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Summary record of the 713th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 2 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Dalil.....(Afghanistan)

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

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Bard** (Sweden) said that her country endorsed the statement made by the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Sweden and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had signed a strategic partnership agreement that would ensure that UNHCR received predictable funding totalling around \$385 million in non-earmarked support. Aware of the need to ensure better responsibility-sharing, Sweden strongly endorsed the global compact on refugees and wished to participate in its full implementation. As a mark of solidarity with host States and in view of the importance of resettlement, the Government had increased its refugee quota to 5,000 persons in 2018. Sweden also supported UNHCR in its efforts to eradicate statelessness by 2024.

2. **Mr. Ungern-Sternberg** (Germany) said that his country endorsed the statement made by the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Germany assumed its share of responsibility by supporting refugees and host communities and hosting refugees on its territory. It hosted the sixth largest number of refugees worldwide and had increased the number of resettlement places available for the 2018–2019 period to 10,000. The Governments of Germany and France would also work closely together to address the issue of the protection of humanitarian workers, which hopefully would be of benefit to UNHCR.

3. **Ms. Farani Azevêdo** (Brazil) said that her country had participated in the elaboration of the global compact on refugees, demonstrating its willingness to establish a robust responsibility-sharing framework. Some of the elements of the compact were already being applied in Brazil. It had established an interministerial committee to coordinate its response to the movement of Venezuelan nationals and was currently hosting 75,000 Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants. A reception centre established at the border provided them with registration and documentation services, food, health care and psychosocial support. All asylum seekers and migrants enjoyed free access to the national health and education systems. Persons in situations of vulnerability were hosted in 12 shelters located in the cities of Boa Vista and Pacaraima and managed by Brazil in collaboration with UNCHR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). To alleviate the pressure on the border in the State of Roraima, the Government was assisting Venezuelans who wished to be relocated elsewhere in the country; a total of 5,000 would thus be relocated before the end of 2018. One of the positive consequences of the resettlement strategy had been the strengthening of the country's general capacity to host refugees. Despite the aforementioned challenges, Brazil was participating in initiatives under the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism and committed to continuing the resettlement of refugees from Central America.

4. **Mr. Alemán Pérez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country had always hosted migrants and refugees. Notably, it had taken in 5.6 million Colombians, 1 million Asians, 1 million Arabs, 500,000 Peruvians, 500,000 Ecuadorians and 400,000 Italians, all of whom enjoyed free access to the country's education, health care, housing and food programmes. Currently, 438,000 of the 2.5 million housing units built by the Government at no cost to the tenants were occupied by Colombian families. Colombian migrants had also benefited from more than 11 million free medical consultations through the Barrio Adentro health-care system. However, Venezuela had never received financial assistance from UNHCR or any other international organization to mitigate the costs of its social programmes, which also covered migrants. Venezuela recognized the considerable contribution of foreign diasporas to the economic, social and cultural development of the country and, only a few days previously, President Maduro had naturalized around 8,500 migrants. Venezuelans who had left the country were returning home. The Government of Venezuela hoped that UNHCR would support the voluntary return plan that it had introduced to process the thousands of applications that it was receiving.

5. **Mr. Winder** (United Kingdom) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States. UNHCR had to address the growing number of displaced

persons and find lasting political solutions in fragile and complex environments. The United Kingdom, which continued to meet the goal of earmarking 0.7 per cent of its gross domestic product for development assistance, had provided £129 million to the Rohingya refugee response plan and had pledged £450 million to provide assistance in Syria and the surrounding region. UNHCR should implement appropriate controls at the field level and uphold the highest standards of transparency in reporting on the use of the contributions that it received. Pursuant to a commitment made in 2015 to resettle 20,000 persons affected by the conflict in Syria, over 12,800 refugees from the region had begun a new life in the United Kingdom.

6. The United Kingdom wished, in particular, to contribute to the improvement across the aid sector of standards for the prevention and punishment of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. It would host an international summit on those issues on 18 October 2018, during which representatives from the aid sector would outline the measures they planned to take. UNHCR would have to transform its staff and operational procedures to assume the role of coordinator of the global compact on refugees. It would also have to collaborate further with partners on the ground, particularly through impartial joint needs assessments focusing on refugees' needs.

7. **Ms. Tichy-Fisslberger** (Austria) said that because crises and instability in Syria, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Libya and other countries continued to cause massive displacement, Austria was still one of the countries hosting the most persons of concern to UNHCR. In addition to providing those persons with basic accommodation and health care, the Government had considerably increased its spending on social integration and had provided €1 million in support of the operations of UNHCR in Libya. It had also launched an action plan consisting of 50 measures to better protect internally displaced persons.

8. **Mr. Namwamba** (Kenya) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the African Group. He hoped that the global compact on refugees, once adopted, would offer a fresh start for the growing number of refugees. The trend was no different in Kenya, which, in April 2018, was hosting 461,000 refugees. By August, 9,000 more refugees had arrived, primarily from South Sudan. Unfortunately, voluntary repatriation measures had not been successful in reducing the overall number of refugees living in Kenya. For that reason, Kenya and other member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development had signed the Nairobi Declaration, whose aim was to ease the pressure on host countries, expand access to third country resettlement and support countries of origin. The Government had also prepared a draft implementation plan for the global compact on refugees, which would provide the basis for the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration, and draft guidelines on refugee education. Refugees fell under the responsibility of the international community; it was therefore deeply concerning that the number of resettlement places in third countries continued to fall, placing an undue burden on countries such as Kenya.

9. **Mr. Jespersen** (Denmark) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. Forced displacement was a challenge from the points of view of both humanitarian protection and development, a challenge that developing countries, which hosted 85 per cent of displaced persons, could not shoulder and in which they had a right to expect the support of the international community. That was precisely why the global compact on refugees was needed; States should ensure that they implemented it robustly. The way in which assistance was provided to displaced persons must be transformed. Refugees must be included in host countries' education and health systems, have access to labour markets and enjoy freedom of movement; that would require additional funding for development activities. Refugees should be offered sustainable solutions, including local integration in neighbouring countries or, where possible, voluntary and sustainable repatriation to their countries of origin. That approach could completely change the response to forced displacement. All stakeholders would have to adapt their working methods, not least UNHCR, which would have to better define its strategic protection priorities and facilitate solutions tailored to suit each situation. Doing so would require it to review its organizational structure, define new priorities and change the mindset of its staff.

10. Denmark had increased its humanitarian funding to record levels and had increased its development budget to support some of the countries in the Middle East and several countries affected by protracted forced displacement, including Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. In total, it had provided more than \$300 million in development assistance, including \$72 million to countries implementing the comprehensive refugee response framework. Denmark highlighted the importance of collecting and analysing data on mass displacement and supported the new joint data centre established in Copenhagen by the World Bank and UNHCR. It would also participate in the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. Denmark would continue to provide multi-year, non-earmarked contributions to UNHCR as part of their partnership agreement, which would grant the agency greater flexibility to define its humanitarian programmes.

11. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that he welcomed the adoption of the global compact on refugees, which would allow for timely responses to refugee movements and support host countries. Montenegro had prepared a plan of action and established an operational team to respond to any sudden influx of refugees. It had opened a centre for migrants and established several refugee reception centres. The border police patrolled the border and the main roads leading towards checkpoints. Montenegro was conducting a number of activities to improve the socioeconomic situation of refugees and displaced persons, particularly in the areas of education, health care and social protection. The Law on International and Temporary Protection of Foreigners of 1 January 2018 had introduced efficient mechanisms for the protection and fair treatment of asylum seekers similar to those set up in other countries in the European Union and had established a mechanism for identifying cases of statelessness. In cooperation with neighbouring countries, Montenegro had successfully provided long-term housing solutions for 6,063 displaced and internally displaced persons, both within and outside the country's borders. Faced with increasing numbers of migrants, Montenegro would need to set up additional reception centres and would require additional funds to assist migrants throughout the status determination procedure.

12. **Ms. Batistić Kos** (Croatia) said that her country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. Croatia fully supported the global compact on refugees and called on other Member States to do the same. Regions were better equipped than countries to address the ever-increasing number of migration crises; as such, Croatia continued to cooperate with countries in South-eastern Europe and international organizations to implement the Regional Housing Programme within the framework on the Sarajevo Process. With the support of regional partners and through reconstruction and housing programmes, the Croatian authorities had enabled the return of a significant number of displaced persons, returnees and refugees. The number of asylum seekers in Croatia had risen in relation to previous years and migration levels were likely to continue to grow in the years to come. The number of requests for international protection had been 211 in 2015, compared with 2,234 in 2016 and 1,887 in 2017.

13. **Mr. Gaffey** (Ireland) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. He welcomed the growing involvement of the World Bank in the response to migration crises. He was concerned that while UNHCR had increased its budget year after year, the amount spent per refugee per day continued to decline. Because certain migration crises received more attention and funding than others, the quality of assistance provided to each refugee varied from region to region. For that reason, the Government of Ireland urged States to send non-earmarked contributions to organizations working in the field, which would allow them to allocate resources based on their priorities. Ireland had resettled over 800 refugees from Syria since 2015 through its refugee protection programme and had pledged to make 1,200 resettlement places available for the 2018–2019 period pursuant to the joint resettlement programme of UNHCR and the European Union. During that same period, 530 members of the families of refugees would be resettled in Ireland on humanitarian grounds. Ireland had also recently announced its intention to establish a refugee sponsorship programme, through which Irish communities would engage directly in refugee resettlement in partnership with the authorities and civil society, allowing them to show their solidarity with refugees and foster social ties between communities. Lastly, he encouraged UNHCR to continue to attach due importance to combating sexual exploitation and abuse in the management of migration crises.

14. **Ms. Flores Liera** (Mexico) said that her country aligned itself with the declaration made by Colombia on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group. The sudden flight of many Venezuelans to other countries on the South American continent to protect their safety and rights was one of the gravest challenges that the region had had to face in recent times. She therefore called on UNHCR to increase its presence and activities in the countries hosting the largest number of persons in need of protection, in close cooperation with the national authorities, relevant United Nations bodies, other humanitarian agencies and the donor community. In that regard, Mexico took note of the appointment by UNHCR and IOM of Mr. Stein to the position of Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

15. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by the States and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR.

16. **Mr. Czech** (Poland) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. The situations giving rise to the influx of refugees were various and the number of asylum seekers far exceeded the hosting capacities of many States, which often lacked the resources necessary to address their needs. Moreover, the movement of refugees caused host States to fear for their social cohesion and the safety of their citizens. For that reason, it was necessary to effectively decouple irregular migration procedures from asylum applications and ensure that effective asylum application systems were established in volatile regions. In recent years, Poland had significantly strengthened its efforts to support refugees and the countries hosting them in their regions of origin. Humanitarian aid had increased sixfold between 2015 and 2017. Poland was also funding programmes intended to palliate the effects of refugee crises in the Middle East. It was contributing to the European Union Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis and, pursuant to its bilateral development assistance agreements, was financing projects run by Polish non-governmental organizations in the Middle East and assisting Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. In a show of solidarity with neighbouring Ukraine, Poland was providing humanitarian and development assistance for internally displaced persons in that country.

17. **Ms. van Daalen** (Netherlands) said that, each year, her country would contribute €128 million, on top of existing funding, for the purpose of strengthening the capacities of host countries in the areas of education, services, employment and the protection of vulnerable persons. The Netherlands would collaborate with UNHCR through a partnership with an annual budget of €100 million set up to support the resettlement of displaced persons. It would also increase the number of refugees it resettled each year from 500 to 750. The Netherlands welcomed the fact that UNHCR had adopted transparency standards for the preparation of its reports and underlined that the agency must remedy shortcomings in the monitoring of projects highlighted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and apply a zero-tolerance policy in respect of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. UNHCR should contribute to the universal integration of psychosocial support and mental health services into refugee responses and coordinate its activities with IOM.

18. **Mr. Gave** (France) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Pursuant to its new humanitarian strategy, France had adapted its asylum and immigration policy in the light of new developments and planned to allocate 0.55 per cent of its gross national product to international cooperation by 2022. In collaboration with its European and African partners and with the support of UNHCR and IOM, France had launched a road map on migration flows in the central Mediterranean region and would resettle 3,000 refugees from Libya, the Niger and Chad by 2019. France supported the efforts of UNHCR to strengthen its partnerships, especially in the private sector, and to promote gender equality.

19. **Ms. Hakala** (Finland) said that her country aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Finland welcomed the implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework and the global strategic priorities of UNHCR, as well as the fact that 56,000 stateless persons had acquired a nationality the previous year. The roles of the

private sector, civil society and refugees themselves should be strengthened under the global compact on refugees, as should the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Resettlement, especially the resettlement of vulnerable persons, the protection of the right to seek asylum and the maintenance of asylum systems remained priorities, as did providing immediate access to health services and social activities for asylum-seeking children. Finland had amended its legislation to make it easier for refugees and other immigrants to integrate into the employment market and undergo training. It would continue to conclude multi-year financial agreements with UNHCR. A third of its contributions would be non-earmarked.

20. **Mr. Al-Ghunaim** (Observer for Kuwait) said that his country had organized three international donor conferences, through which a total of \$6 billion in grants and contributions in support of refugees had been collected, \$3.7 billion of which was for the 2017–2020 period. Kuwait was working with UNHCR to support the countries neighbouring Syria and had contributed \$30 billion to assist with reconstruction in Iraq.

21. **Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) said that he was concerned about the decrease in the budget of UNHCR for Africa in 2019. Morocco had adopted a law on human trafficking and a law on asylum was under examination. As part of its national asylum and immigration strategy, the Government was implementing a general policy for the socioeconomic integration of immigrants, which had benefited some 50,000 persons. The registration of persons living in the Tindouf camps had continued to be made conditional upon the resolution of the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara, which was contrary to the rules of UNHCR.

22. **Mr. González Arenas** (Uruguay) said that his country had registered a considerable uptick in asylum applications and needed to strengthen its national capacity. Since 2009, Uruguay had implemented various solidarity-based resettlement programmes, offering support for women victims of violence, Colombian migrants in rural areas, Syrian refugees and refugees from Central America, particularly from El Salvador. With a view to building on those programmes in an orderly and sustainable manner, Uruguay had requested to join the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism coordinated by IOM and UNHCR.

23. **Mr. Garcia** (Philippines) said that in October 2017 his country had signed an inter-agency agreement on the protection of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons in the Philippines, which provided for mechanisms that facilitated assistance and services in the areas of health, education, training, employment and livelihood. The Philippines continued to issue travel documents to recognized refugees and stateless persons pursuant to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The validity of those documents had been extended from two to five years. On 24 November 2017, the Government had launched its action plan to end statelessness, which provided for the removal of all gender-discriminatory provisions from nationality legislation, accession to the United Nations statelessness conventions and the improvement of quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations. It had also introduced an emergency transit mechanism to allow for the immediate protection of refugees at risk of refoulement or persecution. The Philippines was also actively engaged in the regional forum on displacement in the event of disaster.

24. **Ms. Kazakova** (Russian Federation) said that the international protection of persons of concern to UNHCR must be based on the principles of neutrality, independence, humanity and respect for the sovereignty of host countries. Before all else, the root causes of migration must be addressed and measures encouraging the voluntary return of refugees must be strengthened. That was what the Russian Federation had done by ridding Syria of terrorist groups and thus allowing Syrian refugees to return home. It was also conducting a significant number of humanitarian activities, participating in conflict resolution and supporting the work of UNHCR. At the national level, the country had resettled a large number of refugees and displaced persons on its territory, including more than 1 million Ukrainians. It had also welcomed around 800,000 stateless persons since 1992 and granted a number of them Russian nationality. A bill on asylum in the Russian Federation was currently being drawn up and would enshrine basic treaty principles, reduce the duration and cost of asylum procedures and provide for the establishment of a temporary protection mechanism.

25. **Ms. Poláková** (Slovakia) said that her country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The comprehensive refugee response framework had already been implemented by 15 countries. The efforts of those countries should be applauded. The lessons learned from that exercise demonstrated that the adoption of comprehensive solutions and a whole-of-society approach could work. That was a good sign for the global compact on refugees, which was the result of the remarkable and constructive efforts of the entire international community. Slovakia would continue to provide financial support for the efforts of UNHCR to assist people in need of protection.

26. **Ms. Jayasuriya** (Observer for Sri Lanka) said that it was a matter of deep concern that 85 per cent of refugees continued to be hosted by low- and middle-income countries. Those countries must be guaranteed unwavering support. The global compact on refugees was a triumph for multilateralism, because it demonstrated that all stakeholders were willing to find common solutions and share the burden borne by host countries. Having dealt with issues relating to internal displacement and the repatriation of refugees, Sri Lanka recognized the challenges associated with repatriation and reintegration. UNHCR had provided invaluable assistance in protecting and sheltering displaced persons in Sri Lanka, and significant progress had been made towards the adoption of durable solutions that would facilitate the reintegration of Sri Lankan refugees. Despite the fact that it was not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Sri Lanka was committed to assuming its responsibilities in accordance with international norms and principles.

27. **Mr. Kára** (Czech Republic) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The Czech Republic had recently approved a substantial contribution to UNHCR to address the relatively new flows of displaced persons in several regions of Ethiopia. It had also extended its long-term cooperation with UNHCR to assist Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, as well as its assistance to those who decided to return to Afghanistan. It also continued to assist Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as displaced persons and returnees in Iraq. A recent decision to open an embassy in Bamako would enhance the work of the Czech Republic in the Sahel. The Czech Republic was determined to continue its cooperation with UNHCR by actively participating in the implementation of the global compact on refugees and sponsoring young professionals through the junior professional officers programme.

28. **Mr. Šuc** (Slovenia) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The adoption of the global compact on refugees later that year would transform the way in which the international community worked at the global level to protect refugees and find durable solutions. Slovenia was a small donor, but it strove to do its share to reduce the suffering of people in humanitarian emergencies. To that end, it would continue to be a regular supporter of the work of UNHCR. That year, its support had focused on Syrian refugees and displaced persons; in line with its announcement at the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region in 2017, the country would continue to provide funding for the work of UNHCR in Syria in 2019. Later that year, it would provide an additional contribution to UNHCR for its work in the western part of the Balkans. Slovenia supported a number of projects focused on the economic and social empowerment of women, especially in Jordan, Lebanon and Uganda. It was also participating in the European Union relocation scheme and had relocated 253 persons from Eritrea, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. A further 20 asylum seekers were expected to be relocated that autumn.

29. **Mr. Vierita** (Romania) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. As an emergent donor, relocation country and promoter of humanitarian law, Romania was committed to the protection of refugees. It used its official development assistance for education and development projects in refugees' countries of origin to address some of the root causes of the phenomenon. It was also currently modernizing its national mechanisms for international humanitarian assistance to better respond to current and future challenges. The year 2018 would mark the tenth anniversary of the Emergency Transit Centre for refugees in Timișoara, which was being expanded and modernized to further improve the assistance provided for vulnerable refugees. Romania strongly appreciated the active involvement of UNHCR in preliminary

discussions on the possible introduction of regional disembarkation platforms, in cooperation with third countries. It encouraged UNHCR to continue the dialogue in order to clarify the practical elements of the project and establish how it would be implemented. Lastly, Romania would pay particular attention to all aspects of migration when it assumed the presidency of the Council of Europe in January 2019.

30. **Mr. Ambrazevich** (Belarus) said that his country actively cooperated with UNHCR and supported its work to protect refugees and stateless persons. That year, UNHCR had facilitated constructive and transparent discussions on the global compact on refugees and had considerably strengthened the protection of refugees, all while maintaining a balance between diverse, often divergent, interests. It was important to address the root causes of migration first and foremost: the grave violations of international law that led to war and conflict. To that end, the main protagonists must engage in a dialogue on the adoption of a strategic vision.

31. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by the States and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR. In particular, he thanked Kuwait and the other Gulf States for their additional contributions in 2018 and the Netherlands for the generosity of its non-earmarked contributions. He called on other countries to follow the example of the delegation of the Philippines, which had provided tangible and detailed information on the measures that it had taken, at the high-level meeting on statelessness that would be held at the seventieth session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR as part of the #IBelong campaign.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.