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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Fifty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 607th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 6 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. FUJISAKI (Japan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (agenda item 12)

1. Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, nominated Mr. Mtesa (Zambia) for the office of Chairman.
2. Mr. MANALO (Philippines) seconded the nomination.
3. Mr. Mtesa (Zambia) was elected Chairman by acclamation.
4. Mr. THORNE (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) nominated Mr. Strømme (Norway) for the office of Vice-Chairman.
5. Mr. BEK Bumhym (Republic of Korea) seconded the nomination.
6. Mr. Strømme (Norway) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.
7. Mr. BELEVAN TAMAYO (Peru), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, nominated Ms. Tudakovic (Canada) for the office of Rapporteur.
8. Ms. CROMPTON (New Zealand) seconded the nomination.
9. Ms. Tudakovic (Canada) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (agenda item 13) (document without a symbol, distributed in the meeting room)

10. Ms. BLOMBERG (Rapporteur) said that the draft report of the fifty-seventh session was the result of many hours of informal preparatory consultations on draft decisions and conclusions. While the discussion of the conclusions on international protection had been difficult at times, the cooperation of all concerned had made it possible to reach agreement on all issues. The inclusion of observers in informal discussions prior to negotiations on the draft conclusions had proved to be very useful. Observers that could not become members had for the second time been allowed to participate in the consultations; however, the participation of NGOs in the drafting of conclusions could be further improved. The new Bureau should continue informal consultations on the nature and value of conclusions and should review the negotiating process in order to maintain the high quality and relevance of the conclusions.

11. Section III of the draft report contained two draft conclusions and four draft decisions for adoption by the Executive Committee. The draft conclusion on women and girls at risk provided practical guidance on how to identify environmental and individual factors that increased the protection risks faced by displaced women and girls, and highlighted a number of preventive strategies and responses. The draft conclusion on identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and protection of stateless persons provided an operational framework for UNHCR to cooperate with States and relevant United Nations agencies to address the issue of statelessness.

12. The General Decision on Administrative, Financial and Programme Matters (Decision 1) contained the Executive Committee's decision to replace the Operational Reserve Category II with a new annual programme budget category entitled "New or additional activities - mandate-related". It also requested the Bureau, in consultation with the Office, to complete informal consultations before the meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2007 in order to finalize the criteria for the inclusion or non-inclusion of supplementary programme budgets for refugee or refugee-related programmes, and to continue informal consultations on how supplementary programme budgets could be best managed to support the Office's role as cluster lead in certain internal displacement situations.

13. The Decision on the Programme of Work of the Standing Committee in 2007 (Decision 2) called on the Office of the High Commissioner to consult with the Committee with regard to structural and management change process. It also requested the Bureau, in cooperation with the Office, to resume and finalize, before the fifty-eighth plenary session of the Executive Committee, informal consultations for extending the input in from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the work of the Executive Committee that were implementing or operational partners of UNHCR.

14. A list of the decisions taken by the Standing Committee and the Chairman's summary of the general debate would be annexed to the final version of the report, which would subsequently be submitted to the Third Committee of the General Assembly as an addendum to the High Commissioner's annual report.

15. Ms. DUMPE (Observer for Latvia) requested that Latvia should be included in the list of States wishing to participate in meetings of the Standing Committee as observers

16. Mr. LYAPICHEV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the draft conclusion on identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and protection of stateless persons. He drew attention to the fact that issues relating to citizenship did not fall exclusively within the competence of States.

17. The draft conclusion provided an interpretation of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness that made it possible to clarify the specific legal obligations of States parties to those conventions and of countries considering accession to those instruments.

18. His delegation considered that specific measures for the integration of stateless persons, including their naturalization, would allow States, in cooperation with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies, to reduce the numbers of stateless persons considerably.

19. He was particularly concerned at the arbitrary deprivation of citizenship, or refusal to grant citizenship, in connection with the succession of States, including the practice of systematic discrimination against stateless persons. He hoped that the adoption of the conclusion would enable UNHCR to step up its activities relating to the identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of the rights of stateless persons, particularly with regard to protracted situations of statelessness.

20. Mr. RESSLER (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) requested that UNICEF should be included in the list of participants as observers.

21. The report of the fifty-seventh session of the Executive Committee, as orally amended, was adopted.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION (agenda item 15)

22. Mr. GUTERRES (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the discussions at the current session of the Executive Committee had revolved around three key issues, namely, the role of UNHCR in addressing internal displacement, the asylum-migration nexus and the UNHCR reform process.

23. The members of the Executive Committee had agreed that UNHCR had an obligation to participate in global efforts to address IDP situations as a fully engaged, predictable partner. Thus far, UNHCR involvement had been limited to its responsibilities within the framework of the cluster approach, which applied only to emergency situations in a limited number of pilot countries. There was a need for further discussion of the institutional framework for IDP protection and priority areas of engagement, taking into account country-specific and regional particularities. While financial considerations were important, efforts should be made to adopt a needs-based approach to programme planning.

24. With regard to asylum-migration nexus, members had unanimously recognized the protection challenges posed by mixed population flows and they had agreed that IDP-related activities should not divert resources earmarked for refugee protection. Members had highlighted the need for effective and durable solutions, particularly return and resettlement, and both resettlement and host countries had identified resettlement as a valuable strategic solution and a burden-sharing mechanism. He highlighted the need for further in-depth discussions on the political, economic and social implications of the asylum-migration nexus and the diversity of protection needs. The High Commissioner's Forum was a suitable setting for such an exchange.

25. Members had expressed strong support for reform initiatives aimed at enhancing the Office's capacity to address displacement, provide an adequate response to the protection challenges in mixed populations flows and guarantee the sustainability of solutions. In order to close the gap between available resources and protection needs, the international community must provide additional funds and UNHCR must use those resources more effectively.

26. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the CHAIRMAN declared the fifty-seventh session closed.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.