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Agenda item 7

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-ninth session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Jun Yamada (Japan)

Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the year 2020

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 21

International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees

1. At its 18th meeting, on 14 June 2019, the Committee considered programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme plan for 2020 and programme performance information for 2018 ([A/74/6 \(Sect. 25\)](#)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan by sectoral, functional and regional bodies ([E/AC.51/2019/CRP.1/Rev.2](#)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the programme and responded to queries raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed broad support for the programme, as an important mechanism to ensure protection for refugees and other persons of concern and to achieve durable solutions to their problems without discrimination and taking age, gender and diversity into consideration.

4. Delegations also expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its excellent relationships with host countries and other stakeholders, especially in the current increased global refugee crisis. In addition, support was expressed for the Office's



internal reform initiatives to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability of humanitarian assistance, as well as its implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework globally to help strengthen protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees.

5. A delegation expressed the view that migration and refugee flows were global phenomena and expressed support for the handling of those phenomena through collective efforts in an organized, safe, regular and responsible way. The delegation emphasized that there should be a special focus on fair and balanced burden sharing and sharing of responsibility in assisting refugees around the world, while taking into account the existing contributions and different capacities and resources of States. The delegation also noted positively: the inclusion of vulnerable groups of people with disabilities; the principle of national ownership with regard to assistance in the emergence of refugee crises; and the key role of voluntary return as a preferred option.

6. In the section entitled “Alignment with the Charter of the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals and other transformative agendas”, under “Overall orientation”, some delegations expressed their opposition to the alignment of the objective with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (referred to in para. 25.3), as not all Member States had supported its adoption. Some delegations proposed the deletion of references to the alignment of the Global Compact with the objectives of UNHCR. A delegation proposed either taking note of, rephrasing the related text or deleting it. Another delegation sought clarification as to why the text should be deleted. A delegation observed that the reference to “cooperation with States” in the implementation of mandates was reflected in the objective of the biennial programme plan for the period 2018–2019, previously approved by Member States, but had notably been omitted in the proposed programme plan for 2020. The same delegation sought clarification as to the omission of that aspect in 2020.

7. In the strategy and external factors for 2020, a delegation sought the views of UNHCR on the reform measures mentioned in paragraph 25.7, specifically the move to a decentralized model in 2019, and enquired about the current status of the reform, how it had been conducted and whether any consultations had been undertaken with Member States. The delegation stressed the importance of UNHCR maintaining dialogue with Member States in Geneva and expressed concerns about the transfer of capacities to the regional offices, where not all Member States were present. In that regard, the delegation requested more information on those reform initiatives and as to whether Member States had been consulted and their inputs taken into account.

8. Concern was expressed by several delegations on the highlighted result in 2018 as to the use of the word “affirmation” in the context of the Global Compact, which was not a legally binding agreement, and proposed that the word be removed from the title, as well as from other related text, to avoid inconsistency and nuances. Another delegation stressed the expectation that the Compact would play a significant role in responding to the issue of refugees and supported its reflection in the proposed programme plan for 2020. Another delegation sought the views of UNHCR on the elements that, for some countries, made the Compact difficult to accept.

9. A delegation expressed support for the non-binding legal character of the Global Compact, as well as the voluntary nature of the contributions of countries in handling large refugee flows, while taking into account national realities and the capacities of different countries, as well as national policies and priorities.

10. A delegation pointed out an inconsistency between the English and the French versions in the text relating to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, specifically, on the inclusion of the phrase “refugees and migrants” in the French version (*“Dans la Déclaration de New York pour les réfugiés et les migrants adoptée*

en 2016”). The delegation expressed concern that the title of the Declaration mentioned both refugees and migrants, noting that there was a distinction between the two terms and a legal definition of the term “refugees”, which entailed a right to asylum, that was not applicable to migrants. In that regard, the delegation sought clarification as to whether the General Assembly had approved the title of the Declaration containing both refugees and migrants and, if not, proposed its amendment, to avoid any ambiguity. Delegations agreed to deliberate further on the matter in informal discussions, while reviewing the provisions contained in General Assembly resolution [73/151](#).

11. A delegation pointed out that the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, of 1951, and the 1967 protocol thereto, were the main legal foundations of the international legal regime for the protection of refugees and therefore did not support the expansion of the scope and the inclusion of, for example, climate change, natural disasters and economic situations, as indicated in the Global Compact.

12. Some delegations expressed concern that the new programme plan format and presentation provided less information by presenting a single highlighted result, which limited the ability of Member States to exercise their oversight role over more than one programmatic area of work. That in turn, in the view of a delegation, increased the risk of leaving out other important and critical programmatic activities, including for example activities on refugee protections and emergency assistance, as well as the principle of country ownership, which should be reflected in the programme plan. A delegation opined that the proposed programme budget should focus mainly on programmes and financing and should not be turned into a report on the activities of a particular department. In that regard, the delegation expressed doubts about the need to include the parts on “Recent developments”, “Highlighted result for 2018” and “Most significant relative variances in deliverables”. Further, the delegation was of the view that evaluation of the activities was not the main purpose of the programme narrative. Another delegation, however, expressed support for the inclusion of “Recent developments”, opining that they provided relevant and useful context. The same delegation further argued that the central point of the new budget format was to galvanize action towards results and a new culture that would allow staff to review past results, challenges and lessons learned. Another delegation expressed regret once again that, as observed in other programmes, not all paragraphs were numbered, which made it difficult to refer to paragraphs.

13. Regarding the highlighted planned result for 2020, reference was made to the performance measures, and clarification was sought on the challenges and progress made with respect to pledges and contributions announced by States at the Global Refugee Forum.

14. Clarification was also sought on the deliverables for the period 2018–2020 reflected in table 25.1, specifically regarding the lack of changes between the planned and actual volume of quantified deliverables. Further, clarification was sought on examples of technical materials delivered to its beneficiaries.

15. The view was expressed that the phrase “other persons of concern” in paragraph 25.8 was not sufficiently clear as to whom it related.

16. A delegation observed a gap between financial resources required in order for host countries to meet the needs of refugees responsibly and the real capacity of those countries to mobilize the resources required in order to meet those needs. In that regard the delegation expressed the view that the programme plan should reflect appropriate arrangements for adequate resources to be deployed to host countries to meet the needs of refugees, while another delegation expressed the view that future programme plans should put the focus on problems caused by refugees to host countries and how those problems should be tackled.