camps. The Russian Federation was providing humanitarian assistance to Syrians bilaterally and through international organizations. It also had taken on additional commitments to accept refugees and reduce statelessness. That was seen in its approval of a state migration policy, which aimed to improve the system for asylum seekers and create favourable conditions for the integration of forced migrants. The Russian Federation attached great importance to its collaboration with the UNHCR in such work.

He said that, in 2012 alone, seven normative legal acts had been adopted, focused on creating the conditions to integrate asylum seekers and refugees. In 2014, the Government expected to introduce a draft of the federal law on refugees. It also was modernizing its documentation system for asylum seekers and those who had already been granted asylum. Those people would be presented with transit documents and their refugee status would become permanent. Between 2007 and 2012, the Government had reviewed the applications for refugee status of 13,000 citizens from 189 countries. In cooperation with several States, it was working to establish a regional system for granting asylum. Regarding the urgent problem of statelessness, he said that issue was relevant for European countries where non-citizens had been denied civil, political and socioeconomic rights. The UNHCR should make more efforts to solve that problem. Russian Federation citizenship had been granted to 193,000 stateless persons.

NAOTO HISAJIMA ([Japan](#)), commending reforms undertaken by the UNHCR, pointed out that there had been a slight reduction in the number of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers last year, and a record number of the internally displaced had returned voluntarily. On the other hand, the number of refugees voluntarily repatriated was still low and new crises had multiplied. In that context, he expressed respect for UNHCR staff who continued to work in insecure and unpredictable operating environments and condolences for the deaths of six of the Office's staff members from January 2011 through June 2012.

He was of the view that the General Assembly's resolution, adopted on 10 September of this year, would provide momentum for further dissemination and implementation of human security. Japan supported such efforts, and this past July, hosted the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, which was run parallel to a similar event held by the UNHCR on Afghan refugees. He also recalled that Japan had begun a three-year resettlement pilot programme with the UNHCR to host Myanmar refugees from the Mae La Camp in Thailand. That programme had been extended for an additional two years and was being grown from one to three refugee camp sites. His country had also, in 1993, started the Tokyo International Conference of African Development and had been leading discussions on African development ever since. In closing, he expressed support for the UNHCR's Transformative Agenda, calling for strenuous efforts to realize durable solutions to protracted crises.

MONZER FATHI SELIM ([Egypt](#)) said his country appreciated the support and cooperation of the UNHCR, particularly in regards to the crisis in Libya. Problems posed by increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons required increased efforts to deal with root causes and mitigate their implications, particularly in crisis areas where food security was a challenge, such as Somalia, and proliferation of armed conflicts, such as in Syria, Mali and Niger. The global community must consolidate endeavours towards elimination of inherent causes of conflicts in the world, supporting and enhancing the capacities of post-conflict States to engage in a sustainable development process. Restoring security and respect for all human rights were prerequisites for creating the enabling environment for the return of refugees and mitigating the impact of that phenomenon, particularly in neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, it was essential that contractual obligations to protect refugees were not affected by security obsessions or controls to curb irregular migration under the guise of protecting national identity. Egypt reaffirmed its rejection of the continued practice by a neighbouring country of returning illegal migrants and refugees to Egyptian territories, instead of addressing their international situation in accordance with laws. The situation in Syria continued to take a dangerous turn, and, Egypt, during an important phase of its modern history, had endured a great burden as a result of that crisis. Currently, Egypt was hosting hundreds of thousands of Syrians, in addition to over 2 million Sudanese and

Palestinians. Egypt had not spared any efforts in providing help, but it was not enough. It faced major challenges meeting their basic needs, and was confident the international community would continue to provide the necessary support to strengthen those efforts.

SOLOMON K. MAINA, Director of Multilateral Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of [Kenya](#), said the growing number of displaced persons in the reporting period meant that previous gains made in reducing displaced persons were being lost. He joined the call for political leaders to redouble their commitment to resolving long-running conflicts and enhance cooperation. For over 40 years, Kenya had hosted refugees from neighbouring countries. Since the restoration of peace in Sudan, the dynamics of Kakuma refugee camp had changed and Somali refugees were now the dominant group. The Dadaab camp – the world's largest – was most challenging, as it hosted more 600,000 refugees.

He urged focusing on providing safe haven inside Somalia, especially as areas had been liberated from the Al-Shabaab terror group. Refugee return would not be carried out against their will. He urged support for the Somali Government in providing protection to all Somalis. There were many more refugees in urban areas. The competition for scarce resources had been an increasingly important factor in destabilizing the status quo in areas where camps were located. Deteriorating security in and outside camps was also worrying and he urged exploring new options to build a more equitable international refugee burden-sharing regime. Kenya's resources were not without limit. "Refugees are not just numbers", he said. "They are people who have rights and needs", stressing the issue was not about money, but rather the provision of security, among other issues.

MS. ALDHEBAIB ([Kuwait](#)) emphasized the responsibility of States to support humanitarian institutions, especially the UNHCR. While States were reducing financial contributions to the Office during the financial crisis, Kuwait had paid \$3.5 million additional in contributions this year, she said. The situation of Syrian refugees was deplorable, but the world community must not forget about the situation of Palestinian refugees resulting from the stubbornness of Israel. Kuwait supported their claims and had made a donation of \$2 million in the context of their annual contribution.

Kuwait had provided assistance to Syrian refugees through its obligations, but also stood in solidarity with them. Kuwait had also made voluntary contributions to a number of government and non-governmental organizations, and reiterated its support to the noble task of the UNHCR. She concluded by thanking States that had provided shelter to refugees, especially Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, who had spared no effort welcoming Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

MONIA ALSALEH ([Syria](#)) said her country was the third highest in terms of welcoming the greatest number of refugees, as outlined in the UNHCR report. Her Government and people had treated refugees as brothers in sharing its resources. Syria also had cooperated with non-governmental organizations and Syrian civil society to find solutions, shouldering both its humanitarian responsibilities and international obligations. It had cooperated with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UNHCR in facing the crisis being perpetrated by extremists. Moreover, Syria had decided to facilitate the access of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations to offer humanitarian assistance.

On that front, she said despite the agreement made with OCHA and the UNHCR for a revised response plan, a lack of financial resources prevented that plan from being implemented. Funds collected represented only 29 per cent of the total needed to meet Syrians' needs. She urged countries to keep their commitments. Neighbouring countries were exploiting refugees by transforming refugee camps into military camps to train terrorists for committing massacres in Syria. Certain Arab countries of Wahabi tendencies were inside the armed groups in Syria committing terrorist acts. They had declared that girls in Syria must marry for reasons of sexual jihad. She invited all Syrians to return from the refugee camps.

SULJUK MUSTANSAR TARAR ([Pakistan](#)) said protracted refugee situations led to multifaceted challenges. They entailed political, social, economic and environmental costs for host communities, which must be fully addressed. Pakistan had hosted the largest refugee population in

the world since the 1980s. Despite dwindling international support for Afghan refugees, Pakistan hosted them with open hearts and homes. By doing so, his Government had eased humanitarian challenges for the Afghanistan Government and international community.

Voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees was the only solution, he said, which required efforts for the creation of “pull factors” in Afghanistan, which in turn, would ensure their participation in Afghanistan’s prosperity. Expecting Pakistan to shoulder such a gigantic task alone was not realistic. The outcome of the Geneva Conference should be a starting point for an orderly repatriation of Afghan refugees. He urged that pledges to resolve the Afghan refugee problem be translated into concrete resources. Noting that the tripartite agreement expired on 31 December 2012, he said Pakistan was evaluating options for a refugee policy beyond 2012. He also urged international recognition of the common responsibility for refugees, returnees and displaced people.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN ([Bangladesh](#)) said the world was witnessing spiralling conflict, unrest, violence, persecution and deprivation. “With the emergence of new global threats like environmental degradation and climate change, the complexity of today’s displacements is assuming new a dimension. These challenges call for new strategies and policies for the many millions of ‘climate migrants’,” he said, encouraging UNHCR to devise strategies to address these emerging challenges. Bangladesh had been extremely sensitive to the issue of refugees, and had been patiently hosting a large number of Myanmar refugees since 1991. Although not party to the 1951 Convention on the Rights of Refugees, within limited resources it had been addressing basic needs and protection requirements with the help of the Office and the international community.

Bangladesh was also over-burdened with frequent infiltration of several hundred thousands of undocumented Myanmar nationals who were taking advantage of the long-drawn stalemate in repatriation of Rohingya refugees, he said. The situation was further aggravated due to recent developments in Myanmar. “While Bangladesh has been consistently living up to its humanitarian and moral obligations towards Muslim refugees, the international community also has a clear obligation to collectively address the source of the problem,” he said. His country was also conscious about the question of third country resettlement of the Myanmar refugees. However, it did not see much benefit in carrying out sporadic resettlement on a piecemeal basis, which, he believed, further complicated the repatriation process, and contributed to ‘pull factors’ across the border. “Given the ongoing democratic reform process in Myanmar, we would urge partners and donor agencies to engage with the Government of Myanmar for a permanent solution of this problem,” he said.

MARIO VON HAFF ([Angola](#)) appreciated UNHCR’s cooperation with his Government on refugees and internally displaced persons, and in the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from neighbouring countries. UNHCR’s 2010 report showed that 43.7 million people had been displaced by conflict or persecution, the highest number in 15 years. That tragedy posed major challenges for refugee protection, requiring States, in most cases, to create mechanisms for minimizing suffering. For its part, Angola had extended voluntary repatriations until June 2012, when the cessation clause for Angolan refugees seeking refuge in neighbouring countries had ended.

In addition, he said Angola was working with UNHCR to find a sustainable solution for a large number of refugees who had fled the country between 1961 and 2002, within the framework of the global strategy for voluntary repatriation or local reintegration. In 2011, repatriation operations had resumed, allowing for the voluntary return of 22,000 refugees of the 119,000-130,000 refugees still in exile, until the end of June 2012. Some 26,000 new refugees had been registered to be repatriated, while 70,000 had opted for local integration, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. He asked UNHCR to implement instruments related to refugee protection. He also urged the international community to spare no effort in addressing the root causes of conflict and displacement, including by strengthening the rule of law at local levels.

MOHAMED IBRAHIM ELBAHI ([Sudan](#)) said the 1951 Geneva Convention and its additional protocols were supported by Sudanese people’s traditions and religious values, which caused them to honour both the host country and refugees by offering shelter. For many years, Sudan had been

hosting refugees. In recent decades, troubles and internal conflicts had increased the number coming from neighbouring countries, leading to an additional burden. The settlement of the issue lay with the State. Therefore, the State and Government had promulgated resolutions related to refugees in 2009, in line with human rights documents. The Government had also signed the Doha Document for peace in Darfur, and had eased the situation and lessened the situation of refugees in Darfur. In the Blue Nile area, there were also thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the Government was providing basic services in health and education. The Government had also moved on to deal with agricultural land reform, leading to stabilization in the Blue Nile area.

Sudan was pursuing work with the UNHCR and the international community in order to have an effective partnership alleviating burdens, so it could return to normalcy, and he asked for assistance in the voluntary return of refugees to help bring stability back to the country. Responding to remarks by the representative of South Sudan in yesterday's discussion on the right to self-determination, he regretted that the delegate made allusions that had no relation to the Government's steady position recognizing South Sudan's referendum for independence. Sudan respected people's right to self-determination and intended to establish good neighbourliness and relations with South Sudan. Also responding to remarks by the United States delegate in yesterday's debate, he said it was wise to work together with the involvement of all parties to strengthen human rights, instead of politicizing the issue.

GUILLERMO RISHCHYNSKI ([Canada](#)) said UNHCR's protection mandate was more relevant than ever, amid the targeting of civilians by the Assad regime in Syria, refugees flowing into South Sudan, continued displacement crises in the Sahel and conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Through support to UNHCR, Canada was helping to alleviate the suffering of highly vulnerable groups. With displacement and protection challenges growing, the collective focus must be on ensuring and improving international protection. Responding to the displacement challenges of mixed migration, persecution of religious minorities, and difficulties faced by people due to their sexual orientation, protection must be at the core of all efforts.

He said protection was at core of Canada's efforts, including its pledges announced in December at anniversary celebrations, notably to set aside resettlement spaces for emergencies. Canada would continue to work with UNHCR and its partners to enhance protection. He urged ensuring that UNHCR was an efficient, rules-based and accountable organization. UNHCR must improve its effectiveness and capacity, including its ability to identify durable solutions, while also responding to rapid on-set humanitarian emergencies. He underscored the importance of building operational flexibility into plans, so operations could be scaled down when needs declined. He also urged improving its ability to communicate results. It should not be using valuable resources on wasteful advertising campaigns.

NURBEK KASYMOV ([Kyrgyzstan](#)) said his country highly valued collaboration with UNHCR, including in issuing documents to citizens in mountainous areas of the country, avoiding the appearance of stateless persons. Activities for the protection of refugees were one of the most important components of Kyrgyzstan's immigration policy; it had a special law on refugees, approved by UNHCR, which aimed to provide assistance so they had access to citizenship and education, as well as help in finding jobs and property. It was important for refugees to have a place where they would not be persecuted, and Kyrgyzstan provided that to more than 20,000 of them.

Unfortunately, in many parts of the world migrants were subjected to discrimination, he said. Migrants and refugees were often seen as threats to the system of social protection, the economy, or security. They were often seen as criminals in the media and their contributions were either neglected, or ignored on purpose. That could lead to an unending cycle of poverty and lack of understanding, which the world community must fight against.

MR. ANSARI ([Iran](#)) said his country had hosted the largest number of refugees in the world. Despite limited resources and being subjected to unfair sanctions, Iran had continued to provide for the needs of the refugees, remaining true to its humanitarian principles and obligations to the refugee convention. Millions of Afghan refugees continued to live in host countries because there was little

possibility for them to reintegrate in their homeland. The remaining refugee population had different needs now that went beyond rudimentary assistance. They had been provided with such services as healthcare, primary education, public transport and protection, but today's refugee community "has moved away from basic needs such as shelter and food to secondary needs such as higher education and costly treatment". Last year, only 21,000 Afghan refugees left Iran to be repatriated. More Afghan people would be willing to return if they saw brighter welfare prospects at home, such as employment opportunities, education facilities, advanced healthcare and speedier reconstruction. "The sad truth is that the international community has made little effort to improve the situation of those who return," he said.

Stressing that voluntary, secure and respectful repatriation was the right of any refugee, he argued that housing must become the priority of donor countries. The best-case scenario entailed the construction of exclusive residential areas for repatriates and the provision of basic infrastructure, such as roads, potable water, electricity, health centres and schools. Resettlement was another strategy to help resolve the refugee problem, but figures were disappointing. In the current calendar year, only 835 Afghan citizens in Iran had been resettled. From 1999 to now, the aggregate figure for resettlements had not even reached 10,000. That number was better understood by comparing it with the yearly average of 40,000 births in the refugee community in Iran. Underscoring the financial burden of supporting refugees, he said Iran had spent billions of dollars. Each year, the Government spent \$345 million to provide for the education of 288,000 Afghan and Iraqi refugee students, or \$1,200 dollars per student. Iran was of the view that implementing the outcome of the international conference on Afghan refugees in May 2012 could well help the international community to find a way out of the largest and the longest-running refugee problem in contemporary history. "It must rise to the occasion [...] to help realize the long-cherished aspirations of displaced Afghans to return and reintegrate in the life of their homeland," he said.

AHMED SAADI ([Algeria](#)) said the UNHCR 2011 report outlined many crises that had emerged in response to social tensions. He expressed concern at the growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, trends exacerbated by food and water insecurity, among other factors. The situation of internally displaced persons also was alarming, as numbers had increased over the last year. He also was gravely concerned at humanitarian situations, especially in the Sahel. Intensified international aid in that regard was needed, especially in Mali, where 300,000 people had been uprooted and more than 265,000 had sought refuge in neighbouring countries. He joined in the appeal for \$295 million to help all refugees and internally displaced persons, saying the effects of the economic crisis would continue to reduce traditional donors' capacities.

He also urged UNHCR to seek new funding through partnerships with other United Nations agencies and the Red Cross. For its part, Algeria last year had granted \$10 million in humanitarian aid to countries in the Horn of Africa. It was also providing humanitarian assistance to Mali. A joint mission of the Algerian Red Cross and UNHCR provided assistance to refugees in southern Algeria. That was followed by a visit by the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, David Gressley, to Malian refugee camps in southern Algeria, where the Government was addressing their food, health, housing and security needs. Algeria also continued to welcome refugees from the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara. Algeria also had signed an agreement with the World Food Programme (WFP) providing food to Sahraoui refugees. Algeria appreciated UNHCR's willingness to help it adapt national asylum legislation to international standards.

NEVEN MIKEC ([Croatia](#)) said his country was deeply concerned by the escalation of violence and continued violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly in Syria and Sudan, which resulted in aggravation of the refugee and displacement crises and increased demands for international protection. It stood ready to continue to support humanitarian needs, he said. Taking into account fundamental human rights obligations and relevant international instruments on statelessness, Croatia was continuously working on both prevention and reduction of cases of statelessness, in particular among the Roma population. Croatia remained convinced that only joint and concerted efforts could lead to the achievement of the common goal of bringing an end to statelessness within the next decade.

He was pleased to inform the Committee that preparations for implementation of the Joint Regional Programme on Durable Solutions for Refugees and Displaced Persons were progressing as planned. Joint efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia - together with international partners - continued to be an outstanding example of regional cooperation. "We believe that the effective implementation of the Programme represents the best guarantee for our continued efforts towards the final chapter of the displacement chapter in our region," he said, expressing great appreciation for UNHCR's continued involvement in the process.

FEODOR STARČEVIĆ ([Serbia](#)) said as a host to one of the largest populations of displaced persons in Europe for more than two decades, his country was aware of the complex problems and challenges in that field, and fully supported the activities of UNHCR. In 2008, the Office identified Serbia as one of the five countries in the world with a protracted displacement situation. The overall number of displaced in Serbia today amounted to 66,000 refugees and over 210,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition to providing for their humanitarian needs, it was of the utmost importance to fully respect their human rights. As part of its commitment to finding just, sustainable and durable solutions, Serbia had granted 250,000 persons citizenship – the greatest percentage of refugee integration in present-day Europe.

"Over 220,000 IDPs from the southern Serbian province of Kosovo still live in other parts of Serbia today, facing numerous obstacles in exercising their right to return," he said. "No lasting solutions for 15,000 IDPs within Kosovo have been found yet." Roma, Ashkalis and Egyptians from Kosovo were in a particularly vulnerable situation; they often did not possess personal identification, making it even more difficult to achieve rights to health insurance, social protection, employment and education. One of the most important goals of the National Strategy for Solving the Question of Refugees and IDPs from 2011 to 2014 was to solve housing needs. Meanwhile, regional efforts with international donors had funded return and reintegration, and would solve housing problems for 27,000 families. Also, the first projects of the Joint Regional Programme would be put in place next year, and Serbia believed the donor community would recognize the importance of that regional initiative aimed at contributing to the closure of the displacement chapter in South-Eastern Europe.

JUDITH MTAWALI ([Tanzania](#)), aligning with the statement made on behalf of the SADC, and expressing concern at the increase in displaced persons worldwide, said: "It is alarming that this year has seen a multiplication of new refugee crises unmatched in recent history, creating insecurity, violation of human rights and an undue burden to protection efforts." With an increasing number of conflicts and decreased funding from the international community, host States, especially those in the developing world, found it extremely difficult to meet their international obligations.

She went on to share Tanzania's experience, as a host State, in resolving refugee issues and noted that, with the exception of the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Great Lakes Region of Africa had seen relative stability in the last decade. That facilitated voluntary repatriation. "Where conditions improve and circumstances permit, refugees need to be encouraged to return to their countries of origin," she said. Even under such circumstances, sometimes refugees who no longer required that status would not leave, as was the case of 36,000 former Burundian refugees in Tanzania. In that circumstance, the Government was left with no option other than to declare them illegal immigrants come 1 January 2013.

JAE WON LEE ([Republic of Korea](#)) said despite UNHCR's dedication, the rapid and uninterrupted succession of large-scale humanitarian crises amid political, social and economic turmoil and a lack of political will, due in part to government concerns over transnational threats, made protection responses more difficult. To address those complicated circumstances, he encouraged UNHCR and Member States to make further efforts to enhance regional cooperation.

As emphasized by the High Commissioner's report, the principle of non-refoulement was core to the 1951 Refugee Convention and should be upheld as such. Regarding the reports on refugees and asylum seekers who fled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and had been sent back against

their will, he said the matter needed urgent attention. Marking the twentieth anniversary of his country's accession to the Refugee Convention, his Government enacted a Refugee Act that would enter into force next July and was currently drafting an Enforcement Decree to facilitate its full and comprehensive implementation.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI ([Morocco](#)) paid tribute to the “spirit of sacrifice” of UNHCR staff around the world. Situations in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 had required rapid intervention by UNHCR. Those complex challenges could not conceal the urgent need for international attention to protracted situations and he emphasized the importance of solidarity to respond to humanitarian situations that exceeded UNHCR's means. Morocco had sent as much emergency assistance as possible following crises in Libya, Syria and the Sahel. Morocco called for increased support to UNHCR to allow it to follow its mandate, saying that 2012 was a hopeful year for refugees in protracted situations in the Balkans, Asia and Africa, thanks to UNHCR voluntary repatriation programmes.

But he noted with regret that no progress had been made vis-à-vis people in the Tindouf camps for more than 37 years, who had borne the costs of political manipulation. No census had been carried out, despite appeals to do so in an unrestricted manner by the Secretary-General and others. Algeria had refused to bear primary responsibility for that issue and that situation could not continue. He recalled the legal and moral responsibilities to protect refugee rights, saying dangerous connections were being made with traffickers, criminals and terrorists. It was imperative for the international community and UNHCR to preserve the humanitarian and civilian character of camps. Morocco would continue to respect international humanitarian law for people in the Tindouf camps and he urged that a political solution be found.

SERGIY KYSLYTSYA ([Ukraine](#)) said his country highly valued UNHCR and was confident that its structural and administrative reforms would respond to peoples' urgent needs. He commended UNHCR for securing protection of refugees, supervising observance of their rights and freedoms and facilitating Governments in voluntary repatriation programmes or through assimilation in their new countries. Ukraine did not distinguish grief into “ours” and “theirs”. Its mission to Libya in 2011 helped to evacuate people of many nationalities from hostilities. Ukraine also provided help in evacuations from Syria this year. It was resolute in its intention to use its capabilities to protect civilians irrespective of nationality.

Ukraine's President had approved a decision to provide humanitarian assistance, through the United Nations, to regional countries on whose territory were there people affected by the conflict in Syria. Ukraine was open to dialogue with the UNHCR on how to provide such assistance. Ukraine had done “complex work” to meet international obligations under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. In 2011, a new law on refugees and people requiring additional or temporary protection was adopted, taking into account UNHCR recommendations and European legislation. The President also signed a “harmonizing” law regulating the access of refugees in need of additional protections in the social, educational and medical fields.

CHRISTINA MCELWAIN ([Ireland](#)) said crises in Syria, Sudan, Mali and Somalia had affected the lives of many millions, and highlighted the vulnerability of human beings to displacement due to conflict, persecution, natural disasters and other facts. They had also demonstrated the indispensable role of the High Commissioner and his staff in the provision of protection and assistance, saving lives and preserving human dignity, in accordance with the core humanitarian principles that united the international community. Also, the global community could not forget that more than two-thirds of the refugees of concern to the UNHCR lived in situations of prolonged exile, with many hosted by countries in the developing world that had borne a considerable burden for a very long time. Ireland was ready to play its part in intensifying collaborative efforts to fulfil its obligations to meet the needs of these vulnerable populations, and would continue to highlight the need to respond to forgotten emergencies worldwide during its forthcoming Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2013.

Protection challenges worldwide remained daunting, and Ireland welcomed progress addressing sexual and gender-based violence and child protection. “Ensuring access to quality education for

refugee children must be regarded as an essential component of the protection approach," she said. Ireland also believed that coordination was essential for successful humanitarian actions, and supported a strong and effective Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the field. Concluding, she paid tribute to the staff of UNHCR for their dedicated work. "They operate in some of the most insecure and dangerous environments in the world, often in situations where the special position of humanitarian actors is not respected and the humanitarian principles which underlie their work are disregarded," she said, urging continued efforts to ensure they enjoyed the highest possible standard of security as they carried out their work.

DINDAR ZEBARI, Assistant Head of Department of Foreign Relations, Kurdistan Regional Government of [Iraq](#), said his region was hosting refugees from neighbouring countries and had implemented its responsibilities under international law by providing essential services such as housing. Despite its limited resources, especially at the end of the dictatorial regime, the region had provided shelter in two camps, where there were 10,924 refugees. Those two camps had not received adequate international support, which placed a big burden on his government. A new wave of refugees from Anbar was being held in the Kawa camp and 1,328 refugees were there now. Some 2,268 more had also come to the region. Given the conditions of some States in the name of the Arab Spring, other refugees from Syria had arrived, exceeding his region's expectations. Some 40,000 were being hosted in one particular camp and region.

There were other refugees in other districts and local authorities had coordinated with UNHCR so they could have legal resident status, he said. Regional authorities had provisionally allowed Syrians a six-month renewable residence permit. His region was providing the best conditions for Syrian refugees, vis-à-vis other countries where they were being hosted. Moreover, Kurdistan had dedicated \$10 million to host refugees. The Ministry of Education had opened Arabic language schools with a curriculum matching that in Syria. The Ministry of Higher Education asked that Syrians be admitted without payment. Despite such efforts, growing numbers of Syrian immigrants were arriving daily in his region. In addition to assisting in the camps, the governments of the region could face difficulties in other efforts being undertaken, which could impact refugees. "This could be a real disaster", he said, calling for the United Nations to provide assistance to help Syrian refugees in Kurdistan.

MILORAD ŠĆEPANOVIĆ ([Montenegro](#)) said the issue of refugees in his country was being resolved in a permanent manner, providing them legal status with the possibility of voluntary return. His Government had intensified access to rights and living conditions of displaced persons; along with continuous activities at the national level, it was working with the Joint Regional Programme on Durable Solutions for Refugees and Displaced Persons which, among other things, would resolve the regional housing problem, an integral part of the national agenda to find a durable solution for refugees and internally displaced persons. The closure of the refugee and internally displaced persons problem would be the closure of a chapter in the Balkans.

The process of resolving the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons involved solving their legal status in the former Yugoslavia and, bearing in mind the importance of finding durable solutions, Montenegro was facilitating those procedures. Refugees and internally displaced persons would be relieved of the obligation to provide proof of financial status, housing and health insurance. Despite all efforts and progress, a number of persons still faced problems obtaining documents. Montenegro had undertaken information campaigns on the importance of resolving status, as well as made a mechanism for easier access to documents and travel to countries in the region to obtain documents. That was all only possible with the support and solidarity of the international community.

NELI SHIOLASHVILI ([Georgia](#)) said last year her country undertook further steps to ensure its legislation and policies were in line with international standards properly safeguarding the rights of stateless persons, refugees and internally displaced persons, ratifying the 1954 Convention. "The problem of forced displacement continues to be the most appalling humanitarian issue of the country. Despite the concerted efforts of the international community and the Government of Georgia, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons are still deprived of their fundamental right for safe and

dignified return to their homes," he said.

The General Assembly each year adopted a resolution reiterating the right of Georgia's internally displaced persons to return, and the steady increase of the number of delegations supporting that resolution demonstrated the international community's firm intent to find an international law-based solution for the displaced from the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. Yet, that right to return was still blatantly obstructed; the Government of Georgia had spared no effort in providing the internally displaced persons with durable housing solutions and to address their immediate needs. Still, the only durable solution was a return to the places of their permanent residence. "I would like to emphasize continuous human rights violations of the remaining population in Georgia's occupied regions," he said. "With the view of preventing further violations, the lack of international human rights monitoring mechanisms for these territories is a gap to be filled as soon as possible."

SANJA KULJANIN ([Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)) said her region had experienced many difficulties related to displacement for more than twenty years. Better understanding of the issue, joint efforts and cooperation of countries in the region had led to positive developments in the Western Balkans. Sarajevo hosted a donor conference in April this year entitled, "Durable solutions for refugees and IDPs", which aimed to raise funds for implementation of national projects which were integral to the region's Joint Regional Programme. In five years, 27,000 households and approximately 74,000 individuals in four countries should benefit from the Programme, which had collected more than 300 million euros from the international community, slightly more than 50 per cent of the total required to resolve the issue.

Return was not a genuine durable solution if the conditions to make it sustainable were absent, she said. Lasting solutions must be based on a holistic notion that went beyond property restitution and physical reconstruction, providing for economic opportunities, social protections and rebuilding relationships. Solutions for displaced populations also had to take into account human rights aspects. Politicization of a humanitarian process was not acceptable. Nevertheless, Bosnia and Herzegovina was fully aware there was no entirely humanitarian solution for those problems, because solutions inevitably included a political dimension. Bosnia and Herzegovina was committed to closing the chapter of protracted displacement in a dignified manner, firmly believing solving the problem would contribute to neighbourly relations, stability and lasting peace in the region, she said.

SEMUNGUS HABTEGIYORGIS ([Ethiopia](#)) was deeply concerned by the growing number of refugees around the world, in Africa and in his own subregion. After many years of man-made and natural calamities, the Horn of Africa had become one of the most conflict-ridden and volatile regions in the world, he said, resulting in a consistent influx of refugees and the displaced for several decades. Ethiopia maintained an open door policy to asylum seekers, despite adverse environmental and security consequences. There were currently 378,000 refugees in Ethiopia, causing constraints and requiring greater partnership with UNHCR and the donor community.

Based on the United Nations Convention and its Protocol, and the Organization of African Unity Convention governing specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, the Ethiopian Parliament had established a legislative framework to administer the situation of refugees and returnees in Ethiopia, and cooperated closely with UNHCR, the donor community and other humanitarian organizations to that end. With a view to seeking a long-term solution to the plight of refugees, the Ethiopian Government, in cooperation with UNHCR, had launched a program to enable refugees to live anywhere in the country, if they had no criminal record, and for thousands to receive higher education, so as to be productive citizens when they returned to their homelands.

MS. MAMMADALIYEVA ([Azerbaijan](#)) said Armenia's aggression had led to the occupation of one-fifth of Azerbaijani territory and transformed one of every nine people into a refugee or internally displaced person. The Security Council outlined its grave concern, in several 1993 resolutions, at the civilian displacement. The General Assembly, in its 20 December 1993 resolution, also had noted with concern that refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan had exceeded one million. Armenia's actions could qualify as ethnic cleansing, defined by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as a practice to make an

ethnic area homogenous by using force or intimidation against those belonging to specific groups. Azerbaijani citizens' rights had been violated by their forced displacement, violation of the principle of non-discrimination and prevention of access to their property, and to return home. Azerbaijan had made efforts to meet the needs of refugees and IDPs by improving temporary housing conditions.

Moreover, Azerbaijan was committed to settling the conflict based on international law, he said, and allowing IDPs to return home. It was mobilizing all political and diplomatic resources in that regard. Armenia was trying to maintain the status quo of occupation. The lack of agreement on political issues could not be used as a pretext for not facing the problems caused by the deliberate failure to respect international law in armed conflict and foreign military occupation situations. Displaced people must be permitted to return home. There were several consequences for the continued violation of the rights of displaced persons. Azerbaijan was committed to efforts to overcome problems vis-à-vis refugees and displaced persons, and would cooperate closely with UNHCR to that end.

PIERRE DORBES, International Committee of the Red Cross, said that although the plight of internally displaced persons had not abated in recent years, the international community's attention to it had decreased over time. For its part, the ICRC, through its assistance and protection activities, had responded to the needs of displaced people and of their host communities in some 35 countries, while continuing its efforts to prevent the displacement of people. Focusing on the critical situation of people affected by protracted displacement in some 40 countries, he said it was not necessarily the first year of displacement that was the hardest or most complicated for the people affected, but the years after when media interest had subsided and resources had begun to become scarce. Faced with uncertainty about their future or the constant threat of forcible eviction, they often also had to deal with a lack of access to adequate housing, education, health-services and income-generating opportunities. Stressing the need to ensure that those people could benefit from social welfare systems and development projects and have access to basic rights, he urged Governments, as well as humanitarian and development agencies, to prioritize the needs of victims of long-term displacement.

ANNE CHRISTENSEN, of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), said that the world was currently facing a challenging situation with a range of overlapping and complex displacement contexts, including acute and protracted crises in places such as Syria and Mali. Last month, the IFRC had launched its flagship publication, the "World Disasters Report", which this year highlighted the plight of forced migrants. In 2011 there were over 70 million people displaced by conflict, political upheaval, violence, disasters and other drivers such as climate change and environmental degradation. More than 20 million people were trapped in a state of "protracted displacement", living in camps or in unplanned and informal parts of cities. Addressing such challenges required harmonized actions and policies at the international level. At the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2011, a migration resolution called for Governments to ensure that migrants, irrespective of their legal status, had access to the support they needed and that they were treated at all times with respect and dignity. More specifically, it had requested States to ensure that relevant laws and procedures were in place to enable national societies to enjoy effective and safe access to all migrants without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status.

AMY MUEDIN, International Organization for Migration (IOM), said that the international community must be well prepared and flexible in its responses to population movements resulting from multiple complex crises and that those responses must be coordinated through effective interagency cooperation. She stressed IOM's commitment to the Transformative Agenda to strengthen responses. Reiterating concerns about the threat to vulnerable populations from environmental degradation and climate change, she welcomed the Nansen initiative to address legal and protection gaps for people displaced for those reasons. Turning to the migration/refugee nexus, she stressed the need to engender ownership of the States involved. Finally, she said that the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel required further joint action from the broader humanitarian community.

Right of Reply

Exercising his right of reply, Myanmar's delegate said he wished to inform the meeting the truth of the matter referred to by the Bangladesh delegate. Sharing a long border, the Government had in the 1970s launched census polling in the area and, as the majority of people dwelling in the area for the betterment of their lives were illegal immigrants, they fled to their home countries. Agreements had been reached between Myanmar and Bangladesh in the 1970s and 1990s, and Myanmar continued to open reception camps to returnees. It was confident that bilateral immigrant issues would be solved between the two friendly neighbours.

Armenia's delegate said she regretted to say the statement of the Azerbaijan delegate was provocative, using unfounded accusations and lies. The numbers she had cited were well-recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the recent report of the International Crisis Group. Armenia was the first country in Eastern Europe to face the problem of refugees after half a million fled massacres in Azerbaijan from 1988 to 1990. Even though Armenia had recently faced a devastating earthquake, it used all resources available to do its best to accommodate refugees. In very difficult conditions in the first years of independence, Armenia created conditions to integrate half a million refugees into its society, and was praised by UNHCR. Armenia did exactly what Security Council resolutions required from its side, and was always ready to share its practices on integrating refugees into society.

Responding, Azerbaijan's delegate said she was convinced that careful reading of international documents would dissuade the Armenian representative from making irrelevant comments. In 1993, the Security Council adopted four resolutions condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan, the occupations of its territory by Armenian forces and requiring their immediate withdrawal. The Council also reaffirmed the sovereign territorial integrity and recognized the borders of Azerbaijan. The illegality of the separatist entity and structures set up by Armenia had been declared several times at the international level. Attacks against civilians and the bombing of inhabited areas constituted war crimes, crimes against humanity and racial discrimination.

Armenia's delegate said she regretted to ask the floor for a second time, but must mention that the most recent violation of humanitarian law was the 2004 axe murder of an Armenian in a dormitory by an Azerbaijani Army lieutenant, who received a life sentence, but turned up two months ago set free. That was the observance of humanitarian law in Azerbaijan. Systematic breaches of international law were among the major causes of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

Responding, Azerbaijan's delegate said the discussion showed the targeted and wrong attitude of Armenia. Azerbaijan obtained its independence in the limited territory it possessed in the Soviet Union – there was a great deal of evidence that Armenia started the war, occupied Azerbaijan and conducted ethnic cleansing on a large scale. In 1993, the Security Council demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal from all the territories occupied by Azerbaijan and reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty of its recognized borders. The illegality of the separatist entity and its structure set up by Armenia had been recognized by the international community.

Iraq's representative said improvement of the security situation in his country, through the Iraqi security forces, had guaranteed the voluntary return of internally displaced persons. That meant the file was almost closed and he saw no justifications for speaking about Iraq, as the Red Cross representative had done.

* *** *

For information media • not an official record