

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

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65th meeting

**Report of the sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing
Committee (15-17 March 2016)**

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee (ExCom), Ambassador Carsten Staur (Denmark), opened the meeting and welcomed Guatemala, Iraq and Mali as new observers. The Vice-Chairperson, Ambassador Rosemary McCarney (Canada), chaired the meeting on the second day.

II. Adoption of the agenda of the sixty-fifth meeting and of the 2016 work programme

2. The Committee adopted the agenda for the meeting (EC/67/SC/CRP.1) and the 2016 work programme (EC/67/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

III. Regional activities and global programmes

A. Regional updates

3. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) noted that, while there had been positive developments over the past year, the overall global landscape remained deeply preoccupying, not least in Europe, where the refugee and migration crisis had revealed both strong examples of solidarity and humanity, but also a toxification of the debate. He urged States not to lose sight of less high-profile displacement challenges and called on donors not only to sustain, but to increase funding, recalling that only half of the Office's US\$ 7 billion budget had been met in 2015.

(a) Africa

4. The Director of the Africa Bureau noted that, despite growing public awareness about forced displacement, the plight of some 17 million displaced persons in Africa risked being forgotten. He highlighted the funding challenges facing many operations and drew attention to protection challenges, including the need to balance access to asylum with security concerns, and to ensure the civilian character of asylum. He also highlighted positive developments on solutions and statelessness.

5. The Committee noted the large number of emergencies affecting Africa and welcomed the continued generosity of host countries. Some delegations expressed concern that UNHCR had not scaled-up its emergency response swiftly enough in some situations, particularly for Burundi. Concern was expressed over the low levels of funding for operations in Africa, particularly for solutions and livelihood activities, and the projected food shortages as a result of funding gaps for the World Food Programme (WFP). UNHCR's efforts to increase cash-based assistance, using a targeted approach, in order to cope with ration cuts were welcomed, and the Office was urged to provide information on the targeting strategy as well as on any other strategies to increase food availability. UNHCR was also requested to provide an update on follow-up to the 2014 high-level segment of ExCom on enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa.

6. With respect to solutions, delegations welcomed the involvement of refugees from the Central African Republic in the recent elections and expressed hope that this would pave the way for more voluntary returns. The international community was urged to support the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees within the framework of the Global Initiative for Somali Refugees, including by enhancing development assistance in Somalia. The resumption of voluntary returns to Côte d'Ivoire and the ongoing implementation of

the comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees were positive developments, although more support for the latter from the international community was needed. The increase in the number of refugees resettled from Africa in 2015 was welcomed, and States were encouraged to explore alternative pathways for admission, including family reunification, to prevent dangerous onward movements. The positive example set by States such as Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia in providing local integration was highlighted. Progress made in combatting statelessness, including through the elimination of gender discrimination in nationality laws and improvements in civil registration systems, was highlighted. Delegations expressed hope that a protocol on the right to nationality in Africa would be adopted by the African Union in 2016.

7. The Director stated that, while the elections in the Central African Republic had been a promising step forward, efforts to ensure peaceful coexistence, reconstruction and disarmament, and livelihood activities were needed to ensure the necessary conditions for return. With respect to returns to Somalia, nine districts had been assessed as safe. However, the 2014 tripartite agreement between Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR was premised on refugees returning to their areas of origin with access to an adequate level of services to ensure sustainability. The Director took note of one delegation's suggestion that UNHCR improve communication with relevant stakeholders in Somalia, including donors, development actors and returnees. In response to a call for UNHCR to strengthen its protection and monitoring capacity in Burundi, he advised that an office had been established in Makamba in January 2016. He hoped that, with the opening of an office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the presence of African Union monitors, assessments would improve. In response to concerns regarding the closure of Kiwanja camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Director said UNHCR was seeking to ensure that departures from the camp would be voluntary, in line with the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa, and that minimum services would be available in their areas of return. With respect to statelessness, he suggested that birth registration rates among displaced populations could be increased by enabling local authorities to carry out registration and through the adoption of legal frameworks and awareness-raising.

(b) Americas

8. The Director of the Americas Bureau provided an update on developments in the region, focusing on the collective efforts of States to promote and implement the Brazil Plan of Action. She described the progress achieved in enhancing access to fair and efficient asylum procedures, stressing the importance of regional cooperation, notably through capacity-building and the exchange of best practices. Regarding the Northern Triangle of Central America, she spoke about the protection dimension of the displacement crisis and outlined UNHCR's strategy aimed at identifying protection gaps and developing a joint response with relevant actors, including in countries of origin. She also emphasized the importance of addressing the needs of women and unaccompanied and separated children. The Director commended the efforts of States aimed at preventing and resolving statelessness and at demonstrating global solidarity through resettlement and other forms of admission.

9. The Committee noted that the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action provided a road map for the next 10 years and a pragmatic and flexible framework for international cooperation and solidarity that facilitated durable solutions and the eradication of statelessness. Delegations called for more financial resources to support implementation of the Brazil Plan of Action.

10. While progress on the peace process in Colombia was welcomed, the continuing violence and displacement in some areas of the country were also noted. With respect to solutions, the importance of promoting labour mobility and facilitating local integration, particularly for vulnerable populations, was emphasized. UNHCR was commended for its

support to States in the Northern Triangle, particularly in implementing joint strategies for the protection of vulnerable groups. UNHCR was encouraged to continue working closely with governments and partners, particularly on strengthening child protection and reception mechanisms. Support was expressed for UNHCR's visits to detention facilities and for the information on asylum procedures that was provided to those individuals seeking protection.

11. The Director thanked delegations for their expressions of support. She encouraged States to continue implementing the Brazil Plan of Action, particularly through national plans and by establishing monitoring mechanisms, which would provide the basis for an assessment of its impact. She noted that the Americas was a region where solutions were possible, but where a lack of resources meant that they were not able to be fully realized. She appealed for strengthened financial support to achieve more. With respect to UNHCR's work in Central America, the Director reassured the Committee of the Office's continued commitment in this regard. In response to a question regarding progress made in implementing the ExCom conclusion on civil registry, the Director noted that in Haiti, consultations were ongoing with the Government to help reform the civil registry so that cases of undetermined nationality of Haitians abroad could be resolved. On the resettlement of 850 Colombian refugees in 2015, the Director clarified that solutions achieved through the solidarity resettlement programme were mutually complementary and that one did not exclude the other. The solution applied depended on the profile of the individuals concerned and their protection risks. Regarding the transitional solutions initiative, she noted that UNHCR was working on analysing lessons learned.

(c) Asia and the Pacific

12. The Director of the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific provided an update on developments, noting in particular the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan in 2015, which led to high numbers of civilian casualties and renewed displacement, affecting the prospects for voluntary return. In Myanmar, the ceasefire agreement in October 2015, followed by elections in November, had been major steps forward. Some spontaneous returns had taken place and a roadmap had been prepared as a basis for a future tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation with the concerned governments, once conditions allowed.

13. Delegations expressed concern over the deteriorating security in Afghanistan and its impact on UNHCR staff safety, humanitarian access, prospects for return, and increasing onward movements by Afghans, including to Europe. UNHCR was encouraged to work pragmatically to advance the "Solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries". Disappointment was expressed that the 2015 high-level segment of ExCom on the Afghan refugee situation had not resulted in more support for the implementation of the enhanced voluntary return and reintegration package. One delegation pointed out that the hospitality of host countries was not a solution and emphasized the importance of providing adequate financial support for sustainable reintegration within the country of origin. This delegation called for the establishment of an annual quota for the resettlement of refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR was urged to engage with the Afghan Government to ensure that returnees were included in national development initiatives and to advocate full implementation of the national IDP policy.

14. Delegations welcomed the positive developments in Myanmar, as well as UNHCR's efforts to establish a "roadmap" for the voluntary return of refugees through a tripartite agreement. In the interim, continued humanitarian assistance to the refugees from Myanmar in Thailand was important. The Committee expressed hope that UNHCR would be able to work with the new Government to address the root causes of displacement and statelessness.

15. States, particularly signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, were urged to respect their obligations under international law and to avoid the detention and criminalization of asylum-seekers. Concern was expressed over unsafe mixed maritime movements, and continued regional cooperation was called for to address the issue. UNHCR was urged to redouble its efforts to reduce the refugee status determination (RSD) backlog in Bangkok and to ensure consistency, fairness and transparency in its RSD procedures. The Office was also encouraged to work with host countries to expand work and temporary stay permits, and to support the establishment of national screening and registration processes. It was noted that limited access to durable solutions for refugees in the region continued to lead to onward movements, and several delegations called for increased resettlement places and for processing times to be expedited. The resettlement of 100,000 refugees from Bhutan out of Nepal to third countries was cited as a positive example of international cooperation, and delegations expressed support for UNHCR's efforts to find solutions for the residual caseload. Several States reiterated their commitment to eliminating statelessness and underlined national efforts with respect to birth registration and the reform of nationality laws.

16. The Director stressed that the solutions strategy remained the framework for resolving the Afghan refugee situation. While UNHCR had continued to facilitate spontaneous returns, it was not able to conduct return monitoring due to the security situation. She urged coordinated action to ensure the sustainability of returns, going beyond cash grants and including development assistance. UNHCR continued to advocate increased support to the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, particularly for education, skills training and livelihoods. With respect to Myanmar, the Director noted that the priority was to facilitate the return of IDPs, but that UNHCR would continue to work towards a tripartite agreement for voluntary return once conditions were in place. The Director acknowledged the serious challenges facing UNHCR with respect to its RSD procedures in Asia and welcomed the intention of some governments to begin working with the Office on RSD.

(d) Europe

17. The Director of the Europe Bureau described the ongoing developments and challenges in the region, structured around the themes of access to protection, quality of protection and solutions. In response to the unprecedented numbers of people arriving in Europe, many countries passed restrictive legislation or used physical obstacles to dissuade refugees and migrants from reaching their territories, and xenophobic sentiments were on the rise. At the same time, there was a surge of solidarity at the community level. With respect to solutions to other situations in Europe, UNHCR was concerned with the lack of progress in a number of countries, where restrictions on freedom of movement and lack of humanitarian access hampered efforts.

18. Delegations emphasized that the situation in Europe would only be normalized by addressing the root causes of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and reaching a political settlement. Without this, the refugee flows were likely to continue. While some saw progress within the European Union on how to address the irregular movements in the Mediterranean and restore order to the flows, others stated that the recent agreements to send back refugees *en masse* were a cause for serious concern. Protecting human lives rather than protecting borders should be the priority. It was also important to distinguish between migrants and refugees, making sure that the appropriate protection safeguards were in place. States were urged to implement relocation and resettlement schemes, increase measures to ensure quality protection and security screenings, and expand and improve reception and accommodation capacity along the migrant route, prioritizing attention to vulnerable populations.

19. Delegations expressed concern for the humanitarian situation and lack of solutions in other operations in the region, including in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Support

for UNHCR's statelessness campaign and ongoing efforts to eradicate statelessness in Europe were welcomed.

20. The Director thanked delegations for the support provided to UNHCR and its partners in responding to the crisis. Regarding the 30 March meeting being organized by UNHCR on pathways for the admission of Syrian refugees, the Director appealed to all States to make pledges. He argued that Europe could do better, considering that in 2015 only 12,000 refugees were resettled to the region. Regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Greece, he said UNHCR shared the Committee's concerns and stressed that the Government needed urgent financial assistance to address the needs of some 44,000 who were presently in the country. Further responsibility-sharing was also vital, including the relocation of those who qualified for international protection. At the same time, it was important to pursue other forms of access to protection, not just to Europe but to other countries as well, directly from Turkey and other neighbouring host countries.

(e) Middle East and North Africa

21. The Deputy Director of the Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa presented the update on UNHCR's operations in the region, highlighting major challenges and key priorities. Protection remained at the core of UNHCR's interventions and its central imperatives included safeguarding asylum and preventing refoulement, ensuring humanitarian access, responding to mixed movements, combatting sexual and gender-based violence, and enhancing child protection. While working to address the emergencies in the region, solutions were also a priority. With respect to the Syria situation, the Deputy Director noted that the Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP) remained only 5 per cent funded, while the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (SHARP) was only 4 per cent funded, despite the commitments made earlier this year at the London conference. Similarly, programmes in North Africa, Yemen and Iraq suffered from a systematic lack of predictable funding.

22. The discussion focused largely on the Syria situation, with numerous tributes to humanitarian staff. UNHCR's efforts to reach besieged areas in the country and expand its protection response were applauded. While the cessation of hostilities inside the Syrian Arab Republic was welcome, more needed to be done to ensure that humanitarian agencies had rapid, safe and unimpeded access. Temporary access was not sufficient, and concern was expressed over the rising trend of attacks on humanitarian staff. UNHCR was encouraged to continue using biometric registration and other innovative tools, including cash-based assistance, throughout the region, to focus on the growing needs of refugees outside of camps, and to facilitate the gradual shift towards longer-term responses, in close cooperation with development actors. With respect to funding, the international community was urged to ensure that host countries and communities received the support they desperately needed. In the spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing, States were encouraged to explore pathways for the admission of Syrian refugees and support the upcoming meeting being organized by UNHCR on this topic on 30 March.

23. Concern was also expressed regarding other humanitarian situations in the region, including Iraq, Libya and Yemen. With respect to Iraq, humanitarian access, contingency planning for future waves of displacement, and the development of a comprehensive protection strategy for both refugees and IDPs were essential. UNHCR was encouraged to expand its humanitarian response in Yemen and engage with the full range of potential partners in order to meet the needs. More needed to be done to strengthen protection responses in Libya, particularly with respect to alternatives to detention and rescue at sea. The Committee also noted the precarious situation faced by asylum-seekers in the region, including Afghans, Palestinians and Somalis, who also required commensurate protection and assistance.

24. With respect to the Sahrawi refugees living in the camps near Tindouf, one delegation emphasized the need for assistance to meet the increasing vulnerability of the population, particularly since the flooding of the camps in October 2015. The delegation referred to the Secretary-General's visit to the camps in March 2016, aimed at drawing attention to the suffering of the population and to the need to find a solution that would enable their return in dignity. The Secretary-General called for a donor's meeting dedicated to addressing the humanitarian situation of the Sahrawi refugees. Another delegation stressed the importance of biometric registration, which was a vital protection tool and allowed UNHCR to quantify the real needs of the people. The delegation maintained that registration was in line with UNHCR's mandate and recent United Nations Security Council resolutions. The delegation also insisted on the need to properly monitor the provision of food aid to ensure that there was no diversion.

25. The Deputy Director thanked delegations for their support and, with respect to the Syria situation, expressed appreciation for the ongoing contributions of both host and donor countries. She hoped that the generosity of host countries would be matched with further solidarity from the international community in terms of financial contributions, but also in terms of resettlement and other forms of admission. Regarding the 3RP and the SHARP, she emphasized the need for timely and predictable funding and highlighted the importance of the resilience component of the 3RP. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR was leading three clusters and was working closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on the "whole of Syria" approach to ensure that operations were as effective as possible. In Yemen, UNHCR hoped to expand operations, but access was limited. In the context of the discussion on the Sahrawi refugees, she clarified that registration was handled in consultation with the host country concerned. In this case, UNHCR was in discussion with the host government and UNHCR remained ready to provide the necessary technical support. With respect to the issue of aid diversion, as disclosed in the 2007 report of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), strong multi-layer monitoring procedures had since been put in place, together with partners, to ensure that aid reached the intended recipients, and recent donor missions had reported positive feedback.

B. Global programmes

26. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) provided an overview of UNHCR's global programmes, as contained in EC/67/SC/CRP.3. He highlighted the recent publication of a global strategy implementation report, which presented the achievements and challenges in executing UNHCR's five-year global strategies for public health, settlement and shelter, livelihoods, and safe access to fuel and energy (SAFE).

27. There was broad support for UNHCR's activities in the area of global programmes, which set high standards of service delivery and assistance to refugees. At the same time, UNHCR was encouraged to take into account the socioeconomic situation of host communities in their design and implementation. With respect to livelihoods, UNHCR was urged to expand its programmes in countries of origin, in order to support the repatriation and sustainable reintegration of refugees. The Office was called upon to strengthen its advocacy on the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, identify innovative education solutions for refugees in remote locations and ensure that all children had access to education. UNHCR was asked to provide more information on its intention to develop shelter strategies in smaller operations, as well as to reflect on the effectiveness of the global shelter cluster, considering the increasing number of refugees and IDPs in urban settings. UNHCR's strategy to expand cash-based assistance was welcomed, although it was noted that such programmes should be adapted to the local context and be adequately monitored. The roll-out of the biometric identity management system in 2015

was appreciated, but one delegation urged UNHCR to continue to encourage States to develop their own national registration systems.

28. The Director noted that consideration of the socioeconomic situation of host communities was central to UNHCR's global strategies. The call for UNHCR to focus on creating the conditions for return and reintegration was clear, and all of the strategies and approaches discussed had equal application across borders. Regarding food insecurity in Africa, UNHCR had advocated increased support for WFP, while also enhancing targeted self-reliance initiatives. Answering a question about how UNHCR was reaching populations outside of camps, he said the Office was adapting its approaches to health care, education, shelter and livelihoods programming in order to reach those in both urban and rural settings. At the same time, successful implementation of the alternatives to camps policy was dependent upon having the necessary national systems in place to support this. Acknowledging the lack of reference to gender mainstreaming in the conference room paper, the Director reaffirmed that age, gender and diversity was a core part of each global strategy and that UNHCR was working to establish mechanisms to better disaggregate gender data.

29. With respect to cash-based assistance, the Deputy Director replied that common cash facilities had significant cost-saving potential and that UNHCR would seek to expand their use in Africa in 2016. In response to a question about the extent to which UNHCR could increase its engagement in mental health activities, given limited resources and funding, he said the goal was to ensure that such services were provided through national health systems and that this required strong support from governments.

IV. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

30. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the agenda item, calling attention to the challenging operational environment and scale of forced displacement worldwide. Despite unprecedented generosity from donor countries, the sheer magnitude of the needs had resulted in the Office's largest-ever funding gap. This had prompted deep reflection on the adequacy of the current humanitarian response. At the same time, stronger linkages were being made between the humanitarian and development spheres, and this was welcome. Turning to the report of the Board of Auditors, she noted that an unqualified audit opinion had been issued on UNHCR's financial statements for 2014 and spoke about the progress being made in terms of accountability, fraud prevention and human resources management.

A. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for previous years

31. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) presented an overview of UNHCR's follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for 2014 and previous years, as contained in conference room paper EC/67/SC/CRP.5. She noted that the 2014 review had focused on financial matters; asset management; internal control and fraud risk assessment; the upgrade of UNHCR's enterprise resource planning system, MSRP; understanding delivery cost; financial management in education programmes; and human resources management. Addressing the Board's recommendations was a management priority for UNHCR, and the Office would continue to take action to address them.

32. The Committee expressed appreciation for the concrete steps taken by UNHCR to address the recommendations and welcomed the matrices provided, which increased transparency with respect to outstanding recommendations. Delegations were pleased that

the pace of implementation had increased and that the number of outstanding recommendations had decreased. The Office was encouraged to implement the remaining ones swiftly, particularly in the areas of risk management, improvement in finance and project control, and management of implementing partners. Equal attention was given to implementation of the recommendations on human resources. Getting the right people in the right places at the right times was critical, particularly in emergencies. One delegation requested that UNHCR provide further information on its efforts to balance efficiency and effectiveness in programme delivery, while another suggested that a measured approach was needed to ensure that efficiency gains did not come at the expense of effective, quality and context-specific programmes. Regarding the cost of delivery, UNHCR was asked about the challenges involved and whether there were system benchmarks against which UNHCR could measure its performance. In terms of the recommendation that UNHCR disclose the administrative costs of implementing partners, several delegations stressed the need to ensure that implementing partners had the appropriate levels of overhead to carry out the critical functions that they were contracted to do.

33. The Controller stressed that UNHCR was committed to ensuring full transparency with respect to the status of recommendations and the work being done to address them. In terms of partnership arrangements, UNHCR had undertaken significant work in 2015 and 2016 to enhance policies, guidance and oversight, and the Board was pleased with the progress made thus far. UNHCR had assessed the possible use of multi-year partnership agreements, but had determined that, consistent with the practice of other UN organizations, this would not be appropriate while UNHCR continued to operate on an annual funding cycle. In terms of the selection of partners, UNHCR had an enhanced framework, and the selection process was done in a much more transparent way through the partnership portal. UNHCR was committed to transparency with respect to the costs of its implementing partners but maintained its position that they should not be reflected as UNHCR's administrative costs, as they represented the actual cost of programme delivery. UNHCR had, nevertheless, agreed with the Board's recommendation to disclose the overhead costs of its international partners as a note to its financial statements. The Controller reaffirmed the organization's commitment to a risk-based approach to audits of its implementing partners in a way that minimized the burden on them but yet still gave the assurances needed.

34. In response to a question on steps taken by UNHCR to strengthen its financial review process for the 2016 annual programme review, the Controller noted that UNHCR was developing an analytical framework that was intended to show the costs and variations on budgets, operation by operation, as well as where the risks were in terms of implementation and programmatic difficulties. This would enhance the review process and guide the allocation of resources.

B. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

35. The Inspector General, a.i. briefed the Committee on the work of her Office since the last report to the ExCom in October 2015, which was centered around the following objectives: strengthening UNHCR's oversight function; enhancing accountability and integrity in UNHCR; building confidence among staff, partners and persons of concern in the work of the Inspector General's Office (IGO); and developing partnerships with system-wide oversight entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). She noted that an external review of UNHCR's oversight functions was being planned and that the results of that review may lead to a separate external review of the Office's inspection function, as recommended by the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee. The results would inform the future structure of her Office and the scope of its mandate. Meanwhile, the IGO was working to ensure that compliance with recommendations related to inspection and investigation was systematic and that it had sufficient expert staff.

36. Delegations emphasized the importance of strong oversight functions that grew on par with the organization's budget and, in this regard, welcomed the strengthening of the IGO through additional staffing and training. Having staff closer to field operations was particularly important. Efforts to ensure coordination with other oversight entities, to align the enterprise risk management process with criteria by which operations were selected for inspection and to strengthen fraud prevention and detection were welcomed. UNHCR's work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse were also commended.

37. The Inspector General, a.i. provided further clarification with respect to the review of UNHCR's oversight functions, noting that the memorandum of understanding with the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was valid until the end of the year and that extension was dependent upon the outcome of the review. The Deputy High Commissioner added that the review would take into consideration how other agencies were working and the findings of reviews carried out in previous years. Responding to disappointment expressed over the delay in implementation of an online tool for monitoring compliance with recommendations, she noted that this was not only due to financial constraints but also to difficulties in identifying a system that could be used by all of UNHCR's oversight functions. Regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, the Inspector General, a.i. assured the Committee that addressing them was a priority. UNHCR was working to strengthen prevention, including by enhancing training for staff and partners.

V. Coordination

38. The Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) presented the paper on strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit, contained in EC/67/SC/CRP.6. He updated the Committee on efforts to enhance partnerships with NGOs, international organizations and the private sector, and implement the refugee coordination model. He also discussed UNHCR's engagement in preparations for the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit.

39. The Committee stressed that the timeliness and efficacy of UNHCR's operations relied on the quality of its partnerships and coordination with host States and communities. UNHCR was encouraged to continue strengthening collaboration with its partners, particularly national NGOs, and to institutionalize the principles of partnership. Moreover, UNHCR was urged to enhance transparency, continue information-sharing and consult with all stakeholders in the design of policies and programmes. Delegations welcomed the strengthened partnerships with development actors on solutions. At the same time, it was important to translate agreements made at Headquarters into concrete action at the field level. With respect to the Solutions Alliance, hope was expressed that this mechanism would become more operational under the chairmanship of UNHCR. The Office was urged to support and fully involve host countries in order to ensure their ownership of any initiatives and that their national obligations and priorities were taken into consideration.

40. States expressed interest in being updated on progress achieved towards implementing the refugee coordination model and the "Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations". Operational partners needed to be comfortable with implementation of these initiatives, and there was still work to be done in this regard. On cluster responsibilities, UNHCR was encouraged to strengthen co-leadership in the field through clear agreements and common understanding, and to provide dedicated resources for its lead roles, ensuring that critical functions were filled. UNHCR was commended for its role in leading the protection cluster, including follow-up to the whole-of-system review on protection and extensive consultative process that culminated in the updated "Strategic framework for 2016-2019".

41. With respect to the World Humanitarian Summit, UNHCR was encouraged to ensure that the plight of forcibly displaced persons featured prominently on the agenda. There was concern over the lack of attention given to protection in the Secretary-General's report, "One humanity, shared responsibility". One delegation highlighted the policy guidance provided to UNHCR in the ExCom conclusions on international protection and its relevance to the process leading up to the Summit. UNHCR was commended for prioritizing education in emergencies at the Summit. On the "grand bargain" on humanitarian financing, States emphasized that efficiency was not primarily about cost-cutting but that it should lead to a better response for the people affected. One delegation stressed that local responders and NGOs should also benefit from the grand bargain.

42. The Director expressed appreciation for the strong support and endorsement regarding UNHCR's coordination and partnership efforts, and for the advice provided on the World Humanitarian Summit. He agreed that both refugees and IDPs, as well as solutions, needed to feature centrally at the Summit and gave assurances that sufficient attention to protection would be given at the event itself. With respect to partnerships with national and local actors, he stressed that building their capacities with a view to handover was central to UNHCR's policy and was a standard requirement in partnership agreements with international NGOs. On inter-agency coordination, the Director recognized the need to further advance understanding of the "Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations" and noted that UNHCR's strengthened Inter-agency Service was focused on ensuring implementation in the field.

VI. International protection

A. Oral update on follow-up to the High Commissioner's Dialogues on Protection Challenges

43. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection (Policy and Law) and Senior Policy Adviser (Protection) jointly presented the update on follow-up to the High Commissioner's Dialogues on Protection Challenges, including the outcomes of the 2015 Dialogue on understanding and addressing the roots causes of displacement. The theme of the 2016 Dialogue, "children on the move", was also announced.

44. With respect to the 2015 Dialogue, the Committee recognized that humanitarian actors could only address the symptoms of displacement. The current humanitarian system was overwhelmed, and the international community had a responsibility to demonstrate leadership and consider solutions to mass displacement and mixed migratory flows, linking humanitarian and development interventions from the outset of a crisis and providing protection to refugee populations through orderly, safe and lawful pathways for admission. In this regard, delegations stressed the importance of seizing opportunities at key events in 2016, such as the World Humanitarian Summit and the 30 March meeting on pathways for admission of Syrian refugees. Emphasizing the need for an exchange of views on a more well-defined theme, States commended the choice of the 2016 Dialogue.

45. The Deputy Director welcomed the interest in the 2016 theme. This would, indeed, allow for a more focused discussion on a topic which was preoccupying UNHCR in many parts of the world. In response to a question on the mainstreaming of protection, she assured the Committee that UNHCR was working on integrating protection in the global clusters that it led or co-led. UNHCR provided regular training at the global and field levels and developed tools and standards on protection, which were implemented through the global clusters. Guidance outlined in the statement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on the "Centrality of protection in humanitarian action" had been crucial for the promotion of cohesion and ownership of protection across all sectors of the humanitarian response.

B. Oral update on the ExCom conclusion(s)

46. The ExCom Rapporteur outlined the progress made to date. Earlier in March, States had agreed to proceed with the two themes adopted for 2016, as part of the multi-year work plan, without modification: “youth” and “international cooperation from a protection and solutions perspective”. Discussion on the scope of the themes had revealed points of consensus, and it had been agreed that UNHCR would organize briefings on the remaining issues on which States had raised questions, including: the link between humanitarian and development programmes; comprehensive solutions strategies; the engagement of youth through education, training and livelihood opportunities; and the global youth consultations. Some States had also requested that new points be included in the scope of both themes and in this regard, language would be proposed by the Rapporteur. Another meeting of States would be convened following the briefings.

47. Delegations welcomed the constructive approach taken as well as the adoption of the multi-year work plan, which provided greater predictability. Member States were urged to work together in a humanitarian spirit towards the adoption of a conclusion in 2016. It was stressed that the process of negotiating the conclusions should be inclusive and consensus-based, and that it should balance the interests of various States. Delegations noted the linkages between the conclusion themes and a number of other processes, including the global refugee youth consultations and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants in September 2016.

VII. Programme/protection policy

48. The Deputy Director of DPSM, together with the Deputy Director responsible for comprehensive solutions in the Division of International Protection (DIP), presented conference room paper EC/67/SC/CRP.4 on UNHCR’s proposed strategic framework in the United Nations for the period 2018-2019, noting that the themes in the draft programme were aligned with UNHCR’s global strategic priorities (GSPs), as well as with the strategies and policy initiatives set by the High Commissioner for the current biennium. The draft programme had been provided to the Standing Committee for information, prior to review by the UN Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in July 2016, and review and adoption by the General Assembly towards the end of the year.

49. Several delegations expressed support for the overall content of the draft programme. Its alignment with the GSPs was welcomed, as ExCom had mandated the Office to use the GSPs as its fundamental results framework. Commenting on the substance, several delegations suggested amendments to the draft programme.

50. With reference to paragraph 21.7, one delegation recalled that General Assembly resolution 1166 (XII) mandated ExCom to provide guidance to the Office. Accordingly, it was suggested that paragraph (h), page 5, which required UNHCR to “systematically follow up on relevant recommendations in the plans of action emanating from international conferences and involving other humanitarian and development organizations...”, should be streamlined with reference to the role of ExCom reflected in resolution 1166 (XII).

51. Several comments addressed specific “expected accomplishments” or “indicators of achievement”. Regarding the “expected accomplishment” in paragraph (c), page 7, [“increased safety from violence and exploitation for refugees and others of concern, especially women and children”], one delegation, commenting on the protection needs of unaccompanied minors, proposed that UNHCR consider adding “decreasing number of dangerous secondary movements” and “increasing family reunification through resettlement” as additional indicators of achievement. It was noted that the only reference to international cooperation was in the context of durable solutions (paragraph (f), page 7).

Therefore, one delegation recommended that “international cooperation” be added as a separate, stand-alone “expected accomplishment”. In relation to voluntary repatriation and reintegration (paragraph (f), page 8), one delegation requested the inclusion of an indicator measuring increases in UNHCR’s collaboration and partnership for projects in areas of return, including livelihood opportunities. One delegation requested that UNHCR’s policy on alternatives to camps (paragraph 21.15) also be reflected, through the inclusion of a new “indicator of achievement” [e.g. “increased percentage of UNHCR operations supporting alternatives to camps”]. One delegation cautioned against expanding and further disaggregating the range of indicators, referring to the importance of alignment with the indicators set for the GSPs.

52. One delegation expressed concern about use of the adjective “irregular” as qualifying the reference to maritime movements in paragraph 21.11, page 8. The following alternative was suggested: “UNHCR will continue to be involved in the search or solutions for those rescued at sea, or stowaways, and who are in need of international protection.”

53. Several delegations emphasized the need to focus on UNHCR’s core mandate of refugee protection, and one delegation requested that a reference to UNHCR’s core mandate to find durable solutions for refugees be included on the first page of the draft programme. It was suggested that some issues mentioned in the draft programme – such as gender equality, environmental conservation, renewable energy, livelihoods, education and public health – would be best handled by specialized agencies which had core competencies in these areas, also given cost-effectiveness considerations. UNHCR’s involvement in situations of internal displacement should only be at the invitation of the State concerned. One delegation expressed reservation to the reference to UNHCR working “with partners to ensure that durable solutions to displacement form part of broader development and peacebuilding agendas”, contained in paragraph 21.16, noting that the Office’s mandate was limited to assistance, protection and solutions, and that any involvement in peacebuilding went beyond UNHCR’s purely humanitarian mandate.

54. One delegation objected to language such as the reference to “LGBT” in paragraph 21.10, page 8, which it noted was not acceptable to all delegations. Another delegation considered that the formulation of that paragraph was not consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Several delegations expressed support for the language and focus of paragraph 21.10 as drafted.

55. Several delegations raised questions about the process by which the draft programme had been developed, the role of Member States, and the next steps in its consideration. One delegation noted that the conference room paper had been received late by the Committee and proposed to defer discussion on the draft programme to the next meeting of the Standing Committee, thereby allowing time for consultations with capitals. Several delegations reiterated that ExCom was mandated to provide guidance to UNHCR in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1166 (XII) and sought clarification on the role of ExCom as opposed to the CPC, noting that the latter was not in a position to debate technical and substantive issues relating to the work of the Office. Another delegation noted that it would not be appropriate for any significant changes to be made in the context of the draft programme, as it was based on the GSPs, which had previously been approved by the Committee; any proposed changes would be better addressed in a separate discussion related to the GSPs.

56. The Deputy Director of DPSM thanked the Committee for its comments. With respect to paragraph (h) [following up recommendations emanating from international conferences], he stated that this was intended to refer to the many processes that UNHCR may be engaged in, and which may be directed to the UN system as a whole, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The reference did not displace the role of ExCom as UNHCR’s governing body, and the Committee would retain the opportunity to review which processes UNHCR was involved in during its annual meeting, when

approving the budget and programme of the Office for the year ahead. With respect to suggested changes to indicators, it was important to maintain coherence with the GSPs, which had been agreed upon and which were consistent with previous policies and commitments adopted by the Committee. He agreed that the issue of cost efficiency was important, noting that the Office prioritized local sourcing of products where possible. He also noted that UNHCR sought to adopt a multi-sectorial approach in its interventions in collaboration with other UN agencies; this point was reiterated with respect to gender equality by the Deputy Director of DIP. The Deputy Director of DPSM clarified that the reference to peacebuilding in paragraph 21.16 was not meant to broaden the mandate of the Office, but rather to acknowledge that UNHCR's humanitarian actions to facilitate voluntary return may occur in the context of peacebuilding operations.

57. The Director of DPSM regretted the late submission of the paper to the Committee due to delay in receiving the edited version back from the UN Secretariat. He clarified that this was a recurrent paper, produced by UNHCR every two years, and that it had been shared with the Committee for its information following the recommendation of the UN Secretariat that agencies share their draft programme with their governing bodies. For the previous biennium, the Committee had made two recommendations, which subsequently had been shared with the CPC. He added that in view of the concerns raised by delegations, the process for the next biennium would be revisited.

58. In light of the discussion, the Chair ruled that the Standing Committee was not in a position to adopt the draft decision contained in annex II of the conference room paper, where the Committee had been requested to take note of the biennial programme plan. He clarified that the draft programme had been shared with the Committee for information. It would accordingly be discussed by the CPC as planned, as part of its review of the proposed strategic framework for the United Nations as a whole, and the CPC would be informed of this Committee's discussion.

VIII. Programme budgets and funding

59. Introducing the item, the Deputy High Commissioner recalled the challenges the international community was facing in terms of new and unresolved conflicts and increasing global displacement. Consequently, UNHCR was no longer able to meet even the absolute minimum requirements of core protection and life-saving assistance to preserve dignity. She stressed that it was urgent to rethink the way the world financed the response to humanitarian crises and spoke about the numerous initiatives underway to achieve this.

60. The Controller and Director of DFAM and the Director of DER jointly presented the update on budgets and funding for 2015 and 2016 (EC/67/SC/CRP.7). The Controller reviewed the financial situation in 2015 and provided an update on the 2016 budget approved by the Executive Committee in October 2015, noting that four supplementary budgets, totalling US\$ 520.7 million, had since been established. The Director of DER noted that UNHCR's budget had more than doubled between 2010 and 2015, mirroring the increase in global forced displacement. Despite a record number of contributions and UNHCR's efforts to broaden its donor base, the gap between the 2015 budget and estimated funds available amounted to some US\$ 3.5 billion.

61. The Committee expressed appreciation for the detailed update, including the breakdown of information provided on new or emergency needs in recent supplementary appeals, which gave an overall picture of UNHCR's implementation rate and capacity, and for the transparency in showing the fluctuations in the ExCom approved budget. UNHCR was encouraged to share relevant information with partners and Member States when undertaking prioritization exercises and allocating resources to the field, especially given that roughly only half of UNHCR's budget was funded in 2015. UNHCR was encouraged

to continue expanding its donor base, and Member States were urged to provide robust support to UNHCR in 2016 and beyond.

62. The Controller thanked delegations for their generous support to UNHCR and assured the Committee that the Office would give its utmost attention to ensuring cost-effectiveness in managing the funds received. In response to a question on how UNHCR would ensure that record levels of funding were being programmed effectively, she said the Office was bolstering its financial and accounting systems, which would enhance decision-making as UNHCR allocated and prioritized resources. Responding to a question about additional supplementary budgets foreseen, she indicated that UNHCR was expecting additional needs in Europe. The Director of DER noted that the Office had reached an agreement with OCHA to ensure that UNHCR appeals were part of wider inter-agency humanitarian response plans and that the needs of refugees were reflected throughout.

63. The draft decision on budgets and funding for 2015 and 2016, as contained in the annex to the present document, was adopted.

IX. Any other business

64. The Committee agreed that, in 2016, it would continue to follow the practice of circulating the report electronically for review and adoption. The draft report of the sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee would be circulated by 15 April 2016. Two weeks would be allowed for review, during which time Member States could submit comments or corrections to language relating to their interventions, until 29 April. Amendments would be incorporated, as appropriate, and the report would be subsequently recirculated and considered adopted.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2015 and 2016

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decisions at its sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1132, para. 15 and A/AC.96/1143, para. 13 respectively) as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the sixty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2015,

Reaffirming the importance of responsibility sharing in solidarity with countries hosting refugees,

1. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fourth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2014-2015 Biennial Programme Budget amounting to US\$ 5,179.5 million for 2015,
2. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fifth session, approved revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2014-2015 Biennial Programme Budget (revised) amounting to US\$ 6,234.4 million for 2015,
3. *Notes* that the 2015 supplementary budgets amounted to US\$ 1,156.4 million for programmes benefiting global refugees and global statelessness, and projects for internally displaced persons,
4. *Notes* the reduction of US\$ 158.4 million in the Middle East and North Africa region;
5. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2015 to a final total of US\$ 7,232.4 million,
6. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-sixth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2016-2017 Biennial Programme Budget (A/AC.96/1147) amounting to US\$ 6,546.3 million for 2016,
7. *Notes* that the 2016 supplementary budgets currently amount to US\$ 520.7 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;
8. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2016 to a current total of US\$ 7,067.0 million,
9. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2016 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets, and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs, and
10. *Urges* Member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the annual budget for 2016.