



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
1 February 2018

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 41st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 2 November 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland)
later: Ms. Kaszás (Vice-Chair) (Hungary)
later: Mr. Gunnarsson (Chair) (Iceland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 64: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*) ([A/72/12](#), [A/72/12/Add.1](#) and [A/72/354](#))

1. **Mr. Chatha** (Pakistan) said that wars, human rights abuses and protracted refugee situations had become endemic. According to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([A/72/12](#)), 65.6 million people worldwide had been displaced as a result of persecution, conflict or other situations of violence. With the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the international community had strongly reaffirmed its commitment to protect refugees and migrants and support the countries and communities that sheltered them. Words, however, were not enough; States must not shy away from their shared responsibility to address the global refugee crisis.

2. Pakistan had hosted millions of Afghan refugees for nearly four decades; it was the largest protracted refugee situation since the Second World War. The Government provided unhindered access to education, health care and livelihood opportunities. In 2013, it had adopted a new national policy on Afghan refugees, which focused on safe and dignified voluntary repatriation and assistance for host communities. The Government was drafting a plan of action for repatriation and working closely with the Afghan Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Nevertheless, there was a lack of recognition and appropriate support for those efforts from the international community.

3. The contributions of host countries were largely taken for granted. While national resources were strained to meet the increasing protection needs of refugees, pledges of international solidarity rarely led to concrete actions. In order to ensure that no one was left behind, Pakistan called for proactive action, equal burden-sharing, long-term durable solutions and thinking that went beyond national priorities. The refugee crisis required a comprehensive approach that included conflict resolution and long-term political solutions to address the root causes of displacement.

4. *Ms. Kaszás (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

5. **Ms. Agladze** (Georgia) said that the New York Declaration and the World Humanitarian Summit, held in 2016, had been milestones in increasing global responsibility for displaced persons. Those commitments, however, must be transformed into

action. Georgia reiterated the need to address the root causes of forced displacement and ensure the fundamental rights of all displaced persons in a purely humanitarian context. Despite its limited resources, Georgia was doing its best to provide asylum. The law on international protection, which had recently been adopted by the Parliament, strengthened safeguards and improved protection for asylum seekers, refugees and persons with humanitarian status. Georgia continued to be concerned about the forced displacement resulting from several waves of ethnic cleansing in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. A survey conducted by UNHCR in 2015 had found that more than 70 per cent of Georgian internally displaced persons were willing to return to their homes voluntarily.

6. Despite the General Assembly resolutions and direct calls from the Security Council, hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced persons still could not exercise their fundamental rights. Meanwhile, the ethnic Georgian population in the occupied regions faced the imminent threat of expulsion. In the current academic year, Georgian-language education had been banned in all schools. Entry and exit points along the occupation line had been closed, and razor-wire fences and other artificial obstacles had been installed, severely restricting the freedom of movement of local residents. Furthermore, Russian occupation forces had recently demolished the houses of Georgian internally displaced persons in the occupied Tskhinvali region. The report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on cooperation with Georgia ([A/HRC/36/65](#)) had concluded that some practices in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions appeared to reflect discriminatory patterns based on ethnic grounds. The return of displaced persons should be addressed effectively in the framework of the Geneva international discussions; however, the Russian Federation continued to politicize and impede the talks. The Government of Georgia was committed to finding long-term solutions to the plight of internally displaced persons, without prejudice to their fundamental right to a safe and dignified return, and would continue to work in close cooperation with UNHCR.

7. **Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) said that the resources available for humanitarian relief fell far short of the demand. Most refugees were concentrated in developing countries, which placed burdens on economic and social development and security, while some developed countries had a growing tendency to politicize the issue. In the past year, UNHCR had made significant efforts to advance internal reform, strengthen coordination and enhance its capacity for emergency response. China appreciated those efforts and had always maintained

good cooperation with the Office. In 2017, UNHCR had conducted pilot projects to implement the comprehensive refugee response framework and had seen positive results.

8. The global compact on refugees should address both the symptoms and the root causes of the refugee problem. While it was necessary to increase support for UNHCR and recipient countries and eliminate xenophobia and discrimination against refugees, there must also be efforts to address social instability and imbalance in development, resolve disputes through dialogue and increase development assistance to developing countries, with a view to creating the conditions necessary for the return of refugees. The global compact must also uphold the spirit of international cooperation. UNHCR should share the results of its pilot projects, which could serve as a reference for the global compact. Negotiations must be driven by Member States, and the reception and resettlement of refugees must consider historical factors, as well as national conditions and capacities. The global compact should also adhere to the principles of objectivity and impartiality, and the international community must avoid interfering in the internal affairs of States and must prevent the politicization and abuse of international refugee protection mechanisms. International relations should be based on mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation. In May 2017, China had hosted the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and stood ready to work with all parties to address the refugee situation and promote refugee protection.

9. **Ms. Alfassam** (Kuwait) said that the report stressed the need to address the root causes of displacement and find creative ways to facilitate the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons. The international community should cooperate fully with UNHCR in finding appropriate solutions. Kuwait was concerned about the increase in displaced persons and refugees around the world and applauded the New York Declaration, which would improve the living conditions of refugees and migrants. Kuwait provided humanitarian assistance directly to affected States and through the relevant specialized international agencies. In fact, her country had provided more than \$2 billion over the previous five years to support refugees and internally displaced persons around the world.

10. Kuwait had taken a number of administrative measure in order to assist persons who resided illegally in its territory, including the establishment of a central body that would address their status in the country and provide them with assistance and social benefits. Under the Government's road map, illegal residents would be

classified into one of three categories: persons whose status must be regularized, persons who might be granted citizenship and persons who would be given residence in the country. Kuwait had doubled its annual contributions to a number of international agencies and organizations dedicated to refugees and migrants. It fulfilled its humanitarian requirements and would continue to cooperate with the international community to find a solution to the migrant and refugee crisis.

11. **Ms. Sukkar** (Jordan) said that her country's borders had long been open to refugees, and Jordan hosted the largest number of refugees in the world per capita. The number of registered refugees had reached 2.8 million. More than 1.3 million were Syrians, of which approximately 89 per cent lived in host communities. Those circumstances put increased pressure on the country's limited resources, especially water, and they strained public services, including health, education, infrastructure and solid waste management. They also had an impact on development and social cohesion. Jordan had nevertheless managed to move from meeting emergency needs to a long-term development approach. The response plan for the Syrian crisis 2017-2019 brought together medium-term humanitarian and resilience efforts within a single national framework for the benefit of both refugees and host communities. Jordan also used technology to improve efficiency and security in vetting refugees, through the collection of biometric information.

12. The Prime Minister had approved recommendations to allow undocumented Syrian refugees to enrol in government schools. The Government was also expanding schools in Syrian refugee camps, and had opened 200 schools that operated double shifts. Specialized education programmes were being implemented for children who had missed more than three years of schooling. In addition, essential health services were being provided to refugees, including support for war-related injuries and obstetric and neonatal services. Jordan also provided gender-sensitive psychosocial, legal and medical services, including for women and girls who were the most vulnerable to violence and in need of protection, and had taken steps to promote social awareness of the issues relating to early marriage. Furthermore, there were plans to provide 200,000 jobs for Syrian refugees by 2020 in a way that would not negatively impact the national labour market or Jordanian job creation.

13. The influx of Syrian refugees and the protracted nature of the regional crises had pushed the country's absorptive capacity to its limit, impacting all aspects of life in the country. She therefore called on the

international community to increase its commitments and turn pledges into actions, emphasizing the principle of burden-sharing and the importance of strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. The Government had recently announced an agreement with donor countries to host the second Brussels Conference in 2018 to ensure continued efforts to mobilize funding in support of host countries on an annual basis and to follow up on progress.

14. **Mr. Francis** (Lebanon) said that he shared the High Commissioner's concern that 84 per cent of refugees were hosted by low- and middle-income countries. Rather than become the norm, refugee crises must be considered exceptional emergency situations that required the full mobilization and solidarity of the international community, and refugees and host communities must be at the heart of the response. Burden- and responsibility-sharing were fundamental to addressing the consequences of forced displacement. Sustainable solutions must also address the root causes of displacement, and the return of displaced persons and refugees must be a major priority. Furthermore, the specific context of each situation should be taken into consideration. For example, under the provisions of its Constitution, Lebanon could not be a resettlement country.

15. With more than 1.2 million registered Syrian refugees and 400,000 Palestinian refugees, Lebanon continued to host the largest number of refugees in the world, both per capita and per square kilometre. The mass influx of refugees strained the country's limited capacities and threatened security and social, economic and financial stability. Lebanon therefore reaffirmed the need for a global shift in the humanitarian assistance approach. According to the report, development actors had increased their efforts to address displacement and its impact on host communities, and had given greater attention to strengthening national services, including health care and education, in order to accommodate refugees.

16. There was growing global awareness of the need to translate calls for responsibility-sharing and expressions of solidarity into practical policies. Despite its immense challenges, Lebanon remained committed to the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

17. **Ms. Martinic** (Argentina) said that the New York Declaration and the comprehensive refugee response framework represented a significant step forward. The Government was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism and hoped that it would

strengthen the country's capacity to receive new refugees. In that regard, Argentina reaffirmed its commitment to receive Syrian refugees affected by conflict.

18. The search for sustainable regional and international solutions must be guided by the principles of solidarity and responsibility-sharing. Argentina would host two subregional consultations in November 2017 on the implementation of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action. According to an agreement between the National Refugee Commission and the UNHCR regional office, Argentina continued to improve the quality and accessibility of the process to obtain refugee status; strengthen capacities to process, review and rule on applications; identify the specific protection needs of vulnerable groups; and establish effective and sustainable internal review mechanisms.

19. Developing countries were disproportionately affected by large-scale refugee movements. The adoption of a global compact on refugees in 2018 would help to develop suitable frameworks to reinforce the progress made at the national and regional levels. A human rights-based approach must be taken in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New York Declaration, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, older persons and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Lastly, political resolve was needed to cooperate in promoting peace and sustainable development in order to address the underlying factors contributing to the rising numbers of people fleeing their homes.

20. **Ms. Ivanovic** (Serbia) said that solutions to the refugee and migrant crisis could only be achieved through joint and coordinated efforts by all Member States and international organizations. As at mid-2015, more than 900,000 refugees and migrants had transited through Serbia. When the route had been closed in 2016, the number of people remaining in transit countries had increased, which had strained reception and accommodation capacities. Serbia therefore called for a comprehensive European and global solution. As local communities struggled to absorb the large influx of refugees and migrants, it was becoming difficult to resist xenophobia, social animosity and intolerance in many European countries. As a transit country, Serbia had invested substantial human and financial resources in managing the refugee and migrant crisis. The Government had provided health care, food, medicine and information on asylum. Reception centres organized workshops and language courses, and migrant children had been attending Serbian schools since September 2016.

21. Additional international efforts were needed to address the issue of displacement effectively, and Serbia was ready to share its experiences and best practices in addressing the challenges of protracted displacement. In the 1990s, Serbia had received refugees from the former Yugoslavia and internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. The Regional Housing Programme could serve as an example of cooperation between host countries, countries of origin and international partners. In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, the Programme facilitated reconciliation and good relations. It was therefore essential for all participating countries to fully implement the Programme to ensure sustainable conditions for the reintegration of returnees. Given that the number of internally displaced persons was much higher than the number of refugees, and that their problems were very similar to those of refugees, UNHCR was the appropriate international agency to help the two groups. In the past 18 years, just 5 per cent of the more than 200,000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija had returned home. Serbia hoped to collaborate with UNHCR and other relevant partners to find just and durable solutions for that population.

22. **Ms. Hwang Yoo Sil** (Republic of Korea) said that the funding gap continued to widen, as the scale of the crisis had largely overwhelmed the humanitarian response. Nevertheless, her delegation was encouraged by the adoption of the New York Declaration and the work towards a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The recent pledging conference on the Rohingya refugee crisis was a timely reminder of the challenges facing the international community.

23. Durable solutions were needed for protracted refugee crises. UNHCR and other humanitarian actors must foster extensive partnerships to address the root causes of displacement. In that regard, her delegation encouraged UNHCR to redouble its efforts to strengthen partnerships with the private sector and development agencies. The Secretary-General had stressed the need to re-establish the integrity of the current refugee protection regime, as protecting refugees was an obligation under international law. In that connection, her delegation wished to underline the principal of non-refoulement.

24. The international community must share the responsibility of assisting host countries. Her Government had made an effort to assume more responsibility in helping to address the humanitarian crisis, by increasing its financial contributions to support the global refugee response. In 2013, the

Republic of Korea had become the first Asian country to enact an independent refugee law. It accepted asylum seekers and refugees and had implemented a pilot resettlement programme over the past three years. Her delegation reaffirmed its continued commitment to joining the international community in addressing displacement.

25. **Mr. Mseke** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, as a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, the United Republic of Tanzania had continued to pursue its open-door policy of offering asylum and protection and had welcomed over 318,000 refugees, mostly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. International resources to support refugee management were dwindling, which had forced Governments in poor countries, such as his, to use their own meagre resources to meet their obligations. The international community must contribute its fair share.

26. In November 2016, Tanzania had agreed to pilot the comprehensive refugee response framework, which would support the Government in meeting its commitments and enhancing protection for refugees, focusing on admission and rights, emergency response, inclusion and self-reliance, local integration for new citizens, third-country options and voluntary repatriation. The road map for the framework identified areas of engagement, stakeholders, principles of partnerships, coordination structures and priority sectors. The framework would provide support for the Burundi regional refugee response plan and the regional Democratic Republic of the Congo contingency plan. It would assist with financial planning and updating legal and policy frameworks. The principles of international cooperation, including burden- and responsibility-sharing, were crucial to the framework's effectiveness. He called on the international community to support the framework, as well as the pilot project in the United Republic of Tanzania, and to assist UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in raising funds for the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees.

27. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that over the past three years his country had faced significant humanitarian challenges owing to the aggression of the Russian Federation, which had resulted in the displacement of more than 1.6 million people from the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces and from temporarily occupied Crimea. Ukraine had the highest number of internally displaced persons among European countries, with an estimated 3.8 million people, 70 per cent of whom were elderly, women and children. Unfortunately, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Ukraine

remained critically underfunded, with only 28 per cent of the requirements met. Under such challenging circumstances, the Government of Ukraine was doing its best to provide the necessary assistance and was making institutional and legislative efforts to increase social and security guarantees for displaced persons and ensure their human rights. However, much remained to be done. Ukraine stood ready to cooperate with its partners to improve the situation of those in need and appreciated the vital humanitarian and technical support provided by a number of international organizations and individual partner States. His delegation commended the recent visits by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

28. The humanitarian situation was further complicated by the fact that the so-called local authorities in Donbas, supported by the Russian Federation, were blocking access for humanitarian aid. Ukraine condemned the outrageous propaganda promoting the alleged humanitarian efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation, which refused to coordinate with the International Committee of the Red Cross. It was sending so-called humanitarian convoys of half-empty trucks into the occupied territories, in violation of Ukrainian legislation and relevant international standards, and refused to allow Ukrainian border and customs services to review the contents. Those trucks then returned to the Russian Federation carrying goods and equipment stolen from Ukrainian enterprises in occupied Donbas. Furthermore, the situation in occupied Crimea remained dire. According to the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars continued to face systematic human rights violations and abuses and were often forced to flee, while the occupation authorities were reluctant to provide UNHCR with unimpeded access to the occupied area.

29. **Mr. Teffo** (South Africa) said that his delegation was concerned about the growing number of displaced persons, in particular the 10.7 million newly displaced persons. As a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 African Refugee Convention, South Africa was committed to protecting refugees and asylum seekers, who had access to education, health care, work, legal aid, social benefits and other services, while retaining the right to return to their countries of origin.

30. International cooperation and burden-sharing were critical to addressing the protracted nature of displacement and the disproportionate burden on developing countries. His delegation reiterated its

support for the New York Declaration and was encouraged by the growing momentum towards a global compact on refugees. The comprehensive refugee response framework must ensure that burden-sharing was adequate, predictable and equitable, in order to ease the pressure on host communities. Consideration of a development funding mechanism must bear that in mind, and there must be close cooperation and joint planning between humanitarian and development actors. South Africa did not support the use of the framework as a basis for the global compact. The root causes of forced displacement could not be addressed in a piecemeal approach through loan facilities and other initiatives that would further burden developing countries that were already heavily indebted, especially in Africa.

31. **Ms. Auearee** (Thailand) said that the global compacts on refugees and migration must jointly address the increasing complexity and severity of global challenges. The visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to Thailand in July 2017 had resulted in closer and more constructive cooperation. As a member of the UNHCR Executive Committee, Thailand supported efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive refugee response framework. It commended the countries that had taken part in the framework and encouraged the involvement of other parties, including IOM, donor countries, civil society and the private sector.

32. In 2016, the Governments of Thailand and Myanmar had facilitated the voluntary return of a pilot group of 71 displaced persons to Myanmar, and preparations were underway for the next group to return. Thailand strongly supported the UNHCR "I Belong" campaign, a 10-year campaign to end statelessness by 2024. The Thai Cabinet had approved a resolution to address issues relating to legal status and stateless persons, under which approximately 110,000 young persons born in Thailand would be eligible to apply for Thai nationality. In January 2017, it had approved a proposal to implement a screening system for undocumented immigrants and refugees to address the issue of mixed migration. The Government would welcome technical assistance from UNHCR to provide training in that regard.

33. **Mr. Gaumakwe** (Botswana) said that, regrettably, Africans continued to account for a high proportion of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers as a result of instability and insecurity across the continent. The international community must bear in mind its collective responsibility to provide humanitarian support. In that regard, Botswana wished to commend the countries that had taken the lead and

graciously opened their doors to those fleeing from conflict. His country hosted approximately 3,500 refugees and asylum seekers.

34. The repatriation process should be redesigned to reduce the timeline for voluntary returnees, thereby eliminating further psychological anxiety and accelerating the healing process. The pursuit of long-term solutions for refugee and migrant crises must begin with identifying and addressing the root causes. Botswana fully supported UNHCR, which played a vital role in the successful implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework, and trusted that its national policies, as a first country of asylum and encampment, would be given due recognition and support within the framework. His country was encouraged by the relationship cultivated by UNHCR with financial institutions, in particular the World Bank. Financial assistance was essential to finding sustainable solutions for the global refugee crisis and also played a vital role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Botswana would continue to engage with other members of the international community in developing and implementing the global compacts on refugees and migration, including equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

35. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that armed conflicts must be resolved in order to address the needs of displaced persons and fully restore their human rights. Two thirds of displaced persons were internally displaced, and yet the issue did not receive sufficient attention. Azerbaijan therefore fully supported all efforts to increase the visibility of internally displaced persons and hoped that the global compact on refugees would adequately address that issue.

36. The Armenian aggression and occupation of Azerbaijani territories had led to significant internal displacement. Azerbaijan had one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons per capita. The Government had made significant progress in improving their living and housing conditions, providing houses in the newly established settlements to more than 250,000 people. Azerbaijan strongly supported and cooperated with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, and various mandate holders had conducted a total of four visits to Azerbaijan.

37. The Azerbaijani football team Qarabag, whose members were internally displaced persons representing the occupied city of Agdam, had advanced to the group stage of the Union of European Football Associations Champions League. It was the first such team from the Caucasus to do so.

38. She stressed that the measures taken by the Government to alleviate the plight of internally displaced persons were not viewed as a means of permanent local integration, as the displaced persons preferred voluntary return. Azerbaijan would therefore spare no effort to ensure their safe and dignified return to their native lands.

39. **Mr. Kadir** (Morocco) said that the refugee crisis had had a particular impact on Africa, which hosted approximately one quarter of the world's displaced persons. His delegation commended the efforts of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which continued to demonstrate their long tradition of hospitality and solidarity in welcoming refugees. The international community should provide those countries with the necessary assistance, strengthen its support for UNHCR and cooperate with the Office.

40. Unfortunately, some situations continued to be politicized by certain States. The people living in the Tindouf camps in Algeria were deprived of their rights and the protection guaranteed under international humanitarian law, which required that country to allow a census to be conducted in the camps. Algeria and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario) were exploiting the situation of those people for political, economic and financial gain. In its statement at the 40th meeting (see [A/C.3/72/SR.40](#)), the Algerian delegation had boasted of the assistance provided to the population in the Tindouf camps, when, in fact, Algeria and the Frente Polisario had been found guilty of embezzling humanitarian aid. In 2015, the European Anti-Fraud Office had published the report of an investigation conducted between 2003 and 2007, which had confirmed the organized, fraudulent, systematic and large-scale embezzlement of humanitarian aid by Algeria and the Frente Polisario. Although it claimed to defend the interests of those people, Algeria imposed a value added tax on humanitarian aid, profiting from both the misery of those people and the generosity of donors. Algeria could not continue to exploit that population to replenish its coffers.

41. By refusing to allow a census to be conducted, Algeria, as a host country, was violating international humanitarian law. It also refused to implement the Security Council resolutions that had called for the registration of the camp populations since 2011. That anachronistic and unique situation could not continue without consequence. As a host country, Algeria had both the legal obligation and the moral and humanitarian responsibility to protect the rights of refugees.

42. **Mr. Gebru** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation was concerned about the continued underfunding of the UNHCR budget and refugee response plans, especially the 2017 refugee response plan for Ethiopia, which had a 75 per cent funding gap. All relevant actors, especially donor communities, should allocate adequate resources to humanitarian assistance. His delegation also expressed concern about the trends in mixed migratory flows and the protection challenges highlighted in the report with regard to human trafficking and smuggling, sexual and gender-based violence and forced recruitment, as well as unaccompanied and separated refugee children. In order to achieve the sustainable voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees, humanitarian assistance must extend beyond the initial stages of repatriation. Collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in countries of origin must be strengthened, and the international community must increase development assistance to those countries and invest in addressing the root causes of conflicts.

43. His delegation commended the countries that had offered resettlement opportunities to African refugees and encouraged them to further expand the related programmes. Resettlement and other forms of admission, including family reunification, should be used to reduce secondary movements. Partnership should remain the cornerstone of addressing the current humanitarian challenges, and the protection of refugees should be guided by the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing. Furthermore, least developed countries that hosted large numbers of refugees should receive support. Ethiopia reiterated its firm commitment to work closely with UNHCR and other international partners to maintain its open-door policy and to find lasting solutions to the refugee situation.

44. *Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland) resumed the Chair.*

45. **Ms. Chifwaila** (Zambia) said that the New York Declaration and the forthcoming global compact on refugees provided an opportunity to support local host communities and to address the needs of refugees, in particular those of women and girls, who made up half of the refugee population. For at least 50 years Zambia had received repeated and sustained influxes of refugees and had continued to welcome new arrivals, providing a safe haven in camps around the country. It currently hosted over 57,000 refugees and had received an additional 3,360 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo since August 2017. As a result, her country was facing a growing humanitarian crisis, with thousands of people in urgent need of assistance.

46. In 2017, the Government had repealed and replaced the 1970 Refugees Act. The new law included provisions for the recognition of refugees and established a refugee fund and settlements. It would also facilitate the incorporation into domestic legislation of the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, as well as the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Although Zambia had formulated a reservation to some provisions of the 1951 Convention concerning the rights to employment, education and freedom of movement, the Government was considering relaxing the encampment policy to enhance freedom of movement for refugees so that they could seek gainful employment and achieve self-reliance. Over 20,400 refugees and former refugees currently resided outside of settlements. The Government was also providing access to education for refugee children by strengthening the education infrastructure in the settlements.

47. **Mr. Ajayi** (Nigeria) said that national Governments were obligated to promote and protect the human rights of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons. Nigeria had always been committed to the welfare of refugees and, shortly after gaining independence, had supported United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the Republic of the Congo. The country had consistently scaled up its humanitarian efforts, providing necessary support and assistance to the innumerable relief operations in Africa.

48. Since the advent of the Boko Haram insurgency, which had displaced thousands of people, the Government had developed policies and programmes to support and facilitate timely and efficient humanitarian assistance and had established internally displaced persons camps across the country. Medicine and good nutrition were provided, while medical personnel and social welfare workers offered life-saving social services. The Government was also providing free and high-quality education for internally displaced children, and an initiative to prevent future attacks on schools and learning centres combined a robust civil-military policing strategy with community mobilization and an early-warning mechanism to complement the Government's security policy for the north-east and Lake Chad. The Chibok schoolgirls were receiving psychosocial and psychological support to facilitate their reintegration into society. Nigeria had recently drafted a national policy on civilian protection to better protect civilians from the actions of armed groups. Nigeria remained committed to promoting and protecting the welfare of refugees, internally displaced

persons and migrants and to ensuring that their human rights were protected under the national development agenda. The Government would also continue to implement policies for their safe return.

49. **Ms. Salim** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that refugees, like all people, aspired to a good life and wanted to be able to move freely and have access to work and education. They should receive adequate support and be treated with dignity. The Federation welcomed the leadership of UNHCR in developing a global compact on refugees through the effective roll-out of the comprehensive refugee response framework. The Uganda Red Cross had participated in drafting the terms of reference for the comprehensive refugee response framework Secretariat, and the Federation stood ready to provide assistance to other case-study countries.

50. Local actors played an important role in providing protection and assistance to refugees, as they often had greater access and a strong understanding of local circumstances, politics and culture. It was therefore essential to boost their institutional capacity and provide core funding. A good legal framework could also strengthen the role of local actors and Governments. For over 10 years, the Federation had been working with national societies and Governments in more than 100 countries to strengthen domestic legal frameworks to facilitate responses to large-scale emergencies, in line with international humanitarian standards. While that work had typically focused on disaster relief, the same legal barriers tended to emerge in situations of mass migration and displacement.

51. The Federation had broad experience in helping refugees build resilience. Participatory assessments allowed communities to identify solutions and create action plans that drew on local resources, as well as national and international assistance. Such participatory assessments should also include host communities. The most effective way to cultivate a respectful relationship between refugees and host communities was to cultivate connections between individuals. National societies had a range of programmes to support intercommunity exchanges and the integration of refugee children in school.

52. **Mr. Dollo** (Mali) said that his country was emerging from an unprecedented security and sociopolitical crisis. More than 50,000 people had been internally displaced, and 150,000 refugees had sought refuge in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. To manage the crisis, the Government had drafted a national humanitarian action policy and was

implementing a five-year action plan. It had also adopted a national strategy that facilitated the return and socioeconomic integration of displaced persons. Emergency response plans had been created for the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti, with assistance from IOM, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Government cooperated closely with its three neighbouring countries and UNHCR to improve the conditions for return, under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In June 2017, more than 60,000 refugees had been repatriated, and more than 11,000 internally displaced persons had returned to their homes. The Government provided financial and material support for their relocation, in addition to providing basic social services in the camps. Those achievements had been possible with the support and cooperation of bilateral and multilateral partners. Furthermore, the Government was working to implement the President's social emergency programme 2017-2020, in which the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons figured prominently.

53. **Ms. Hagan** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross) said that a number of States had incorporated the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into domestic laws and policies. Several States had also taken important steps to incorporate the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Despite the progress made, millions of people continued to be displaced by armed conflict and violence. Protection, assistance and durable solutions for displaced persons must be adapted to their specific needs and must be a collective priority. That would require joint efforts by national and local authorities, humanitarian and development actors, and displaced persons and host communities. In a rapidly urbanizing world, the international community must also improve its response to displacement in cities, keeping displaced persons at the centre of those discussions. States should mark the forthcoming twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles by taking swift action to prevent displacement, protect displaced persons and comply with international human rights and humanitarian law. States should also draw on good practices to implement concrete measures to address the needs of internally displaced persons and uphold their rights.

54. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that her delegation commended the efforts of UNHCR and thanked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his visit in August 2017. The Sudan's heritage and religious values compelled it to accept, host and protect the more

than 2 million refugees who had entered the country. Her country remained committed to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto and the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Furthermore, her Government had recently updated national legislation on refugee issues in 2014, to bring it into line with relevant regional and international instruments. The Sudan supported the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the two related compacts that were being developed.

55. The mass migration of refugees from neighbouring countries had caused significant difficulties for the Sudan. The situation was further complicated because, in addition to the mass movement of persons, the Sudan also had to contend with mixed migration, illegal migration, refugees fleeing from camps and heading to cities, and human smuggling and trafficking. Her Government had made concerted efforts to combat those problems. A law on trafficking in persons had been enacted, the law on asylum had been amended to include provisions on combating smuggling and trafficking in persons, and the passport law had been amended to ensure that it addressed the latest developments and challenges. In October 2014, the Sudan, in cooperation with the African Union and the European Union, had hosted a conference to combat smuggling and trafficking in persons in the Horn of Africa. Another such conference had been held in Rome in November 2014. However, the Sudan had received little assistance in implementing the outcomes of those conferences, and she called upon the international community to provide the support required. The Government had concluded border control agreements with neighbouring countries and had signed agreements with UNHCR and IOM on combating irregular migration.

56. She called on UNHCR to continue to facilitate the return to Darfur of displaced Sudanese nationals who had taken refuge in Chad by providing them with the support and services they needed. The Sudan would continue to cooperate with UNHCR and the broader international community through partnerships based on burden-sharing and moving from relief to development in the affected areas. Lastly, she called on the international community to address refugee issues comprehensively, including by forgiving the debts of developing countries and helping them to combat poverty, so that they would be able to fulfil their responsibilities towards refugees.

57. **Mr. Nyago** (Uganda) said that his country was a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, as well as the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing

the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Uganda had hosted a Solidarity Summit on Refugees in June 2017, with a focus on its more than 1 million South Sudanese refugees. The Government appreciated the support from States, organizations, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, individuals and others who had stood with Uganda, as its meagre resources were overstretched by the unprecedented refugee situation.

58. The Government was implementing the “Uganda Model”, a grassroots-based management approach outlined in the settlement transformation agenda, which was supported by the World Bank and the United Nations. The Model faced serious challenges, including limited land to offer refugees, overstretched health-care services, inadequate clean water and sanitation facilities and a lack of educational facilities, teachers and materials. International support was therefore required to ensure the Model’s sustainability in the short and long term. Refugees must become increasingly self-sufficient with regard to food production. Additionally, both refugee and host communities must have access to improved water and sanitation facilities and environmentally-friendly technology, such as solar-powered devices and energy-efficient stoves. Furthermore, climate-smart agricultural practices must be introduced and encouraged. The Model was not meant to replace the conventional role of humanitarian agencies in receiving, protecting and relocating refugees to third countries. The international community must continue to pursue lasting political solutions to tensions in countries of origin.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

59. **Ms. Shlychkova** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation had been forced to take the floor to respond to the baseless accusations made against the Russian Federation by the delegations of Georgia and Ukraine, whose politicized statements did not facilitate a constructive discussion of humanitarian issues in the Third Committee. Georgia and Ukraine were attempting to shift onto others their responsibility for the situation on the ground and to justify their reluctance to take specific steps to correct it.

60. Her delegation stressed that South Ossetia and Abkhazia were independent sovereign States; the Russian Federation had never exercised effective control of those territories. The Government of Georgia had forced the people in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to declare their independence, and its aggressive policies were responsible for the forced migration in the region. Georgia clearly refused to work with South Ossetia and Abkhazia towards a legally binding agreement on the

non-use of force, although such an agreement could begin to normalize the situation in the region and implement practical measures to resolve pressing issues, including humanitarian questions.

61. With regard to Ukraine, massive numbers of citizens were actually fleeing the country or moving from the south-eastern regions owing to the crimes committed by the Ukrainian authorities and ultranationalists, who had started an internal armed conflict in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine. She recalled that Ukraine, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic were parties to the Minsk agreements. The Russian Federation had no control over the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics, and no Russian forces were present in them. Her country hosted more than one million Ukrainian citizens, offered voluntary donations to UNHCR to manage the situation in eastern Ukraine and provided significant humanitarian assistance in south-east Ukraine, in full accordance with international procedures. Her delegation wished to recall that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, in full compliance with international law. A visit to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, or any other region of the Russian Federation, would be a matter for cooperation between the Moscow office of UNHCR and the Russian authorities. If the Ukrainian Government considered the people of south-east Ukraine to be its citizens, then it should end the blockade of the Donbas and provide them with social benefits. The situation of Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons could only be resolved by ending the armed conflict and finding a political solution based on the Minsk agreements.

62. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that in March 2014 the Russian Federation had begun its aggression against Ukraine by deploying "green men" on the territory of Crimea, and three weeks later it had held an unconstitutional and unlawful referendum on Ukrainian territory. As a result of that so-called referendum, an agreement had been signed on 18 March 2014 by President Putin and a number of other persons, including a Russian citizen. A Ukrainian citizen could just as easily sign an equivalent agreement with the President of Ukraine on the annexation of part of the Russian territory by Ukraine.

63. With regard to the Donbas, a member of the Russian special forces had admitted to commanding a team that had been sent to the Donbas region to fuel the war. A recent statement made by President Putin during the Valdai forum made it clear that the Russian Federation did indeed exercise effective control of some parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. Despite

causing the war in Ukraine, the Russian Federation now boasted of the assistance it was providing to Ukrainian refugees. More than 10,000 lives had already been lost because of its actions. The Russian Federation had no moral right to claim that it was providing assistance, when it was exercising effective control over parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces and over all the military organizations in those provinces. It had even introduced the Russian currency there. The Russian Federation was continuing to destroy the provinces and steal equipment from factories and plants.

64. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that the comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation served only to mislead the international community and to undermine and politicize the right to return of internally displaced persons. Ethnic cleansing of internally displaced persons had been on the international agenda for more than two decades, but the plight of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons in Georgia continued to be ignored. Regrettably, there had been no progress on the issue, whether on the ground or within the framework of the Geneva international discussions, owing to the deplorable position of the occupying Power, which continued to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia by breaching the Charter of the United Nations, the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, the norms and principles of international law and all Security Council resolutions pertaining to Georgia. The Russian Federation had carried out military aggression against Georgia and continued to occupy 20 per cent of its sovereign territory. Those violations were duly reflected in the findings of the International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia. Until the end of the occupation, the responsibility for the situation in the occupied territories, including human rights issues and the return of internally displaced persons, rested with the Russian Federation.

65. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria), in response to the statement made by the representative of Morocco, said that Algeria had been and remained a host country for refugees, which was a fundamental principle of its foreign policy. Morocco was claiming to be a victim, but it was in fact the perpetrator. Morocco had occupied Western Sahara, carrying out massacres and undertaking the so-called Green March in order to force people to flee to a neighbouring country. Instead of discussing the deplorable situation in Western Sahara, the Moroccan delegation was focusing on the refugees in Algeria, a country that stood in solidarity with its neighbours.

66. Morocco was responsible for dividing and occupying Western Sahara, which was considered a Non-Self-Governing Territory by the United Nations

and would be treated as such until its people could exercise their right to self-determination. While Morocco constantly changed its position, Algeria had always stressed the right to self-determination and did not question United Nations resolutions. He wondered how a country that had carried out large-scale massacres, arrests and forced disappearances could claim to promote human rights. He also wondered why a country that promoted human rights would be opposed to the establishment of a human rights component as part of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. He assumed that Morocco was afraid of being denounced for the human rights violations that it committed in the territory. While Morocco claimed to have a clean human rights record, the country's dark history was proof of its status as an occupying Power rather than an administering Power. With regard to the allegations of embezzlement, there was no official report from any United Nations agency or non-governmental organization that proved those allegations.

67. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that the statement made by the representative of Algeria reflected complete ignorance of international law and represented a further attempt to spread lies in the Third Committee. The Sahara had always been and would forever remain Moroccan. According to international law, the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, an occupying Power was defined as a State that occupied the territory of an existing State in an international armed conflict. When Morocco had recovered the Sahara in 1975, Morocco was the only recognized independent State. Consequently, there was no occupation.

68. As for the Green March, 350,000 Moroccan civilians had participated in that glorious journey, which Algeria could not understand. In fact, Algeria had expelled 350,000 Moroccan immigrants in retaliation, separating families and robbing them of their goods. For that offence, Algeria should be brought before the International Criminal Court.

69. Algeria was the main party to the disagreement over the Sahara, as it had created and supported the Frente Polisario. No other State had raised the issue of the Moroccan Sahara in the Third Committee. Algeria claimed to defend the right to self-determination, but had made a proposal for partitioning the Sahara to the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, James Baker.

70. The embezzlement of humanitarian aid was, in fact, recorded in a report of the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF), as well as reports from UNHCR. The OLAF report referred to evidence of fraudulent maneuvers that had taken place over a lengthy period. As for the human rights situation in the Moroccan Sahara, the Security Council, in its resolution [2351 \(2017\)](#), had welcomed the efforts made by Morocco in the Sahara, in Dakhla and Laayoune, as well as its interaction with special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council.

71. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria) said that it was the representative of Morocco who misunderstood international law, as the International Court of Justice was the competent body on the issue, not the International Criminal Court. Morocco had violated international law by occupying Western Sahara, and Algeria had not been the only delegation to raise the issue in the General Assembly or in other United Nations forums.

72. The Green March had resulted in deaths, disappearances and an outflow of refugees. The territory of which Morocco boasted was a Non-Self-Governing Territory. The people there were under colonial occupation and must sooner or later exercise their right to self-determination. He wondered how many colonial Powers of the past had made the same claims of territorial integrity. Algeria would never change its position until the right to self-determination had been exercised in accordance with international law, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant United Nations resolutions. That position was further supported by international and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, from which Morocco had withdrawn on account of the African Union's recognition of the Frente Polisario.

73. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that he had mentioned the International Criminal Court in connection with the deportation of 350,000 Moroccans. In fact, the International Court of Justice had recognized the historic ties between the King of Morocco and the people of the Sahara, who continued to pledge their allegiance to the King. That was another clear indication that the Sahara was Moroccan.

74. It was Morocco that had maintained its position on the issue. It had stated from the beginning that the Sahara was Moroccan and would continue to do so. Algeria, on the other hand, had suggested partition and continued to present other suggestions to the Secretariat. Algeria had caused the conflict over the Moroccan Sahara with a view to disrupting the territorial integrity of Morocco for hegemonic reasons. Algeria focused

only on the Sahara and never had the courage to talk about other situations, which was clearly because of Algeria's position as a stakeholder. He also wished to know why that country did not support the right to self-determination for the Kabyle people.

75. Human Rights Watch had recently published a report which stated that Algeria had shown racial discrimination and racism in deporting thousands of migrants and asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa. That was not the behaviour of a welcoming country. Algeria was attempting to politicize the plight of the people held captive in the Tindouf camps. He challenged Algeria to allow UNHCR to conduct a census of that population.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.