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Summary record of the 693rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 3 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Staur..... (Denmark)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and said that, during his visit to Greece a few weeks previously, he had once again been impressed by the dedication, compassion and professionalism of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was impossible to overemphasize the importance of the legal foundation of the work of UNHCR, namely the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, which had created a legal framework around human and humanitarian values and standards related to the protection of those with a well-founded fear of being persecuted and the principle of non-refoulement.
2. With the rapid succession of large-scale emergencies and the rising number of forcibly displaced persons, which currently stood at 65.3 million, there was a need not only to rediscover the political will to address the root causes of emergencies and humanitarian disasters but also to secure sufficient funding to ensure that UNHCR action was effective and efficient and to enable UNHCR to maintain the living standards and dignity of those affected to the best of its ability. Doing so would require more funding for UNHCR in the immediate term, broader burden- and responsibility-sharing, as stipulated in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and an increase in non-earmarked contributions to UNHCR, in line with the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit and the pledges made as part of the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing.
3. Lastly, there was a need to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and development activities in order to create the instruments and capacities required to address the many protracted situations of refugees and internally displaced persons around the world. In view of that need, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which was to be developed over the following two years, could not be timelier.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (A/AC.96/LXVII/1)

4. *The agenda was adopted.*
5. *Participants were invited to watch a short film entitled "A way forward", which provided an overview of the complex challenges facing UNHCR and its partners, and possible solutions.*

Statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

6. **The Secretary-General** said that, in the almost 10 years since he had been elected, conflict, climate change and displacement had traumatized millions of people. The Organization was doing its best to respond to exponentially growing demands with shrinking resources. In 10 years, the number of displaced persons had doubled and currently stood at 65 million men, women and children who had been through harrowing experiences that should haunt the conscience of humanity. He paid tribute to UNHCR and its dedicated staff on the front line of the Organization's global response.
7. Since he had last addressed the Executive Committee in 2014, the displacement and refugee crisis had dramatically deteriorated. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Geneva Conventions had been flouted over and over again. Some 13.5 million Syrians, including 6 million children, desperately needed help. He had met with some of them in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Greece. He had also met the swimmer Yusra Mardini, who had been a member of the refugee team at the 2016 Olympic Games. When he thought about, on the one hand, the courage she had displayed by jumping into the Aegean Sea from the

overcrowded boat in which she had fled the Syrian Arab Republic in order to help push the boat to shore and, on the other hand, the inaction of powerful leaders, he was outraged by the bitter injustice of war.

8. While the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic was one of the most dramatic and tragic in the world, the millions of other refugees from Yemen, Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and beyond must not be forgotten. Regardless of whether or not one had experienced displacement, as he had done more than 60 years earlier, everyone had a responsibility to confront the terrible reality in which hospitals became a target, in which humanitarian workers — among the most courageous people alive — had to contend with warring parties who wanted them dead, and in which more and more destructive weapons were being used against civilian targets in deliberate war crimes.

9. The wilful and blatant disregard for international humanitarian law was causing large-scale suffering and long-term damage. Countries needed to transcend their national interests and come together to provide a forceful global response.

10. Although the numbers were staggering, it was important to remember that each one represented a human life and that the crisis was not one of numbers but of solidarity. The pledge to leave no one behind made in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development could not be achieved unless millions of refugees and displaced persons were lifted out of poverty. The United Nations was doing everything possible to mobilize countries in a spirit of solidarity. The aim of the international gatherings held in London, Geneva and New York in 2016 had been to revive the founding spirit of the United Nations, which was centred on international solidarity, respect for fundamental human rights and recognition of human dignity. At the Summit for Refugees and Migrants, Member States had declared their profound solidarity with those forced to flee, reaffirmed their obligation to fully respect the human rights of refugees and migrants and pledged to support countries and communities affected by large movements of refugees and migrants. However, the New York Declaration would only make a real difference in the lives of refugees if the leaders who had adopted it made good on their promises.

11. The recipients of the 2016 Nansen Refugee Award, namely the Hellenic Rescue Team and Efi Latsoudi, showed that success was only possible thanks to the unrelenting advocacy and the brave example of civil society representatives. That solidarity served to counter ignorant and self-serving leaders who tried to fuel fear and distrust of foreigners for their own purposes in a cynical grab for power that made everyone less safe. To address the rise in xenophobia, the United Nations had launched a new campaign called “Together: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All”, which was designed to replace fear with hope by fostering inclusive communities where diversity was appreciated as people’s greatest strength.

12. History would judge the international community on the basis of results achieved, and he called upon States to translate their commitments into action so that future generations could live in a world where everyone enjoyed full human rights no matter where they were born.

13. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his inspiring words, his unwavering support for the cause of refugees and for the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which would remain an important part of his legacy to the United Nations, the world and humanity.

14. **The Chair** said that he wished to convey the respect and gratitude of the Executive Committee to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the hope that he would continue to champion the cause of refugees.

Statement by the High Commissioner and general debate*Statement*

15. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that making and building peace had become more difficult and that the legal and moral boundaries established to mitigate the impact of war on civilians were being crossed more deliberately and with more impunity every day. In the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, South Sudan and elsewhere, civilians were suffering untold hardship.

16. Displaced persons were moving more rapidly, over longer distances and for a more complex range of reasons. Food insecurity, environmental degradation, climate change, inequality, exclusion and bad governance were among the factors driving mobility. Statelessness was both a root cause and a result of forced displacement. The increasingly regional dimension of conflicts had brought a range of security considerations into play.

17. Refugees' access to protection was all too often compromised by closed borders and entry restrictions. Refugees were pushed back into conflict zones and populations were trapped in besieged areas. Nine out of 10 refugees were hosted in developing countries, and an increasing number were seeking protection further afield owing to the inadequate support being provided to host countries and countries of origin and to the lack of solutions. Some long-standing host countries had increased pressure on refugees to return home in circumstances in which their repatriation was less than voluntary and in which their security and ability to rebuild their lives could not be assured.

18. The right to asylum and the values of tolerance and solidarity that were its foundation were undermined by xenophobia, nationalist rhetoric and political discourse linking refugees with security concerns and terrorism. Moreover, the failure of European States to mount an effective and shared response to the 2015 crisis had led to chaos in the region and to countries such as Austria, Germany and Sweden receiving disproportionate numbers of people while others closed their doors.

19. However, that stark picture did not capture the entire situation, as most of the States next to conflict zones had kept their borders open to refugees and the international refugee protection regime continued to underpin their responses, with many States striving to find a way to reconcile international obligations with domestic, social, economic and security concerns. Appreciation was due to host countries and communities that remained resolute in extending hospitality, solidarity and support to millions of asylum seekers and refugees.

20. There was growing recognition that new approaches that moved beyond traditional humanitarian models were necessary to respond to large displacement crises. The strong focus of the United Nations General Assembly on refugees and migrants showed that forced displacement had finally taken centre stage as a defining global challenge. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted by the General Assembly in mid-September, provided a powerful platform for change, calling for predictable and collaborative international responses based on solidarity and responsibility-sharing.

21. In January 2016, he had launched a process of reflection with a wide range of colleagues at headquarters and in the field on the strategic directions that should guide UNHCR action over the coming five years. The process would draw on input from various stakeholders, including States. Five core strategic directions had been identified in the course of those discussions.

22. The first strategic direction concerned the need to place protection principles and standards at the centre of responses to forced displacement, statelessness and humanitarian crises by offering concrete support to countries in need, by providing responses to new protection challenges, by supporting governments in delivering services (including

registration, documentation and child protection services), and by forging strong community links and working to promote participation.

23. The second strategic direction concerned the need to enable refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons to become full members of society and to build a stable future, which meant actively pursuing their resettlement and complementary pathways to third-country admission. However, the return of more than a quarter of a million refugees to Côte d'Ivoire in the previous five years and the potential of the peace negotiations in Colombia to find solutions for almost 7.5 million displaced persons showed that there was hope. In Afghanistan, efforts to stabilize the country and to promote its institutional and economic development would only truly succeed if account was taken of the millions of Afghans who remained uprooted. The same was true for the hundreds of thousands of Somalis who had been internally displaced or who were in exile throughout the region. The repatriation of displaced populations must remain voluntary. Mindful of the fact that some 10 million people worldwide were still without a nationality, he was fully committed to pursuing the campaign to end statelessness launched by his predecessor in 2014. In 2015, tens of thousands of people had acquired a nationality or had their citizenship confirmed through a range of initiatives.

24. The third strategic direction for UNHCR would be to continue strengthening and expanding its capacity and expertise in emergency preparedness and response. In 2015 and 2016, over 700 emergency deployments had been undertaken, which was an unprecedented number. UNHCR was continuing to address a number of large-scale crises requiring an emergency response, including in South Sudan and Nigeria.

25. There was growing consensus that development investments must play a central role in addressing displacement. Thus, as a fourth strategic direction, UNHCR was firmly committed to securing the engagement of development actors in addressing forced displacement and statelessness. In that connection, the Office had strengthened its partnership with the World Bank and welcomed the Bank's introduction of the new concessional lending instrument, which was already playing an important role in leveraging development support for Syrian refugees and for host countries and communities in the Middle East and North Africa. The Office's collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme had also been strengthened through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for Syrian refugees. Moreover, UNHCR was also pursuing partnerships with the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development aimed at expanding refugee access to safe and decent work and to economic opportunities.

26. As part of its fifth strategic direction, UNHCR aimed to take a more systematic approach to the entire spectrum of displacement issues, working in collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other partners. Although UNHCR had already increased its capacity, further efforts were required. He had therefore asked the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations to lead a review of global responses to internal displacement in order to gain a better understanding of what needed to change to make UNHCR engagement more coherent and predictable.

27. The five strategic directions would be underpinned by a reinvigorated commitment to partnerships. UNHCR was working alongside other United Nations agencies and attached great importance to its partnerships with NGOs. In 2015, UNHCR had allocated 38 per cent of its budget to 938 partners, more than two thirds of whom were national authorities or national NGOs. It was essential to mobilize the broadest possible range of actors, including from the private sector, to address the challenges posed by forced displacement. He recognized the growing role of individuals and companies in that endeavour and welcomed George Soros' recent pledge of \$500 million to companies and start-ups founded by refugees and migrants.

28. The internal capacities and systems of UNHCR needed to be further strengthened in a number of areas in order to pursue the five strategic directions. There was a particularly urgent need to simplify procedures, processes and other management tools. At the same time, in line with its commitments under the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, UNHCR would pursue greater efficiency and work with other agencies to assess needs, harmonize and simplify reporting requirements and to reduce procurement and logistical costs. He was also particularly keen to continue to invest in increasing the proximity of UNHCR to refugees through its network of 464 offices in 129 countries and in ensuring the safety of field staff working in high-risk locations. The Office would also encourage creativity and innovation by, inter alia, expanding refugee access to mobile phone technology and the Internet and by scaling up cash-based interventions.

29. UNHCR would continue to invest in its workforce, which currently stood at more than 15,000 people, having grown by 50 per cent in the space of five years, and would pursue greater gender equity, diversity and inclusion.

30. The development of the strategic directions and the management tools that supported them would require substantial financial contributions. He wished to thank donors for the strong support that they provided to UNHCR, which had translated into increases in its annual budget over the previous five years and to a significant rise in 2016. However, funding for 2016 currently stood at \$3.76 billion, which would cover only 50 per cent of its total requirements. More worrying still was the large difference in funding levels between operations, with those in Africa, including in Somalia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, being very poorly funded, at less than 20 per cent, while those in the Syrian Arab Republic and Europe were funded at 53 per cent.

31. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework that accompanied the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants set out, for the first time, a blueprint for change. He was honoured that UNHCR had been chosen to oversee its introduction and development, which would be one of its central tasks for the next two years. It would work closely with States, the United Nations and other international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, civil society, academia and the business community to apply the Framework and would draw on that experience to develop a global compact on refugees by 2018.

General debate

32. **Mr. Digna** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that he welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to assist refugees and the progress achieved in the fight against statelessness. He noted that the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants contained concrete plans to guarantee, inter alia, the rights of refugees.

33. The African continent continued to grapple with several displacement situations, which placed an increasing burden on host countries, many of which were already experiencing difficult socioeconomic conditions. The African Group commended African countries on their generosity and hospitality. However, it noted with concern the reduction in the budget allocated to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa for 2016-2017, despite a foreseen increase in displacement figures in Africa over the same period and a lack of durable solutions for refugees. He therefore urged UNHCR to work closely with the regions and governments concerned to find durable solutions. He also encouraged it to further strengthen international assistance based on the principle of responsibility-sharing and solidarity, and to expand the use of resettlement as a means of international protection.

34. **Mr. Sørensen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that Albania, Georgia, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and

Ukraine aligned themselves with the European Union statement. In 2015, European Union member States had received more than 1.3 million asylum applications and had experienced a similar trend in 2016. The European Union and its member States reiterated their commitment to supporting the Western Balkan countries. They also wished to highlight the situation in Ukraine, where it was mostly the elderly and children who were being displaced. The European Union wished to express its appreciation to countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, which had taken in a large number of displaced persons. It was ready to work towards achieving the aim set out in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of providing resettlement places and other legal pathways for admission to enable the annual resettlement needs identified by UNHCR to be met. To date, European Union Member States and associated States had resettled more than 10,000 of the 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection. The European Union also remained committed to acting upon the European Union–Turkey statement of 18 March 2016, which provided that for every Syrian who was returned to Turkey from the Greek Islands, another Syrian from Turkey would be resettled in the European Union, with full account being taken of UNHCR vulnerability criteria. It was also working with Turkey to design a voluntary humanitarian admission scheme, which would be operationalized soon. The European Union was currently discussing a proposal for a European resettlement framework with the aim of contributing to global resettlement efforts.

35. At the World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in May 2016, the European Union and other stakeholders had made a commitment to prevent forced displacement by addressing its root causes and to adopt a new approach to addressing protracted displacement. In 2014, the European Union had launched its first Regional Development and Protection Programme in the Middle East, which was focused on improving protection in host countries, strengthening the capacity of local and central authorities and improving access to basic services and employment for refugees and host communities. It had also launched regional development and protection programmes in North Africa and in the Horn of Africa. The European Union also attached importance to the situation in Afghanistan and would co-host a conference with the Afghan Government on 4 October 2016.

36. The European Union echoed the call of UNHCR for more solidarity, effective responsibility- and burden-sharing and enhanced international cooperation.

37. **Mr. Mabri** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that Côte d'Ivoire aligned itself with the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the African Group. In the face of the current large-scale displacement of populations, which overstretched the capacities of host countries and sometimes bred xenophobia, racism and discriminatory behaviour within host communities, Côte d'Ivoire recalled that the international community had a duty of solidarity towards displaced persons. The scale of current flows of displaced persons necessitated a global response. Refugee flows also had serious consequences for neighbouring and transit countries, which more than ever needed the support of the international community. Côte d'Ivoire therefore called on the latter to act upon the outcome of the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants.

38. Côte d'Ivoire was grateful for the valuable support it had received from UNHCR, which had allowed 260,000 Ivorian refugees to be repatriated in fewer than five years. In December 2015, after the closure of its borders owing to the Ebola virus epidemic, the Ivorian Government had authorized the opening of a humanitarian corridor, which had enabled 17,000 Ivorians to return to the country. On 8 September 2016, it had decided to reopen its land borders with Guinea and Liberia, which had further increased refugee repatriation operations. Côte d'Ivoire called upon the international community to assist it in its efforts to facilitate the socioeconomic reintegration of repatriated Ivorians. Having itself been a host country for many refugees, Côte d'Ivoire was working to combat statelessness by implementing the provisions of the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS

Member States on Eradication of Statelessness, in particular by issuing identity and travel documents to persons who did not possess them.

39. **Mr. Nabiye** (Azerbaijan) said that Azerbaijan welcomed the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and appreciated the role played by UNHCR in assisting displaced persons. Notwithstanding the scale of the flows of refugees and internally displaced persons in its territory, Azerbaijan was working to provide timely assistance to persons affected by humanitarian disasters. The International Development Agency of Azerbaijan provided humanitarian assistance to persons belonging to vulnerable groups and ran capacity-building programmes in the areas of health, education and information and communication technology. Azerbaijan, which was still under partial occupation, had been dealing with the problems related to refugees and internally displaced persons — whose numbers had grown to 1,200,000 — while respecting international law. In order to assist refugees and internally displaced persons, the members of the international community should put aside their political interests and create conditions that were conducive to peace. They should also resolve existing conflicts in accordance with the principles of international law, in particular sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

40. Azerbaijan was convinced of the need to adopt an international convention on the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons. It was regrettable that some countries, such as Armenia, prioritized their own political interests over solving the problems related to refugees and migration. The occupation of Azerbaijani territory should come to an end and all internally displaced persons should be able to return home with dignity.

41. **Ms. Richard** (United States of America) said that, in 2016, her country had provided \$7 billion in humanitarian aid, including \$1.5 billion to UNHCR. Furthermore, at the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis, NGOs based in the United States had pledged to raise \$1.2 billion in funding for humanitarian assistance, and private-sector firms had responded to the White House's call for them to pledge \$650 million for that purpose. The United States would stay true to the commitments made at the Leaders' Summit and urged other countries to do the same.

42. Her country had reached its goal of welcoming more refugees than it had in any of the previous 15 years, providing a fresh start to some 85,000 of the world's most vulnerable people, and was committed to doing more by resettling up to 110,000 refugees in 2017. The United States also wanted to help other countries increase their resettlement efforts by supporting the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism, a new joint venture by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration that would help resettle 30,000 people over the next three years. The United States looked forward to regular discussions with UNHCR on its approach to fulfilling its commitments under the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing.

43. As part of its efforts to do better in fulfilling its global responsibilities, the United States had contributed \$30 million to the "Safe from the Start" initiative to combat gender-based violence. The United States also applauded new and growing partnerships, such as the strengthened partnership between UNHCR and the World Bank, to which the country contributed.

44. **Mr. Onek** (Uganda) said that the country's refugee population currently stood at 690,000 and was expected to reach 810,000 by the end of 2016. Since 1959, Uganda had hosted on average over 160,000 refugees per year. It had participated in the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis and welcomed its outcomes, namely the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Uganda had also participated in the Wilton Park Forum on new

approaches to protracted forced displacement. The country had already started to implement the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework by developing a policy. It had also integrated refugee protection and management into its second national development plan and had begun to implement the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Uganda. The Government of Uganda pledged to continue its open-door asylum policy for refugees but needed support from the international community to conduct sustained interventions. The Government was in the process of establishing a national solutions alliance to find alternative solutions for protracted refugee situations in the country. Moreover, it had secured a loan of \$50 million from the World Bank to fund the Settlement Transformation Agenda/Refugee Host Empowerment Programme (ReHOPE), which it called upon other development partners to support. The institutional capacity of local governments hosting refugees must be increased if the current protection regime was to be maintained and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework was to be implemented.

45. **Mr. Bessler** (Switzerland), emphasizing the need to guarantee protection and assistance to displaced persons in order to prevent them becoming the refugees of tomorrow, said that Switzerland welcomed the preventive approach of UNHCR and the support that it provided to States in developing and implementing a national policy and legislative framework for displaced persons, underpinned by international standards. Switzerland was of the view that the promotion of human rights should be more fully integrated into conflict prevention and the search for political solutions to resolve conflict, and underscored the importance of protection as a central pillar of UNHCR action. He commended UNHCR on its efforts since 2012 to build its technical capacity, to develop comprehensive strategies and to devise clear guidelines the implementation of which had a direct impact on protection.

46. Switzerland would continue to support the Division of Programme Support and Management. It would closely monitor the implementation of refugee response frameworks intended to fulfil the commitments made on 19 September and encouraged the High Commissioner to report regularly to the Executive Committee on that subject and on the measures taken pursuant to the global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees.

47. **Mr. Baloch** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan had been generously hosting Afghan refugees for nearly four decades. Over 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees, in addition to some 700,000 undocumented Afghans were currently residing in Pakistan. Their presence had given rise to socioeconomic and security challenges and had overstretched public services, as the refugees benefited from education, health-care and employment services. The situation had also led Pakistan to seek out innovative solutions, such as the iris recognition immigration system and the registration of refugees using biometric technology. Pakistan had also participated in the largest voluntary repatriation programme in the history of UNHCR. The Government of Pakistan remained committed to the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees within the framework of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries, adopted by the international community in May 2012. It had agreed to extend the stay of Afghans in the country until 31 March 2017 and had signed a tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation, which would remain valid until December 2016. As of the end of September 2016, 190,000 registered Afghans and 160,000 undocumented Afghans had returned home in safety and dignity, and the number of those returning home was expected to increase gradually in the coming months, particularly thanks to repatriation grants. Pakistan appealed to donors for their continued support in that connection.

48. **Mr. Mohamed** (Djibouti) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the African Group. He recalled that, since it had gained its

independence in 1977, his country had continuously welcomed refugees from neighbouring countries and had never failed to live up to its tradition of hospitality. Djibouti had acceded to the international instruments relating to refugees very early on and, over the years, had acquired considerable experience in welcoming and assisting refugees, with the support and continued commitment of UNHCR. Djibouti had recently adopted an inclusive and progressive refugee protection law that was in compliance with the relevant international instruments. The harsh climate and the humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa continued to trigger influxes of refugees into Djibouti, and it was therefore necessary to strengthen the assistance programme for the refugees living in its territory.

49. **Mr. Mbella Mbella** (Cameroon) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the African Group. He recalled that his country was currently hosting more than 350,000 refugees, mainly in the Adamaoua region, in the east and in the far north of the country, of whom 274,000 were from the Central African Republic and 80,000 were from Nigeria. There were also 190,000 displaced persons in addition to those refugees. Although most of the refugees were in camps, a large number also lived with host families. Cameroon had recently signed a framework agreement with UNHCR under which they would take joint responsibility for covering the cost of any hospital care received by refugees, who also received free education. Food security was guaranteed at the seven refugee sites. Measures were being taken to promote the employment of refugees and identity cards with security features were being issued to persons entitled to refugee status. A tripartite agreement would soon be signed between Cameroon, UNHCR and Nigeria with the aim of facilitating the voluntary return of Nigerian refugees. A similar agreement was being drawn up for refugees from the Central African Republic. On 1 August 2016, Cameroon and local representatives of UNHCR had signed an agreement transferring responsibility for the process of determining refugee status to the Government of Cameroon. Cameroon appealed to the international community to help it meet the needs of refugees, displaced persons and host communities.

50. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), thanking the delegations that had recalled the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and its importance in helping refugees in the years to come, said that it was now time to act and to translate the commitments made into reality. Referring to the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the African Group and the statements made by representatives of African States, he noted that Africa was the continent where solidarity towards refugees was being stretched to breaking point and where the responsibility for hosting refugees rested with countries with limited resources. He supported the African stakeholders' request for increased resources to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. He congratulated Uganda on its exemplary long-term strategy for receiving refugees. He believed that the European Union and European States would remain key partners of UNHCR in the years to come and reiterated his proposal for the joint development of a fair and humane asylum system. He hoped that political progress would lead to solutions to the problems of displacement in the Caucasus, and he thanked the United States for the pledges it had made and the leadership role it had assumed on numerous occasions.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.