

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

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**Report of the seventy-first meeting of the Standing
Committee (6-8 March 2018)**

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Suraya Dalil (Afghanistan), opened the meeting.

II. Adoption of the Standing Committee Work Programme for 2018

2. The Committee adopted the agenda for the meeting (EC/69/SC/CRP.1/Rev.1) and the 2018 work programme (EC/69/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

III. Regional activities and global programmes

A. Regional updates

3. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) described the global displacement situation resulting from both new and worsening crises, highlighting the gap in financial resources which, in some countries, had led to difficult living conditions and gaps in key services. He drew attention to the heavy burden faced by the major host countries. Despite this, they increasingly provided access to national services and adopted inclusive policies, even when the resources to meet national requirements were limited.

4. He also addressed the issue of fraud and corruption, with allegations having recently surfaced in Kenya and Uganda, and highlighted some of the measures the Office was taking in response, in close cooperation with the concerned governments and partners. While this issue would be discussed in greater detail during the discussion on the work of the Inspector General's Office (see paragraphs 42-47), the Assistant High Commissioner assured the Committee that UNHCR took these allegations very seriously and that it was taking all the necessary administrative, management and investigative measures to address them.

(a) Africa

5. The Director of the Africa Bureau updated the Committee on UNHCR's operations in sub-Saharan Africa, where the largest proportion of displaced persons in the world was hosted. He highlighted the deteriorating situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the ongoing conflicts in the Central African Republic, Nigeria and South Sudan. He also drew attention to the chronically underfunded operations in the region. The 2018 budget, which presently stood at \$2.8 billion, was currently only funded at 5 per cent. The World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners were facing similar challenges; 2 million refugees across 9 countries had their food rations decreased last year, with further cuts expected in 2018. With this in mind, finding new ways of working was not a choice but a necessity, and African governments were to be applauded for demonstrating strong leadership in applying the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF).

6. The Committee expressed concern about the rising number of new refugees in the region, including those fleeing to Uganda from South Sudan. The increasing displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recurring violence in the Central African Republic and the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin were also cause for alarm. Food insecurity across the continent was a problem, and ration cuts in some countries, including Rwanda, were posing enormous challenges. There was a call for strategies to be developed to address the regional dimensions of the Central African Republic and the Mali situations. Allegations of corruption in the Uganda refugee operation were also raised. The

concerned delegation conveyed that the allegations were being taken very seriously and outlined the measures being taken by the Government to address accountability and transparency, to strengthen the refugee response in the country and to initiate investigative and disciplinary actions. While noting the need for the allegations to be fully addressed, the Committee stressed that this issue should not divert attention away from the important work being carried out in the refugee operation in Uganda, including the support from the host communities and the Government's progressive refugee policies.

7. Several delegations highlighted the importance of addressing the situation of refugees with special needs, including women at risk and victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Preventing SGBV should be considered life-saving and, therefore, a priority area. The need for a strong protection lead in situations of internal displacement and effective coordination in a number of operations, including in Cameroon, was also stressed. While asylum space remained strong on the continent, UNHCR was called on to continue advocating for the principle of non-refoulement.

8. Member States called for increasing attention to political solutions and addressing the root causes of conflict, including socioeconomic factors. Humanitarian assistance must also be accompanied by development assistance. As one delegation put it, complementarity between the humanitarian, development and peace and security pillars was vital to addressing the refugee crises in the region. Several delegations referred to the important work being done to integrate refugees in national health and education systems, such as in Djibouti, and to expand livelihood opportunities. Emphasis was also placed on self-reliance and skills training, which were important in the context of return and successful reintegration.

9. Delegations applauded the continued generosity of host countries and communities, as well as the important steps taken in Africa towards the implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, including the application of the CRRF in countries such as Ethiopia. The CRRF offered an important opportunity to help find durable solutions for refugees and garner greater support for host communities. The burden of hosting large numbers of refugees had serious financial implications on the national resources of developing countries in Africa. It was, therefore, crucial that the needs of refugees and receiving States be supported equitably by the international community.

10. With respect to solutions, UNHCR's efforts to bilaterally engage with host countries was welcome, and the Office was urged to continue supporting voluntary returns. This had to be accompanied by reintegration projects and development assistance so that returns would be sustainable. In line with the commitments made under the New York Declaration, resettlement and complementary pathways should be further explored. Initiatives to support local integration, including in Zambia and more recently Guinea-Bissau, were also highlighted. Support for ending statelessness was also conveyed, including in the context of the expected adoption of a protocol to the African Union Charter on the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness in Africa.

11. The Committee echoed the concern that UNHCR's operations in sub-Saharan Africa remained underfunded, despite hosting the largest number of persons of concern. This compromised the quality of protection and assistance afforded to refugees, with gaps in critical areas such as shelter and education. While African countries continued to keep their borders open to refugees, these efforts should be matched by commitments from the international community. Finally, tribute was paid to UNHCR staff working in the region, and attacks on humanitarian workers were condemned.

12. In relation to food insecurity, the Director highlighted the importance of joint fundraising and advocacy efforts by UNHCR and WFP. With respect to the funding gap and prioritization, he spoke about the importance of ensuring that the critical needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) were also considered alongside those of refugees. In response to the call for increased coordination in Cameroon, the Deputy Director of the

Bureau recalled that UNHCR and the Office of the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had agreed on an arrangement under which UNHCR would provide leadership for the mixed situation. Today, however, with more IDPs than refugees in the country, it was agreed that OCHA would assume coordination for the IDP response, while UNHCR would maintain leadership for the refugee response.

(b) Middle East and North Africa

13. The Deputy Director covering the Iraq and Syria situations provided an update on UNHCR's programmes in the Middle East and North Africa, drawing attention to the magnitude and complexity of displacement in the region, but also to the high levels of compassion and solidarity.

14. There was broad support for UNHCR's efforts to protect and assist persons of concern in the region and for its staff who continued to operate in challenging security environments. Delegations echoed concern for the Iraq, Syria and Yemen emergencies and outlined the support they were providing to the international response. Several States lamented the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in parts of the region, including in eastern Ghouta in the Syrian Arab Republic, and called for political solutions to be found to the ongoing conflicts.

15. The importance of coherent international response to internal displacement, especially in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, was also emphasized, as were the challenges presented by mixed movements across the Gulf of Aden and along the central Mediterranean route. In this context, UNHCR was commended for its achievements in Libya, especially its advocacy on alternatives to detention. More broadly, emphasis was placed on efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV.

16. One delegation stressed the chronic underfunding for the situation of Saharawi refugees living in camps near Tindouf, Algeria, compounding their vulnerability. It commended the efforts aimed at better assessing the needs of those refugees, consistent with their numbers, pending their voluntary return in safety and dignity, in conformity with the United Nations peace plan. Another underscored the need to register the refugee population in the camps near Tindouf, indicating this was in line with UNHCR's mandate and recent United Nations Security Council resolutions. It was stated that efforts to evaluate the cost of hosting refugees should include only those countries with a genuine commitment to hosting refugees.

17. The Deputy Director echoed the gratitude expressed for the generosity shown by countries hosting large numbers of refugees, particularly those neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic. He thanked delegations for their support of the "Regional refugee and resilience plan in response to the Syria crisis" (3RP) and other appeals, but noted that additional funds were still required to meet the growing humanitarian needs in the region. He stressed the importance of multi-year and unearmarked funding in this regard. The Deputy Director agreed that conditions in the Syrian Arab Republic were not conducive to returns but acknowledged the need to ease the pressure on host countries. While UNHCR was supporting IDPs and refugees who returned on their own, States were encouraged to facilitate other solutions for refugees, including expanding resettlement programmes and increasing access to complementary pathways for admission. The Head of the Unit covering the Iraq and Syria situations advised that UNHCR had distributed around \$300 million in cash assistance to Iraqi and Syrian refugees in 2017 and briefly outlined the benefits this provided, including protection.

18. Responding to comments on statelessness, the Deputy Director highlighted a number of key achievements in the region, including support for birth registration and legal aid and counselling in the context of the Syria situation. This had brought the number of Syrian children being born without documentation from 30 per cent to 2.5 per cent. He also

mentioned the important recent conference on “belonging and identity” convened by the Government of Tunisia, in partnership with UNHCR and the League of Arab States.

19. The Deputy Director clarified that UNHCR’s activities in Yemen had increased over the past year, with international staff relocated temporarily when required by security considerations. In relation to the emergency transit mechanism in Niger, she confirmed that larger scale evacuations were planned for 2018 but that implementation would depend on the fulfilment of two conditions: (i) the completion of the transit and departure facility in Tripoli; and (ii) an increase in international resettlement quotas since Niger would not accept evacuees unless they could subsequently depart for third countries.

(c) The Americas

20. The Director of the Americas Bureau provided an update on developments in the region since the adoption of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action in 2014. She described progress on the quality of asylum initiative; the eradication of statelessness; comprehensive solutions, with an emphasis on local integration; and solidarity with countries in the north of Central America and the Caribbean. She noted numerous good practice examples by States which were relevant to the process leading to the adoption of the global compact on refugees. She also highlighted the contributions of the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (commonly referred to by its Spanish acronym, “MIRPS”) to protection and solutions for displaced and stateless persons, including through enhanced regional cooperation and shared responsibility.

21. Delegations welcomed numerous concrete accomplishments in the Americas since the adoption of the Brazil Plan of Action. This included the amendment or adoption of national legislative frameworks, aligning them with international protection standards. The need to build on a common understanding of protection standards through progressive policies, and innovative tools and approaches, was underscored. At the subregional level, the MIRPS had also produced tangible results. Efforts to develop protection mechanisms for displaced persons in Central America, including through humanitarian admission and private sponsorship programmes, were emphasized. Delegations called for greater complementarity between regional and subregional mechanisms, with the exchange of good practices and lessons learned. Financial assistance was crucial to helping ensure that good practices translated into a more equitable and predictable response.

22. The Committee underscored the increased number of countries joining the quality of asylum initiative aimed at improving norms and procedures. They also highlighted progress on registration and documentation, and the identification of special needs. A number of States described ongoing efforts to protect stateless persons and reduce cases of statelessness, including by promoting birth registration and establishing national statelessness determination procedures, and UNHCR was encouraged to further support such initiatives. On solutions, local integration was being promoted across the Americas through access to labour markets, livelihood programmes and the creation of inclusive environments. Attention was also drawn to the establishment and expansion of the protection transfer arrangement, an international protection mechanism that facilitated the resettlement of vulnerable displaced persons from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. UNHCR was encouraged to continue to seek additional partners and financial support to reinforce this mechanism over the long term.

23. In Colombia, UNHCR’s contributions to the re-establishment of the rights of the victims of conflict, including IDPs, were acknowledged. UNHCR was urged to further support solutions for IDPs and access to self-reliance programmes, and to assess the gaps in protection when humanitarian actors scale down their operations. On Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of), UNHCR was encouraged to raise awareness of the situation and develop contingency plans. Of particular concern in this context were cases of human trafficking, sex work and SGBV.

24. The Director recognized the relevance of regional approaches to mitigate and address protection crises and to find sustainable solutions, including for stateless persons. In Colombia, UNHCR remained committed to supporting the peace process and to responding to ongoing needs, together with the support of World Bank and other partners. She echoed the concerns raised over the increase in discrimination and xenophobia towards Venezuelans and highlighted efforts to foster peaceful coexistence between communities. She underscored the importance of the ongoing implementation of the MIRPS as a contribution to the CRRF and also acknowledged the commitments made in San Pedro Sula, including “twinning” with other countries to strengthen asylum systems. She noted the challenges associated with the development of protection systems in States and territories in the Caribbean receiving asylum-seekers.

(d) Asia and the Pacific

25. The Director of the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific presented the update on UNHCR’s operations in the region, highlighting UNHCR’s scaled-up operations on behalf of refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. With respect to the Afghan refugee situation, solutions remained contingent upon developments inside Afghanistan, where there was increasing insecurity. The Director noted progress on solutions in Sri Lanka and with respect to the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, and underscored the importance of partnerships with a wide range of actors.

26. The Committee expressed concern over the dire situation of refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh, including congestion and the lack of sanitation and lighting, and welcomed UNHCR’s expanding operational capacity. Strengthened protection, including for vulnerable groups, registration (including for newborns) and efforts to prevent and address SGBV were considered critical. Delegations also called for the next humanitarian response plan to better acknowledge the immense strain that the sudden and massive influx had on Bangladesh and that it be informed by a gender-based analysis. Regarding the bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar on voluntary returns, UNHCR’s involvement was considered essential and was underscored by numerous delegations. Returns were considered premature, and delegations called for unimpeded humanitarian access to Rakhine State in Myanmar.

27. Regarding the Afghan refugee situation, delegations commended the continuing generosity of the two main host countries, citing in particular the expanded access to education and healthcare in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the extension of the “proof of registration” cards for refugees in Pakistan. Support was also expressed for the registration of undocumented Afghans in Pakistan. Attention was drawn to the need for reintegration assistance in Afghanistan, in support of the Government, with greater linkages between the humanitarian and development sectors. The increasing number of IDPs in Afghanistan was also a concern. UNHCR’s commitment to undertake an external evaluation of cash programming for returnees, including whether undocumented Afghans were negatively impacted by the programme, was also welcomed. The “Solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries” remained the main framework for joint interventions. UNHCR was asked to provide in its annual update the facts and figures related to the voluntary repatriation and resettlement of Afghan refugees as well as the progress and shortcomings of the strategy. More broadly, it was suggested that the regional updates include comparable data about burden-sharing in each major refugee situation as an introductory step to assess the gaps in international cooperation and to promote burden- and responsibility sharing, as called for in General Assembly resolution 72/150 on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

28. Several delegations highlighted the need for strengthened efforts to bring protracted refugee situations to an end, in line with the principle of international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing. UNHCR was encouraged to continue efforts to ensure access to

territory and to fair refugee status determination procedures, as well as to promote alternatives to detention and protection-sensitive systems for the management of mixed movements in the region. Delegations welcomed the progress made on statelessness, while highlighting the vulnerabilities of the Rohingya population which had increased markedly over the last year.

29. In response to caution expressed regarding premature returns to Myanmar, the Director emphasized that the conditions for voluntary repatriation were not yet in place. Despite the recent bilateral agreement by the two governments, voluntary returns must be based on an informed decision and complemented by humanitarian access. Regarding contingency planning for the imminent monsoon season, he described the mitigation measures being taken but highlighted the serious challenges associated with the topography of the land. Responding to a question about how UNHCR is ensuring that the Rohingya are consulted in the response, the Director indicated that UNHCR had established a large community outreach network among the refugees in Bangladesh to ensure their needs were addressed. In terms of the impact of the situation on Bangladesh, multi-stakeholder engagement was necessary to support the Government and the host communities. The lessons learned from the refugee-affected and hosting areas (RAHA) programme in Pakistan could be helpful in this regard.

30. Regarding the Afghan refugee situation, the Director emphasized the need for greater support to increase the absorption capacity in Afghanistan and to bolster the pilot projects the Government was trying to implement in this regard. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were also looking at how to support unregistered returns, as these individuals were also in need of support.

(e) Europe

31. The Director of the Europe Bureau focused on key developments that had occurred in the region over the last year, recalling the profound impact of the large-scale arrivals in 2015 and 2016 on societies and systems. She also outlined the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead. The latter included maintaining access to territory, countering discrimination and xenophobia, and ensuring continued advocacy on alternatives to detention.

32. While there was an overall downward trend in the number of people seeking protection in Europe in 2017 compared to 2016, delegations noted that large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, including unaccompanied and separated children, were still arriving, often as part of mixed flows from the Middle East and North Africa. Delegations outlined the challenges associated with protecting, assisting and finding solutions for these arrivals, and expressed concern that people continued to undertake dangerous journeys along the Mediterranean routes that left them vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of criminal activity and exploitation. Many delegations also expressed concern about forced displacement in and from Ukraine, with a delegation cautioning that the situation risked becoming a “forgotten crisis”.

33. A collaborative international approach was widely recognized as necessary for saving lives and finding lasting solutions for refugees, IDPs and stateless people in the region. Several delegations outlined the contributions that they were making in this regard, with some affirming their commitment to the prompt conclusion of negotiations on the reform of the Common European Asylum System. While still ensuring access to protection, others underscored the sovereign right of States to manage their own borders, as well as the need to clearly distinguish between the rights of refugees and migrants. UNHCR was encouraged to identify lessons learned and good practices from the region’s response to large movements of refugees that could be applied to other situations.

34. The Director thanked the Committee for the significant political and financial support that UNHCR had received from and for the region. With respect to Ukraine, she

noted that the humanitarian situation remained critical, especially in areas along the “contact line”. Gaining predictable and sustained access for humanitarian actors to deliver aid, and ensuring that people had full access to their rights were two of the major operational challenges faced by UNHCR in the country. Turning to Greece and Italy, the Director stressed that UNHCR would remain operationally engaged in both States and thanked each of them for their support. She reiterated the Office’s position that those seeking protection on the Greek islands should be moved as quickly as possible to the mainland.

35. The Director reassured the Committee that preventing and reducing cases of statelessness remained a priority for UNHCR. She urged the 30 per cent of European States that were not already party to one or both of the statelessness conventions to consider accession, noting that the Office remained ready to provide the necessary support. She also acknowledged the request for more information on the risk of child statelessness and advised that this would be an area of joint collaboration between UNHCR and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 2018. On protection monitoring, the Director confirmed that UNHCR was present in many areas of arrival. UNHCR has developed a border monitoring tool to allow the Office to trace issues of concern and engage with relevant authorities. Efforts to identify people with specific needs, including psychological support, had been strengthened. The Director thanked the States that had participated in the emergency relocation mechanism for people in Greece and Italy, as well as those that had engaged in broader asylum and migration reform. She encouraged further solidarity between European States, including increased relocation and resettlement quotas.

B. Global programmes

36. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) presented the update on global programmes (EC/69/SC/CRP.3), which aimed to improve the quality of life of persons of concern in various sectors, including public health, education, shelter and settlements, livelihoods, and energy. He also highlighted developments in cash-based programming, registration and identity management, and data collection.

37. The Committee welcomed the increased collaboration with partners, including development actors, on global programmes. Supporting the inclusion of refugees in national development plans was underscored. Delegations also noted that local organizations and responders played an increasingly important role in the implementation of programmes, helping to reduce costs, and UNHCR was commended for strengthening their capacity. The need for strategic partnerships that reinforced the technical capacity of host countries and national systems was stressed, as was the importance of leveraging technology to find solutions to shelter, health and data-related challenges, including through work with private sector donors. UNHCR was urged to expand interventions in the area of renewable energy. With respect to education and health, UNHCR was commended for responding to critical gaps, particularly in relation to women and girls. UNHCR’s commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention and response, and to the integration of mental health care into primary health care, was acknowledged. Access to sexual and reproductive health care was also highlighted.

38. While progress on cash programming was noted, UNHCR was encouraged to develop tools to assess protection risks associated with the use of cash, to carry out feasibility studies according to the operational contexts, and to better measure its impact, including on health, education, and water and sanitation. Further information on the use of single cash transfer platforms was also requested. The Office was called upon to strengthen its community-based approach and to factor in gender-specific vulnerabilities, including when carrying out cash-based interventions. UNHCR was also encouraged to work more closely with women’s groups to better gauge their needs.

39. Delegations acknowledged UNHCR's efforts to improve data capacity and welcomed plans to establish a joint data centre with the World Bank, which would facilitate joint needs assessments and monitoring. States called for the expanded collection and use of biometric data for registration and documentation purposes to ensure effective humanitarian responses, including in the pursuit of third country solutions such as resettlement and complementary pathways. The importance of collecting and using sex and age disaggregated data, as well as mainstreaming data collection on persons with disabilities to better inform programming, was emphasized.

40. The Director of DPSM acknowledged the need for more efficient and effective global programmes in the context of growing numbers of refugees, and underscored the importance of working with partners in this regard. He explained efforts to ensure that systems were interoperable and that UNHCR data was compatible with that of its partners. Engaging with development actors, such as the World Bank, also required data that supported evidence-based decision-making. On mental health, UNHCR was helping identify the needs and advocate that resources were channelled where they were most needed. In emergencies, he noted that UNHCR promoted a more sustainable approach that took into account the longer-term consequences of displacement from the outset. Responding to questions on collaboration with WFP, the Director highlighted innovations in the humanitarian response in Uganda, describing how biometric information enabled both organizations to compare data in real-time and achieve better results. Regarding cash programming, he noted that UNHCR aimed to use a common cash delivery platform and that some 60 per cent of the cash assistance delivered last year was multipurpose in nature.

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

41. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the agenda item on management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources. She provided an update on the Headquarters review process, including the recent creation of a Division for Resilience and Solutions, and other efforts to strengthen efficiencies and enhance operational delivery. This includes the work being pursued in the context of the "grand bargain" workstreams. She also outlined some of the measures UNHCR was taking to ensure ethical behaviour in UNHCR's workforce and to prevent misconduct, sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The Deputy High Commissioner briefed the Committee on the progress UNHCR was making in the area of risk management. This included the launching of the "risk management 2.0" initiative, which aimed to strengthen management systems and address the root causes of corruption and fraud. In closing, she noted the current funding gap, emphasizing the importance of timely contributions to ensure the continuity of UNHCR's vital programmes.

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

42. The Inspector General updated the Committee on the status of oversight reforms, including the improved integration of the UNHCR Audit Service of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) into UNHCR's oversight architecture; the progress in establishing a new Strategic Oversight Service; and the ongoing work of the Investigation Service, particularly in relation to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and the current investigations into allegations of misconduct in Kenya and Uganda.

43. Delegations welcomed the efforts to strengthen oversight in UNHCR, including the creation of the Strategic Oversight Service, which was achieved without additional cost to the organization, as well as the direct relationship now established between the Inspector

General's Office and OIOS. Support was expressed for the overarching oversight policy which was under development by the Inspector General's Office. Member States appreciated the efforts taken to strengthen risk management but encouraged UNHCR to build on these efforts, including increasing staff awareness and understanding of the approach. Delegations took note that the OIOS review of the second line of defense would soon be made public, along with UNHCR's response, and queried when similar reviews would be undertaken on the first and third lines of defense.

44. Delegations recognized the increasing workload of the Investigation Service and highlighted the importance of having sufficient resources to ensure an effective response. Member States also expressed appreciation for proactive investigations and asked to be kept informed of the follow-up actions taken in the concerned operations. Implementing lessons learned from investigations was also welcomed. There were calls for a commitment to due process and procedural fairness, to resolving cases within a reasonable amount of time and for adequate protection of whistle-blowers. Concern was also expressed regarding the level of impunity in some contexts. UNHCR's efforts to report on the investigations concerning Kenya and Uganda were welcomed, although calls were made by delegations for greater transparency from the outset. Ensuring maximum transparency and reporting to donors in a timely manner on all forms of misconduct was seen as essential in maintaining donor confidence and the trust of persons of concern.

45. The Committee voiced its strong concern over the rising number of allegations relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment allegations, with many governments reiterating their zero-tolerance policies and recognizing that this was also shared by UNHCR. Nevertheless, and although UNHCR had good systems in place, the commitments, policies and procedures needed to be implemented in order to be effective. A stronger approach was needed for preventing, reporting and dealing with such cases. This required adequate resourcing, including investment in training of staff and affiliates, both at Headquarters and in the field. UNHCR was called upon to ensure adherence to the code of conduct and to create a culture where everyone felt responsible for the safety and well-being of beneficiaries and staff.

46. The Deputy High Commissioner responded to the questions directed at management. She informed delegations that an annual disciplinary report was issued to all staff and that, this year, it had gone out under the cover of a note from the High Commissioner, stressing zero tolerance and highlighting the actions taken against two staff members in relation to sexual harassment. These reports, a summary of which could be made available, provided information about the types of allegations received and the management response when substantiated. She also indicated that UNHCR was in the process of preparing a communication to States with more information on the organization's approach to preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The Deputy High Commissioner also spoke about the need to strengthen controls vis-à-vis national partners and, more broadly, about the collective engagement of the United Nations on this issue. With respect to resources for investigations, she confirmed that any requests for additional resources to address challenges arising, such as in Kenya and Uganda, had been granted and that new situations, such as Uganda, would be given full consideration. More needed to be done, however, on the proactive side to strengthen monitoring and compliance.

47. The Inspector General thanked the Committee for its support. With respect to the comments on transparency and reporting to donors, she highlighted the need to find a balance between reporting and ensuring the investigation was not at risk due to an early release of information. It was also important to keep in mind that some allegations were unfounded or couldn't be substantiated due to a lack of evidence. This was why there was a much higher number of allegations than the number of cases opened for investigation. This did not mean that should more information be obtained, investigations could not be opened. In terms of information-sharing with other agencies, the network of investigators

in the United Nations system facilitated good collaboration. The Head of the Investigation Service noted that there were specific clauses on ethical behavior in UNHCR's partnership agreements and spoke about some of the specific measures undertaken to raise awareness among UNHCR's partners and to train their staff on investigations of misconduct. He also spoke about some of the initiatives to strengthen support to both witnesses and victims. The Chief of the UNHCR Audit Service in OIOS also took the floor to respond to questions on the second line of defense report, noting that it would be available in approximately 30 days, once comments from UNHCR management were received. The results were expected to inform the risk management 2.0 project and implementation of the Headquarters review. He took note of the need for a review of the first and third lines of defense, the former which had been somewhat covered through field audits.

V. Coordination

A. Strategic partnerships, including coordination

48. The Head of the Partnership and Coordination Service in the Division of External Relations (DER) provided an overview of UNHCR's efforts to strengthen partnerships, as well as key developments over the past year (EC/69/SC/CRP.4/Rev.1). In particular, and following a recommendation from the UNHCR Headquarters review, he noted that the Partnership and Coordination Service had been reconfigured to help ensure more strategic and coherent engagement with partners. An update on inter-agency coordination was also provided, with a focus on the refugee coordination model and support for IDPs in the context of cluster responsibilities.

49. The Committee welcomed UNHCR's efforts to expand and strengthen its relationships with United Nations partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development actors and other entities. In line with the multi-stakeholder approach envisaged in the New York Declaration, the early engagement of a broad range of actors was considered necessary for an effective and efficient international response to forced displacement. Such engagement helped break down operational silos and reduce costs, contributing to the achievement of the "grand bargain" commitments and to the Secretary-General's goals for reform of the development system. States expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration with NGOs and acknowledged the recent increase in funds disbursed to local and national partners, while noting the need to strike an appropriate balance with support for international NGOs. UNHCR was also commended for deepening its strategic partnership with the World Bank and for its increasingly targeted engagement with the private sector, as these partners played an important role in helping to find innovative and cost-effective solutions.

50. The Head of the Partnership and Coordination Service confirmed that the Service was working in full collaboration with the new Division of Resilience and Solutions to ensure that NGOs were better consulted. He reiterated that it was important to engage partners from the outset of a response and to ensure that the needs of persons of concern were placed at the centre of collective action. While UNHCR remained actively involved in the joint steering committee to advance humanitarian and development collaboration, consideration should be given to expanding its membership. Turning to cooperation with OCHA, the 2014 note on mixed situations remained relevant and a principals-level meeting was scheduled for March 2018 to explore areas for further collaboration, particularly in support of IDPs. The 2017 operational review of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement and the appointment of a Special Adviser on Internal Displacement were key developments in this regard.

B. Oral update on the comprehensive refugee response framework

51. In presenting the oral update on the CRRF, the Deputy Director for Comprehensive Responses in the Division of Resilience and Solutions focused on three key areas: the latest operational developments in Africa and the Americas, progress made in broadening partnerships and the way forward. Four countries – Belize, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia – had recently agreed to apply the CRRF, bringing the total number of countries and regions involved to 13.

52. The Committee applauded the leadership and generosity of countries hosting large numbers of refugees, especially those applying the CRRF. In welcoming the progress that had been made to date, there was a strong focus on the progressive measures being implemented by the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia, as well as the achievements of both the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in response to the Somali situation and the MIRPS in addressing forced displacement in the north of Central America. Donors played a key role in supporting these comprehensive approaches and in financing programmes that provided refugees with access to national services, including healthcare, education and employment opportunities. The CRRF was repeatedly highlighted as an opportunity to find durable solutions, with States urged to increase the number of resettlement places and to facilitate the conditions necessary for voluntary and sustainable return.

53. Forced displacement was widely recognized to be both a humanitarian and development challenge, requiring a “new way of working” by all involved in the response. Development actors needed to be engaged from the outset to help prevent protracted situations. UNHCR was commended for its strong focus on partnerships in guiding the application of the CRRF, especially its deepening relationship with the World Bank. However, the Office was also encouraged to further clarify the specific goals of the roll-out, to monitor and evaluate the outcomes, to establish a platform to share results and lessons learned, and to continue to feed this information into the process leading to the global compact on refugees.

54. The Deputy Director drew attention to the important role of a diverse range of States that were hosting large numbers of refugees but not formally applying the CRRF. He noted the importance of anchoring comprehensive approaches in regional institutions and outlined the work that UNHCR was doing with its partners to support the IGAD and MIRPS processes. In response to concerns about the decision by the United Republic of Tanzania to withdraw from the CRRF, he advised that UNHCR continued to cooperate with the Government and advocate for ongoing protection for refugees. Having identified education as a core component of the CRRF, the Deputy Director emphasized the significant improvements that had been made in this area, but also the work that still needed to be done.

VI. International protection

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

55. The Senior Policy Adviser to the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) provided an update on follow-up to the last three Dialogues on Protection Challenges and reviewed the outcomes of the 2017 Dialogue, which focused on the global compact on refugees. The latter served as an opportunity to take stock of the good practices and lessons that had emerged during the early application of the CRRF and outcomes of the five thematic discussions that took place earlier in the year. The draft global compact which was currently being discussed in formal consultations reflected the comments and suggestions received as part of this process.

56. The interventions focused on the 2017 Dialogue and the development of the global compact on refugees, with delegations expressing their continued commitment to the formal consultations process. As a neutral facilitator, it was important for UNHCR to consider all of the issues raised by States in a fair and transparent manner. In relation to the draft text of the compact, greater burden- and responsibility-sharing, including through a fair and equitable mechanism, needed to be better reflected, as had been repeatedly raised. There was also a call for no additional standards or commitments to be created. The voluntary, non-binding nature of the compact and the importance of respecting State sovereignty were mentioned, as was the need for more robust follow-up arrangements, including indicators on protection, gender and inclusion, and a stronger focus on protecting people with disabilities. The role of resettlement as a protection tool and expression of solidarity with refugee host countries was also raised.

57. The Senior Policy Advisor assured the Committee that many of the issues raised would be addressed in greater detail during the formal consultations. She acknowledged that it was sometimes challenging to strike the right balance in terms of the many comments and suggestions received, but reassured delegations that UNHCR was listening carefully and that the revised draft would reflect this. In particular, it would include stronger language on burden- and responsibility-sharing, root causes and cooperation with development actors. Acknowledging the need for clarity on the global support platform, she expressed appreciation for the initiative having been put forward. She also noted that the intent of the compact was to address gaps in the refugee response and not to capture every aspect of the international protection regime.

B. Oral update on the Executive Committee conclusions

58. The Rapporteur of the Executive Committee recalled that in 2015, the Committee adopted an indicative multi-year workplan for the conclusions on international protection in 2016-2017. Since then, conclusions were negotiated and adopted on: international cooperation from a protection and solutions perspective; youth; and machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons. An informal meeting was held in February 2018 to discuss the matter, where it was agreed not to embark on negotiations for a conclusion this year, given the limited time available due to the formal consultations process for the global compact on refugees. Nevertheless, Member States underlined the importance of continuing the conclusions process next year, during the seventieth session of the Executive Committee, which would be led by the next Rapporteur.

59. Two delegations took the floor and expressed support for the Rapporteur's proposal to postpone the negotiation of a conclusion on international protection this year, given the need to focus on the global compact on refugees. Recalling the multi-year workplan

adopted by consensus in 2015, one delegation noted that the only topic which had not yet been considered was on resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective. Consideration of this theme in 2019 was vital and would reinforce the aspects related to resilience and self-reliance in the global compact on refugees.

60. While noting that the multi-year workplan adopted in 2015 was indicative and open to modification, the Rapporteur acknowledged the importance of advancing discussion on the remaining topic and indicated that this would be his successor's responsibility.

VII. Programme budgets and funding

61. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) and the Director of DER jointly presented the paper on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018 (EC/69/SC/CRP.5). The Controller provided an update on the financial situation for 2017 and the 2018 requirements, while the Director of DER outlined key trends and highlighted the need for flexible funding.

62. The Committee recognized the need for greater financial support to UNHCR, particularly in the form of unearmarked funding, to ensure a flexible and predictable response to new and ongoing challenges. UNHCR was encouraged to strengthen its reporting on how unearmarked funding was used and the impact of multi-year funding, including in the context of the "grand bargain" commitments. There was a suggestion to establish an informal group to discuss unearmarked and multi-year funding for refugee responses, with a view to sharing good practices and engaging in dialogue on the balance between core funding and pledges. UNHCR was asked to clarify how it prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable in its responses and to link the budget with results. Open and transparent communication with States in terms of prioritization and the allocation of resources was key. Delegations queried how UNHCR's change management process would help gain efficiencies and reduce the gap between needs and resources, and how the CRRF would be reflected in the 2019 budget. Delegations urged UNHCR to review its criteria for issuing supplementary appeals to ensure that they truly focused on unforeseen and new emergencies.

63. Concern was expressed about the continued annual gap between the needs and the available resources. In this context, private sector partners played an important role in diversifying UNHCR's donor base. UNHCR was urged to redouble its efforts in this area, strengthening its strategic engagement with the private sector, engaging new donors and reaching out to non-traditional partners. In addition, the Office was asked to share lessons learned from successful fundraising campaigns.

64. In terms of whether UNHCR planned to produce a statement of assurance, the Controller outlined the measures that had been taken to strengthen the organization's risk-based approach. He confirmed that this would eventually lead to some kind of statement of assurance, though UNHCR had not yet decided on the model, which would allow the Office to highlight any weaknesses. In relation to cash flow, he explained that UNHCR entered its budget commitments and disbursed a significant amount of funds to implementing partners at the start of each year. This had an impact on resource availability and demonstrated the need for a steady income stream.

65. The Director of DER thanked the Committee for its continued support for UNHCR and reiterated the importance of unearmarked funding. She noted that UNHCR would prepare an update on the use of unearmarked funding for the next meeting of the Standing Committee in June. Multi-year funding was generally also beneficial, though contributions were relatively small and partly earmarked, and measuring its specific impact on operations presented challenges.

66. In response to a request for a report on the application of the programme support cost of 7 per cent, the Deputy High Commissioner indicated that this information was provided in UNHCR's 2016 report on unearmarked funding and that a report was being prepared for 2017. In terms of the continued utility of the needs-based budget, in view of the large proportion of unmet needs, she noted that it was the Executive Committee that had requested UNHCR to present the budget in this way and also to develop the pillar structure. She indicated that there had been disparity among the pillars, particularly in relation to IDPs, and reassured the Committee that UNHCR was working to fulfil its responsibilities towards this population. Noting that only new and urgent emergency needs were included in supplementary budgets, she confirmed that UNHCR sought to identify which of these needs could be accounted for in the Office's annual budget. In the face of growing requirements, she spoke about the challenges involved in ensuring that UNHCR had the right level of staff and resources for its operations, and indicated that feedback was welcome on this. On the "grand bargain" commitments, implementation was ongoing, with some efficiencies gained, including in relation to joint procurement and the partner portal.

67. The decision on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018 contained in the annex was adopted.

VIII. Any other business

68. In line with the practice of adopting the reports of the Standing Committee meetings through an electronic circulation process, the Chairperson indicated that the report on the seventy-first meeting would be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated for comments by 30 March. Following a two-week review period, any comments or corrections from Member States in relation to their interventions would be incorporated and the report would be subsequently recirculated and considered adopted.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decisions, at its sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1154, para. 13 (c), A/AC.96/1165, para. 15 (3) and A/AC.96/1176 para. 14 (3)), as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2017,

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

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, amounting to \$6,408.5 million for 2017,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-seventh session, approved revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2016-2017 biennial programme budget (revised), amounting to \$7,309.7 million for 2017,

Notes that the 2017 supplementary budgets amounted to \$832.1 million for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons,

Notes the budget reduction of \$178.9 million in 2017,

Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2017 to a final total of \$7,962.9 million, representing the sum of the revised budget of \$7,309.7 million and the total supplementary budgets of \$832.1 million, as well as a budget reduction of \$178.9 million,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-eighth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2018-2019 biennial programme budget, amounting to \$7,508.4 million for 2018,

Notes that the 2018 supplementary budgets amount to \$487.4 million as of 31 January 2018 for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons,

Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2018 to a current total of \$7,995.8 million as of 31 January 2018, representing the sum of the original budget of \$7,508.4 million and the supplementary budgets of \$487.4 million,

Recognizes that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2018 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

Urges Member States to continue to respond generously, in the spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the annual budget for 2018.