



General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 November 2016
English
Original: French

Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sixty-seventh session

Summary record of the 700th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 6 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Staur (Denmark)

Contents

- Consideration and adoption of the biennial programme budget 2016-2017
- Review of the annual consultations with non-governmental organizations
- Other statements
- Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2017
- Consideration of the provisional agenda of the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee
- Election of officers
- Any other business
- Adoption of the report of the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee
- Closing of the session

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of the present document* to the English Translation Section, room E.6040, Palais des Nations, Geneva (trad_sec_eng@unog.ch).

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Executive Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.16-17477 (E) 091116 101116



* 1 6 1 7 4 7 7 *

Please recycle The recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Consideration and adoption of the biennial programme budget 2016-2017

(A/AC.96/1158 and Add.1)

1. **Ms. Clements** (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, in 2015, the proportion of forcibly displaced persons worldwide had reached the unprecedented level of one in every 113 persons. More than 65 million people had been forced from their homes by persecution, armed conflict or other threats, which marked a 50 per cent increase compared to the previous five years. The work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was made all the more complicated by the fact that even accessing those populations was a challenge, and half of its field staff regularly took huge risks in order to help them. However, helping people regain control of their lives came at a cost. In reviewing the revised programme budget for the 2016-2017 biennium, that context should be kept in mind, as well as the fact that millions of people were counting on UNHCR to deliver, at a time when displacement was increasing. Furthermore, it was to be expected that the number of forcibly displaced persons would continue to rise, at least until the end of 2016. The revised draft programme budget for the 2016-2017 biennium had been prepared on the basis of the global needs assessment, as recommended by the Executive Committee. The estimates were based more on the needs to which UNHCR had to respond rather than on the funds it expected to receive. Those needs were considerable. The comprehensive budget for 2016-2017 included the original annual budget of over US\$ 6.5 billion, plus US\$ 930 million in supplementary budgets established to address developments in Burundi, Europe, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and Afghanistan.

2. The 2016 budget had reached an unprecedented US\$ 7.4 billion, but as of the previous week, UNHCR had only half that amount in available funds. The shortfall was exacerbated in a number of woefully underfunded operations. Programmes in Somalia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, for instance, were struggling to make do with less than 20 per cent of the funding they needed. Such funding gaps had dramatic consequences for those in need and also compromised the long-term impact of UNHCR work. UNHCR therefore called on all States to provide it with sufficient resources to effectively fulfil its mandate. The largest source of unearmarked funding was the private sector. Funds allocated by the private sector had grown by 200 per cent between 2011 and 2015 and would continue to grow in 2016; UNHCR expected to raise over US\$ 310 million by the end of 2016. The proposed 2017 budget was just over US\$ 7.3 billion, representing a decrease of US\$ 123 million compared to the 2016 budget. Operations in Africa accounted for 32 per cent of the 2017 budget, operations in the Middle East and North Africa 29.7 per cent, operations in Asia and the Pacific 7.5 per cent and operations in the Americas 2 per cent. Those proportions were all equivalent to those in the 2016 budget. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had not raised any objections to the revised programme budget.

3. **Ms. Gaertner** (United States of America) said that the budget presented by UNHCR, which amounted to more than US\$ 7.3 billion per year for 2016 and 2017, was the largest in history and reflected the massive humanitarian needs of the millions of people all over the world affected by both new and protracted crises. The contributions of the United States to the UNHCR budget as the single largest donor, providing more than US\$ 1.5 billion in 2016, had naturally also reached a historic high. However, the gap between the funds needed and funds available continued to widen. The United States noted with satisfaction that UNHCR was working to develop its internal capacity, investing in its workforce and making its operating system more efficient and flexible. The United States urged all donors to support the work of UNHCR by providing unearmarked, robust and predictable contributions. Her country limited the proportion of its earmarked contributions, as earmarking reduced the flexibility UNHCR needed in order to respond to new emergencies

and promote the proper functioning of international cooperation. The United States supported the revised budget for 2016-2017 and encouraged UNHCR to be as transparent as possible in its execution and to organize more informal consultative meetings in order to highlight its strategic and budgetary priorities. It also encouraged UNHCR to prioritize its activities based on the needs and vulnerability of the persons affected by humanitarian crises.

4. **Mr. Nzita** (Observer for Angola) said that the draft budget for 2017 included a reduction in funding for Africa, even though the continent was being severely affected by the refugee crisis. Angola hoped that the continent's humanitarian needs would not be forgotten during the next budget adjustment in relation to UNHCR regional programmes. Angola noted with satisfaction that the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, held in New York in September 2016, had created an innovative funding instrument to respond to refugee crises in middle-income countries. The mechanism could help low and middle-income countries deal with the additional costs generated by hosting refugees. Angola supported the revised draft budget for 2016-2017.

5. **Ms. Clements** (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that unearmarked contributions were very important as they could be used more flexibly and quickly to fund new operations that were not necessarily predictable. The gap continued to grow between funds required and funds received, at a time when UNHCR would like to be able to respond to at least half of requirements identified. UNHCR would welcome the organization of additional consultation meetings to discuss strategic and budgetary priorities and consider other bilateral or multilateral mechanisms the States members of the Executive Committee might find useful with a view to enhancing transparency. Responding to the observer for Angola, she said that the revised draft budget for 2016-2017 did not propose a reduction in resources for Africa; on the contrary, it provided for a net increase of US\$ 190 million for the continent, including additional resources to address the situation in Burundi and Yemen. The only reduction in the budget for Africa was in relation to Chad, given that its population had decreased compared to previous years.

6. **The Chairperson** gave an overview of the revised draft budget for 2016-2017, as presented in the draft general decision on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1158). He took it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the draft general decision.

7. *It was so decided.*

Review of the annual consultations with non-governmental organizations

8. **Ms. Kashmiri** (Rapporteur for annual consultations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) said that the annual consultations with NGOs, which had taken place in Geneva in June 2016 on the theme of youth, had provided an opportunity for 30 youth delegates to meet with 520 representatives from 200 organizations in 87 countries. It had been concluded that UNHCR, NGOs and Member States should establish a definition of the term "youth" that was standardized across all United Nations agencies and partners, collect disaggregated data on youth, include youth in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation, and engage youth with rights-based programming that met their specific needs. The young delegates had stressed during the consultations that they could not be specifically taken into account in the absence of statistics on their numbers. It was therefore crucial that Member States and UNHCR generated and used data disaggregated by age and sex pertaining to adolescents and children in humanitarian crisis situations. Lastly, all the participants had highlighted the challenges and risks faced by young stateless persons and the close link between the absence of identity documents and violations of their rights.

9. **Mr. Ó Haodha** (Ireland) welcomed the commitment shown by UNHCR to regular, comprehensive and frank dialogue with NGO partners. With 38 per cent of the UNHCR budget entrusted to partners, it was important that the right partnership policies were implemented. In that regard, while Ireland appreciated the efforts made by UNHCR to amend its rules on procurement, it drew attention to the sometimes onerous demands made on NGOs under certain procedures. Regarding the annual consultations with NGOs held in 2016, Ireland welcomed the recommendation made at the session on sexual and gender minorities among young refugees to the effect that humanitarian agencies and service providers should ensure that staff were trained in providing a safe, welcoming space that was sensitive to the needs of young LGBTI refugees.

10. **Ms. Gaertner** (United States of America) said that her country encouraged Governments, civil society and UNHCR to build upon the outcomes of national and international consultations with young refugees and, in that context, to proactively identify ways to engage young people in humanitarian protection and assistance programmes. The United States wished to know how UNHCR planned to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the report on the 2016 annual consultations with NGOs. On the relationship with NGOs more generally, it wished to know what decision UNHCR had made on partner personnel costs and how it had planned for those costs in the 2017 budget.

11. **Mr. Küche** (Germany) noted with satisfaction that one of the recommendations arising from the Global Youth Refugee Consultations — the adoption of a conclusion on youth by the Executive Committee — had been or would soon be implemented.

12. **Ms. Clements** (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees), responding to the question from the United States delegation on UNHCR financing of partner personnel costs, said that calls for funds would be made to cover those costs.

Other statements

13. **Mr. Avognon** (Chairperson, UNHCR Staff Council) welcomed the High Commissioner's commitment to continuing to invest in the UNHCR workforce. With regard to the participation of staff in decision-making processes, the Staff Council had cautioned the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner on the temptation to resort to parallel mechanisms that gave the impression of a move to exclude staff from decision-making processes that affected them. On two separate matters, the Staff Council welcomed the initiative by management to start addressing issues of inclusion, diversity and gender in UNHCR, and stressed the need for all stakeholders to maintain their commitment to ensuring the safety of UNHCR staff operating in unstable areas where they were at high risk.

14. **Mr. Alakhder** (Observer for Libya) asked how countries affected by conflict, which often faced numerous difficulties, were expected to ensure the protection of UNHCR staff present in their territory.

Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2017

Consideration of the provisional agenda of the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee

15. **The Chairperson** drew the delegations' attention to decisions 2 to 6, which, respectively, concerned the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2017; observer participation in meetings of the Standing Committee in 2016-2017; the provisional agenda of the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee; the simultaneous distribution of documents of the Executive Committee; and the participation of intergovernmental organizations in private meetings. The decisions would be annexed to

the report of the current session, which would be submitted for adoption at the end of the session. With regard to the decision on observer participation in meetings of the Standing Committee in 2016-2017, a number of States and organizations had made official requests to participate in the meetings of the Standing Committee as observers, namely Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Jamaica, Lithuania, Malaysia, Nepal, Panama, Paraguay, Zimbabwe, the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council and the International Development Law Organization. Those requests being in order, he proposed that the names of the States and organizations concerned should be added to the agreed text of the draft decision.

16. *It was so decided.*

17. **The Chairperson** said he took it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the five decisions in question.

18. *It was so decided.*

Election of officers

19. **Mr. Reyes Castro** (Mexico) nominated Ms. McCarney (Canada) for the office of Chairperson of the Executive Committee.

20. **Mr. Kampyongo** (Zambia) seconded the nomination.

21. *Ms. McCarney (Canada) was elected Chairperson of the Executive Committee by acclamation.*

22. **The Chairperson** said that, in accordance with the decision taken at the Committee's sixty-fourth session, a member from the Group of Asian States was to serve as first Vice-Chairperson. He suggested that the Executive Committee should be informed of the name of the candidate once it was known and that the candidate should then be elected by silent procedure.

23. *It was so decided.*

24. **Mr. Elgizouli** (Sudan) nominated Mr. Delmi (Algeria) for the office of second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.

25. **Mr. Plavčan** (Slovakia) seconded the nomination.

26. *Mr. Delmi (Algeria) was elected second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee by acclamation.*

27. **Ms. Hakala** (Finland) nominated Ms. Duong (Switzerland) for the office of Rapporteur.

28. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) seconded the nomination.

29. *Ms. Duong (Switzerland) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

30. **Ms. McCarney** (Canada) said that she was honoured to have been elected as Chairperson of the Executive Committee. The leadership of her predecessor, Mr. Staur, would serve as an inspiration to her, and she would endeavour to follow his example. The high-level events organized in recent years signalled a year of opportunity, and she pledged to work with all delegations in a spirit of openness and transparency. She planned to pursue the commitment of UNHCR to the principles of humanitarianism and to the non-political nature of refugee protection and looked forward to celebrating at the next session the many successes that would have been achieved over the course of the year.

Any other business

31. As no delegation had any issues to raise, the agenda item was considered closed.

Adoption of the report of the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee

(document without a symbol, distributed in the meeting room)

32. **The Chairperson** briefly introduced the draft report of the sixty-seventh session. Sections I and II provided an overview of the work carried out during the session; section III contained the conclusions on international protection as well as the five decisions adopted by the Executive Committee; and lastly, the annex contained the list of decisions taken by the Standing Committee in 2016 and a summary of the general debate prepared by the Chairperson. The final version of the report would be submitted to the Third Committee of the General Assembly as an addendum to the annual report of the High Commissioner.

33. *The draft report of the Executive Committee on the work of the sixty-seventh session was adopted.*

Closing of the session

34. **Mr. Grandi** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that over the four days of the current session, 13,000 persons had fled violence in South Sudan, 10,000 migrants had been rescued off the coasts of Italy and Libya, more than 250,000 persons had been besieged in Aleppo, Syria, and hundreds of thousands of persons were preparing to flee Mosul, Iraq. It was therefore not surprising that the discussions had been infused with a sense of urgency. It was crucial that the fundamental commitment to the principle of protection remained the central pillar of UNHCR engagement and that the Committee ensured that that commitment was translated into practice and drove policies and actions. Finding solutions to the complex crises of today involved developing shared actions, policies and programmes and establishing close connections between various stakeholders with the necessary influence and resources (humanitarian actors, Governments, civil society, the media, NGOs, businesses, academia, donors, municipalities, faith-based groups, displaced persons and stateless persons). It was also necessary to enhance connections between host countries and the institutions that offered steadfast support to refugees and displaced persons, so that the contribution of host countries was recognized and sustained support was provided to countries of origin striving to create the conditions that would allow their citizens to return home. Forging such connections was at the heart of the work of UNHCR and the United Nations. The Committee must make the concepts of responsibility-sharing and solidarity that underpinned the recent New York Declaration part of its vocabulary and make them tangible, as members of the Committee had asked in the context of applying the comprehensive refugee response framework. Some members of the Committee had noted that, for the first time, the framework brought together systematically, consistently, decisively and above all predictably a number of elements that were already part of the responses to some crises, such as the engagement of humanitarian and development actors from the outset of crises, private sector investment, innovative approaches and opening up job opportunities, and a mechanism for predictably defining the contributions of countries of origin, host countries and third countries.

35. In his view, it was crucial that the acute funding deficits in various operations in sub-Saharan Africa should be addressed, and he sincerely hoped that the New York Declaration would contribute to that end. Welcoming the call made by certain members of the Committee for a reduction in earmarked funding, he echoed the argument put forward by one delegation that it was a matter of trust in the ability of UNHCR to respond to compelling priorities. During his visits to field operations in the past year, he had met a large number of those affected by conflicts, who had spoken to him of their feelings of loss — of their families, their homes, a sense of stability, their vision of the future — and of

their exhaustion, their fear and their sense of alienation. Only by engaging in concrete responses to their plight and by living up to the hopes invested in UNHCR would the organization honour its commitments through true sharing of responsibility.

36. After an exchange of courtesies, **the Chairperson** declared the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees closed.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.