

**Chair's Summary of the General Debate
64th Session of the Executive Committee
2 October 2013**

Let me begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his extensive and engaging presentation. Let me also thank the more than 90 delegations who responded with expressions of support and constructive recommendations for UNHCR.

Delegations commended the High Commissioner and UNHCR staff for the work they do on behalf of the displaced. Many speakers expressed their appreciation for the High-Level Segment on "Solidarity and Burden-Sharing with Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees" and affirmed their support for both the people of the Syrian Arab Republic and the neighboring countries, who have opened their borders and already welcomed more than two million refugees. Many delegations equally recognized other crises, as well as protracted situations, which must not be forgotten and which require continued support from the international community. Committee Members recalled the tremendous burden refugee situations may place on host countries and, in keeping with the Statement which this Committee agreed in relation to the High Level Segment, restated the need for international solidarity and burden-sharing to address the needs of host communities, refugees and internally displaced persons. Regarding the latter, several of delegations welcomed the upcoming dialogue on the protection of internally displaced persons.

The High Commissioner referred to reforms and initiatives that his Office has undertaken in recent years, and delegations commented on a number of them. In particular, support was expressed for UNHCR's efforts to strengthen its emergency response capacity; to improve children's education; to ensure age, gender and diversity mainstreaming; to promote birth and other civil registration, particularly for newborns; and to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Delegations welcomed internal reforms in management, including results-based approaches, transparency in audit procedures and compliance with IPSAS, and the reduction in the proportion of headquarters' costs relative to the overall budget, with one delegation commending the High Commissioner and his team "for their sound and solid financial management."

In addition to welcoming UNHCR's reforms and innovations, many speakers encouraged the Office to continue to strengthen strategic partnerships with OCHA and sister agencies and its work within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to promote education for children, to prevent and resolve statelessness, and to address the needs of urban refugees and internally displaced persons. There was also strong support for UNHCR's engagement with the Transformative Agenda and its leadership of key clusters.

All of these efforts are, of course, geared to fulfilling UNHCR's core mandate – protection and the search for durable solutions. Many speakers noted the importance of enhancing resettlement opportunities as one form of durable solution, while others recalled that voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity remains the preferred, and in some cases perhaps the only, feasible solution for many refugees. Many States commented on the

importance of unlocking protracted situations. In doing so, they emphasized that humanitarian and development actors must jointly “use their creative synergies to come forward with solutions,” such as is being done with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and the Transitions Solutions Initiative. One delegation encouraged UNHCR to continue to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in development planning; others supported UNHCR’s efforts to improve refugee self-reliance. These remarks reinforced the High Commissioner’s call for all partners in the search for solutions to “recognize solutions-oriented approaches for what they are: not only an investment in people, but indeed a better use of scarce funding than measures that perpetuate long-term aid dependency.”

In relation to protection, it was heartening that many States reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of international protection, to the Refugee Convention and the Conventions on Statelessness, and to international humanitarian law. Many delegations provided excellent updates on efforts they have undertaken to assist UNHCR and the people of concern to the Office, at both national and regional levels. These include the European Union’s Common Asylum System, several initiatives in Latin America, the Regional Housing Programme in the Balkans, and individual State initiatives regarding legislation or programmes such as Ethiopia’s “Out of Camp” policy. Delegations commented on the importance of humanitarian access and enhancing the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. Many delegations paid tribute to those staff who have lost their lives while assisting others.

None of UNHCR’s activities can occur, of course, without financial support. Delegations took note of the significant increase in UNHCR’s budget in recent years and the funding gap that exists. Bearing this in mind, a number of speakers encouraged donors to provide more funding -- especially more unearmarked funding -- and welcomed a broadening of the donor base to include new member States and more individual and private sector donors.

So, in spite of a rise in the numbers of displaced persons and severe emergencies, along with continuing and protracted crises, there is room for optimism about the future. And I would like to issue a challenge to each and every delegation here to unite behind the High Commissioner’s call to us at the end of his opening statement. Recalling that, for as long as human memory extends, people everywhere have sheltered strangers in need, he encouraged us, “Let us stand together to protect this fundamental human value, for the millions of people around the world who depend on it. And let us join our efforts to make sure that those who help them are supported in doing so.”

Please, let us do so. Thank you.