



General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 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 695th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 4 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Mc Carney (Vice-Chair)..... (Canada)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

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.16-17449 (E) 231116 291116



* 1 6 1 7 4 4 9 *

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



The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Essien** (Nigeria) said that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered by Mr. Digna on behalf of the African Group. She welcomed the outcomes of the recent Summit in New York, notably the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Over the years, the Nigerian Government had steadfastly opposed the setting up of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons in the country, preferring to ensure the integration of asylum seekers. The Government was collaborating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with a view to allowing refugees that had lived in the country for at least eight years to obtain Nigerian citizenship. She expressed gratitude to UNHCR for the assistance provided to Nigerian refugees who had returned to the country and internally to displaced persons affected by the attacks of Boko Haram in the north-east, and welcomed the recent announcement by UNHCR that it intended to scale up its humanitarian response in that region.
2. **Mr. Utoni** (Nigeria) said that Namibia aligned itself with the statement delivered by Mr. Digna on behalf of the African Group. He was pleased to report that, since the last meeting of the Executive Committee in 2015, Namibia, with the assistance of UNHCR, had managed to halve the number of refugees and asylum seekers, which had led to the closure of the UNHCR office in Namibia in December 2015. However, the country would continue to host refugees and asylum seekers, while promoting the three durable solutions in pursuit of the goal of “we stand together with refugees”.
3. **Mr. Marrone de Castro Sampaio** (Brazil) said that Brazil not only admitted refugees to its territory; it also ensured that they were fully integrated into society and that they could rebuild their lives there if they so wished. Every refugee that filed an asylum application in the country immediately enjoyed the right to work, to study and to receive medical care. Brazil had strengthened its partnerships with civil society organizations providing assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. The country had not forgotten its commitments to the Latin American and Caribbean region, however, and in that regard would strive to implement its plan of action adopted in 2014. The plan addressed the issue of displaced persons from the Northern Triangle of Central America, whom Brazil would begin to receive as part of a resettlement programme.
4. **Ms. del Carmen Magarin de Esperanza** (Observer for El Salvador) said that El Salvador, as a country of origin, was working in favour of refugees and migrants through its integration programme for people that had been repatriated. The programme had led to the emergence of many initiatives, particularly in the spheres of employment and higher education. It also dealt with issues of reintegration, health and security, and included the provision of psychosocial support for returnees.
5. **Mr. Irungu** (Kenya) said that his country aligned itself with the statement delivered by Mr. Digna on behalf of the African Group. Kenya currently hosted more than 400,000 refugees from Somalia, South Sudan and other countries in the region, a burden that exacerbated the already critical situation in the areas where the refugee camps were located. Of even greater concern was the loss of the humanitarian character of the Dadaab camp, where terrorists had established a base for their activities, posing a serious threat to the country’s national security. Kenya had been hosting Somali refugees for over two decades and had continuously endeavoured to keep their plight on the agenda and to encourage the international community to find durable solutions. At the pledging conference held in Brussels in October 2015 (in the framework of the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees), the participants had shown willingness to come to grips with the issue, but had fallen short in terms of financial commitments. The Government of Kenya urged its partners to honour their pledges towards Somali refugees and in favour of development in Somalia. Having

been forced to close the Dadaab camp, the Government was now moving to repatriate the Somali refugees still living there, in close collaboration with UNHCR and in keeping with the tripartite agreement signed in 2013. It would be ensured that repatriations were carried out in a humane and dignified manner in accordance with international human rights standards. Kenya had committed US\$ 10 million to support the voluntary return of more than 400,000 Somali refugees, and had repatriated some 13,604 Somali refugees in the previous three months alone. He strongly urged the international community to contribute to those efforts and to provide those returning to Somalia with decent living conditions and opportunities to participate in the development of their country.

6. **Mr. Manicom** (Canada) said that since the beginning of 2016, Canada had provided financial support to UNHCR totalling 157 million dollars, which represented an 84 per cent increase over 2015. It had also announced multi-year institutional funding of 37.8 million dollars to support the global response of UNHCR, and would increase its overall humanitarian assistance by 10 per cent over the 2015 level. Through resettlement programmes, the Government of Canada intended to triple the number of refugees that Canada would admit in 2016, to 44,800.

7. **Mr. Alemi Balkhi** (Afghanistan) said that the Afghan Government was committed to facilitating the return of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers abroad, and in late 2015 had adopted a voluntary return and reintegration strategy that prioritized the rights, problems and needs of returnees. The Government had also prepared comprehensive action plans for the return of refugees. In 2015, 475,000 Afghan refugees voluntarily returned to the country, exceeding the Government's expectation of 200,000 people. However, intensified conflicts had caused the internal displacement of over 1 million, with a further 250,000 compelled to flee the tribal areas. The Afghan Government alone did not have the capacity to solve the problem of internally displaced persons and therefore appealed for additional support from donor countries, United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations. It also considered that States should take interim measures to address the migration crisis, which would consist in guaranteeing due, expedited process for all asylum seekers, creating a joint migration management board between countries of origin and destination, creating job opportunities in countries of origin to discourage migration, and fighting human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

8. **Mr. Masujima** (Japan) said that at the World Humanitarian Summit, the Japanese Government had committed to implementing a three-year assistance package worth about US\$ 6 billion for the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, at the Group of Seven (G7) summit held in May 2016 at Ise-Shima (Japan), Japan had consolidated the G7 Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration, which had highlighted the importance of mid- and long-term efforts to address refugee and migrant issues. The Government of Japan had also taken part in the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees, and had announced that it would implement an assistance package of about US\$ 2.8 billion between 2016 and 2018 for refugees, migrants and host communities. It had also committed to implementing a human resource development programme, including education, for approximately 1 million people affected by conflicts, to creating a team of volunteers to provide support for Syrian refugees, and to hosting Syrian students and families. During the World Humanitarian Summit, Japan and UNHCR had organized a side event on strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus, in which Japan had introduced model projects. In that context, Japan was currently collaborating with UNHCR on a project to ensure the electricity supply to the Zaatari refugee camp and to provide training for the people living there.

9. Japan had so far contributed approximately US\$ 160 million to UNHCR in 2016.

10. **Ms. Londoño Soto** (Colombia) said that her Government believed that the global compact on refugees should be developed through an open process based on experiences

gained in different regional and national contexts. Colombia welcomed the joint initiative of UNHCR and other United Nations agencies to conduct a global review of policies on internally displaced persons, who numbered more than 40 million. The Government had identified more than 8 million victims of the armed conflict in Colombia, 6.9 million of whom had had to flee their homes. Since the adoption of the Victims Act of 2011, the Government had begun to work towards the social integration of internally displaced persons and was searching for durable solutions to ensure the stability of their socioeconomic situation and respect for their fundamental rights. Those measures had been taken thanks to prioritizing the issue of internally displaced persons in the national development plan. To date, the Government had provided compensation for 600,000 victims.

11. **Mr. Grandi** (High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed the efforts undertaken by Canada, Japan, Nigeria, Kenya, Namibia, Afghanistan, Brazil, El Salvador and Colombia, and expressed gratitude for their support for the activities of UNHCR. He hoped that Canada, which had become a major resettlement country for refugees, and Japan would play a leading role in the implementation of the New York Declaration and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

12. **Mr. Vera Urairat** (Thailand) said that the current global crisis required a global response consistent with the principle of equitable burden sharing among countries. The international community should provide greater funding and assistance to host countries, 85 per cent of which were low or middle income countries. It was also necessary to provide development assistance to host countries and countries of origin, and to end the violence and discrimination that were the root causes of emigration. Moreover, there was a need for a better coordinated approach among countries of origin, transit and destination in order to improve the predictability of migration flows and to better respond to emergency situations.

13. The Government of Thailand appreciated the contributions of UNHCR, NGOs, donor countries and other partners that had joined its efforts to host 103,000 displaced persons from Myanmar, who were still living in the nine temporary reception centres along the border. It was working closely with Myanmar to prepare for the voluntary return of those displaced persons, in conditions of safety and dignity, and urged UNHCR to support that bilateral initiative. The Government also continued to promote development alongside humanitarian assistance, including by working with Myanmar so that returnees could live in their motherland in the enjoyment of their rights.

14. **Mr. Muharemi** (Croatia) said that Croatia aligned itself with the statement of the European Union. In his view, addressing the migration crisis required countries to work both internally, by strengthening societal and institutional resilience, and externally, by implementing admission and return policies and preventing loss of life during the dangerous journeys undertaken by migrants. Drawing on its own experience of conflict, and on the compassion and solidarity of its people, Croatia had spent 20 million euros on assistance for migrants. It was also cooperating with UNHCR to provide assistance to displaced persons through the Regional Housing Programme, whose last approved project was due by the end of 2017. As part of the durable solutions strategy, UNHCR had recommended that the State party complete the procedure for the cessation of refugee status for refugees from Croatia no later than 2017, in recognition of the progress achieved in resolving the refugee situation in the region.

15. Croatia welcomed the third progress report on the Implementation of the Durable Solutions Process for refugees from Croatia displaced by the 1991-1995 conflict, which recognized the efforts undertaken in that area.

16. **Mr. Júnior** (Mozambique) said that Mozambique endorsed the statement made by the representative of Sudan on behalf of the African Group. His Government believed that

if countries wished to effectively address massive population movements, they must make a much greater effort to facilitate safe, orderly and responsible mobility, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

17. Mozambique welcomed the fact that 9 per cent of the UNHCR budget, i.e. US\$ 310 million, would originate in the private sector in 2016, compared with US\$ 22 million in 2006. It urged donor countries to make unearmarked contributions in order to allow UNHCR some flexibility in the allocation of resources to different regional operations.

18. **Mr. Ma Zhaoxu** (China) said that countries that took in refugees and applied the principle of non-refoulement should receive financial support. China had earmarked 685 million yuan for humanitarian aid to Syria and the countries of the Middle East, and was fulfilling the pledge given by its President at the Group of 20 (G20) summit in Antalya (Turkey) to donate US\$ 100 million to countries and international organizations that provided humanitarian assistance to refugees. At the high-level meeting held on the occasion of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Chinese Premier had pledged US\$ 300 million to a joint China-United Nations peace and development fund, in order to contribute to assistance for refugees in developing countries. China would also consider the possibilities of tripartite cooperation with international organizations on refugee issues, and had committed to strengthening its cooperation with UNHCR to promote the international protection of refugees.

19. **Ms. Geleva** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that her Government aligned itself with the statement of the European Union (EU). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was situated on the “Balkan route”, and more than 700,000 migrants and refugees had crossed the country’s borders in 2015. A further 90,000 migrants and refugees had done so between 1 January and 18 March 2016, the date of the EU-Turkey Statement. There were currently 214 migrants and asylum seekers staying in the country’s two transit and relief centres. The national authorities were handling the migrant crisis in a responsible and professional manner, in compliance with European and international standards. Educational programmes had been put in place for refugee children and a new integration strategy for refugees and foreigners was being developed. Border control was organized in cooperation with partner countries and organizations. Attempted illegal crossings had increased since the closure of the Western Balkans route; between January and August 2016, 33,000 illegal attempts had been registered on the Macedonian-Greek border. Ninety-four cases related to the smuggling of migrants had been dealt with during that period, resulting in charges being brought against 71 individuals.

20. **Mr. Hassan** (Chad) said that his country was making a considerable effort to find solutions to the problems caused by the presence on its territory of more than 750,000 refugees and asylum seekers, in addition to displaced persons and returnees. The Government of Chad called for an increase in international assistance to improve the situation of those affected by this humanitarian crisis, which was one of the world’s most neglected, including in financial terms. Identity documents and residence permits would be issued to internally displaced persons and returnees in order to prevent statelessness. While the Government had drafted a comprehensive humanitarian response plan for Chadians returning from the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Libya, that plan could not be implemented owing to a lack of resources, a situation that risked bringing about a new humanitarian disaster.

21. **Mr. Daerr** (Germany) said that his Government aligned itself with the statement given on behalf of the European Union. Germany was the third largest donor to UNHCR and had further increased its contributions in 2016. In 2015 alone, it had provided refuge and protection to more than 1 million refugees through various admission pathways. Taking the view that displacement issues could only be addressed jointly, in a spirit of responsibility and solidarity, it welcomed the pledges given in New York and was actively

participating in the follow-up of the two summits. Germany was also concerned about the increase in the number of people forcibly displaced owing to natural disasters and the effects of climate change, which had doubled in the previous 20 years. Mindful of the need to take concrete measures, Germany was co-chairing (with Bangladesh) a platform on disaster displacement, which built upon the outcome of the Nansen Initiative.

22. **Ms. Aoun** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon was the country with the largest number of refugees relative to its population and size, and that, although not a party to the 1951 Convention, it applied the principles thereof, including that of non-refoulement. Lebanon had experienced refugee inflows throughout its history, but was currently reeling from the effects of the Syrian conflict, whose continuation endangered Lebanon's stability and development plans. Lebanon had never closed its borders and deserved recognition for its efforts. It needed greater assistance from the international community to continue to pursue a policy based on respect for humanitarian principles, to respond to the needs of communities hosting migrants, and to create the conditions that would allow Syrians to return to their homes.

23. Just five countries, whose combined gross national product amounted to 2 per cent of gross world product, accommodated nearly half of the world's refugees. It was necessary to work together towards a sharing of responsibilities, so that each country's capacity, rather than its proximity to the conflict area, became the main criterion for the allocation of refugee groups.

24. Lebanon welcomed initiatives to establish a link between humanitarian aid and development assistance to host societies. The country was determined to continue its cooperation with UNHCR and other humanitarian and development agencies so as to ensure the best possible reception conditions for Syrian refugees and to assist their return to their country of origin. Moreover, the Lebanese Government wished to reiterate its determination to participate in consultations on the global compact, insofar as the specific circumstances of the country were taken into account.

25. **Mr. Konaté** (Observer for Mali) said that his Government aligned itself with the statement given by the representative of Sudan on behalf of the African Group. Mali was experiencing the effects of a serious humanitarian and security crisis, which had led to the mass displacement of people, both within the country and to neighbouring countries. The President of the Republic of Mali regarded the return of refugees as a national priority, and to that end was implementing information and awareness campaigns in neighbouring countries to facilitate the return process and repair the damage that the crisis had caused to the country's economic and social fabric. In that regard, tripartite agreements had been signed and more than 56,000 returns had been registered by the end of August, representing 30 per cent of the people who had fled the country. A humanitarian programme to facilitate and accelerate the reintegration of refugees had been implemented with the assistance of UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank. Reception centres provided beneficiaries of the programme with access to water, health care, education and social economy services. The Government of Mali expressed gratitude to all of its technical and financial partners and requested enhanced support for the continuation of the return programme, so that all Malian refugees abroad could return to their country.

26. **Mr. Tcharié** (Togo) said that Togo aligned itself with the statement given by the representative of Sudan on behalf of the African Group. On 3 March 2016, the Togolese parliament had adopted a new law on the status of refugees, that complied with international standards for the reception and protection of asylum seekers. Togo was currently hosting 13,082 refugees of 18 nationalities, who were able to live independently and with dignity. The children of refugees had access to free primary education, while

tuition fees for higher education were the same for all, regardless of nationality. Refugees had access to the same civil registry and employment services as Togolese nationals. Thanks to the efforts of UNHCR and the Togolese Family Welfare Association (ATBEF), refugees were provided with free medical care and vaccines.

27. **Mr. Alhadhrawi** (Observer for Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia afforded significant humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons in keeping with the principles of humanitarian action. In the previous five years it had hosted Syrian refugees and half a million Yemenis, who had been granted legal residence and access to the labour market, as well as to health care and education services. In 2015 and 2016, Saudi Arabia had provided them with US\$ 1.73 billion worth of aid. It had also contributed a further US\$ 418 million of assistance to refugees, that included US\$ 173 million paid to UNHCR, US\$ 60 million to IOM and US\$ 185 million to other United Nations organizations. In New York, the Government had recently pledged a further US\$ 75 million to address the refugee question. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre had been created to strengthen and coordinate national capacity in that respect, for a humanity without borders. The Government believed that donor and host countries should forge the partnerships needed to find practical solutions to the problems facing refugees and displaced persons, and it called upon United Nations organizations to develop mechanisms to support the implementation of humanitarian projects.

28. **Mr. Sirleaf** (Observer for Liberia) said that Liberia aligned itself with the statement made by Sudan on behalf of the African Group. Liberia was currently hosting some 20,000 Ivorian refugees, a number that was likely to diminish with the resumption of the voluntary repatriation process. Although Liberian security services had been in full control of the country's security since 1 July 2016, the country needed technical and financial support to carry out various measures to better accommodate and protect refugees. It invited UNHCR to provide support for the ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), for the development of a national database to improve protection, and for the issuance of machine-readable travel documents for refugees.

29. **Ms. Gandhi-Andrews** (Observer for Trinidad and Tobago) said that in 2000 Trinidad and Tobago had acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, and had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. Trinidad and Tobago did not have any legislation on refugees, although it received the second-largest number of asylum seekers in the region (after Belize), with recorded numbers increasing from 43 in 2013 to 300 in September 2016. In June 2014, the country had adopted a policy on refugees and asylum seekers that would allow it to gradually assume responsibility for the entire process of refugee status determination.

30. **Mr. Staur** (Denmark) said that his country aligned itself with the statement of the European Union and noted that the international meetings held since the beginning of 2016 had recognized displacement as one of the defining challenges of our time. Denmark lent its support to UNHCR in the process towards a global compact on refugees, which should call for new partnerships that extended beyond humanitarian actors and place refugees on the development agenda. It applauded the partnership between UNHCR and the World Bank, which had joined the governing board of the Solutions Alliance.

31. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed the efforts made by all the countries and for the support that they provided for the activities of UNHCR. He extended particular thanks to Germany for its leadership and generosity. He recognized the role played by the countries located along the Balkan route, assuring them that UNHCR would keep in touch with them in order to resolve outstanding problems. He also expressed thanks to Saudi Arabia for its contribution, Lebanon for its hospitality and

Thailand for its generosity. Responding to the representatives of Chad, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique and Togo, he stressed the importance of allocating resources to development in emergencies, in protracted refugee situations and in the framework of the return of refugees.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.