



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9641st meeting

Thursday, 30 May 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Afonso (Mozambique)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Ms. Benn
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation	Ms. Zabolotskaya
Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia	Ms. Jurečko
Switzerland	Mr. Carpenter
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Grandi.

Mr. Grandi: It is an honour to hold my by now traditional briefing with the Security Council during Mozambique's presidency. As we just discussed, Mr. President, I visited your country in March and saw first-hand how Mozambique is grappling with many of the global challenges the world is facing, and its impact on people's daily lives — be it some of the most devastating manifestations of the climate emergency, violent internal conflict fuelled by armed groups and widespread forced displacement resulting from the other two. I was inspired by President Nyusi who, describing how Mozambique was addressing those problems, added that it was important that “the current situation does not distract us from working on solutions”. That message is for all of us, and it is fitting for the Security Council, as it faces today's grave challenges to peace and security. It is a crucial message, if we are to move beyond empty talk and into solving people's problems.

Please remember that the problems include the risk and reality of forced displacement — let me say that, as sometimes that dimension gets sidelined. The number of those who have been forced to flee their homes by war, violence and persecution reached 114 million at our most recent count. Next month we will update that figure. It will be higher. The political solutions needed to solve displacement obviously continue to be absent.

I last briefed the Council in October (see S/PV.9465). Back then, I shared my views on several crises and warned that humanitarians, while not giving up, were near breaking point. Seven months have passed but the situation has not changed — if at all, it has grown

worse. So, most regrettably, I will have to speak once again about the same crises and of how they displaced an ever-growing number of people.

Why is that happening? The reasons are multiple and often related to geopolitics, which is Council members' domain, not mine. Let me however focus on one more immediate factor that my colleagues and I — and indeed all humanitarians — witness in their everyday work: non-compliance with international humanitarian law. Non-compliance is a cold and technical expression. What it means really is that parties to conflicts — increasingly everywhere almost all of them — have stopped respecting the basic rules of war and sometimes even pretending to do so; civilians are being killed in growing numbers; rape and other forms of sexual violence are being used as weapons of war; civilian infrastructure is getting hit and destroyed; and humanitarian workers are becoming targets. Council members hear and discuss that every day. The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is mandated to uphold that body of law, spoke to Council members last week on the subject (see S/PV.9632). But I want Council members to hear it from me too, because we at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) deal with one specific consequence of those violations: since the brutal conduct of hostilities has meant not only to destroy but also to terrify civilians, civilians — more and more often — have no other choice but to flee in terror.

What has happened in Gaza since the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 and throughout the Israeli offensive is a case in point. Let me add my voice to those who have been urging the Security Council to pursue an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages and the full resumption of humanitarian aid; and most importantly, to spare no effort to resurrect a real peace process — the only way to ensure peace and security to Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, none of that has happened yet. The atrocious events in Rafah made us witness once more and most dramatically hundreds of thousands of people trying to avoid lethal attacks by moving frantically in the limited, constrained space of southern Gaza, reached only by a trickle of aid, with dozens losing their lives.

Among the many images from this conflict that will haunt us for a long time is that of desperate people trapped and often killed inside a war zone. Their safety should be our — the Security Council's — paramount concern. And while UNHCR, respecting its division of labour with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency

for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is not and will not be operational there, let me say — from the perspective of my role and mandate — that while Palestinians should be protected wherever they are, the atrocious dilemma of whether they should exit Gaza or not is one that Israel has the clear responsibility to avoid. That is because although there is indeed a universal right to seek asylum, so often responded to by countries neighbouring conflicts — and it is a right that I will always advocate for, as a matter of principle — in this case, there is also the special international legal obligation of an occupying Power not to force the civilian population to flee the territory it occupies. And another forced exodus of Palestinians will only create yet another intractable problem and make it impossible to find a solution to this decades-long conflict.

The war in Gaza is also a tragic reminder of what happens when conflicts — and, by extension, a refugee crisis — are left unattended. It must also serve as a call to not forget other unresolved crises. A stark and nearby example of this is that, 13 years after the start of the conflict in Syria, 5.6 million Syrian refugees remain in neighbouring countries, which have also hosted Palestinian refugees for generations — with Lebanon's plight remaining the most worrisome and tensions over the presence of refugees in that country being extremely acute, and Jordan, another major host of Syrians, caught squarely between two crises.

The plight of Syrian refugees, however, gets attention only when other factors emerge. Of late, some arrivals of Syrians in European Union countries have spurred a flurry of proposals on how to solve the problem, including by sending back refugees to so-called “safe areas” in Syria.

Let me take the opportunity to reiterate once again our position on this question: the voluntary, safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland is the best solution and their right. Although most refugees would like to return one day, very few do currently, with many expressing either fear of being targeted and lack of confidence in the Syrian Government or concern that in Syria living conditions — services, housing and work — are in an abysmal state. It is the Syrian Government that is responsible for addressing the first set of obstacles. Regarding the second, we urge all donor countries to step up support to early-recovery activities, per resolution 2642 (2022). If we are serious about solving the Syrian refugee problem — and

we must be — the only way forward is to overcome political constraints and work on both tracks, with all stakeholders, as UNHCR, indeed, is already doing.

Meanwhile, violations of international humanitarian law have continued to have a devastating effect on millions of lives around the world, including forcing people to flee. In none of the refugee and displacement crises that I described to the Council in October have we seen any sign of progress in that respect.

For example, since my last briefing to the Council, in Myanmar more than 1.5 million people have been displaced by fighting — bringing the total to more than 3 million, with many trying to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The situation in Rakhine state is especially worrisome. The conflict between Myanmar's armed forces and the Arakan army has flared up again, displacing different ethnic groups, with the Rohingya community caught between the parties and targeted with dangerous abuse, stigmatization and forced recruitment, and with humanitarians operating in a high-risk environment, which has already compelled agencies to temporarily relocate from certain areas.

I wish to reiterate here my recent appeal to the parties to ensure the protection of civilians and of aid workers, to the countries neighbouring Myanmar to allow safe access for refugees fleeing for their lives and to the Security Council to ensure that a political process to address Myanmar's problems is again — and seriously — placed on the international agenda before some of the consequences further threaten the stability of the region.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, violence between men with guns is so common that no other place on Earth is as dangerous for women and children as the east of that country. And my reaction is not naive — I worked there. I know the intractable ethnic problems; the plunder of resources by a multiplicity of actors, including States; and the regional ramifications; the constant disrespect of the civilian character of internally displaced persons sites by armed men, endangering both the displaced and humanitarian workers. But how can members of the United Nations, how can “We the Peoples” pay so little attention and have so much inaction in a place where sex with a child can be bought for less than a cold drink? What a shameful stain on humanity.

We, the humanitarians, are trying to play our part. Last year, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo asked UNHCR to revitalize efforts to find solutions to

complex situations of forced displacement across the region's borders, and especially between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Rwandan Government agreed, and we resumed dialogue, but in reality, without a broader political process — or at least a political framework — it will be difficult to make progress on the humanitarian side; and aid is increasingly hard to mobilize for the victims of this state of affairs.

Let me touch briefly on Ukraine, as it is another theatre of war where international humanitarian law gets violated every day. There are unrelenting attacks on the Ukrainian power network, which cause enormous hardship on civilians. Attacks do not spare houses and other civilian infrastructure. In January, in the heart of winter, I met Ukrainian children going to a makeshift school in the Kharkiv underground because it was the only place that could be kept safe and warm by the local authorities. And displacement — there, too — is increasing again, mostly within the country, and mostly of elderly and other vulnerable people living near the front lines, requiring urgent, life-saving humanitarian and psychological support. And, as the Council continues to deal with the war in Ukraine as a political and military issue, it should not lose focus on its deep, devastating human consequences on the people of Ukraine.

The blatant disregard of international humanitarian law by parties to conflicts also makes peace much more difficult to attain. Death, destruction and displacement deepen societal divisions, tearing apart trust and making it difficult to put the pieces of a country back together.

An obvious example is the Sudan, which I visited in February and where parties to the conflict keep creating additional obstacles to aid activities, with their reluctance to give access to some key areas, thus preventing humanitarians from helping many of those in need, including through cross-border and cross-line operations, the organization of which remains extremely complicated.

The political backdrop is discouraging: inadequate peacemaking efforts or outright support for one side or the other are making the conflict much worse. For both sides, disregarding all sense of humanity and consideration for their own people, the solution remains essentially a military one. As a result, there are now 9 million people displaced inside the Sudan or refugees in neighbouring countries — some of which,

like Chad or South Sudan, are grappling with their own fragilities. That is a number similar to what we have observed in Ukraine, but met with continued neglect and indifference by the international community. And funding remains completely inadequate. At a welcome conference in Paris in April, more than \$2 billion in contributions were announced, but very little has materialized thus far. Aid activities inside the Sudan are funded at only 15 per cent, and the refugee operations at 8 per cent. That requires no further comment.

The Sudan is also an example of the broader consequences of disrespect for the rules of war and total lack of accountability— first and foremost, of course, for civilians. For instance, almost no child in the Sudan has gone to school for months. And here, too, sexual violence is rife, in Darfur and other war zones. On a daily basis, refugees arriving in Chad tell us appalling stories of women raped in front of their children and of children murdered in front of their mothers. And I ask members: how can those who fled such horrors ever feel safe enough to return? How can they ever trust those men with guns? Beyond that, how can the Sudan's middle class — the same middle class that somehow held the country together through so much turmoil over the past decades and is now being displaced or destroyed — rebuild the country after the conflict?

Nor should it be a surprise that we have seen a 500 per cent increase in the number of Sudanese arriving in Europe in the year after the outbreak of violence. Most of them never wanted to leave home, but brutal violence has forced them to flee. And insufficient aid in neighbouring countries forced them to move again — especially to North Africa and beyond, towards Europe. Rich countries are constantly worrying about what they call irregular movements. But in that and other situations, they are not doing enough to help people before they entrust themselves to human traffickers. The consequences are inevitable. Compliance with international humanitarian law — which of course is an obligation — therefore also has an element of self-interest.

It is a grim political landscape that I see around us, from my humanitarian viewpoint: short-sighted foreign policy decisions, often founded on double standards, with lip service paid to compliance with the law but little muscle flexed, even from the Council, to actually uphold it and — with it — peace and security. International humanitarian law is the clearest representation of the effort to find a common ground. And if, at times of war — some of the most horrific and turbulent times humankind can experience — parties must set their

differences aside and operate in a way that protects at least the lives of civilians — which today I urge them to do — so should the Council in its day-to-day work. And members will forgive me if I use strong words. It is the frustration of a humanitarian speaking here. Last year I called on the Council to use its voice — not its voices. But the Council's cacophony has meant that members have instead continued to preside over a broader cacophony of chaos around the world.

It is too late for the tens of thousands already killed in Gaza, Ukraine, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and so many other places. But it is not too late to put the Council's focus and energy on the crises and conflicts that remain unresolved, so that they are not allowed to fester and explode again. It is not too late to step up help for the millions who have been forcibly displaced to return home voluntarily, in safety and with dignity. It is not too late to try to save countless millions more from the scourge of war.

The President: I thank Mr. Grandi for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, and I thank High Commissioner Grandi for his powerful remarks today.

This meeting comes at a crucial moment. As the High Commissioner has told us, the number of people who have been forced from their homes continues to rise, with direct impacts for regional stability and international peace and security. We all have a role to play in reversing that trend, not just because it is the right thing to do for displaced people and host communities, but because it is necessary if we are to leave no one behind and meet the Sustainable Development Goals. As we raise our collective ambition in line with the 2030 Goals — for inclusive education, for women and girls, and for climate-resilient populations — the United Kingdom is committed to efforts to address the root causes of displacement, to tackle human trafficking and to ensure that displaced populations are not left behind.

The Security Council has a role in tackling rising displacement, including by addressing the conflicts that are driving it. We have discussed the very concerning situations in Gaza and Ukraine in recent days. So today, I will focus my remarks on the United Kingdom's efforts in two contexts which require more international attention, including in the Council.

First, the Rohingya have faced decades of persecution and are the largest stateless population in the world. Almost a quarter have been confined to internally displaced person camps in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Approximately 1 million Rohingya refugees live in camps in Bangladesh, the majority of whom arrived in 2017 after fleeing ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar military. They are heavily reliant on humanitarian aid, with very little opportunity to work and largely unable to leave. The United Kingdom is a leading donor to the Rohingya response, and our humanitarian programme is focused on meeting the basic and urgent needs of refugees. Since 2017, we have provided more than \$57 million of support to the Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in Rakhine state and more than \$496 million in Bangladesh to the Rohingya. We must also do more as a Council to bring an end to the conflict in Myanmar.

Secondly, the consequences of the Sudan conflict have been devastating for civilians. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are responsible for appalling human rights abuses. The Sudan is now the world's largest displacement crisis, with more than 8.8 million people forced to flee their homes to escape violence and hunger, including 2.1 million who have fled to neighbouring countries. Those communities remain vulnerable, often unable to access basic needs, including food, shelter, clean water, sanitation and medicine. The United Kingdom has nearly doubled our humanitarian assistance to more than \$110 million to support the Sudanese people. And we will continue to work with Council members towards urgent de-escalation, in particular around El Fasher, a ceasefire and a political process to deliver a sustainable peace, and improved humanitarian access.

Finally, along with many other States and partners, the United Kingdom was pleased to announce new commitments to support refugees and host communities at December's Global Refugee Forum. In the face of unprecedented need, now is the time to renew our efforts to address the drivers of displacement and deliver meaningful change for displaced people. Under the leadership of the High Commissioner, we must now work together to translate the commitments we have all made into tangible action that helps to address the needs of the displaced and advances the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. The United Kingdom also remains committed to improving international

efforts to tackle the scourge of people smuggling and human trafficking. It is vital that we all work together to make migration more safe, orderly and regular.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Grandi for his briefing. Under the leadership of the High Commissioner, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has done tremendous work to alleviate the difficulties facing refugees. China highly appreciates and will continue to firmly support the work of UNHCR and the High Commissioner.

At present, the international refugee situation remains grave. The total number of refugees and displaced persons worldwide has exceeded 110 million. Low- and medium-income countries are hosting three quarters of the world's refugees and are under heavy socioeconomic pressure. The international community should practice true multilateralism and give strong support to UNHCR and other multilateral agencies so that they can coordinate and mobilize the resources offered by all parties, pursue active cooperation and provide the necessary protection to refugees, in accordance with international law. All parties must shoulder their respective responsibilities in the light of the historical context and current reality of each country. Developed countries should honour their pledges of assistance, and those countries that bear the main responsibility for refugee issues should scale up their assistance and give greater support to refugees and countries hosting refugees.

Armed conflicts are a major driver of refugee flows. Let us take a look at the world today. Refugee issues in Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar and other places are yet to be resolved, while the Ukraine crisis and the Gaza conflict have created fresh, extremely urgent refugee problems. The Council should focus on its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and facilitate political solutions to regional hotspot issues. The protection of refugees should follow the principle of neutrality and avoid double standards and politicization. It is important to increase investments in peacebuilding, accelerate post-war reconstruction in conflict-affected areas and create the conditions for the return of refugees. Unilateral sanctions have long hampered the economic recovery and improvement of livelihoods in the countries concerned and have seriously affected their efforts to resolve refugee issues. Therefore, those measures must be lifted immediately.

The issue of Palestinian refugees has been dragging on for more than seven decades, with millions of people in protracted displacement. The Gaza conflict, which has lasted for nearly eight months, has claimed the lives of more than 36,000 civilians and plunged millions of people into an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Achieving a ceasefire and saving lives is the strongest call and the most urgent demand of the international community right now. We urge Israel to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and International Court of Justice orders on provisional measures, immediately stop its collective punishment of the Palestinian people, halt its attacks against Rafah, lift the blockade of Gaza, open up all land crossings and ensure adequate and rapid access for humanitarian supplies. China calls on the international community to increase its support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Africa is the continent with the most concentrated and prominent refugee situation. China highly appreciates the long-standing solidarity and resilience shown by countries that are hosting African refugees. China calls on UNHCR to maintain its commitment to Africa and to continue its efforts to resolve Africa's refugee issues.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank High Commissioner Grandi for his tireless work on behalf of refugees and other vulnerable groups around the world. He is dealing with unprecedented challenges in Europe, Africa, Latin America and other places around the globe.

The United States continues to take significant action worldwide to support refugees and the countries who host them. The United States is the largest single humanitarian donor in the world. In our fiscal year 2023 alone, we provided nearly \$15 billion in global humanitarian assistance on behalf of the American people. For example, since Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the United States has provided nearly \$2.9 billion to support refugees, internally displaced persons and others in need. Similarly, the United States is by far the most significant humanitarian donor in the Sudan and throughout the region, responding to the mass atrocities, famine-like conditions, and large-scale displacement and refugee movements into some of the world's poorest countries.

In 2023, we welcomed 60,014 resettled refugees to the United States, and we are on track to reach or surpass 100,000 arrivals this year. We are doing our

part, and we call on other Member States to do more. We are proud that our refugee admissions programme brings refugees from every continent and corner of the world — 79 nationalities from 95 host countries this fiscal year. We believe that all refugees from all backgrounds and with all skill sets are deserving of durable solutions, including third-country resettlement. This administration is especially proud of its work to help resettle LGBTQI+ refugees fleeing persecution from around the world. Indeed, over the past several decades the United States has admitted more than 2 million refugees. Data and evidence show the significant economic and social contributions refugees have provided to communities throughout the United States.

While we continue to respond to and support the United Nations-led response to multiple, concurrent emergencies causing displacement, we are also using our resources and diplomatic efforts to advance the rights of refugees and work closely with other Member States to afford protection to refugees. We are committed to working together with the international community at the political level to resolve conflicts that are driving displacement. Advancing the protection of refugees is critical to reach sustainable solutions for displacement. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is an indispensable part of advancing solutions.

At the same time, and more than ever before, we need humanitarian financing, development efforts and private sector investments to work in concert to effectively address today's complex forced displacement crises. Indeed, more humanitarian resources alone are insufficient to meet the complexity of today's problems. We need greater emphasis on local and regional solutions, including lawful pathways for refugees and migrants to move safely and in dignity. The Safe Mobility Offices in Central and South America highlight our efforts in that area. We appreciate our partnership with many Member States on that important initiative, which we hope can serve as a model as we move forward together in tackling those issues.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to protection as the bedrock of humanitarian response, self-reliance and durable solutions, rooted in the self-identified needs of affected persons. Today, refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons around the world need our commitment to protect them. I urge fellow Member States to heed the High Commissioner's calls

and take steps to improve the implementation of our shared commitments to protecting forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important briefing. I thank United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi for his sobering update on the global situation for refugees and displaced people.

Armed conflicts, socioeconomic insecurity and climate change disasters continue to have an impact on the lives of humans in difficult and tragic ways. Data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicates that the number of forcibly displaced persons in 2022 was more than 108 million worldwide, and that increased to 114 million by the end of 2023. In addition, UNHCR's Global Appeal 2024 report projected an increase to approximately 130 million for 2024, including refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also reports that 75.9 million persons were internally displaced as at the end of 2023, up from 71.1 million in 2022. It is important to bear in mind that those figures reflect the status of actual people, including women and children, who face a harsh and unforgiving reality outside of a peaceful and safe environment.

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts across the globe, with reportedly more than 63 million persons forced to flee their homes and communities from armed conflicts in Gaza, the Sudan, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other regions in 2023. Significant populations have also been displaced by climate emergencies and natural disasters, and energy and food crises, with those factors often overlapping in many cases. Africa continues to be particularly severely affected by forced displacements, accounting for approximately 46 per cent of the world's internally displaced persons in 2023, of whom 32.5 million were displaced by conflict and violence. In the Sudan, which is currently facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, there are more than 9 million internally displaced persons. The confluence of the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters on the one hand and insecurity on the other has resulted in 7 million internally displaced people in the West Africa and Sahel regions, as well as significant increases in other regions of the African continent, such as Ethiopia, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others.

Sierra Leone firmly reiterates our full and unwavering commitment to the protection of refugees and displaced persons as a fundamental principle of international humanitarian law and human rights law, as outlined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as to all related General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

Drawing on our shared determination to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person, Sierra Leone wishes to make the following points.

First, the information shared reflects an alarming trend of increased violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. As we navigate protracted peace processes, including cross-border spillovers in some situations, Sierra Leone strongly emphasizes the protection of civilians and calls on all parties to conflicts to refrain from conducting hostilities in a manner that leads to their forcible displacement and a deterioration of their living conditions. Armed conflicts have particularly exacerbated the vulnerability of young people across the world. The destruction of civilian and critical infrastructure has disrupted their access to essential services, such as health and education, further increasing their socioeconomic deprivation and contributing to internal and cross-border displacement. That has resulted in an increase in the movement of young refugees and migrants — especially from the West Africa and Sahel regions — across the Mediterranean, seeking better socioeconomic opportunities. Those young people remain vulnerable to human traffickers, systematic violations of human rights and violence against women and girls.

It is therefore important for the Council to promote efforts that address the full peace-development-humanitarian nexus. We emphasize the importance of maintaining a common and united position in supporting broad-based multilateral approaches, including the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and its 31 commitments, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and outcome reports of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.

Secondly, on strengthening host communities and country capacity to address the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, Sierra Leone acknowledges the vital role of host communities and Governments in alleviating the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons. We acknowledge the efforts of numerous host countries, such as Bangladesh, which is home to 979,306 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar spread out across two congested camps; Chad, which has thus far hosted approximately 1.5 million Sudanese refugees and returnees; and Türkiye, which currently hosts approximately 3.36 million refugees, the majority of whom — at least 3.33 million — are Syrians under temporary protection. We call for enhanced support to and through those countries by United Nations agencies and relevant humanitarian organizations, not only to increase access to humanitarian aid but also to build the self-reliance of refugees.

Furthermore, we call for the increased protection of internally displaced persons and refugees, who face risks from the conflict spreading or from continued socioeconomic marginalization or environmental deterioration. All too often, even after having moved away from the initial sites of distress, refugees and internally displaced persons find themselves facing the same dire fates in their new and temporary locations. In the Sudan, Gaza and Myanmar to name but a few, recent clashes among conflicting parties have resulted in the deaths, injuries and destruction of the property of internally displaced persons and refugees seeking safety in their second, third or even fourth locations. Data from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) indicates that at least 430 internally displaced persons sheltering in UNRWA premises have been killed and 1,442 injured since 7 October 2023. Even as the Council and the wider international community work towards lasting peace and stability around the world, we reiterate the need for embedding explicit mandates for the protection of internally displaced persons and refugees in peacekeeping and humanitarian entities on the ground.

Thirdly, Sierra Leone underscores the importance of promoting conditions that enable refugees and internally displaced persons to voluntarily return to their home countries and communities, especially under safe and stable conditions. We emphasize the importance of programmes that provide documentation, psychological, livelihood and other support services that rehabilitate internally displaced persons and refugees

and prepare them for reintegration. In addition, the operational support provided to individuals and families for safe return and community reintegration should be underpinned by peacebuilding and development efforts for rebuilding and improving critical infrastructure and administrative and governance systems for sustaining peace and national cohesion. Sierra Leone reaffirms our commitment to the voluntary, safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees in adherence with the principle of non-refoulement.

We remain concerned that national, regional and international humanitarian programmes for refugees and displaced persons remain substantially underfunded. As at 23 April 2024, UNHCR forecasts a \$8.5 billion funding shortfall, with only \$2.2 billion of the \$10.7 billion budget actually available for use.

We conclude by emphasizing the importance of implementing an appropriate global burden and responsibility-sharing financing mechanism for an integrated peacebuilding and sustainable development framework that addresses the root causes of forcible displacement and promotes the principles of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I thank High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his comprehensive, vivid and in-depth briefing on the current situation of refugees and displaced people around the world.

The briefing of the High Commissioner to the Security Council in October 2023 (see S/PV.9465) was a sober reminder that the scale and severity of refugees and displaced people was greater than ever before. According to today's briefing, the situation now is even more dismaying. Most of the conflicts that have been generating the largest displacements remain unsolved and prolonged, and some are even worsening. The Council has actively discussed the catastrophic displacement situations, including in Gaza, the Sudan and Ukraine over the past few weeks, all of which dismally showed no signs of improvement.

In most cases, displacement happens when peace and security fail to be maintained. That is why the Security Council should responsibly seek ways to tackle that issue. In that regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, we must shed light on existing chronic refugee problems, while simultaneously keeping our eyes focused on emerging and rapidly evolving crises. The

world is experiencing new conflicts and divisions every year and every month, most of which are generating scores of refugees in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Overshadowed by that urgency, long-standing crises with millions of refugees and displaced persons, including in Syria, Afghanistan and Myanmar, have been relatively overlooked. Building on the discussions within the Council, we should redouble our efforts alongside all relevant stakeholders to identify fundamental solutions for those protracted situations. The Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees is a case in point of the concerted effort of Governments, United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Afghan civil society, in which they have been seeking ways to identify and address impediments to the safe return and asylum-seeking of Afghan refugees.

Secondly, the scale and flexibility of funding for humanitarian assistance should be significantly increased to effectively respond to the diversifying crises. Every year, there are more refugees from more countries and regions in need of humanitarian aid. Regrettably, UNHCR and many other organizations leading the provision of assistance for refugees in the field have been hamstrung by continuous underfunding. The most recent UNHCR report shows that funding for the agency covered only 52 per cent of its budget in 2023, falling far short of the needs. Most notably, it is crucial to increase unearmarked funding to effectively address the multifaceted challenges in a flexible manner. In that regard, the Government of the Republic of Korea decided to more than quadruple its unearmarked contribution to UNHCR to \$18 million this year. In addition, its unearmarked contributions from the private sector are also significant. Since the response to the global crisis must be also global, we hope that the international community can pay greater heed to the appeals of UNHCR.

Finally, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, must be upheld. The complexity of recent conflicts and divisions sends a clear message: get back to basics — the fundamental rules and norms that underpin international society. While those principles affirm that protecting civilians is not a matter of negotiation, we sadly see the opposite stark reality every day. More than 36,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed since last October,

and nearly 1 million have been forced to flee Rafah in the past three weeks alone. It is regrettable that, even after the Council adopted a series of resolutions stressing the protection of civilians in accordance with international law, that agreed principle has not been duly respected.

At the same time, we should pay special attention to refugees at risk of persecution, torture and expulsion who are forced to return, as we witness in many distressing cases, such as those related to Afghan and Syrian refugees, as well as North Korean escapees. In that vein, we urge all United Nations Member States, especially neighbouring countries, to respect the principle of non-refoulement.

Compliance with international law is the fundamental way to prevent the conditions for displacement and to resolve existing refugee problems. In that regard, the Security Council should step up its efforts to strengthen accountability for serious violations of international law.

Ms. Benn (Guyana): I must first thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for today's briefing.

Guyana supports the critical work that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is doing in regions across the globe. The life-saving assistance provided by the agency to millions of refugees, migrants and other displaced people has safeguarded the human rights of vulnerable populations and provided much-needed support to Governments in the management of crises.

The number of refugees continues to rise rapidly, reaching more than 35 million by the end of 2022 and rising even further to more than 36 million in 2023. Even more alarming is that this number is only a fraction of the more than 100 million forcibly displaced people that the UNHCR seeks to assist worldwide.

In Guyana, we are no stranger to the consequences of migratory movements that can be propelled by crises beyond our borders. That is just one of the reasons that we have and will continue to work closely with the UNHCR in its dedicated efforts towards executing its mandate.

The global community must remain committed to providing aid to displaced people, including by filling the funding gap of UNHCR. We are mindful of the importance of ensuring that the agency receives the budgetary support that will allow it to meet the needs

of millions in its operations across the globe. We are confronted by the reality of a confluence of war, violence, economic and climate crises that have forced millions from their homes. UNHCR's work is now more important than ever. It is imperative that the Council and the wider international community recommit to supporting those efforts.

I must also highlight, as High Commissioner Grandi has, the increasing prevalence of climate-related displacement. Climate change is an existential crisis with further expanding impacts on our planet. It should not be surprising that it is also leading to large-scale internal and cross-border displacement of millions of people. Refugees and displaced persons are among the most vulnerable. Enhancing their protection from abuse, exploitation and gender-based violence is vital. The UNHCR confronts those challenges every day, and Guyana will remain a partner in those efforts during its time on the Council and beyond.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the insightful information provided by High Commissioner Filippo Grandi.

As we have just heard, the figures on displacement and refugees continue to increase, because the root causes of violence, inequality and intolerance in the world have not been addressed. Women, children, persons with disabilities and those belonging to ethnic and religious minorities who are displaced or seeking asylum are facing increased levels of vulnerability to transnational organized crime networks, trafficking for sexual exploitation, recruitment and use, and the smuggling of migrants.

The work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is essential for displaced persons, refugees, stateless persons and those in need of international protection, in particular in those countries in which armed conflict is further complicating the situation for the victims and hindering the efforts to provide humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and related bodies.

My delegation believes that the Security Council could provide peace missions and special political missions with mandates that would allow them to work with UNHCR and other agencies of the United Nations system in ensuring minimum security conditions during transit, in the resettlement in host communities and in identifying sustainable and lasting solutions. Strategies to do so are not simple, and their implementation

requires the coordinated work of all the actors involved. Ceasefire agreements, the political will of sending and receiving States, sustainable financing, compliance with international refugee regulations and attention to the root causes of the problems that generate displacement are measures that can alleviate the situation.

Ecuador has a history of work on human mobility. Throughout its history, it has experienced all dimensions of the migration phenomenon: origin, destination, transit, return and refuge. In the light of that experience, Ecuador is always ready to contribute to spaces for constructive dialogue with a view to promoting safe, orderly and regular migration. My country will continue to be an advocate in the Council for strict compliance with international humanitarian law.

Ms. Zabolotskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his briefing.

Assisting refugees and addressing their problems is particularly relevant in the context of an unprecedented global humanitarian crisis. Last year, a series of endless armed conflicts, internal political difficulties in certain countries and natural disasters led to a record number of people forced to flee their homes and countries in search of protection. There is no doubt that the current refugee crisis has surpassed the tragic record levels registered in 2016 in every respect.

When speaking about the forced displacement crisis, we must first turn to the unprecedented situation in Gaza, where Israel's brutal military operation has entered its eighth month. The indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza has already forced more than 1.7 million Gazans to flee their homes in order to save their lives. However, no matter where people find shelter and refuge, they remain in mortal danger. Israeli attacks on civilian targets, including refugee camps and other facilities belonging to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) serving as shelters, have already killed 450 people and injured more than 1,400. Those who are selflessly providing assistance to Palestinian refugees are also being killed.

The situation in Rafah, where an estimated 1 million civilians are crowded together, is egregious. People are dying there every day, and that includes United Nations staff. Just the other day, an Israeli Air Force attack on a tent camp of internally displaced persons (IDPs) north-west of Rafah killed at least 45 people, including young

children, and wounded more than 200. The scale of the humanitarian catastrophe is growing by the day. The Israeli military is blocking the entry of humanitarian aid. There is no water, food or fuel in Gaza. Those who manage to escape the bombings face starvation, infectious diseases and a lack of essential medical care.

Meanwhile UNRWA, a partner of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that provides real assistance to Palestinian refugees, continues to face unprecedented political pressure and threats, including through cuts in desperately needed funding. We are aware that Palestinian refugees are not directly within UNHCR's mandate, but we hope that the High Commissioner, as one of the highest-ranking United Nations officials, will continue to monitor the situation and call on Israel to comply with its international obligations.

The situation in Gaza and the smear campaign against UNRWA once again clearly illustrate the regrettable trend of politicizing refugee and IDP issues. That is particularly evident in funding of humanitarian programmes aimed at assisting refugees. Having provoked the lion's share of conflicts around the world, Western countries are extremely reluctant to fund UNHCR programmes aimed at assisting refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, the Sudan and many other conflict-torn countries. Moreover, Western countries are actively engaged in sending asylum seekers who arrive at their borders back to developing countries. Against that backdrop, the "golden billion" States continue to express concern about the situation of Ukrainian refugees, while failing to mention that a significant number of them are heading to Russia. That is the notorious policy of double standards and the division of the world population into first- and second-class citizens.

The trend of politicization is especially clear when it comes to the voluntary return of Syrian refugees. The West is effectively blocking that process, not only by denying assistance to those who wish to return, but also by torpedoing the implementation of early-recovery projects, which is key to security and dignified repatriation. Instead, the West prefers to keep Syrian refugees outside the country by all means and to increase sanctions restrictions against Damascus — restrictions that primarily affect ordinary Syrians. Nor does it provide any care for civilians in such notorious camps as Al-Hol and Al-Roj, where thousands of women and children who fled the carpet bombings of Raqqa, Hajar and Baghouz are essentially abandoned to their fate.

Nevertheless, we trust that UNHCR will continue to facilitate the implementation of initiatives for the voluntary return of Syrian refugees to their homeland, in coordination with Damascus. In that context, we should like to ask the High Commissioner how he assesses the real — rather than the declared — donor implications of the most recent conference on Syria, held in Brussels.

Regarding the situation in Ukraine, we would like to remind Council members of a number of important facts that they are unlikely to hear in briefings by international organizations or from their officials. Since 2014, after the coup d'état in Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of Russian and Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine have fled from Ukraine to Russia. The mass exodus from Ukraine to Russia has continued in recent years due to the incessant shelling of peaceful towns in Donbas by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Since February 2022, local residents have been fleeing war crimes committed by the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the territory of Russia, and they are not fleeing to Ukraine. That is borne out by statistics. According to UNHCR data alone, our country has taken in more than 2.8 million refugees. In reality, of course, those figures are much higher. Since the beginning of the special military operation, some 5.5 million people have arrived in Russia, in contrast to the mere 4 million officially registered Ukrainian refugees being hosted by all European countries together.

The Russian side is making every effort to receive and house the refugees and to provide them with comprehensive assistance. The staff of the UNHCR Office in Moscow can independently verify the effectiveness of the work carried out in a number of Russian regions so as to ensure decent conditions for refugees.

Concern was expressed today about Ukraine's energy infrastructure. However, a plain fact that has been consistently omitted is that Kyiv's massive shelling of cities in Donbas have left residential areas in the region without water, gas, electricity and cell phone coverage and have prevented deliveries of food and medical supplies to the affected areas. The inhumane water and transport blockade of Donbas imposed by Kyiv has brought the region to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. More than 600,000 retirees have been cut off from their pensions and other social benefits have also been cancelled. We note too that the Armed Forces of Ukraine, thanks to shipments of

Western-made artillery shells and long-range missiles, is attacking civilian targets within Russia. In the first three months of 2024 alone, the Armed Forces of Ukraine fired 22,000 rounds of ammunition, killing 201 civilians in Russia. There are children in Belgorod who do not have the opportunity to attend school, but the High Commissioner has perhaps not heard about that.

In the context of the refugee situation, special attention should be paid to Africa. Despite all their economic difficulties, there are African countries that have been setting an example of solidarity and assistance to displaced persons for years, unlike countries of the West. And they have a right to count on international support and recognition for that. In that context, we share the concerns expressed about the difficult situation of the Sudanese population created by the armed conflict that has been going on there for more than a year. All of the Sudan's neighbours, including Egypt, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan, are dealing with the burden of the exodus of Sudanese refugees and have collectively already taken in almost 2 million Sudanese citizens. The various estimates of the number of IDPs in the Sudan itself range from 7 to 9 million, a situation that demands a systematic expansion of assistance to the Sudanese authorities with a view to resolving the whole spectrum of humanitarian issues. I emphasize that it is particularly important to establish cooperation with the country's central authorities, who have the full responsibility for normalizing the security situation and addressing all of the issues related to refugees and IDPs.

Finally, we would like to once again draw attention to the tragic plight of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea. I want to remind everyone that while this issue is on the Security Council's agenda, we have heard no information about it today. Year after year, the Mediterranean has continued to be a mass grave for many of the people attempting to reach Europe annually. The number of victims is steadily increasing. Horrific tragedies of deaths at sea occur regularly. And yet we continue to see no attempts to provide help or any response in that regard from Western Europe. Instead of getting help, people in distress are being deliberately pushed out of the zone of jurisdiction, which is a death sentence. And the humanitarian non-governmental organizations providing aid to refugees continue to be hampered in their work. The situation is impermissible from the point of view of both international law and basic decency. People are dying but no one is being held responsible. It is clear that the situation is not going to

change unless refugees who are rescued and intercepted at sea are sent to safe ports where they can disembark in accordance with international maritime law. We ask the High Commissioner to keep the Mediterranean region in his focus and to continue to press the European Union to uphold its international obligations and responsibilities and combat impunity.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Grandi for his briefing, and above all for his work at the helm of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

This year, 2024, has been marked by crises that are driving millions of people to flee fighting, persecution or the consequences of food insecurity and climate change. Last year, in 2023, 110 million people were forcibly displaced. In that context, UNHCR's mandate remains pivotal. I applaud the work, courage and dedication of all of its staff.

Since the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018, France has provided a global response to forced displacement that has to be adapted to every situation. The tyranny of the Syrian regime has led to the displacement of more than 13 million people. We know what it means for neighbouring countries to host millions of refugees, particularly Lebanon. During the eighth Brussels conference on 27 May, France announced a new contribution of €150 million for 2024. UNHCR is not the problem. The responsibility lies with the Syrian regime. France, together with its partners in the region, will step up its support for the High Commissioner's efforts to ensure that the conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees to Syria are finally guaranteed.

In Gaza, where the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is responsible for assisting the civilian population, humanitarian aid is only trickling in. The Israeli military operation at Rafah has led to a further displacement of more than 1.7 million civilians across the Gaza Strip. France has been warning from the outset of the need for strict compliance with international humanitarian law and full, unimpeded access for humanitarian aid. We would like to reiterate our appeal for an immediate ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages and an immediate end to the intervention in Rafah. The Security Council must work towards the goal of a two-State solution, which is the only way to give both Israelis and Palestinians any prospect of peace. France will continue to work for that.

In the Sudan, the conflict has displaced nearly 9 million people. More than 1.8 million of them have found refuge in the neighbouring countries of Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. France and Germany joined forces on 15 April to organize a humanitarian conference in Paris to step up aid to the Sudan and neighbouring countries, resulting in pledges of more than €2 billion in aid.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has forced 8 million Ukrainians to leave their homeland, and its offensive against Kharkiv could worsen that situation. It will be vital to ensure access to the displaced in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine, as well as to Ukrainian populations in Russia.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, more than 100,000 people — the entire Armenian population — were forced to leave their homes following the military offensive in autumn 2023. France salutes UNHCR's action on behalf of those people.

The situation in Myanmar has deteriorated in recent months, owing to intensified fighting and Myanmar security forces' abuses of civilians. There are now 10 times more displaced people than in 2020. The situation of internally displaced persons and refugees belonging to the Rohingya minority is worrying, and UNHCR continues to provide essential support in Bangladesh and in Myanmar to meet their needs.

Finally, in Afghanistan, the lack of political prospects and the Taliban's systematic violations of human rights, especially of women and girls, continue to force people to leave. France has been closely following the large-scale displacement of people, both voluntary and forced, to and from Afghanistan, and we are grateful to UNHCR for the quality of its work to protect those vulnerable populations.

France will continue to support UNHCR and is proud to have co-sponsored the second Global Refugee Forum in December, which was an important opportunity to respond collectively to the challenges facing refugees. Our financial contribution amounted to €120 million in 2023, and we will maintain that level as far as possible through 2024. We are also taking on our share of responsibility through our refugee resettlement and legal access programmes, with a particular focus on women under our "Avec elles" initiative. Needless to say, it is up to the Council to create the conditions for a lasting settlement to all these crises with a view to addressing the root causes of population displacement.

In conclusion, I would like to strongly endorse the appeal that the High Commissioner just made for full respect for international humanitarian law.

Mr. Carpenter (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to express my gratitude to the High Commissioner for his briefing and his Office's tireless efforts on behalf of communities affected by displacement around the world.

As the High Commissioner has just pointed out, millions of lives have been uprooted by armed conflict, including as a result of violations of international humanitarian law, as well as persecution, food insecurity, natural disasters resulting from climate change and human rights violations. The international community must not forget the women, men and children displaced by the conflicts in Gaza, the Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere, as well as the protracted crises facing the Rohingya and those displaced in the Middle East, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Besides that, we are seeing growing insecurity in the Sahel, worrisome migratory flows across the Americas, the Mediterranean and the Bay of Bengal and many other such issues. Above all, the Council must seek the unity needed to support efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully and consolidate peace. It can also address the factors behind forced displacement. We can identify several courses of action.

First, it is essential to guarantee the safety and protection of people who have been forced to leave their homes. We would like to emphasize the obligation to respect international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international law on the status of refugees, which govern the protection of displaced persons, particularly in a context of armed conflict. In practice, that means facilitating the search for people who have disappeared during forced displacement, for example. In that regard, as part of the Rabat process, Switzerland, the Gambia and the International Committee of the Red Cross have launched a process aimed at establishing a network of national focal points for missing migrants and refugees.

Secondly, humanitarian actors must have the necessary means and security to conduct their work. The second Global Refugee Forum in Geneva in December 2023 resulted in 1,750 pledges, including \$2 billion in additional financial commitments. That is a sign of solidarity with refugees and with the countries and communities that host them. Resolution 2730

(2024), which we adopted last Friday (see S/PV.9634), recalls the obligations of parties to conflict to respect and protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel providing assistance and protection to civilian populations affected by armed conflict. We reiterate here our firm appeal to all parties to conflicts to ensure rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, as required by international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, in order to achieve a genuine change of direction in preventing and responding to forced displacement, it is also crucial to take account of its root causes as part of a holistic approach. Conflict and insecurity, particularly food insecurity, are likely to be exacerbated by the adverse consequences of climate change. Preventive action can be strengthened by greater use of scientific data and methods, making it possible, for example, to anticipate displacement caused by extreme climate events. We should use those tools more extensively to enable early action to be taken.

It is essential that the Council make the most of the resources at its disposal to support displaced persons and the efforts to prevent and resolve the many crises and armed conflicts that require its attention. Switzerland will continue to work to that end.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his informative and sobering briefing.

I would like to start by commending the dedication of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), led by Mr. Grandi, to addressing the increasingly dire situations faced by refugees and internally displaced people. Japan will continue to collaborate and engage with UNHCR in order to address the challenges of forced displacement.

Japan is deeply concerned about the fact that forced displacements have doubled in the past decade, with more than 114 million people currently displaced as a result of prolonged conflicts and new crises. Intensified natural disasters caused by climate change have also further exacerbated the situation. Japan remains steadfast in its support for refugees and forcibly displaced persons from various parts of the world — from Europe to Asia and from Africa to Latin America, including Ukraine, the Sudan, Syria, Gaza, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Venezuela, to name only a few. At the same time, we also recognize the growing burden that this has created, particularly on neighbouring countries that have been hosting large numbers of displaced people for decades. We will continue our efforts to alleviate such situations.

I would like to highlight a couple of key points that Japan believes are crucial to addressing the refugee and displacement crises.

First, the rule of law, including compliance with international humanitarian law, must be respected if we are to address existential challenges as an overarching principle, as the High Commissioner pointed out.

Secondly, as refugees and displaced people put in vulnerable situations subsequently face more complex and grave threats, an approach based on human security is increasingly relevant and crucial. Japan will continue to implement programmes on the ground with a focus on human security, including through UNHCR.

Thirdly, since the number of forcibly displaced people around the world now exceeds 114 million, reliance on emergency humanitarian aid alone will not suffice. We must adopt a medium-to-long-term comprehensive approach. In that spirit, Japan launched a multi-stakeholder pledge on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at the Global Refugee Forum last December that aims to support refugees' self-reliance and ease the burden on host countries through cooperation on development, alongside short-term humanitarian aid. It also promotes peace initiatives aimed at resolving and preventing conflicts that are the root cause of displacement. In Africa the crises are growing increasingly dire. We really need to work to improve and change those situations. In Zambia, Japan is implementing a project to improve livelihoods and local integration for former refugees, and we plan to expand similar assistance to Kenya and Ethiopia.

Lastly, among the displaced, women and children are particularly vulnerable. It is crucial that we advocate for their protection and promote initiatives for sustainable peace. That can be achieved through the participation of women as leaders in conflict prevention and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, aligned with the concept of women and peace and security.

I do not think that the language used by the High Commissioner today was too strong. Sadly, his report reflects the severe realities on the ground. Japan remains deeply committed to alleviating the plight of refugees and displaced persons. We must all envision and work to realize a future where refugees and displaced persons can share their dreams and have an opportunity to make them a reality.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I would like to begin by expressing our deep appreciation for the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its dedicated partners, which continue to operate under increasingly challenging global conditions.

The numbers speak for themselves. Today more than 100 million people are displaced. The stark figure reflects the urgent need to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts. The vicious cycle of conflict and displacement demands that we prioritize conflict prevention. That entails combating the impunity of those who violate human rights, as such violations are at the root of conflicts and forced displacement. Promoting good governance and inclusive and sustainable development is also critical, as is building resilience to food insecurity.

Effective prevention also means addressing the root causes of forced displacement beyond conflict. The undeniable link between climate change and displacement also requires our urgent attention and action. Climate change is causing more frequent and extreme weather events such as floods, cyclones and droughts. The International Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that such weather-related hazards triggered a record 32.6 million internal displacements in 2022. Furthermore, climate change exacerbates the impact of other factors that contribute to displacing people, making it a threat multiplier. We must scale up targeted support for those communities to ensure their safety and welfare amid a changing climate.

We cannot meet the needs of millions of displaced people without ensuring that the United Nations and its partners have the humanitarian resources, expertise and access that they require. Denials of humanitarian access, along with the use of arbitrary bureaucratic and administrative impediments, have severe and lasting effects on all civilians trapped in conflict, particularly children. The Security Council has a responsibility to act and exert its influence in order to overcome barriers to safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access. There must be no impunity for those who deny humanitarian aid, target United Nations and humanitarian actors or use starvation as a weapon of war.

The dire humanitarian situation of the thousands of Palestinians in Gaza has reached a catastrophic level and is leading to mass displacement. We greatly appreciate the work of humanitarian agencies on the

ground. We once again reiterate our demand for an immediate and permanent ceasefire as the only way out of this human tragedy. The war in Ukraine has also spurred the largest displacement of people on the European continent in decades. Nor should we forget about the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis, which has been further intensified by reports of renewed violence in Rakhine state.

Women and girls remain disproportionately affected by the various factors that lead to displacement. In Afghanistan, the measures imposed by the Taliban restricting the rights of women and girls have forced many to leave the country. We must ensure that refugees are protected from all forms of violence, including exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence. We commend UNCHR's gender and age-responsive approach, which promotes gender equality as an integral part of its protection mandate.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Malta's support for the work of UNHCR. As a country of the central Mediterranean, a region at a crossroads of migratory movements, we are committed to continuing to fulfil our responsibilities in coordinating rescue activities in a manner that fully respects international law, including the law of the sea.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): I would like to thank High Commissioner Grandi for his update on the tireless work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the current situation of forcibly displaced and stateless people, whose record high numbers ensure that the role of UNHCR remains indispensable.

Beginning with the situation of Palestinian refugees, one of the world's largest displaced communities, we are currently most concerned about those living in the Gaza Strip. My delegation has been clear for months that we need a ceasefire and we need it now. Moving a displaced population around the Gaza Strip remains unacceptable, and we condemn all attacks on civilians living there. We underline last week's ruling of the International Court of Justice on halting the military offensive. The Court's rulings are legally binding, and we call on Israel to respect international law. We welcome the tireless efforts of humanitarian organizations, including UNHCR, to provide life-saving humanitarian aid and services to people in and from Gaza.

Secondly, if we are to address the impact of conflicts on regional stability, we must focus urgently on the tragedy in the Sudan. So far, nearly 9 million people have been forcibly displaced, and there is no end in sight. Civilians, including refugees, are suffering horrific violations. Many, trapped by the fighting, are unable to seek safety or have been prevented from doing so. We are faced with a rapidly deteriorating situation in El Fasher. There, too, there is a desperate need for an immediate, nationwide cessation of all hostilities. Safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need must be ensured. At the briefing just this morning on Syria (see S/PV.9640), my delegation underlined the immense humanitarian needs of refugees and displaced people and stressed the importance of establishing the conditions necessary for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

We are also concerned about the escalating violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the security and humanitarian situations have worsened drastically. The same goes for Myanmar, where refugees and the internally displaced people are unable to return to their homes. And let us not forget Ukraine, where the recent Russian offensive in the Kharkiv region has left thousands displaced, in addition to the more than 6 million refugees who have been forced to leave Ukraine since 2022. In most instances, displaced persons and refugees encounter protection risks and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Women, children, older people and those with disabilities bear a disproportionate share of that burden.

Finally, climate change and environmental degradation are significant threats to security. Climate-related disasters are becoming a major cause of displacement both within countries and internationally.

Many of the humanitarian crises are human-made. The Security Council cannot remain silent. We must not allow international law, including international humanitarian law, to be ignored. We cannot let our own resolutions go unimplemented. We must do more, each and every one of us.

International cooperation — which was invigorated by last year's Global Refugee Forum — as well as more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing and sustainable funding, is crucial. Slovenia is doing its part. We have increased our humanitarian contributions to organizations helping refugees, including UNHCR. We will be continuing our demining projects in Ukraine,

Iraq, Syria and Lebanon via ITF Enhancing Human Security. We will play our role in the resettlement of Syrian and Afghan refugees from Türkiye and will endeavour to ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness as soon as possible.

The number of forcibly displaced people is a reflection not merely of the gravity and scale of conflicts but also of an inability to act when needed. We must step up our commitments to ensure a better world for the children of today and for future generations, including by making greater efforts to seeking durable solutions and complementary pathways for refugees. Our continued support for UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in their important work is indispensable.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I would like to express my sincere gratitude to High Commissioner Grandi for his comprehensive briefing and to commend his dedication and outstanding leadership in supporting and protecting refugees around the world. We want to assure him of Algeria's steadfast commitment to assisting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in fulfilling its noble mandate to safeguard the rights and welfare of refugees and other displaced persons.

The issue of refugees remains one of the most significant and pressing challenges facing global humanitarian organizations. As the numbers of refugees continue to rise year after year, they place an increasing burden on the United Nations and its agencies. That burden is exacerbated by limited resources and donor priorities that often do not align with the urgent needs of those vulnerable people, most of whom live in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa. Despite their limited capacities and resources, host countries bear the brunt of the costs associated with displacement, and they spare no effort in caring for displaced persons, regardless of their status.

In that context, we stress the need for a comprehensive approach that considers all aspects and dimensions to ensure optimal protection and assistance for that vulnerable population. We also emphasize the necessity of bridging the funding gap faced by various United Nations organizations working to support refugees. That requires collective responsibility and adhering to the principles of international solidarity and burden-sharing.

We condemn the grave violations against refugees and the biased media campaigns that tarnish their image. Such actions threaten their physical well-being

and expose them to inhumane treatment. In that context, we emphasize that refugees are entitled to binding legal protection under international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

We strongly condemn the violations and deliberate targeting of the camps of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons by the Israeli Defense Forces. The situation in Rafah is just one chapter of the systemic violence carried out over years of occupation, aimed at undermining the resilience of refugees and eliminating their right to return, as guaranteed by international law and United Nations resolutions.

For nearly half a century, Algeria has hosted Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps, awaiting action by the international community and especially the Security Council to enable them to voluntarily return to their land after having exercised their inalienable right to self-determination, which must be achieved through a free and fair referendum, organized by the United Nations, through the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. Algeria spares no effort in meeting the needs of the Sahrawi refugees and calls on donors to shoulder their responsibility and respond to the appeals made by United Nations bodies to address those vital needs. We renew our call to UNHCR to scale up its assistance and to follow the path of the World Food Programme and other international organizations.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for Mr. Grandi and emphasize that addressing the refugee issue necessitates a collective effort by the whole international community. That effort must align with the principles of solidarity and burden-sharing, tackle the root causes of displacement and ensure the most effective assistance and protection for displaced persons.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Mozambique.

I would like to extend Mozambique's deepest gratitude to the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his insightful and important briefing on the global refugee situation. We wish to pay tribute to you, Mr. High Commissioner, and, through you, to all your colleagues, in Geneva, at Headquarters and around the world for your devoted service to the cause of humanity and humankind.

In our capacity as Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in 2014 and 2015, we had the opportunity to visit and work with the brave women and men of the Office of

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), fully devoted to the cause of refugees, in our field visits to Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Iran, South Sudan and Tindouf, Algeria.

We, in Mozambique, attach special attention to the issue of refugees and displacement. As a nation, we have on different occasions experienced the condition of a refugee or a displaced person as a result of armed conflicts. Presently, we are dealing with the humanitarian situation of internally displaced persons in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, owing to terrorist attacks.

For decades, Mozambique has also been home to thousands of refugees, mostly from the Great Lakes region. Those refugees are hosted in a refugee camp in the northern province of Nampula under the auspices of UNHCR.

We regret to note that, in spite of the commendable efforts of UNHCR, we face historic levels of forcibly displaced people, driven by conflict, persecution, violence and escalating climate-related disasters. That is particularly true in regions such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Those areas are the epicentre of the efforts by UNHCR. They remind us of our shared humanitarian obligations.

We know that the refugee issue is complex and multifaceted in nature. It demands a holistic approach in addressing both the immediate needs and underlying causes. We agree that refugees, often vulnerable and in need of protection, face hostile receptions, bias and trauma. Border closures, pushbacks and restrictive policies erode and undermine the cornerstone principle of international protection. It is therefore imperative that we reinforce protection mechanisms and uphold international refugee principles and norms and, in particular, the principle of non-refoulement.

We are aware that conflicts remain the primary driver of forced displacement. As the High Commissioner emphasized here, this affects more than 114 million people globally, a staggering number that would be difficult to imagine 10 years ago.

In Mozambique, terrorist attacks carried out since October 2017, coupled with the cyclical negative effects of climate change, have internally displaced more than 1 million people.

We are grateful to UNHCR for its support to our displaced people. The High Commissioner's recent visit to Mozambique was a testament to our Government's

attention to our own displaced compatriots and to those foreigners who seek refuge and exile in our lands. Mozambique hosts more than 28,000 refugees and asylum seekers. In 2023, UNHCR facilitated the resettlement of 107 refugees and the voluntary repatriation of 316 refugees, significant steps in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Drawing from our experience, we can affirm that the complex issue of refugees also requires investment in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution. In our view, that must be done so as to ensure that diplomacy and dialogue prevail over violence.

Building and sustaining peace is the cornerstone of resolving refugee flows and internal displacement. We must be mindful of the fact that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, security, stability and opportunity. Our commitment to peace must be unwavering and inclusive, addressing the needs and aspirations of all affected populations. The Security Council can play an important role in that regard, as underlined by our colleagues from China and France.

We wish to reaffirm our strong commitment to protecting refugees and internally displaced persons. Fostering global solidarity and upholding the principle of responsibility-sharing is crucial for effective refugee protection. By working together, regional organizations, States and international bodies can address the needs of refugees and displaced populations and promote a more compassionate and equitable response.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Grandi to respond to the questions, observations and comments we have just heard.

Mr. Grandi: I will be as brief as possible.

First of all, I would like to thank you personally, Mr. President, and the many others who expressed words of support for me and my colleagues. Rest assured that I will convey that gratitude to them. It will be very much appreciated, as every day they have to face very difficult situations across the world.

I also want to thank the many representatives who mentioned the second Global Refugee Forum, which was organized in Geneva in December. Around this table are two of the five co-conveners — Japan and France — and

I thank them once again. The Forum was successful despite the world's divisions, fractures and tensions. The number of pledges in the form of resources, policies or other commitments— both by donor countries, but also by countries hosting refugees — was remarkable, as some noted today. Rest assured that we are fully committed to working with the members of the Security Council and other Member States in order to realize the pledges of the Forum — not just State pledges, but also those made by the private sector, international and national organizations and other civil society institutions.

The issue of funding was mentioned many times. Unfortunately, funding has always been a challenge, as it is for all voluntarily funded organizations, like ours. For many years, budgets that were approved by our Executive Committee, which you chaired many years ago, Mr. President. As you know very well, those budgets were never fully funded. We have managed to mobilize 50 or 60 per cent of the budget, which has meant, over the years, that we had to prioritize activities planned under those budgets and to focus on the most urgent activities. Of late, I have been quite concerned that even those percentages could not be reached. I am very grateful to the Council members and other donors that have stepped up and continue to step up.

In that regard, I would like to single out the United States. As its representative noted today, the United States continues to be our largest donor, by far, and this year will once again be a very substantive donor. We certainly encourage the United States to continue in that direction. Others around the table also mentioned important initiatives in that regard, such as the Republic of Korea, Japan, France and other donor countries — and for that we are very grateful. I issue a strong appeal to Council members and other donors to avoid moving too much in the direction of the excessive earmarking of resources, which prevents us from being a flexible organization in the response that we have to bring across the world.

On the positive side — and this was mentioned by the representative of Japan — there is encouragement for us and development organizations to continue to work together in making the responses more sustainable, especially in long-term refugee situations. We are working with many Council members on that issue, and we will continue to do so. That will be particularly important as the causes for displacement evolve and become more complex, with climate also becoming a factor in the displacement of people, forcing them to leave their homes, as was mentioned by many.

All in all, the Global Refugee Forum reaffirmed the importance of responsibility-sharing, which is fundamentally the foundation on which the work of my organization is built. In that context, initiatives such as resettlement, which was also mentioned by the United States delegation, need to be stressed. I had the privilege this morning, together with the Permanent Representative of the United States, of welcoming to the United States 300 refugees. Once again, that is a very important example of responsibility-sharing and generosity. So I invite members to reflect on that important dimension of the work.

There were specific issues that I wanted to mention. I think it was the representative of Ecuador who mentioned the importance of — or the idea of — making arrangements with peacekeeping or special missions to ensure that they can play a role in addressing issues of displacement. As a matter of fact, we have quite elaborate arrangements with existing missions to ensure that dimension within their scope for protection of civilians. I have to say that we are a bit concerned about the progressive closure of missions. We have lived through that in places that the Council deals with all the time — Mali, for example, and now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once those missions leave, taking with them their protection of civilians dimension, humanitarian organizations are very often left to deal with that, with much less capacity and fewer resources. So that is an issue that I have raised many times within the United Nations and that we need to pay more attention to, especially when missions leave and end their work: who is left, if situations persist, to ensure the protection of civilians, together with Governments, of course.

A number of specific situations were mentioned. Let me quickly go through them. I would like to thank the United Kingdom for having raised the issue of the Rohingya, and many members also echoed that. I spoke about that so I will not repeat myself. I make a plea to put it back on the international agenda. The situation in Myanmar is one of the most complex for the humanitarian community at the moment and one of the most substantive in terms of how civilians are affected and displaced, so I strongly appeal for that overall situation and its Rohingya element to receive more attention.

I refer those who mentioned Syrian refugees to my introduction. But to be very clear, I think that it is very important to solve their plight. In countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, it is becoming a very problematic

issue, including in terms of the decline of the resources allocated to support them. The voluntary, safe, dignified return of Syrian refugees, which remains the best option, I agree, must be carried out, but requires two approaches at the same time. One concerns work to be done with the Government of Syria, and we are working with the Government of Syria to eliminate some of the obstacles that create fear or apprehension or a lack of trust. I discussed that in person with President Al-Assad last year, and we have started important work on that front. But at the same time, it is also the lack of minimal living conditions in Syria that prevents people from going back. So we need to scale up investments in early recovery — that is certainly important.

I know that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General spoke to members earlier today and said the same thing. We very much think the same thing. We were together at the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, convened by the European Union, on which I think there was a question from the Russian Federation. A very substantive figure was pledged, approximately \$8 billion. It is a complex pledge, because it covers many different aspects of the response — some of it is multi-year. We will now wait to see how much of that pledge can be injected into immediate humanitarian responses and early recovery in Syria, which is very important. But I am confident that we can continue to work on those two tracks.

On the situation in Ukraine I will not add much. But again, to respond to the Russian Federation, the figure that we used for Ukrainian refugees in the Russian Federation is the figure that is shared with us by the Government of the Russian Federation. Of course, we are always prepared and ready, as was stated many times in our discussions with the Government, to do more if necessary for the Ukrainian refugees in Russia, to whom we have access, but fairly limited access.

On the Mediterranean, which the representatives of Malta and the Russian Federation mentioned, that is, of course, high on our list of concerns. The reason why I did not mention it in my introduction is that, given the limited time, I chose a number of crises that I had already mentioned in my previous briefing (see S/PV.9465). There are many others that I did not mention, such as Afghanistan, for example, or crises in Africa and in Latin America, but indeed we are extremely concerned about the loss of lives in the Mediterranean. We have been working very closely with the European Commission and the European Union on the pact on

asylum and migration, which is now almost approved and, in the space of two years, must be implemented. We remain available to the European Union to ensure that the implementation of the pact deals with the various aspects of that challenge, whether inside the European Union, on the routes leading to the European Union, such as the Mediterranean, or, of course, upstream — that is the external dimension of the pact, which is really about development and capacity-building along the routes. We are doing very similar work with the United States and countries in the Americas dealing with the movement of people that was mentioned by the representative of Ecuador.

I also want to assure members — because other situations were mentioned, Armenia by France and the Sahrawi situation by Algeria — that we are, of course, focused on all situations, even when they are not on the front pages of the media.

I would like to mention two more points. Several representatives, inevitably and understandably, referred to Gaza and the conflict there. I can assure all members that even though, let me stress it again, we do not have any operational responsibility in the areas of operation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and let me assure you that I will be very rigorous in maintaining that division of labour, we have, however, constantly and consistently joined the Secretary-General and the rest of the United Nations system in calling for an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages and access for humanitarian aid into Gaza. I spoke in my introduction of the complex issue of a possible outflow of Palestinians from Gaza, and I refer members to the very precise language that I used there about Israeli obligations as an occupying Power not to provoke an outflow of refugees from the population in the territory that it has occupied.

I just want to conclude by thanking Switzerland in particular and all members, in fact, for having adopted Security Council resolution 2730 (2024) just a few days ago on the protection of humanitarian personnel. That falls within the context that we have been discussing today and that the Council discusses every day. It is extremely important — please ensure that that resolution is upheld.

The President: I thank Mr. Grandi for his additional comments.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.