



General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
27 December 2012

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 33rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 7 November 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Sparber (Vice-Chair). (Liechtenstein)

Contents

Agenda item 62: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

12-57795 (E)



Please recycle A small recycling symbol consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



In the absence of Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Item 62: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (A/67/12, A/67/12/Add.1 and A/67/323) (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Tarar** (Pakistan) said that in view of the burdensome political, social, economic and environmental costs generated by hosting refugees, in particular in protracted situations, the international community must redouble its efforts to help host countries. Since the 1980s Pakistan had been hosting the largest refugee population in the world. While international support for Afghan refugees had dwindled, his country continued to ease the humanitarian pressures facing the Afghan Government and the international community. However, the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees remained the only durable solution, requiring efforts to ensure their participation in Afghanistan's development. Yet the lack of pull factors had resulted in an increase in the number of refugees in his country.

2. Pakistan could not be expected to shoulder such a gigantic burden alone. The outcome of the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries, held in Geneva in May 2012, should be a starting point for an orderly and swift repatriation of Afghan refugees. The pledges made at the conference to resolve the Afghan refugee problem must be honoured but resources were urgently needed to support the solutions strategy. The tripartite agreement signed by his Government would expire on 31 December 2012 and Pakistan was evaluating options for its refugee policy. The international community must recognize its joint responsibility for refugees, returnees and displaced persons, who should be supported without creating tensions between them and host communities.

3. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said the world was witnessing a spiral of conflict, unrest, violence, persecution and deprivation. The emergence of new global threats, such as environmental degradation and

climate change, added to the complexity of ongoing displacements. His delegation encouraged the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to devise strategies to cope with millions of climate migrants.

4. Bangladesh had been hosting large numbers of Myanmar refugees since 1991. Although not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and despite limited resources, Bangladesh had been trying to protect the refugees and meet their basic needs with the help of UNHCR and the international community. However, there had been no repatriation of refugees since 2005. Bangladesh had long been overburdened by the frequent infiltration of hundreds of thousands of undocumented Myanmar nationals. They created security, economic, social and environmental problems for the local communities, a situation further aggravated by the recent violence in Myanmar. While Bangladesh met its humanitarian and moral obligations towards Muslim refugees, the international community also had a clear obligation to address the root causes of the problem. His country saw little benefit in sporadic resettlement, which only complicated the repatriation process. The ongoing democratic reform process in Myanmar offered a great opportunity for cooperation with the Government of Myanmar to find a durable solution.

5. **Mr. von Haff** (Angola) said that his Government appreciated UNHCR cooperation on the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from neighbouring countries. Migration had intensified worldwide and had become more complex owing to social, economic, political and environmental factors. That tragedy posed major challenges for the protection of refugees, requiring many States to create special mechanisms to minimize suffering. His Government was bringing its policy on asylum seekers and refugees into line with international humanitarian law.

6. Angola had extended its voluntary repatriation operations until June 2012 and was working with UNHCR to find a sustainable solution for the large number of refugees who had fled the country between 1961 and 2002. In 2011, repatriation operations had resumed, allowing for the voluntary return of 22,000 refugees until the end of June 2012; 26,000 new refugees had been registered to be repatriated, while 70,000 had opted for local integration, mainly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia.

7. Angola was asking UNHCR for support to implement instruments for the protection of refugees. His Government was committed to finding durable solutions for Angolan refugees who chose to stay in host countries for family reasons and, in that regard, welcomed the commitment of the Zambian authorities to support the integration of some 10,000 such refugees. He urged the international community to address the root causes of conflict and displacement; the humanitarian community to adopt plans that effectively responded to humanitarian crises; and all stakeholders to help post-conflict countries develop and implement strategies for returnees and displaced persons. Lastly, his delegation encouraged all member States of the African Union to accede to the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).

8. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that his country, a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, had hosted a large number of refugees from neighbouring countries over several decades. Natural disasters and internal conflicts in the Sudan had led to an increase in the numbers of Sudanese refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, placing an additional burden on his country. Since the responsibility for refugee issues lay with States, Sudan had enacted national legislation on displaced persons, enshrining the humanitarian commitments contained in the relevant regional and international instruments. In order to address the root causes of displacement and refugee crises, it had undertaken agricultural land reform and built reservoirs. Moreover, his country's signing of the Doha Agreement for Peace in Darfur had resulted in an improvement in the security situation, thus contributing to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes under voluntary return programmes.

9. Responding to remarks made by the representative of South Sudan in the discussion on the right to self-determination, he recalled his Government's recognition of South Sudan's referendum on independence. It respected peoples' right to self-determination and intended to cooperate with South Sudan as a friendly neighbour.

10. Responding to remarks made by the representative of the United States of America, he said that, as all countries faced human rights challenges, it

would be wise to cooperate on strengthening respect for human rights instead of politicizing the issue.

11. **Mr. Rishchynski** (Canada) said the protection role of UNHCR was more relevant than ever, in view of the targeting of civilians by the Syrian regime, the growing number of refugees flowing into South Sudan, the continuing displacement crises in the Sahel and the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His Government was particularly concerned at the forcible return of North Koreans, Rohingya and Tibetans to their countries of origin. By supporting UNHCR, Canada was helping to alleviate the suffering of highly vulnerable groups. The international community must focus on guaranteeing and improving international protection. For responses to mixed migration, the persecution of religious minorities and the difficulties faced by people owing to their sexual orientation, protection was the key. It was central to Canada's efforts, including the pledges it had announced in December 2011 to set aside resettlement spaces for emergencies.

12. Canada would continue to work with UNHCR and its partners to enhance protection. However, UNHCR must be efficient, results-based and accountable, continuing to improve its ability to identify durable solutions and respond to humanitarian emergencies. In view of the steadily rising budget, he underscored the importance of building operational flexibility into plans, so operations could be scaled up or down in response to needs. While keeping headquarters and staffing costs within agreed limits, UNHCR should improve its ability to communicate results but not waste valuable resources on advertising campaigns. Since UNHCR and host countries needed reliable and predictable commitments, Canada would be focusing resettlement efforts on specific refugee populations.

13. **Mr. Kasymov** (Kyrgyzstan) expressed appreciation for the level of cooperation that existed between his country and UNHCR. In particular Kyrgyzstan had benefited from technical assistance with civil registration that had accelerated the issuance of documents in isolated regions, thereby helping to avoid statelessness. His delegation welcomed the outcomes of the intergovernmental event at the ministerial level of States Members of the United Nations on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the fiftieth anniversary of the 1961 Convention on

the Reduction of Statelessness. The event had opened a new chapter in international cooperation on forced displacement and statelessness and would improve the protection of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons.

14. The protection of refugees was one of the main components of Kyrgyzstan's migration policy as was reflected in the enactment of legal provisions and in practical measures to solve existing problems. Kyrgyzstan had adopted a Refugees Act in 2002, which UNHCR deemed to be fully in accord with international standards. The Act contained provisions relating to assistance to refugees in the acquisition of Kyrgyz citizenship and access to education, employment, property ownership and legal assistance. In addition, guarantees were provided to ensure that refugees would not be returned to a country where they might suffer persecution. Kyrgyzstan was currently protecting more than 20,000 refugees in its territory.

15. In many countries, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were subjected to discrimination and were often seen as threats to the system of social protection, the economy or national security. They were depicted as criminals in the media and their contributions to society were ignored or shown in a negative light in the education system. The international community must combat such phenomena, which resulted in an unending cycle of poverty, isolation and lack of understanding.

16. **Mr. Ansari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that in recent decades his country had hosted the largest number of refugees in the world and, despite limited resources and unfair sanctions, had continued to provide for their needs, in keeping with humanitarian principles and its obligations under the 1951 Convention. Albeit grateful to UNHCR and donor countries, his Government had borne most of the expenses.

17. Even though Afghanistan had had a government with broad international support for a decade, millions of Afghan refugees continued to live in host countries because of the scant possibility of reintegration in their homeland. Afghan refugees had lived in Iranian cities for over 30 years and currently enjoyed access to costly health care, education, public transport and other services.

18. In 2011, only 21,000 Afghan refugees had been repatriated. More Afghans would be willing to return if Afghanistan offered adequate job opportunities,

education facilities, advanced health care and speedier reconstruction. Yet the international community had done little to improve the situation of returnees. Since voluntary, secure and respectful repatriation was the right of any refugee, the Islamic Republic of Iran was participating in Afghan reconstruction projects. Housing must become the priority of donor countries, with the construction of exclusive residential areas for returnees and the provision of basic infrastructure.

19. Resettlement could also help to solve the refugee problem, but only 835 Afghan citizens had been resettled from Iran since the beginning of the year. Since 1999 the total figure came to less than 10,000, whereas the yearly average birth rate in the refugee community was 40,000. His country had spent billions of dollars supporting refugees, including their education. Implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries could help the international community to find a way out of the biggest and longest-running refugee situation in recent history.

20. **Mr. Saadi** (Algeria) expressed his delegation's concern at the deterioration in the situation of refugees and displaced persons, at the number of refugees, a quarter of whom were in Africa, at the large increase in the number of IDPs, most of whom lived in developing countries, and at the severity of humanitarian situations, above all in the Sahel. International aid must be intensified, especially with regard to the conflict in Mali, which had uprooted 300,000 people and forced more than 265,000 to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The international community should also feel compelled to act in the face of the situation of thousands of Syrian refugees.

21. He appealed for more funds to help refugees and IDPs, voicing his delegation's concern that the economic crisis would affect traditional donors' capacities. UNHCR should seek new funding through partnerships with other United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and civil society. In 2011, Algeria had allocated \$10 million in humanitarian aid to the Horn of Africa and was providing humanitarian assistance to Mali. A joint mission of the Algerian Red Crescent and UNHCR had provided assistance to refugees in southern Algeria, where the Government was addressing food, health, housing, schooling and security needs.

22. Algeria continued to host refugees from Western Sahara in the Tindouf camps while they awaited a durable solution based on their right to self-determination. His delegation thanked UNHCR for its continued involvement in their nutrition, health and education and all donors for their mobilization, which had been strengthened by the signing of an agreement with the World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure food aid for 125,000 of the most vulnerable Sahrawi refugees. He expressed appreciation for the periodic UNHCR/WFP joint assessment missions, which continued to confirm the transparency of Algeria's assistance delivery operations.

23. Algeria appreciated UNHCR help in adapting its national asylum legislation to international standards. The process was nearing completion with the promulgation of a new law on the right of asylum that would be fully in line with the 1951 Convention.

24. **Mr. Mikec** (Croatia) said his country was deeply concerned at the escalation of violence and continued violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular in the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, which had resulted in the aggravation of the refugee and displacement crises and increased demands for international protection. It stood ready to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees. In accordance with its human rights obligations and relevant international instruments, Croatia was working on the prevention and reduction of cases of statelessness, in particular among the Roma. However, only concerted efforts could bring an end to statelessness within a decade.

25. Preparations for implementation of the Joint Regional Programme on Durable Solutions for Refugees and Displaced Persons were progressing as planned. The joint efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, together with international partners, continued to be an outstanding example of regional cooperation. The effective implementation of the Programme represented the best guarantee for continued efforts towards ending displacement once and for all in the region. The continued involvement of UNHCR in the process was greatly appreciated. Lastly, Croatia welcomed the efforts by UNHCR to improve the efficiency of its operations, make savings and expand its donor base, in particular in the private sector.

26. **Mr. Starčević** (Serbia) said that, having hosted one of the largest populations of displaced persons in Europe for over two decades, his country was aware of the complex problems entailed and fully supported UNHCR. In 2008, it had identified Serbia as one of the five countries in the world with a protracted displacement situation; there were currently 66,000 refugees and over 210,000 IDPs. In addition to providing for their humanitarian needs, it was vital to respect their human rights. As part of its commitment to finding just, sustainable and durable solutions, Serbia had granted 250,000 persons citizenship – the highest percentage of refugee integration in Europe.

27. Over 220,000 IDPs from the province of Kosovo were living elsewhere in Serbia, facing numerous obstacles in exercising their right to return. Moreover, no durable solutions had been found for 15,000 IDPs in Kosovo. Roma, Ashkalis and Egyptians from Kosovo were particularly vulnerable, as they often lacked personal identification and therefore found it more difficult to obtain health insurance, social protection, employment and education. Serbia had worked with civil society to assist them with the provision of documentation.

28. A major goal of Serbia's strategy for refugees and IDPs was to solve housing needs, in particular for the most vulnerable. With extra funding from international donors, Serbia had provided over 5,000 lasting solutions for refugees and IDPs. Further regional efforts supported by international donors had focused on voluntary return and reintegration or local integration. The pledges funded thus far would be used to solve housing problems for 27,000 families, and it was expected that the remaining funding needed to implement the Joint Regional Programme on Durable Solutions for Refugees and Displaced Persons would soon be raised, allowing the first projects to be put in place in 2013. Serbia believed the donor community would recognize the importance of that regional initiative aimed at helping to end displacement in South-East Europe.

29. **Ms. Mtawali** (United Republic of Tanzania) expressed her delegation's concern at the growing number of displaced persons worldwide and the unprecedented number of new refugee crises in 2012, resulting in insecurity, human rights violations and greater pressure on protection efforts. The protracted refugee situation in parts of Africa was being exacerbated by an increasing number of conflicts. Yet

funding from the international community was decreasing, making it extremely difficult for host States, especially those in the developing world, to meet their international obligations.

30. With the assistance of UNHCR, her country currently hosted about 100,000 refugees, mostly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Relative stability over the previous decade in most of the Great Lakes region had made sustainable voluntary repatriation possible. When conditions improved, refugees should be encouraged to return to their countries of origin. However, even under such circumstances, some refugees refused to leave, as was the case of 36,000 former Burundian refugees in her country. In keeping with international law, they had been given until the end of the year to return in a safe and orderly manner but her Government would have to declare them illegal immigrants on 1 January 2013. With regard to those Burundians whose grant of citizenship was giving rise to some concern, her Government was seeking a mutually acceptable solution.

31. **Mr. Lee Jae Won** (Republic of Korea) said that a succession of large-scale humanitarian crises amid political, social and economic turmoil and a lack of political will had made responses to the needs of refugees more difficult. His delegation encouraged UNHCR and Member States to make further efforts to enhance regional cooperation and welcomed the recent establishment of a Regional Support Office in Bangkok.

32. As emphasized in the High Commissioner's report, the principle of non-refoulement was central to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and should be upheld as such. Drawing attention to numerous reports of refugees and asylum seekers who had fled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and been forcibly returned, he said that their plight needed urgent attention. His Government had enacted a Refugee Act that would better protect refugees and asylum seekers. It would enter into force in July 2013 and an enforcement decree was being drafted to facilitate its comprehensive implementation.

33. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) said that in 2011 a number of crises in North Africa and the Middle East had required rapid intervention by UNHCR. The international community must pay urgent attention to protracted refugee situations and demonstrate solidarity

in response to emergency situations that often exceeded UNHCR means. Morocco had provided as much assistance for displaced persons as it could following the crises in Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Sahel, but UNHCR needed additional funding and other support to act in accordance with its mandate. Thanks to its voluntary repatriation programmes, hopes of ending protracted refugee situations in Africa, Asia and the Balkans had been revived, proof that even the most complex crises could be successfully addressed when the political will existed.

34. No progress had been made, however, in the case of the refugees who had been in the Tindouf camps for more than 37 years. No reliable population census had been carried out, despite appeals by the Secretary-General and the Security Council. Algeria had refused to assume primary responsibility, even though as host country it bore the legal and moral responsibility to protect the rights and safety of the refugees, who were dangerously exposed to contact with traffickers, terrorists and other criminals. The international community and UNHCR must act to preserve the humanitarian and civilian character of the camps. His Government called for full compliance with international humanitarian law with regard to the refugees in the Tindouf camps and for a lasting political solution to be found.

35. **Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine) said that, in view of the increasing frequency and scale of conflicts and the growing need for well-coordinated humanitarian action, his Government welcomed the structural and administrative reforms UNHCR was undertaking and emphasized the importance of providing the Office with adequate resources. It commended UNHCR for securing the international protection of refugees, supervising the observance of their rights and freedoms and helping Governments with voluntary repatriation and assimilation.

36. In 2011, Ukraine's humanitarian mission to Libya had helped to evacuate civilians of many nationalities and, during the past year, it had assisted with the evacuation of civilians from the Syrian Arab Republic. The President had approved a decision to provide humanitarian assistance, through the United Nations, to countries in the region hosting persons affected by the Syrian conflict. Ukraine was open to dialogue with UNHCR on how to provide such assistance.

37. Ukraine had carried out complex work to meet its international obligations under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In 2011, a new law on refugees and people requiring additional or temporary protection had been adopted, taking into account UNHCR recommendations and European legislation. The President had signed a harmonizing law regulating the access of refugees in need of additional protection to social, educational and medical assistance. Protection of refugees' rights was one of the priorities of his country's European integration policy.

38. **Ms. McElwaine** (Ireland) said that conflicts in Mali, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere in 2012 had affected the lives of many millions, highlighting the vulnerability of human beings to displacement and the indispensable role of UNHCR in upholding humanitarian principles. Much of the burden fell on the host communities of neighbouring countries, and that burden was often of long duration: more than two thirds of the refugees of concern to UNHCR lived in situations of prolonged exile.

39. Ireland was ready to intensify cooperation efforts to meet the needs of vulnerable populations and would highlight the matter of forgotten emergencies during its Presidency of the European Union. Her delegation commended the steps taken by UNHCR to address sexual and gender-based violence and child protection in situations of displacement. A major objective for humanitarian agencies would be implementation of the transformative agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation with a view to enhancing leadership, accountability and coordination across all elements of the international response. Ireland supported a strong and effective Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the field. The staff of UNHCR operated in some of the most dangerous environments in the world and further efforts were needed to ensure that they enjoyed the highest possible standard of security.

40. **Mr. Zebari** (Iraq) said that the region of Kurdistan had long been hosting refugees from neighbouring countries, meeting its responsibilities under international law by providing them with essential services including housing. Despite its limited resources, the region had been sheltering over 10,000 refugees in two camps; because of insufficient international support, the authorities had had to

shoulder a heavy burden. Further waves of refugees had arrived more recently, including unexpectedly large numbers of persons displaced from the Syrian Arab Republic, 20,000 of whom were being accommodated in one camp alone.

41. The regional authorities had taken steps, in conjunction with UNHCR, to grant Syrian refugees legal resident status. It was acknowledged that the regional government of Kurdistan was providing the best conditions in the region for Syrian refugees, having allocated \$10 million from its budget. Arabic language schools had been opened with a curriculum similar to that used in the Syrian Arab Republic, and Syrian refugees could attend higher education courses free of charge. However, growing numbers of Syrian migrants were arriving in the region every day. With the onset of winter, the authorities could face difficulties in providing the necessary services, with potentially disastrous consequences. He called on the United Nations and the international community to provide assistance for Syrian refugees in Kurdistan until they could safely return to their country of origin.

42. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that his Government had made the resolution of the status of refugees and displaced persons a key target in its progress towards European integration. A strategy and action plan had been adopted, which provided for the integration of refugees into Montenegrin society and their voluntary return to their countries of origin. His Government had improved the living conditions of IDPs and other displaced persons and facilitated access to their rights. In addition to ongoing activities conducted at the national level, Montenegro was working with the Joint Regional Programme on Durable Solutions for Refugees and Displaced Persons, which, among other things, would resolve the regional housing problem, an integral part of the national agenda to find a durable solution for refugees and IDPs.

43. The outcome of the donor conference held in Sarajevo in April 2012 would help to alleviate the problems facing refugees and IDPs in the region. However, it was necessary to solve the legal status of refugees and IDPs in the former Yugoslavia. Bearing in mind the importance of finding durable solutions, Montenegro was facilitating procedures in coordination with international organizations and other States in the region. Refugees and IDPs, in particular the vulnerable Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations, would be

relieved of the obligation to provide proof of financial status, accommodation and health insurance. Despite all the progress made, a number of persons still faced problems in obtaining documents. Montenegro had therefore conducted information campaigns on the importance of resolving refugees' status, introducing a mechanism aimed at facilitating access to documents and travel to other countries in the region to obtain documents. That progress had been possible only with the support and solidarity of the international community.

44. **Ms. Shiolashvili** (Georgia) said that in 2011 her country had taken further steps to bring its legislation and policies into line with international standards on safeguarding the rights of stateless persons, refugees and IDPs. Georgia had ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and adopted a new law on refugees.

45. Forced displacement continued to be the worst humanitarian problem facing her country. Despite the concerted efforts of her Government and the international community, hundreds of thousands of IDPs had been unable to return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner, in a blatant obstruction of their fundamental right. The General Assembly adopted a resolution every year reiterating the right of Georgia's refugees and IDPs to return. The increasing number of delegations supporting it demonstrated the international community's determination to find a solution based on international law for persons displaced from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Her Government had done all it could to provide the IDPs with housing and meet their immediate needs, but the only durable solution was a return to their places of permanent residence. Emphasizing the continuing human rights violations of the remaining population in Georgia's occupied regions, she said that the lack of international human rights monitoring mechanisms for those territories should be remedied as soon as possible.

46. **Ms. Kuljanin** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that her region had been experiencing displacement-related difficulties for over two decades but better understanding of the issue, joint efforts and cooperation among countries of the region had led to positive developments. Following talks between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, a joint regional programme on durable solutions had been presented in November 2011. A

donor conference had been held in Sarajevo in April 2012 to raise funds for the implementation of national projects as part of that programme, from which 27,000 households and about 74,000 individuals in the four countries should benefit over five years. Almost 300 million euros had been collected from the international community, slightly more than half of the total required.

47. Her country had adopted a revised strategy to facilitate the return of refugees to their original homes, sustain returnees and provide alternative solutions for those unable to return. Since 2008, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina had spent large sums on housing and creating the conditions for sustainable return. However, return was not a genuinely durable solution without the conditions to make it sustainable. A holistic approach was needed, going beyond property restitution and physical reconstruction, and providing for economic opportunities, social protection and the rebuilding of relationships. Solutions for displaced populations also had to take into account their human rights. While the politicization of a humanitarian process was unacceptable the solutions inevitably included a political dimension. Bosnia and Herzegovina was committed to ending the protracted refugee situation and displacement in a dignified manner, in the firm belief that it would improve neighbourly relations and bring about stability and lasting peace in the region.

48. **Mr. Habtegiyorgis** (Ethiopia) said his country was deeply concerned at the growing number of refugees around the world, in particular in Africa and in his own subregion. Disasters had made the Horn of Africa one of the most conflict-ridden and volatile regions in the world, resulting in a constant influx of refugees and displaced persons over several decades. Ethiopia had maintained an open-door policy to asylum seekers, despite the adverse consequences for the environment and security. There were currently 378,000 refugees in Ethiopia, putting constraints on resources and requiring greater cooperation with UNHCR and the donor community.

49. On the basis of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its Protocol and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the Ethiopian Parliament had established a legislative framework to administer the situation of refugees and returnees. Ethiopia cooperated closely with UNHCR,

the donor community and other humanitarian organizations to facilitate repatriation and reintegration, meet refugees' needs, ensure a smooth relationship between refugees and host communities, administer camps and maintain law and order. With a view to seeking a long-term solution, the Ethiopian Government, in cooperation with UNHCR, had launched a programme to enable refugees without a criminal record to live anywhere in the country and receive higher education. Ethiopia remained committed to continue to discharge its obligations with regard to refugees and provide asylum seekers with assistance for as long as necessary.

50. **Ms. Mammadaliyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that armed conflicts and foreign occupations continued to cause the suffering of civilians, in particular displaced persons and refugees. A more coherent international approach was needed to end illegal practices and ensure that displaced persons could return in safety and dignity to their homes. The occupation of almost one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenia had made one out of every nine persons in her country an IDP or refugee. In 1993, the Security Council had expressed concern at the displacement of civilians from Nagorny Karabakh in several resolutions and the General Assembly had noted that the number of refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan had exceeded one million, making it one of the highest populations of displaced persons in the world. Armenia's actions could be qualified as ethnic cleansing as defined by the International Court of Justice.

51. The rights of Azerbaijani citizens had been violated by their expulsion, their discriminatory treatment, the denial of access to their property and assets, and the refusal to allow them to return to their homes. In recent years her Government had made considerable efforts to assist refugees and displaced persons and would continue to use all its political and diplomatic resources to enable them to return home. Despite international efforts, Armenia was continuing its policy of installing ethnic Armenian settlers in the occupied territories. Her country believed that the lack of political agreement should not be an excuse for ignoring the problems caused by armed conflict and foreign occupation. The international community must ensure that the rights of displaced persons were protected. Azerbaijan was committed to continuing its close cooperation with the United Nations to overcome the problems facing refugees and displaced persons.

52. **Mr. Dorbes** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that, although the plight of IDPs had not abated in recent years, with extensive operations under way in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia and elsewhere, the international community's attention had been decreasing. However, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention had been adopted, along with the ICRC policy on internal displacement.

53. Through its assistance and protection activities, ICRC responded to the needs of IDPs and their host communities in 35 countries, while continuing its efforts to prevent displacement. Focusing on the critical situation of persons affected by protracted displacement in 40 countries, he said it was not necessarily the first year of displacement that posed the greatest problems, but later years when media interest subsided and resources became scarce. Faced with uncertainty about their future or the constant threat of forcible eviction, millions of people had to cope with a lack of access to adequate housing, education, health services or income-generating opportunities. Those people should benefit from social welfare systems and development projects, have access to basic rights and be offered durable solutions, such as integration, voluntary return or relocation.

54. Together with States, ICRC was paying particular attention to humanitarian concerns related to displacement, in particular the problems facing IDPs in large urban centres. Pledging the support of ICRC, he urged Governments and humanitarian and development agencies to prioritize the needs of victims of long-term displacement.

55. **Ms. Christensen** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that the world was currently facing a range of complex displacement contexts, including acute and protracted crises in Mali, the Syrian Arab Republic and other countries. The international community must step up efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable displaced populations.

56. In October 2012, IFRC had launched its *World Disasters Report*, highlighting the plight of forced migrants. In 2011, over 70 million people had been displaced, yet the support of governments seemed to be diminishing. More than 20 million people were trapped in protracted displacement, living in camps or

unplanned urban areas, unable to work or gain access to basic social services. In order to address those challenges harmonized actions and policies were required at the international level.

57. At its 31st international conference, held in November 2011, the Federation had adopted a resolution calling for governments to ensure that migrants, irrespective of their legal status, had access to the support they needed and were treated at all times with respect and dignity. States should ensure that relevant laws and procedures were in place to enable national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to enjoy effective and safe access to all migrants without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status. They should also ensure that procedures at international borders, in particular those that might result in deportation or denial of access to international protection, included safeguards to protect the dignity and ensure the safety of all migrants.

58. **Ms. Muedin** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that the international community must be adequately prepared and flexible in its responses to population movements resulting from multiple complex crises. Those responses must be coordinated through effective inter-agency partnership, the cornerstone of humanitarian response activities. Recalling many years of cooperation between IOM and UNHCR on refugee resettlement operations, she stressed IOM's commitment to the Transformative Agenda and the resulting reforms aimed at strengthening responses.

59. Reiterating concerns about the growing threat to vulnerable populations from environmental degradation and climate change, she welcomed the Nansen initiative, which would address the legal and protection gaps for persons displaced by extreme weather events. Since responses to humanitarian crises must be informed by an understanding of the relationship between migration and refugees, she stressed the need for comprehensive approaches and dialogue engendering ownership of the States involved. Moreover, the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel required further joint action. The partnership between IOM and UNHCR was essential for providing mobile populations with the necessary protection.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

60. **Mr. Luin Naing** (Myanmar) said he wished to respond to the statement made by the representative of Bangladesh. From 1969 to 1971, the Government of Myanmar had conducted a census in the border areas of Rakhine State and, since most of the inhabitants were illegal immigrants trying to better their lives, they had fled to their native country. Agreements had since been reached with Bangladesh, under which Myanmar had received thousands of returnees. His delegation was confident that bilateral immigrant issues could be solved amicably by two friendly neighbours.

61. **Ms. Khoudaverdian** (Armenia) said the provocative statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan had been based on unfounded accusations. All the statistical data on the Nagorno Karabakh issue could be found in reports issued by international institutions, including UNHCR. Armenia had been the first East European country to face the refugee problem after massacres in Azerbaijan from 1988 to 1990 had forced the flight of half a million Armenians from that country. Although Armenia had recently suffered a devastating earthquake in the already difficult conditions following independence, it had used all its resources to integrate the refugees into its society and its programmes had won the praise of UNHCR. Armenia had fully complied with the relevant Security Council resolutions and was ready to share its practices with the international community.

62. **Ms. Mammadaliyeva** (Azerbaijan) recommended that the Armenian representative should read the international documents more carefully. In 1993, four Security Council resolutions had condemned Armenia's use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territory by Armenian forces, reaffirming respect for Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the inviolability of its international borders. The separatist entity and structures set up by Armenia in the occupied territory had repeatedly been declared illegal by the entire international community. Moreover, attacks on Azerbaijani civilians and the bombardment of inhabited areas had been condemned as acts of racial discrimination, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

63. **Ms. Khoudaverdian** (Armenia) said, in response to the statement by the representative of Azerbaijan, that the most recent violation of humanitarian law by Azerbaijan had been its treatment of an Azerbaijani officer who had cruelly murdered an Armenian officer

in Budapest. Although given a life sentence, he had recently been released and welcomed back to Azerbaijan as a national hero. She recalled that systematic breaches of international human rights law by Azerbaijan had been among the major causes of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

64. **Ms. Mammadaliyeva** (Azerbaijan) said, in response to the statement by the representative of Armenia, that Azerbaijan had acceded to independence within its existing territorial boundaries. Armenia had started the war by occupying part of the territory of Azerbaijan, conducting ethnic cleansing and establishing a subordinate separatist entity. In 1993, the Security Council had condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan, demanding the immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from all Azerbaijani territory and confirming that Nagorny Karabakh was an integral part of Azerbaijan.

65. **Mr. Al-Obaidi** (Iraq) said that the Iraqi security forces had helped to guarantee the voluntary return of most IDPs in his country. He therefore saw no justification for speaking about Iraq in the way the ICRC representative had done.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.