Refugees and displaced persons

The year 2014 continued to break records in the number of forced displacement, with nearly 60 million individuals displaced worldwide as a result of conflict and persecution. The total number of persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) increased to 14.4 million. More than half came from three countries: Afghanistan, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic. Only 126,800 refugees returned home in 2014, the lowest level since 1983.

With new conflicts emerging in Africa and ongoing crises worsening, the UNHCR emergency response capacity was severely tested during the year. Level 3 emergencies, requiring system-wide mobilization, were declared in the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and Iraq. Meanwhile, further displacement in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Darfur in the Sudan, as well as the outbreak of Ebola virus in West Africa exacerbated the humanitarian situation. In the CAR, UNHCR focused on meeting basic needs, mainly shelter and non-food items, and facilitated the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in their areas of origin. In search for durable solutions, a pilot project to support the spontaneous repatriation of 10,000 Somali refugees from Kenya was launched in December, under a tripartite agreement between Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR. The voluntary repatriation of Angolans also resumed in 2014, bringing the Angolan refugee chapter near conclusion after 50 years of displacement. In the Americas, UNHCR facilitated the Cartagena +30 process, which led to the adoption of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action to strengthen protection and find solutions for the region’s refugees, displaced and stateless people in the decade to come. In the Asia and the Pacific region, the Office carried out refugee status determination in countries without national eligibility procedures. In the Middle East and North Africa region, during the year, Syrians became the largest refugee population under the Office’s mandate, with an estimated 3.7 million. Following the declaration of the level 3 emergency in Iraq in August, UNHCR launched an expanded operation to bring in relief supplies by air, land and sea—the largest single aid distribution organized by the Office in more than a decade, targeting half a million IDPs. In Europe, the number of people of concern to UNHCR rose significantly in 2014, particularly in Turkey with more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees, and in the Russian Federation, which received more than 235,000 applications for refugee status mainly from Ukraine. Two of the UNHCR priorities in Europe were to ensure access to territory and asylum procedures; and prevent loss of life at sea. The seventh High Commissioner’s annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December was dedicated to the issue of protection at sea.

The scale and protracted nature of displacement forced the international community to rethink traditional approaches to humanitarian assistance. In particular, measures to facilitate the self-reliance of displaced persons while they were in exile represented an important shift away from “care and maintenance” models. The UNHCR “Global strategy for livelihoods” (2014–2018) was rolled out in 15 country operations and included innovative ways of connecting refugees with employment opportunities. In 2014, the Office collaborated with over 900 partners, including 720 non-governmental organizations. The World Food Programme remained one of its most important operational partners.

During the year, UNHCR signed a revised memorandum of understanding with the Office of Internal Oversight Services to strengthen arrangements for internal audit services and a cross-functional working group was established to assess the strength of the Office’s fraud prevention system.

In December, the General Assembly increased the membership of the UNHCR Executive Committee from 94 to 98 States. Also in December, the Assembly adopted a resolution on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, by which it condemned all acts that posed a threat to the personal security and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers, such as refoulement, unlawful expulsion and physical attacks, and urged the international community to continue to fund generously the refugee programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Programme policy

Executive Committee

At its sixty-fifth session (Geneva, 29 September–3 October) [A/69/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) held a
high-level segment on “Enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa”, at the end of which the Executive Committee adopted a statement. On administrative, financial and programme matters, the Executive Committee approved total revised requirements for 2014 amounting to $6,236,218,896, as well as the programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters amounting to $6,234,449,630 for 2015 (see p. 000). The Executive Committee decided to convene three formal meetings of its Standing Committee in 2015: in March, June and September. The Executive Committee also approved applications by Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Nepal and Panama, for observer participation in meetings of its Standing Committee in 2014-2015. It further adopted the provisional agenda for its sixty-sixth session (2015).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, in his opening statement at the sixty-fifth session of the Executive Committee, said that said that, with more than 3 million refugees, 12.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and around 700,000 stateless persons, Africa represented the biggest challenge for UNHCR in terms of capacity and financial requirements. The surge in new conflicts during the previous 12 months had had devastating effects in terms of internal and cross-border displacement.

In the Central African Republic, for example, almost 500,000 persons remained internally displaced and more than 400,000 persons were refugees in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congo. In Northern Nigeria, continued insecurity had displaced almost 650,000 persons internally, and around 61,000 persons had sought refuge in Cameroon, the Niger and Chad. There were still almost 140,000 Malian refugees in Mauritania, the Niger and Burkina Faso. The number of internally displaced in Mali had dropped by half in 2014, and some refugees had returned spontaneously, despite the persistent insecurity. The conflict in Libya had displaced around 147,000 persons within the country, and the worsening security situation had led many to board boats to Europe.

The spate of recent emergencies threatened to dilute the focus on protracted displacement, particularly in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and on refugee populations (Eritreans, Darfuri, Saharans and Ivorians). The combination of old and new conflicts and new emergencies placed an enormous stress on the capacities of all the actors involved and jeopardized the food security of refugees and IDPs.

At the end of the high-level segment, the Executive Committee adopted a statement on enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa.

The general debate of the session focused on more systematic support to host countries and local communities, the need for a renewed focus on prevention and strong international resolve to bring about an end to conflict, the need to foster refugee resilience and livelihoods, and the importance of redoubling efforts towards durable solutions while ensuring that no one was left behind. In his opening statement to the debate [A/AC.96/SR.678], the High Commissioner said that the response to five system-wide level 3 emergencies in Syria, the Philippines, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Iraq over the previous year had placed an unprecedented strain on the UNHCR resources. More than 670 emergency deployments of UNHCR and partner staff had been made since 2013, and 400 international emergency fast-track posts had been advertised to ensure continuity beyond the immediate emergency response.

UNHCR continued to rely on the support of the host countries and donors to protect refugees and provide humanitarian assistance. Nine out of ten refugees lived in developing countries—up from 70 per cent 10 years earlier. It was crucial, therefore, for host States in the developing world to benefit from increased international solidarity and burden-sharing. Voluntary contributions to UNHCR had reached a record $2.9 billion in 2013. Numerous measures had been taken to address the issues of statelessness, protection at sea, protection of women and children. Internal displacement, however, which stood at over 33 million persons worldwide, required greater international attention.

Finding durable solutions to the surge in displacement rates remained the most challenging aspect of the agency’s mandate. UNHCR had established 19 operations worldwide with non-earmarked funding as part of the Transitional Solutions Initiative and had increased its budget for the Global Strategy for Livelihoods by more than 40 per cent over the previous three years. To expand the available resource base UNHCR intended also to make structural improvements to the existing humanitarian funding system and establish partnerships with emerging donors and the private sector. Funding difficulties notwithstanding, the fundamental challenge to humanitarian response remained conflict prevention and resolution.

The annual report [A/69/12] of the High Commissioner to the General Assembly covered the first half of the year 2014 [YUN 2013, p. 1154]. The second half was covered in a later report [A/70/12] (see p. 000).

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 18 December [meeting 73], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) Committee
[A/69/482], adopted resolution 69/152 without vote [agenda item 61].

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the activities of his Office and the report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work of its sixty-fifth session and the decisions contained therein,

Recalling its previous annual resolutions on the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees since its establishment by the General Assembly,

Expressing deep concern that the number of people who are forcibly displaced owing to conflict, persecution, violence and other reasons, including terrorism, has reached the highest level since the Second World War,

Expressing its appreciation for the leadership shown by the High Commissioner,

Commenting the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner and of its partners for the competent, courageous and dedicated manner in which they discharge their responsibilities,

Underscoring its strong condemnation of all forms of violence to which humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel are increasingly exposed,

1. Welcomes the important work undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its Executive Committee in the course of the year, which is aimed at strengthening the international protection regime and at assisting Governments in meeting their protection responsibilities;

2. Endorses the report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work of its sixty-fifth session;

3. Recognizes the relevance of the Executive Committee’s practice of adopting conclusions, and encourages the Executive Committee to continue this process;

4. Appreciates the convening of the high-level segment on enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa of the sixty-fifth plenary session of the Executive Committee, welcomes the statement adopted on 30 September 2014 by the States members of the Executive Committee, commends African States for their hospitality and refugee-friendly policies in hosting large numbers of refugees over a long period of time despite their limited resources, calls upon the African States and the international community to pursue efforts as identified in the statement, and calls upon all States to act in international solidarity, burden-sharing and partnership with African States to support international protection of refugees and facilitate durable solutions;

5. Also appreciates the follow-up to the high-level segment of the sixty-fourth plenary session of the Executive Committee, renews its call upon all States to provide the necessary support with a view to sharing the burden of the host countries, and underscores the critical importance of development support for host communities;

6. Reaffirms the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto as the foundation of the international refugee protection regime, recognizes the importance of their full and effective application by States parties and the values they embody, notes with satisfaction that 148 States are now parties to one or both instruments, encourages States not parties to consider acceding to those instruments and States parties with reservations to give consideration to withdrawing them, underlines, in particular, the importance of full respect for the principle of non-refoulement, and recognizes that a number of States not parties to the international refugee instruments have shown a generous approach to hosting refugees;

7. Re-emphasizes that the protection of refugees is primarily the responsibility of States, whose full and effective cooperation, action and political resolve are required to enable the Office of the High Commissioner to fulfill its mandated functions, and strongly emphasizes, in this context, the importance of active international solidarity and burden-sharing;

8. Welcomes recent accessions to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness since the intergovernmental ministerial event marking the sixtieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the fiftieth anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, as well as pledges to remove reservations to them, also welcomes the recent increase in the number of accessions to the two Conventions, and notes that 84 States are now parties to the 1954 Convention and 63 States are parties to the 1961 Convention, encourages States that have not done so to give consideration to acceding to those instruments, notes the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in regard to identifying stateless persons, preventing and reducing statelessness and protecting stateless persons, and urges the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to work in this area in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and Executive Committee conclusions;

9. Re-emphasizes that prevention and reduction of statelessness are primarily the responsibility of States, in appropriate cooperation with the international community, and also re-emphasizes that protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons are primarily the responsibility of States, in appropriate cooperation with the international community;

10. Also re-emphasizes that protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons is a priority for the Office of the High Commissioner, and encourages States parties to give consideration to acceding to relevant instruments and States parties with reservations to give consideration to withdrawing them, unites with satisfaction that 148 States are now parties to one or more of those instruments and States parties with reservations to give consideration to withdrawing them, also welcomes the recent accessions to the 1954 Convention and 63 States are parties to the 1961 Convention, encourages States that have not done so to give consideration to acceding to those instruments and States parties with reservations to give consideration to withdrawing them, underlines, in particular, the importance of full respect for the principle of non-refoulement, and recognizes that a number of States not parties to the international refugee instruments have shown a generous approach to hosting refugees;

11. Notes the current activities of the Office of the High Commissioner related to protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons, including in the context of inter-agency arrangements in this field, emphasizes that such activities should be consistent with relevant General Assembly resolutions and should not undermine the refugee mandate of the Office and the institution of asylum, and encourages the High Commissioner to continue his dialogue with States on the role of his Office in this regard;

12. Encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to continue responding adequately to emergencies, in accordance with its mandate and in cooperation with States, notes the measures taken by the Office to strengthen its capacity to respond to emergencies, and encourages the Office to pursue its efforts to further strengthen its emergency capacity and thereby ensure a more predictable, effective and timely response;
13. Also encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to work in partnership and in full cooperation with relevant national authorities, United Nations offices and agencies, international and intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the continued development of humanitarian response capacities at all levels, and recalls the role of the Office as the leading entity of the cluster for protection, camp coordination and management and emergency shelter in complex emergencies;

14. Further encourages the Office of the High Commissioner, among other relevant United Nations and other relevant intergovernmental organizations and humanitarian and development actors, to continue to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat to enhance the coordination, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian responses and to contribute, in consultation with States, as appropriate, to making further progress towards common humanitarian needs assessments, as stated, among other important issues, in General Assembly resolution 68/102 of 13 December 2013 on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations;

15. Welcomes the recent efforts by the Office of the High Commissioner to ensure a more inclusive, transparent, predictable and well-coordinated response to refugees as well as internally displaced persons and other persons of concern, consistent with its mandate, and in this regard takes note of the articulation of the refugee coordination model;

16. Encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to engage in and implement in full the objectives of the “Delivering as one” initiative;

17. Notes with appreciation the measures taken and efficiencies gained in the process of structural and management change to reinforce the capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner, and encourages the Office to focus on continuing improvement in order to enable a more efficient response to the needs of beneficiaries, including identifying unmet needs, and to ensure the effective and transparent use of its resources;

18. Expresses deep concern about the increasing threats to the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers and convoys and, in particular, the loss of life of humanitarian personnel working in the most difficult and challenging conditions in order to assist those in need;

19. Emphasizes the need for States to ensure that perpetrators of attacks committed on their territory against humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel do not operate with impunity and that humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel do not operate with impunity and that

20. Strongly condemn attacks on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons and acts that pose a threat to their personal security and well-being, and calls upon all States concerned and, where applicable, parties involved in an armed conflict to take all measures necessary to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law;

21. Deplores the refoulement and unlawful expulsion of refugees and asylum seekers, and calls upon all States concerned to ensure respect for the relevant principles of refugee protection and human rights;

22. Urges States to uphold the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, inter alia, through effective measures to prevent the infiltration of armed elements, to identify and separate any such armed elements from refugee populations, to settle refugees in secure locations and to afford to the Office of the High Commissioner and, where appropriate, other humanitarian organizations prompt, unhindered and safe access to asylum seekers, refugees and other persons of concern;

23. Notes with concern that asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons are subject to arbitrary detention in some situations, welcomes the increasing use of alternatives to detention, and emphasizes the need for States to limit detention of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons to that which is necessary;

24. Expresses concern at the large number of asylum seekers who have lost their lives at sea trying to reach safety, and encourages international cooperation to further strengthen search and rescue mechanisms;

25. Emphasizes that the international protection of refugees is a dynamic and action-oriented function that is at the core of the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner and that it includes, in cooperation with States and other partners, the promotion and facilitation of the admission, reception and treatment of refugees in accordance with internationally agreed standards and the ensuring of durable, protection-oriented solutions, bearing in mind the particular needs of vulnerable groups and paying special attention to those with specific needs, and notes in this context that the delivery of international protection is a staff-intensive service that requires adequate staff with the appropriate expertise, especially at the field level;

26. Expresses deep concern about the long-term impact of cuts in food rations on the health and well-being of refugees globally, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, and especially its impact on children, owing to insufficient funding and increased costs, and in this regard calls upon States to ensure sustained support for the Office of the High Commissioner and the World Food Programme, while looking to provide refugees with alternatives to food assistance,pending a durable solution;

27. Affirms the importance of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in analysing protection needs and ensuring the participation of refugees and other persons of concern to the Office of the High Commissioner, as appropriate, in the planning and implementation of programmes of the Office and of State policies, also affirms the importance of according priority to addressing discrimination, gender inequality and the problem of sexual and gender-based violence, recognizing the importance of addressing the protection needs of women, children and persons with disabilities in particular, and underlines the importance of continuing to work on those issues;

28. Notes that the lack of civil registration and related documentation makes persons vulnerable to statelessness and associated protection risks, recognizes that birth registration provides an official record of a child’s legal identity and is crucial to preventing and reducing statelessness, and welcomes efforts by States to ensure the birth registration of children;

29. Strongly reaffirms the fundamental importance and the purely humanitarian and non-political character of the function of the Office of the High Commissioner of
providing international protection to refugees and seeking durable solutions to refugee problems, and recalls that those solutions include voluntary repatriation and, where appropriate and feasible, local integration and resettlement in a third country, while reaffirming that voluntary repatriation, supported, as necessary, by rehabilitation and development assistance to facilitate sustainable reintegration, remains the preferred solution;

30. Expresses concern about the particular difficulties faced by the millions of refugees in protracted situations, recognizes that the average length of stay has continued to grow, and emphasizes the need for redouble international efforts and cooperation to find practical and comprehensive approaches to resolving their plight and to realize durable solutions for them, consistent with international law and relevant General Assembly resolutions;

31. Recognizes the importance of achieving durable solutions to refugee problems and, in particular, the need to address in this process the root causes of refugee movements;

32. Encourages further efforts by the Office of the High Commissioner, in cooperation with countries hosting refugees and countries of origin, including their respective local communities, relevant United Nations agencies, international and intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and development actors, to actively promote durable solutions, particularly in protracted refugee situations, with a focus on sustainable, timely and voluntary return, which encompasses repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, and encourages States and other relevant actors to continue to support these efforts through, inter alia, the allocation of funds;

33. Encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to adopt a solution-oriented approach that supports the sustainability of voluntary repatriation and reintegration, including from the onset of displacement, and in this regard urges the Office to further strengthen partnerships with national Governments and development actors, as well as international financial institutions;

34. Calls upon States to create opportunities for resettlement as a durable solution, acknowledges with appreciation the many countries that continue to offer enhanced resettlement opportunities and other forms of humanitarian admission, recognizes the need to further increase the number of resettlement places and the number of countries with regular resettlement programmes and to improve the integration of resettled refugees, calls upon States to ensure inclusive and non-discriminatory policies in their resettlement programmes, and notes that resettlement is a strategic protection tool and solution for refugees;

35. Notes with appreciation the activities undertaken by States to strengthen the regional initiatives that facilitate cooperative policies and approaches on refugees, and encourages States to continue their efforts to address, in a comprehensive manner, the needs of the people who require international protection in their respective regions, including the support provided for host communities that receive large numbers of persons who require international protection;

36. Notes the importance of States and the Office of the High Commissioner discussing and clarifying the role of the Office in mixed migratory flows in order to better address protection needs in the context of mixed migratory flows, bearing in mind the particular needs of vulnerable groups, especially women, children and persons with disabilities, including by safeguarding access to asylum for those in need of international protection, and also notes the readiness of the High Commissioner, consistent with his mandate, to assist States in fulfilling their protection responsibilities in this regard;

37. Emphasizes the obligation of all States to accept the return of their nationals, calls upon States to facilitate the return of their nationals who have been determined not to be in need of international protection, and affirms the need for the return of persons to be undertaken in a safe and humane manner and with full respect for their human rights and dignity, irrespective of the status of the persons concerned.

38. Expresses concern about the challenges associated with climate change and environmental degradation to the operations of the Office of the High Commissioner and the assistance it provides to vulnerable populations of concern across the globe, particularly in the least developed countries, and urges the Office to continue to address such challenges in its work, within its mandate, and in consultation with national authorities and in cooperation with competent agencies in its operations;

39. Urges all States and relevant non-governmental and other organizations, in conjunction with the Office of the High Commissioner, in a spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing, to cooperate and to mobilize resources, including through financial and in-kind assistance, as well as direct aid to host countries, refugee populations and the communities hosting them, with a view to enhancing the capacity of and reducing the heavy burden borne by countries and communities hosting refugees, in particular those that have received large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, and whose generosity is appreciated;

40. Calls upon the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to play its catalytic role in mobilizing assistance from the international community to address the root causes as well as the economic, environmental and social impact of large-scale refugee populations in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition, and notes with appreciation those host countries, donor States, organizations and individuals that contribute to improving the condition of refugees through building the resilience of refugees and their host communities, while working towards a durable solution;

41. Expresses concern that the needs required to protect and assist persons of concern to the Office of the High Commissioner continue to increase and that the gap between global needs and available resources continues to grow, appreciates the continued and increasing hospitality of host countries and generosity of donors, and therefore calls upon the Office to continue and enhance efforts to broaden its donor base so as to achieve greater burden-sharing by reinforcing cooperation with governmental donors, non-governmental donors and the private sector;

42. Recognizes that adequate and timely resources are essential for the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to fulfil the mandate conferred upon it through its statute and by subsequent General Assembly resolutions on refugees and other persons of concern, recalls its resolution 58/153 of 22 December 2003 and subsequent resolutions on the Office of the High Commissioner concerning, inter
alia, the implementation of paragraph 20 of the statute of the Office, and urges Governments and other donors to respond promptly to annual and supplementary appeals issued by the Office for requirements under its programmes;

43. Requests the High Commissioner to report to his annual activities to the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

Enlargement of Executive Committee

On 16 July, the Economic and Social Council, by decision 2014/242, took note of the requests of Armenia [E/2014/79], Chad [E/2014/48], Georgia [E/2014/62] and Uruguay [E/2014/57] to become members of the Executive Committee, and recommended that the General Assembly decide on enlarging the membership of the Committee from 94 to 98 States.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 18 December [meeting 73], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/69/482], adopted resolution 69/153 without vote [agenda item 61].

Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The General Assembly, taking note of Economic and Social Council decision 2014/242 of 16 July 2014 concerning the enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, taking note also of the request regarding the enlargement of the Executive Committee contained in the note verbale dated 10 December 2013 from the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the letter dated 18 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the note verbale dated 3 March 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Chad to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the letter dated 15 May 2014 from the Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General,

1. Decides to increase the number of members of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from 94 States to 98 States;
2. Requests the Economic and Social Council to elect the additional members at a coordination and management meeting in 2015.

Standing Committee

In 2014, the Standing Committee, established by the Executive Committee in October 1995 [YUN 1995, p.1234] to carry on the Executive Committee’s work between its annual sessions, held its fifty-ninth (4–6 March) [A/AC.96/1133], sixtieth (1–3 July) [A/AC.96/1140] and sixty-first (23–24 September) [A/AC.96/1141] meetings in Geneva. It considered issues relating to the UNHCR programme budgets and funding; international protection; regional activities and global programmes; programme/protection policy; coordination; management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources; and governance. The Committee also held informal consultative meetings on issues requiring in-depth discussion: the proposed themes for the Executive Committee’s conclusion on international protection; the follow-up to the high-level segment on solidarity and burden-sharing with countries hosting Syrian refugees; and the revised programme budget for 2014–2015. The Committee adopted decisions on budgets and funding for 2013 and 2014. The Committee’s work was summarized in a September Secretariat report [A/AC.96/1142].

Refugee protection and assistance

In his annual report covering 2014 [A/70/12], the High Commissioner noted that by the end of 2014, nearly 60 million individuals worldwide were in situations of forced displacement as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations. This was the highest number recorded, with 13.9 million people newly displaced in 2014 alone. Of the 14.4 million refugees under the UNHCR mandate, more than half came from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria. While the numbers of displaced persons continued to rise, solutions remained elusive. Only 126,800 refugees were able to return home in 2014, the lowest level since 1983, and some 6.4 million refugees under the UNHCR mandate had been in exile for five years or longer. The scale of global forced displacement and the response required outpaced anything seen since the Second World War, with needs far exceeding resources. Further, the denial of protection and the shrinking asylum space in some countries had been discouraging, particularly in the face of the overwhelming numbers of refugees in others, including Ethiopia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey, each of which hosted over 600,000 refugees.

In addition to the crises in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan and Syria, which generated significant refugee outflows necessitating a UNHCR response in surrounding countries, the Office declared emergencies also for Burundi, Nigeria and the Mediterranean Sea. Risks to humanitarian workers remained considerable, and more than 100 were killed in violent incidents during the year. Twenty-three humanitarian workers lost their lives in Syria alone. The UNHCR staff and partners nonetheless continued to “stay and deliver” in many situations where security was deteriorating, like Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

The scale and protracted nature of displacement forced the international community to rethink traditional approaches to humanitarian assistance. In particular, measures to facilitate the self-reliance of displaced persons while they were in exile represented an important shift away from “care and maintenance”
models. The UNHCR “Global strategy for livelihoods” (2014–2018) was rolled out in 15 country operations and included innovative ways of connecting refugees with employment opportunities, such as the online platform “UNHCR Exchange”, because experience showed that supporting refugee livelihoods in exile better prepared them for future durable solutions.

Similarly, the “Policy on alternatives to camps”, launched in July, focused on creating opportunities for refugees to live lawfully and independently in their host communities and drew on the UNHCR “Policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas” [YUN 2009, p. 1197], community-based protection practices and broader efforts to include refugees in national structures. The Office also partnered with governments to include refugees in national public services and development plans, for example in Ghana and Rwanda. The expanded and systematic use of cash-based interventions was another example of innovation to support the autonomy of refugees while in exile. The Office continued to implement a number of other strategies, such as the “Global strategy on settlement and shelter” (2014–2018), to enhance services for persons of concern in the sectors of public health, education, settlement and shelter, and fuel and energy.

UNHCR also highlighted the need for a change in approach to humanitarian funding, despite an unprecedented increase. There was an urgent imperative to make better use of development programmes and funding in conjunction with humanitarian responses, as well as to ensure the involvement of development actors at all stages of displacement.

Many States made progress in developing and strengthening national asylum systems. At the end of the year, approximately 40 States were in the process of drafting or revising national laws relevant to refugee protection, and a total of 19 laws had been adopted, including in Albania and Rwanda. The temporary protection regime for Syrians adopted by Turkey in October was a significant milestone. Many European Union member States made progress in transposing the recast asylum directives under the Common European Asylum System into national law. During the year, UNHCR launched its “Global strategy—beyond detention” (2014–2019), which focused on expanding the availability of alternatives to detention for asylum seekers and refugees and ending the detention of children. The Office welcomed a number of positive developments in this area, including an Inter-American Court on Human Rights advisory opinion, which highlighted that detention of children as part of immigration procedures should be the exception rather than the rule.

The High Commissioner concluded that in a year that continued to break records in terms of the scale and scope of forced displacement worldwide, there were nonetheless positive developments in preventing and resolving statelessness and opportunities for some internally displaced persons to return home.

**Populations of concern**

Populations of concern to UNHCR included different categories: refugees and persons in a refugee-like situation; asylum seekers; IDPs and persons in an IDP-like situation; returned refugees and IDPs; persons under UNHCR stateless mandate; and other persons of concern. As of 2014, the “other persons of concern” referred to individuals who did not fall directly into any of the groups usually assisted by UNHCR but to whom the Office extended its protection and/or assistance services, based on humanitarian or other special grounds. Until 2003, this category also included stateless persons. Until 2007, people in refugee-like and IDP-like situations were also included in this category.

According to the High Commissioner’s annual report [A/70/12], by the end of 2014, the total population of concern to UNHCR stood at an unprecedented 54.9 million persons, including over 13 million refugees; 1.7 million asylum seekers; 32.2 million IDPs; 3.4 million people under UNHCR statelessness mandate; and over 1 million of other persons of concern.

**Protection issues**

A July note [A/AC.96/1134] of the High Commissioner on international protection highlighted protection responses in emergency and ongoing crisis situations, as well as the challenges presented by mixed migration and movements by sea. The note also reported on broader aspects of refugee and IDP protection, comprehensive solutions and statelessness.

**Mixed flows**

Throughout the year, securing access to territory and protection, especially in the context of migratory movements, remained a global challenge. The principle of non-refoulement (non-expulsion)—the cornerstone of international protection and a norm of customary international law—was not always respected. The routine detention of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons, alongside economic migrants and often in sub-standard conditions, posed another major threat to their security and rights. In 2014, UNHCR received a record 245,700 applications for refugee status under its mandate. The Office continued to support States in the implementation of the “10-point plan of action on refugee protection and mixed migration”, and to encourage regional cooperation with respect to mixed movements, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). During the year, Caribbean States and Territories agreed to set up a Regional Consultative Mechanism to support the progressive establishment of asylum systems and other procedures to
identify and assist persons travelling as part of mixed movements. In response to serious concerns about kidnapping and trafficking of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the East and Horn of Africa, regional governments adopted a declaration and plan of action in October at a conference in Khartoum organized by the African Union, the Sudan, UNHCR and IOM to share best practices, promote greater cooperation across borders and the development of national strategies to address smuggling and trafficking.

**Refugee at sea**

An estimated 350,000 refugees and migrants were reported to have taken to the seas in 2014, with some 4,300 people losing their lives. In the Mediterranean Sea alone, 219,000 persons arrived irregularly in the European Union during the year. There were also significant mixed movements by sea in South-East Asia and in the Gulf of Aden (some 91,600 arrivals in Yemen in 2014). While movements by sea remained “mixed”, for the first time in several decades, the majority were persons fleeing conflict and persecution. The High Commissioner’s annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December was dedicated to the issue of protection at sea (see below). UNHCR continued to provide practical support to States confronting these movements. Cooperation between international and regional organizations to enhance protection at sea was also strengthened. An updated guide on rescue at sea and the principles and practices as applied to refugees and migrants was published by UNHCR, the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). UNHCR also established the Regional Maritime Movements Monitoring Unit at its Regional Office in Bangkok in 2014, with the objective of improving knowledge of mixed movements by sea in South-East Asia and informing timely operational responses.

**Dialogue on protection challenges.** The seventh High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges (Geneva, 10–11 December) focused on the theme of “Protection at Sea”. The Dialogue informed implementation of the two-year Global Initiative on Protection at Sea, which aimed to support State action to limit loss of life at sea as well as exploitation, abuse and violence. The initiative also sought to ensure that responses to mixed migration by sea were sensitive to the international protection needs of specific individuals and groups.

The Dialogue brought together delegations from 88 countries, 52 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and 13 international governmental organizations, as well as academics and experts. In total, approximately 450 people participated, making it the largest Dialogue to date. During the two-day meeting, the heads of UNHCR, IMO, IOM, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime issued a joint statement calling upon States to tackle the root causes of maritime migration, which included lack of access to safe and regular migration channels.

**Refugee children and women**

In its July meeting [A/AC.96/1140], the Standing Committee considered a document [EC/65/SC/CRP.13] on child protection. In 2014, 51 per cent of all refugees under the UNHCR mandate were children under the age of 18, the highest percentage in more than a decade. Some 34,300 asylum applications were lodged by unaccompanied and separated children in 82 countries, mostly from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Syria. This was the highest number on record since the Office started collecting such data in 2006.

Most of the 16 priority countries under the UNHCR “Framework for the protection of children” reported an increase in access by children of concern to the Office to national child protection and social services. The Office also supported 16 youth-initiated and led projects as part of its Youth Initiative Fund. The Office’s “Education strategy” (2012–2016) was expanded to 25 priority countries, with multi-year strategies developed and implemented with ministries of education and local education partners. The “Educate a Child” partnership enabled an additional 266,000 out-of-school refugee children to enrol in primary school in 12 countries. In October, States from the Middle East and North Africa adopted the “Sharjah Principles” at a regional conference in the United Arab Emirates; the Principles called for all refugee children in the region to have their births registered to help prevent statelessness.

Several initiatives involving UNHCR were undertaken to strengthen sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response. In June, the British Foreign Secretary and UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie co-hosted a high-level summit on ending sexual violence in conflict. With participation from 129 countries, the summit agreed on practical steps to tackle impunity. Further, UNHCR helped develop an international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict, which was launched at the summit. The Office welcomed the 2014 International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, and took steps to facilitate survivors’ access to legal representation and interpreters, as well as to strengthen the capacity of lawyers and judges to adjudicate SGBV cases. In Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda, UNHCR supported government efforts to establish and administer mobile courts. In line with the UN strategic results framework on women, peace and security, a 46 per cent participation rate amongst women in leadership and management structures was reported across 65 operations in 2014. UNHCR
worked with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with respect to its general recommendation on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness.

Resettlement

In July [A/AC.96/1140], the Standing Committee had before it a progress report on resettlement [EC/65/SC/CRP.11], highlighting increased resettlement submissions and departures in 2013 as compared with 2012 (25 percent and 16 per cent, respectively). Noting that 27 States had regular resettlement programmes, the Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection expressed appreciation to those States that had expanded their quotas, as well as to those that had established humanitarian admission programmes for Syrian refugees. Yet a tremendous gap remained: nearly 1 million refugees globally were in need of resettlement, while only 80,000 regular resettlement places were available. Calling on States to be flexible in their resettlement criteria, she underscored the importance of resettlement partners closely engaging with host countries. UNHCR, for its part, was strengthening oversight to ensure integrity in its processing.

Age, gender and diversity

In July [A/AC.96/1140], the Standing Committee considered a document [EC/65/SC/CRP.14] on the 2011 implementation of the age, gender and diversity (AGD) policy, which, by formalizing the AGD approach [YUN 2004, p. 1203], sought to ensure that all persons of concern could enjoy their rights on an equal footing. The launch of the policy was followed by the development of a five-year plan (2011–2016), whose strategic results were: participatory assessments, to facilitate structured dialogue between UNHCR and persons of concern; staff capacity, to ensure that staff and partners had the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver on UNHCR commitments; and organizational accountability, to ensure that strong internal leadership and accountability for AGD were embedded in the organizational structure.

The 2013 AGD Accountability Report had been included into the UNHCR planning and reporting platform, Focus, which provided deeper insight on the broad range of age-, gender- and diversity-related problems faced by persons of concern and on the actions the Office was taking to address them. In 2014, UNHCR continued to improve the AGD Accountability Report in Focus in order to make gender-disaggregated data available; and to revise the participatory assessment tool based on feedback.

Refugee and HIV/AIDS

UNHCR aimed to ensure that persons of concern could access life-saving and essential health care; nutrition; reproductive health services; and HIV prevention, protection and treatment services in emergency and non-emergency settings. In 2014, considerable progress had been made toward ensuring that persons of concern had access to those services. The UNHCR Global Strategy for Public Health 2014–2018, which included HIV and reproductive health, stressed the importance of mainstreaming refugee health care into national health systems. The top priority for the Office was to address the essential health needs of newly-arrived refugees in emergencies. The Office's HIV programme was anchored in principles of protection and human rights. Over the five previous years, the proportion of countries in which refugees received access to antiretroviral treatment at the same level as nationals had increased from 79 to 97 per cent. In 2013, the proportion of operations reporting the inclusion of refugees in national HIV strategic plans stood at 87 per cent. Progress toward legislation protecting the rights of HIV-positive refugees and asylum seekers, including protection from mandatory HIV testing, however, required more attention. Further, 95 per cent of the UNHCR operations ensured refugees’ access to “prevention of mother-to-child transmission” programmes on par with nationals.

Protracted situations and durable solutions

According to the High Commissioner’s annual report [A/70/12], in 2014, some 6.4 million refugees under the UNHCR mandate remained in protracted exile. The lack of sustainable solutions was in part due to the continuing violence in many parts of the world. The Office strengthened internal institutional arrangements to create better momentum for solutions. For example, the Office set aside $20 million for the “Seeds for Solutions” initiative, which provided 20 country operations with technical expertise and increased resources for solutions-related activities. “Seeds for Solutions” funds supported the repatriation of some 12,000 former Angolan refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The UNHCR Solutions Steering Group assisted operations to develop multi-year and multi-partner protection and solutions strategies; and the 2016–2017 biennial planning instructions directed all field operations to incorporate protection and solutions strategies in yearly and biennial country operation plans. At the global level, UNHCR was one of the co-chairs of the Solutions Alliance, which was established in April to encourage innovative solutions for the displaced by bringing together humanitarian and development actors.

The Office also continued to enhance partnerships with development actors to support efforts to achieve solutions. Cooperation with the World Bank resulted in the preparation of three regional forced displacement studies (Sahel, Great Lakes, and Horn of Africa) and
the establishment of financial facilities for the Great Lakes region ($100 million) and the Horn of Africa ($150 million). A pilot project to support voluntary repatriation from Kenya to Somalia was launched in December, under a tripartite agreement between the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, and UNHCR.

Regarding voluntary return, far fewer refugees were able to return home in 2014 as compared to previous years, due to ongoing violence in several major countries of origin. Over the course of the year, 126,800 refugees returned to their countries of origin, including to the DRC (25,200), Mali (21,000) and Afghanistan (17,800). A tripartite agreement was concluded in May by UNHCR and the Governments of Mali and the Niger. The organized repatriation of 38,000 Ivorian refugees from Liberia was suspended in July as a precaution due to the Ebola virus, while the voluntary repatriation of Angolans resumed in 2014, bringing the Angolan refugee chapter near conclusion after 50 years of displacement. In 2014, some 5,800 Rwandans voluntarily returned home, bringing the total number of returns between 2001 and 2014 to 199,600. UNHCR and partners also supported efforts in Afghanistan, the DRC, Georgia, Mauritania and South Sudan to address housing, land and property disputes for returnees, including through legal counselling programmes.

On resettlement, during the year, UNHCR offices in 90 countries presented more than 103,800 cases to States for resettlement consideration. The main beneficiaries were refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic (21,100), the DRC (18,800), Myanmar (15,200), Iraq (11,800) and Somalia (9,400). Over 73,000 refugees departed for resettlement in 2014 with UNHCR assistance. Women and girls at risk represented more than 12 per cent of total submissions, surpassing for a fourth consecutive year the 10 per cent target set by UNHCR. In 2014, the Office also initiated a comprehensive review of its existing policies to address fraud in the context of resettlement.

**Internal displacement**

At the end of the year, the number of persons displaced internally within their countries by armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations was estimated at 38.2 million—the highest number since global statistics started to be collected in 1989. Notable increases in internal displacement occurred in the DRC, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Other countries that experienced new conflict-induced internal displacement in 2014 included Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Sudan. December 2014 marked the second anniversary of the entry into force of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) [YUN 2009, p. 1207]. Among the countries that adopted national legislation to address internal displacement or took steps in developing relevant national laws were Ukraine, the DRC, Nigeria and Afghanistan.

UNHCR continued to engage in situations of internal displacement primarily through an inter-agency framework. The Office led 22 of 27 protection clusters worldwide and 11 of the 24 country-level shelter clusters. The Office also worked closely with national human rights institutions to enhance protection for IDPs, including in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Philippines and Uganda. Multi-year, multi-partner strategies for solutions for IDPs progressed in Colombia, Mali, Serbia, Somalia and Sri Lanka. Among those countries where UNHCR was operational, some 1.8 million IDPs returned home during 2014; about one quarter of them with the UNHCR assistance.

**Statelessness**

In 2014, UNHCR reported a figure of 3.5 million stateless persons. The estimated total of stateless persons globally, however, was at least 10 million. In November, the Office launched the #IBelong global campaign to end statelessness within 10 years, along with the “Global action plan to end statelessness: 2014–2024”. During the year, some 37,100 persons who were formerly stateless acquired nationality in 23 countries. Côte d’Ivoire continued its efforts to resolve one of the largest statelessness situations in the world, including through an innovative 2013 amendment to its nationality law that allowed long-term residents to acquire nationality through a simple declaration. UNHCR worked with the Government of Kyrgyzstan to assist over 6,000 stateless persons to apply for Kyrgyz nationality since May. Efforts to identify persons who were stateless or at risk of statelessness also continued in Indonesia and the Philippines. To reduce the risk of statelessness, UNHCR continued to support host governments to ensure timely registration of births by competent authorities in the context of refugee emergencies. Jordan launched mobile birth registration for all camp-based refugees and issued 2,400 birth certificates to Syrian refugee children in 2014, compared to fewer than 300 in 2013. During the year, over 40,000 families were counselled on birth registration procedures in Lebanon.

**International instruments**


The number of parties to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons [YUN 1954, p. 416] rose to 86 with the accession of Gambia, Mozambique, Niger, Paraguay and Peru. The number of
parties to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness [YUN 1961, p. 533] increased to 63 with the accession of Argentina, Belgium, Colombia, Gambia, Georgia, Guinea, Mozambique and Peru.

### Regional activities

#### Africa

According to UNHCR Global Report 2014, with new conflicts emerging in Africa and ongoing crises worsening, the UNHCR emergency response capacity was severely tested during the year. Level 3 emergencies — major, sudden-onset humanitarian crises, triggered by natural disaster or conflict, which required system-wide mobilization — were declared in the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan, with massive displacement inside the countries and across borders. The High Commissioner designated two senior Regional Refugee Coordinators to manage the humanitarian response to the crises, and additional resources and staff were rapidly deployed to the affected countries. The Regional Refugee Coordinators led the humanitarian community in formulating Regional Refugee Response Plans for both crises.

Meanwhile, further displacement in long-standing areas of conflict, such as the eastern DRC, Somalia and Darfur in the Sudan, exacerbated the situation in already overburdened host countries. In a year of multiple, large-scale crises on the continent, the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa presented additional challenges. Refugees in the three main countries affected by the virus — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — were also at risk. UNHCR ensured that refugees were included in national prevention and response plans. Measures were also undertaken to prevent infection in the camps, including awareness-raising and the establishment of early detection mechanisms, and support was provided to the local response mechanisms in each country.

The CAR and South Sudan emergencies dominated much of the UNHCR attention during the year. In the CAR, the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in September brought about hope for the re-establishment of security in the country. Ongoing fighting and human rights abuses targeting civilians, however, continued to cause massive displacement, and violence spilled across borders into the host countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Congo and the DRC. Many of the Central Africans arriving in neighbouring countries were severely malnourished, having walked for weeks to reach safety. By mid-year, UNHCR and its partner aid agencies were able to strengthen assistance to meet the needs of the refugees and enhance reception services for new arrivals.

Because of the unrest in South Sudan, the number of refugees that fled to Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda reached 614,000, of whom 488,000 fled in the course of 2014. In some countries, humanitarian assistance was hampered by severe rains, strained logistical capacity and lack of access, with camps experiencing food shortages and overcrowding. Several refugee settlements in flood-prone areas were moved to higher land. Despite ongoing peace negotiations, fighting in South Sudan continued to displace civilians. By the end of the year, there were more than 1.6 million South Sudanese displaced within the country, tens of thousands of whom continue to seek temporary protection in or around UN peacekeeping sites.

The situation in north-eastern Nigeria also deteriorated in 2014, with attacks on civilians more frequent and violent. Cross-border attacks from Nigeria into Cameroon, Chad and Niger also caused internal displacement in these countries. By the end of the year, some 1.1 million Nigerians were internally displaced, and more than 54,000 were refugees in the three host countries. Appeals for emergency requirements were launched in September to address the needs of the refugees and IDPs. The appeals, however, were only 45 per cent funded at the end of the year, while the needs continued to grow.

In the DRC, conflict continued to affect the east of the country, internally displacing around 2.7 million people. Approximately 450,000 Congolese were refugees in neighbouring countries. In Mali, the security situation remained fragile. Despite some spontaneous returns, it was not yet conducive for organized voluntary return. Some 143,000 Malian refugees remained in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger at year end. In South Africa, xenophobia and violence against foreigners, affecting many refugees and asylum seekers, were a major concern and resulted in loss of lives, property damage and displacement. UNHCR, working along with the Government and civil society, bolstered efforts to address the situation, including by establishing a 24-hour assistance hotline and organizing mass information campaigns to promote tolerance.

While the situation in Somalia remained volatile, the High Commissioner’s Global Initiative for Somali Refugees galvanized support for solutions. At a ministerial-level meeting held in Ethiopia on 20 August, representatives of concerned countries, the United Nations and regional partners signed the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees, which agreed on the need to ensure asylum space, while supporting host countries and working towards creating the conditions for voluntary repatriation to Somalia. The Commitment also emphasized other solutions, including local integration, resettlement and alternative stay arrangements. By the end of the year, some 2,000 Somalis had voluntarily repatriated to areas of relative stability. A pilot project to support the spontaneous repatriation of 10,000 Somali refugees from Kenya by 30 June 2015 was launched in December, under the auspices of a tripartite agreement between the Government of Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR.
In 2014, the voluntary repatriation of Angolans resumed, bringing the Angolan refugee chapter near conclusion after 50 years of displacement. Approximately 14,300 former Angolan refugees repatriated with the UNHCR assistance, mainly from the DRC, and from Zambia and the Congo. In Zambia, UNHCR continued to support a government programme to locally integrate former Angolan refugees. The voluntary repatriation of Rwandans also gradually moved forward. In 2014, around 5,300 Rwandans returned home. The biometric registration of Rwandans in eastern DRC commenced, with a view to eventually facilitating repatriation and local integration. In Tanzania, the naturalization process for more than 162,000 former Burundian refugees resumed in 2014, after having been on hold since 2011. By the end of the year, more than 40,000 former Burundian refugees, now Tanzanians, received naturalization certificates, which accorded them the same rights as nationals. UNHCR was supporting the Government with all aspects of the naturalization process, while working with the authorities and development partners on the longer-term socioeconomic aspects of their integration. At the end of 2014, approximately 35,000 refugees returned to Mali from exile in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. A tripartite agreement was concluded between the Governments of Burkina Faso and Mali, and UNHCR to facilitate voluntary repatriation.

In 2014, UNHCR submitted the cases of some 34,800 refugees for resettlement from Africa, and more than 19,000 refugees departed to their resettlement countries. This was a 19 per cent increase compared to the number of submissions made in 2013 and a 52 per cent increase compared to 2012. Advances were also made in addressing statelessness, with several African countries acceding to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions. Côte d’Ivoire took steps to identify and address the status of an estimated 700,000 people at risk of becoming stateless. At the end of the year, 22 of the 54 African Union member States were parties to the 1954 Convention and 15 were parties to the 1961 Convention.

At the end of the year, the UNHCR budget for the Africa region stood at $2.6 billion, which included four supplementary budgets for the emergency situations in the CAR, the Ebola response, Nigeria and South Sudan. The total funding received in 2014 for Africa was $995 million, leaving a gap of over $1.6 billion. Expenditure stood at $1.1 billion in 2014, which represented an increase of $153 million over 2013 (when the budget was $1.97 billion). Regarding its financial commitments by subregion, in 2014, UNHCR spent $710.8 million in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, where there were some 7.7 million people of concern. In Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, $236.2 million were spent on 6 million people of concern, while in West Africa $135.8 million were spent on some 2.5 million people of concern. In Southern Africa, UNHCR expended $42.5 million where there were approximately 741,746 people of concern.

**Report of Secretary-General.** In response to General Assembly resolution 68/143 [YUN 2013, p.1160], the Secretary-General submitted a report [A/69/339] on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa provided by UNHCR and other UN entities including the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. The report updated information contained in the Secretary-General 2013 report on the topic [YUN 2013, p. 1159], covered the period from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2014, and provided overviews by subregions.

During the reporting period, both new and escalating emergencies, triggered by extreme violence and human rights abuses, occurred in the Central African Republic, eastern DRC, northern Nigeria and South Sudan. Meanwhile, protracted displacement continued into the second and third decades for some Somalis, Rwandans, Burundians, Liberians, Eritreans and Congolese in exile.

Despite strong support from donors, crucial gaps remained in the funding of refugee operations, particularly for more protracted situations, which suffered from chronic underfunding. In 2013 alone, UNHCR issued three supplementary funding appeals for the DRC, the CAR and Chad emergencies to the total amount of $271.7 million. The UNHCR 2014 comprehensive needs assessment budget for Africa was nearly $1.9 billion, as a result of the CAR and South Sudan emergencies.

East Africa, including the Horn of Africa, remained the subregion with the largest refugee population on the continent, although the absolute number of refugees and asylum seekers declined modestly, from nearly 2 million at the end of 2012 to 1.7 million at the end of 2013. East Africa was home to the largest percentage of refugee children, at 60 per cent of the total refugee population. In Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, the violence in the Central African Republic triggered subregional movements, as the country had long hosted hundreds of thousands of migrants from Cameroon, Chad and elsewhere.

West Africa was home to more than 366,000 refugees and asylum seekers, and the number of internally displaced persons was also on the rise. Security had deteriorated everywhere but particularly in northern Mali and Nigeria, limiting humanitarian access and the delivery of protection and assistance. Nearly one third of the refugees in the subregion was living in protracted displacement. The population of refugees and asylum seekers in southern Africa remained nearly constant in 2013, with 135,542 refugees and 278,633 asylum seekers at year-end. In
South Africa, episodes of xenophobic violence continued. For many other southern African countries with small refugee populations, the overall protection atmosphere remains largely unchanged.

Concerning individuals with specific needs, the Secretary-General reported that a regional framework for the protection of South Sudanese and Sudanese refugee children, comprising 65 per cent of refugees from these countries, was developed by UNHCR and NGOs and was guiding operational actors in a coordinated response. Initiatives to enhance the protection of refugee women included the provision of safe physical spaces. The use of mobile services facilitated the provision of psychosocial assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Given the complex challenges of trafficking and related abuses reported in the subregion, the Government of the Sudan, UNHCR and IOM developed a strategy on smuggling and trafficking in the Horn of Africa and East Africa.

On the humanitarian front, WFP provided food to 2.4 million refugees in 23 countries in Africa in 2013. By the end of 2013, 97 per cent of refugees in Africa had access to anti-retroviral treatment on a par with the nationals of their country of asylum. Eighteen countries had completed or drafted refugee education strategies, including child protection and sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response elements, in consultation with host governments, UNICEF and partners. The UN agencies were supporting strategies to improve the self-reliance of refugees, particularly to enable them to live within hosting communities, to work and to contribute to local economies. In South Sudan, ILO focused on capacity-building through the introduction of basic market-relevant business skills, and the provision of start-up kits for 1,500 women and young people.

The Secretary-General concluded that despite progress made in finding durable solutions, with many refugees returning home or integrating locally, new and ongoing emergencies in Africa had caused massive internal displacement and resulted in an increase in the number of new refugees for the fourth consecutive year. Forced displacement had exposed people to many protection risks, including forced recruitment, sexual and gender-based violence, armed attacks, abductions and trafficking. He called on all States to respect fully the principle of non-refoulement, maintain open borders, combat xenophobia, ensure the humanitarian and civilian character of displacement sites, and end impunity for all forms of violence. He urged States and non-State actors to ensure rapid, unhindered access of humanitarian relief to persons in need; ensure the security of humanitarian workers; sign, ratify and enforce the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel; and respect international human rights and humanitarian law in preventing the forced displacement of civilian populations within State borders. States were also encouraged to sign and ratify international instruments including the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and the two conventions on statelessness. He further called on Governments, together with development and humanitarian actors, to work closely in developing durable solutions strategies for refugees and internally displaced persons, including by incorporating them into national plans, ensuring access to employment and taking all preventative measures to end displacement.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 18 December [meeting 73], the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/69/482], adopted resolution 69/154 without vote [agenda item 61].

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa of 1969 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,

Reaffirming that the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, together with the 1967 Protocol Thereto, as complemented by the Organization of African Unity Convention of 1969, remains the foundation of the international refugee protection regime in Africa,

Welcoming the entry into force on 6 December 2012 and the ongoing process of ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, which mark a significant step towards strengthening the national and regional normative frameworks for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons,

Recognizing the particular vulnerability of women and children among refugees and displaced persons, including exposure to discrimination and sexual and physical abuse, violence and exploitation, and in this regard acknowledging the importance of preventing, responding to and addressing sexual and gender-based violence,

Gravely concerned about the rising number of refugees and displaced persons in various parts of the continent,

Acknowledging the efforts of Member States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other stakeholders in improving the situation of refugees, and expressing grave concern about the deteriorating living conditions in many refugee camps in Africa,

Recognizing that refugees, internally displaced persons and, in particular, women and children are at an increased risk of exposure to HIV and AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases,

Recalling the Joint Declaration adopted at the joint summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the East African Community on the Horn of Africa crisis, held in Nairobi on 8 and 9 September 2011, which, inter alia, expressed concern about the mass exodus of refugees into neighbouring countries, as well as the increased number of internally displaced persons due
to the ongoing humanitarian crises of drought and famine in the Horn of Africa,

Recalling also the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in 2006, and its instruments, in particular two of the protocols to the Pact which are relevant to the protection of displaced persons, namely, the Protocol on the Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and the Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Persons,

Acknowledging with appreciation the generosity, hospitality and spirit of solidarity of African countries that continue to host the influx of refugees due to the humanitarian crises and protracted refugee situations, and in this regard expressing particular appreciation for the commitment and efforts of neighbouring countries in the recent humanitarian crises on the continent, and further acknowledging with appreciation the coordination of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations as well as the continuing efforts of donors, the United Nations system, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, regional organizations, international agencies, non-governmental organizations and other partners, with regard to, inter alia, integration, voluntary return, reintegration and resettlement, in addressing the plight of refugees during the emergency,

Recognizing that host States have the primary responsibility for the protection of and assistance to refugees on their territory and the need to redouble efforts to develop and implement comprehensive durable solution strategies, in appropriate cooperation with the international community, and burden- and responsibility-sharing,

Emphasizing that States have the primary responsibility to provide protection and assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction, as well as to address the root causes of the displacement problem, in appropriate cooperation with the international community,

Welcoming the ongoing implementation of pledges made by States at the intergovernmental ministerial event held in 2011 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the fiftieth anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness,

1. Takes note of the reports of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;
2. Calls upon African Member States that have not yet signed or ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa to consider doing so as early as possible in order to ensure its wider implementation;
3. Notes the need for African Member States to address resolutely the root causes of all forms of forced displacement in Africa and to foster peace, stability and prosperity throughout the African continent so as to forestall flows of refugees;
4. Notes with great concern that, despite all the efforts made so far by the United Nations, the African Union and others, the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa remains precarious, and calls upon States and other parties to armed conflict to observe scrupulously the letter and spirit of international humanitarian law, bearing in mind that armed conflict is one of the principal causes of forced displacement in Africa;
5. Welcomes decisions EX.CL/Dec.686(XX) and EX.CL/Dec.709(XXI) adopted by the Executive Council of the African Union at its twentieth ordinary session, held in Addis Ababa from 23 to 27 January 2012, and at its twenty-first ordinary session, held in Addis Ababa from 9 to 13 July 2012, on the humanitarian situation in Africa, insofar as they relate to persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;
6. Expresses its appreciation for the leadership shown by the Office of the High Commissioner, and commends the Office for its ongoing efforts, with the support of the international community, to assist African countries of asylum, including by providing support to vulnerable local host communities, and to respond to the protection and assistance needs of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa;
7. Notes with appreciation the initiatives taken by the African Union, the Subcommittee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons of its Permanent Representatives Committee, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in particular the role of its Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, to ensure the protection of and assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa;
8. Acknowledges the important contribution of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in identifying, through a participatory approach, the protection risks faced by the different members of the refugee communities, in particular the non-discriminatory treatment and protection of women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly;
9. Affirms that children, because of their age, social status and physical and mental development, are often more vulnerable than adults in situations of forced displacement, recognizes that forced displacement, return to post-conflict situations, integration into new societies, protracted situations of displacement and statelessness can increase child protection risks, taking into account the particular vulnerability of refugee children to forcible exposure to the risks of physical and psychological injury, exploitation and death in connection with armed conflict, and acknowledges that wider environmental factors and individual risk factors, particularly when combined, may generate different protection needs;
10. Recognizes that no solution to displacement can be durable unless it is sustainable, and therefore encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to support the sustainability of voluntary return, reintegration and resettlement;
11. Welcomes the adoption of the conclusion on civil registration by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at its sixty-fourth session, held in Geneva from 30 September to 4 October 2013, and recognizes the importance of early registration and effective registration systems and censuses as a tool of protection and as a means to the quantification and assessment of needs for the provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance and to implement appropriate durable solutions;
12. Recalls the conclusion on registration of refugees and asylum seekers adopted by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner at its fifty-second session, notes the many forms of harassment faced by refugees and asylum seekers who remain without any form of documentation attesting to their status, recalls the re-
sponsibility of States to register refugees on their territories and, as appropriate, the responsibility of the Office of the High Commissioner or mandated international bodies to do so, reiterates in this context the central role that early and effective registration and documentation can play, guided by protection considerations, in enhancing protection and supporting efforts to find durable solutions, and calls upon the Office, as appropriate, to help States to conduct this procedure should they be unable to register refugees on their territory;

13. **Calls upon** the international community, including States and the Office of the High Commissioner and other relevant United Nations organizations, within their respective mandates, to take concrete action to meet the protection and assistance needs of refugees, returnees and displaced persons and to contribute generously to projects and programmes aimed at alleviating their plight, facilitating durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons and supporting vulnerable local host communities;

14. **Reaffirms** the importance of timely and adequate assistance and protection for refugees, returnees and displaced persons, also reaffirms that assistance and protection are mutually reinforcing and that inadequate material assistance and food shortages undermine protection, notes the importance of a rights- and community-based approach in engaging constructively with individual refugees, returnees and displaced persons and their communities so as to achieve fair and equitable access to food and other forms of material assistance, and expresses concern with regard to situations in which minimum standards of assistance are not met, including those in which adequate needs assessments have yet to be undertaken;

15. **Also reaffirms** that respect by States for their protection responsibilities towards refugees is strengthened by international solidarity involving all members of the international community and that the refugee protection regime is enhanced through committed international cooperation in a spirit of solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing among all States;

16. **Further reaffirms** that host States have the primary responsibility to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, calls upon States, in cooperation with international organizations, within their mandates, to take all measures necessary to ensure respect for the principles of refugee protection and, in particular, to ensure that the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps is not compromised by the presence or the activities of armed elements or used for purposes that are incompatible with their civilian character, and encourages the High Commissioner to continue efforts, in consultation with States and other relevant actors, to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of camps;

17. **Condemns** all acts that pose a threat to the personal security and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers, such as refoulement, unlawful expulsion and physical attacks, calls upon States of refuge, in cooperation with international organizations, where appropriate, to take all measures necessary to ensure respect for the principles of refugee protection, including the humane treatment of asylum seekers, notes with interest that the High Commissioner has continued to take steps to encourage the development of measures to better ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, and encourages the High Commissioner to continue those efforts, in consultation with States and other relevant actors;

18. **Deplores** the continuing violence and insecurity which constitute an ongoing threat to the safety and security of staff members of the Office of the High Commissioner and other humanitarian organizations and an obstacle to the effective fulfillment of the mandate of the Office and the ability of its implementing partners and other humanitarian personnel to discharge their respective humanitarian functions, urges States, parties to conflict and all other relevant actors to take all measures necessary to protect activities related to humanitarian assistance, prevent attacks on and kidnapping of national and international humanitarian workers and ensure the safety and security of the personnel and property of the Office and that of all humanitarian organizations discharging functions mandated by the Office, and calls upon States to investigate fully any crime committed against humanitarian personnel and bring to justice the persons responsible for such crimes;

19. **Calls upon** the Office of the High Commissioner, the African Union, subregional organizations and all African States, in conjunction with agencies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the international community, to strengthen and revitalize existing partnerships and forge new ones in support of the protection system for refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, and encourages African States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying and enforcing the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel;

20. **Calls upon** the Office of the High Commissioner, the international community and other entities concerned to continue and, where appropriate, to intensify their support to African Governments through appropriate capacity-building activities, including training of relevant officers, disseminating information about refugee instruments and principles, providing financial, technical and advisory services to accelerate the enactment or amendment and implementation of legislation relating to refugees, strengthening emergency response and enhancing capacities for the coordination of humanitarian activities, in particular those Governments that have received large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers;

21. **Reaffirms** the right of return and the principle of voluntary repatriation, appeals to countries of origin and countries of asylum to create conditions that are conducive to voluntary repatriation, and recognizes that, while voluntary repatriation remains the pre-eminent solution, local integration and third-country resettlement, where appropriate and feasible, are also viable options for dealing with the situation of African refugees who, owing to prevailing circumstances in their respective countries of origin, are unable to return home;

22. **Also reaffirms** that voluntary repatriation should not necessarily be conditioned on the accomplishment of political solutions in the country of origin in order not to impede the exercise of the refugees’ right to return, recognizes that the voluntary repatriation and reintegration process is normally guided by the conditions in the country of origin, in particular that voluntary repatriation can be accomplished in conditions of safety and dignity, and urges the High Commissioner to promote sustainable return through the development of durable and lasting solutions, particularly in protracted refugee situations;
23. **Calls upon** the international donor community to provide financial and material assistance that allows for the implementation of community-based development programmes that benefit both refugees and host communities, as appropriate, in agreement with host countries and consistent with humanitarian objectives;

24. **Appeals** to the international community to respond positively, in the spirit of solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, to the third-country resettlement needs of African refugees, notes in this regard the importance of using resettlement strategically, as part of situation-specific comprehensive responses to refugee situations, and to this end encourages States, the Office of the High Commissioner and other relevant partners to make full use of the Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement, where appropriate and feasible;

25. **Calls upon** the international donor community to provide material and financial assistance for the implementation of programmes intended for the rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructure affected by refugees in countries of asylum as well as internally displaced persons, where appropriate;

26. **Urges** the international community, in the spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing, to continue to fund generously the refugee programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner and, taking into account the substantially increased needs of programmes in Africa, inter alia, as a result of repatriation possibilities, to ensure that Africa receives a fair and equitable share of the resources designated for refugees;

27. **Encourages** the Office of the High Commissioner and interested States to identify protracted refugee situations which might lend themselves to resolution through the development of specific, multilateral, comprehensive and practical approaches to resolving such refugee situations, including the improvement of international burden- and responsibility-sharing and the realization of durable solutions, within a multilateral context;

28. **Expresses grave concern** about the plight of internally displaced persons in Africa, notes the efforts of African States in strengthening the regional mechanisms for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons, calls upon States to take concrete action to preempt internal displacement and to meet the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons, recalls in that regard the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, notes the current activities of the Office of the High Commissioner related to the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons, including in the context of inter-agency arrangements in this field, emphasizes that such activities should be consistent with relevant General Assembly resolutions and should not undermine the refugee mandate of the Office and the institution of asylum, and encourages the High Commissioner to continue his dialogue with States on the role of his Office in this regard;

29. **Invites** the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the human rights of internally displaced persons to continue his ongoing dialogue with Member States and the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, in accordance with his mandate, and to include information therein in his reports to the Council and the General Assembly;

30. **Requests** the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its seventieth session, taking fully into account the efforts expended by countries of asylum, under the item entitled “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions”.

### The Americas

In 2014, the region commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. UNHCR facilitated the Cartagena +30 process, which culminated in a ministerial event in Brasilia, Brazil, in December, where States adopted the landmark Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action to strengthen protection and find solutions for the region’s refugees, displaced and stateless people in the decade to come. Brazil received the second largest number of asylum applications, surpassed only by the United States.

The year also saw unprecedented movements of people from the Northern triangle of Central America—El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras—many fleeing violence, persecution and transnational organized crime. More than 130,000 individuals fled to Mexico and North America in search of protection. At least 68,000 unaccompanied children were apprehended crossing the southern border of the United States. UNHCR responded to the forced displacement crisis by launching a regional initiative to bolster border monitoring and expand protection networks in Guatemala, Honduras and southern Mexico. The Office sought alternatives to detention, as well as ways to improve the reception conditions and shelter for children with protection concerns in Guatemala and Mexico.

During the year, the Office concluded partnership agreements with regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States and the Central American Integration System, to strengthen the region’s legal and institutional frameworks and promote high standards of regional refugee protection. Within Southern Common Market, the presidents of the respective National Eligibility Commissions helped advance common asylum policies and develop improved protection standards.

In Colombia, the operational focus was on enabling the transition from immediate assistance to longer-term solutions for displaced populations through the Transition Solutions Initiative, a joint project between UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Initiative had potential to further assist victims of forced displacement in regaining their rights as citizens. In Costa Rica, Colombian refugees were integrated locally or appeared to be less dependent on aid. With the support of UNHCR partner Asociación de Consultores y Asesores Internacionales in San José, the Office implemented the “graduation
approach”, which sought to “graduate” people out of poverty in rural or urban areas through a sequenced combination of livelihoods provisioning, capacity-building and microfinance.

Protection at sea posed a challenge for Caribbean States and Territories, which struggled to patrol their extensive maritime boundaries and provide protection safeguards for asylum seekers and others with protection needs in mixed flows. The Caribbean, however, committed to enhancing protection standards by establishing a regional consultative mechanism, which aimed to support the progressive establishment of asylum systems and procedures that identified and assisted different groups at risk; guarantee access to refugee status determination procedures; and provide alternatives to detention for asylum seekers and children. Trinidad and Tobago set an example by adopting, in 2014, a new refugee policy, including a three-year phased strategy to assume full responsibility for refugee status determination and protection. The number of asylum seekers doubled to nearly 500 in the Caribbean, a sub-region that struggled to provide an effective response across such a large geographical area. Another concern for the Caribbean was statelessness, with hundreds of thousands in the Dominican Republic who had been denied their nationality following a constitutional court ruling in 2013. Despite Dominican authorities’ efforts to restore nationality for some, an effective solution for all had not yet been found.

In 2014, Panama issued permanent residence documents to approximately 400 Colombians, who had previously benefitted from temporary protection status in the Darien province of the country for the past 15 years. To help respond to the influx of new arrivals to the United States—mainly unaccompanied children from Central America—UNHCR supported improved access to asylum procedures and legal representation. The Office further advocated for alternatives to detention and alternative refugee status determination mechanisms. In March, a report entitled Children on the Run, which reflected the findings of research undertaken at the US southern border, was launched. The report concluded that most unaccompanied children apprehended were found to be in need of international protection. In Venezuela, a work plan enabled authorities to register many asylum seekers, allowing them to access asylum procedures and benefit from a rising recognition rate of nearly 20 per cent. More than 56,000 refugees were resettled in Canada and the United States. Solidarity resettlement countries, such as Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, offered to resettle nearly 120 refugees. In 2014, approximately 10 per cent of all resettled Syrians were living in the Americas, mainly in Brazil, Canada, Uruguay and the United States.

The region’s 2014 budget approved by the Executive Committee in 2013 amounted to $110.4 million. As the budget did not increase significantly in the course of the year, a reprioritization exercise was conducted to address displacement in Central America; strengthen programmes for child protection in Mexico and protection monitoring in Honduras; and promote durable solutions in Colombia, Costa Rica and Ecuador. Total expenditure in 2014 stood at $61.1 million for a population of concern of 7.3 million. Lack of funding prevented a stronger protection response to the needs of people in mixed migratory movements in the Caribbean.

### Asia and the Pacific

By the end of 2014, some 8.7 million people of concern to UNHCR were living in the Asia and the Pacific region, including 3.6 million refugees, 2.7 million IDPs and more than 1.5 million stateless people. Most countries and territories in the region continued to uphold their traditions of hospitality towards refugees and displaced people, although only 20 out of 45 States had acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

The majority of refugees in the region were from Afghanistan and Myanmar. There were nearly 2.6 million Afghan refugees across the world, but the vast majority were in the neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. In addition, there were an estimated 2 million unregistered Afghans in these two countries. The voluntary return of Afghan had decreased significantly in the previous few years and had reached a historical low in 2014. Inside Myanmar, approximately 370,000 people remained displaced in Rakhine and Kayin States, and in the south-east of the country. Moreover, an estimated 810,000 people were without citizenship in Rakhine State. There were also approximately 265,000 refugees of different ethnicities, originating from Myanmar, who were displaced in neighbouring countries.

Around 75 per cent of refugees—2.7 million people—in the Asia and Pacific region were living in urban or semi-urban areas. Displaced people in urban situations were generally more vulnerable than camp populations and had a different set of protection needs, which were often not adequately addressed. For example, because they were not confined to a camp, many lacked documentation and were at risk of arrest, detention and deportation. Lack of documentation prevented them from legally accessing the labour market, and therefore they were more likely to become victims of labour exploitation. Women and adolescent girls were particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Because of inadequate protection, unequal access to education and livelihoods, and the lack of solutions, increasing numbers of people were undertaking dangerous journeys by sea, making irregular migration a key issue facing the Asia and the Pacific region. In 2014, some 63,000 people undertook irregular maritime journeys, the majority departing...
from the Bay of Bengal bound for Malaysia and Thailand. Hundreds of others followed routes through the Indian Ocean from South Asia and Indonesia to Australia, and across the Strait of Malacca from Malaysia to Indonesia. UNHCR received reports of 750 people who allegedly died at sea in South-East Asia in 2014, due to starvation, dehydration or ill treatment on board vessels. Those who arrived were malnourished and traumatized as a result of mistreatment at the hands of smugglers.

After 40 years, the UNHCR office in Viet Nam closed at the end of June and the coverage of its activities was assumed by the Regional Office in Bangkok as of 1 July. UNHCR carried out refugee status determination in countries without national eligibility procedures and continued to work on addressing the root causes of irregular movements, improving protection standards and seeking adequate solutions through closer multilateral cooperation in the region. In Bangkok, the Office established a Maritime Monitoring Unit tasked with compiling and reporting periodic statistics related to the irregular maritime departures. The Office and the Government of Indonesia co-chaired a workshop to assess the implementation of the 2013 Jakarta Declaration on Addressing Irregular Movement of Persons [YUN 2013, p. 1164]. In Central Asia, UNHCR promoted protection-sensitive border management in line with the 2013 Almaty Process on Refugee Protection and International Migration (Almaty Process). Almaty Process member States expressed concern over inadequate emergency preparedness, and agreed to establish national mechanisms for the identification and referral of people in need of international protection.

Under the joint Pakistan-UNHCR Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas programme, over 1,000 projects were carried out throughout Pakistan in education, health, environment, social protection, water and sanitation, livelihood, and infrastructure sectors in 2014. The main objective of the programme was to promote tolerance towards Afghan refugees in hosting communities in Pakistan. In Myanmar, UNHCR prepared for the return of IDPs and refugees to the country’s south-east. In the Philippines, the Strategic Response Plan for Typhoon Haiyan ended in August, following the Government’s decision to phase out to the needs of Syrian refugees and members of host communities in the five main refugee host countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey). UNHCR, along with UNDP, also led the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015–2016, a regional strategy in support of the same countries issued at the end of the year.

Inside Syria, 12.2 million people needed humanitarian assistance at the end of 2014, including 7.6 million IDPs. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2165(2014) (see p. 000), UNHCR strengthened its coordination and operational response capacity in Jordan and Turkey to assist those most in need in Syria. On 28 October, the Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation: Supporting Stability in the Region was organized in Berlin with the support of the United Nations. Conference participants adopted the Berlin Communiqué on solidarity with refugees and their hosts [A/69/630] (see p. 000), which pointed out the necessity of a political solution to the Syrian conflict as the most important prerequisite for lasting peace and the return of the refugees to their homes.

At the end of 2014, there were more than 200,000 Iraqi refugees being hosted in the region, more than half of whom were newly registered during the year due to the increasing violence in Iraq. Following the declaration of a system-wide level 3 emergency in Iraq in August, UNHCR launched an expanded operation to bring relief supplies by air, land and sea—the largest single aid distribution organized by UNHCR in more than a decade, targeting half a million IDPs.

In Yemen, the political impasse deteriorated into renewed conflict, leading to new displacement in 2014. UNHCR continued to provide life-saving assistance and critical protection to both IDPs and refugees wherever possible. At the end of the year, there were more than 330,000 IDPs and approximately 248,000 refugees in the country. Yemen also continued to be a destination and transit country for people travelling as part of irregular mixed movements.

Middle East and North Africa

In 2014, the worsening humanitarian situation in and around Syria was compounded by an escalation of violence in Iraq. Syrians had become the largest refugee population under the UNHCR mandate, with an estimated 3.7 million in the Middle East and North Africa region at the end of the year. UNHCR coordinated the implementation of and reporting on the 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan, under which more than 150 participating organizations responded to the needs of Syrian refugees and members of host communities in the five main refugee host countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey). UNHCR, along with UNDP, also led the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015–2016, a regional strategy in support of the same countries issued at the end of the year.

In 2014, UNHCR spent $269.4 million on some 8.7 million people of concern in Asia and the Pacific.
The security situation in Libya remained volatile. Nearly 37,000 refugees and asylum seekers were registered with UNHCR, the majority from Syria and the rest from more than 30 other countries. Libya also remained a major transit country for migrants and asylum seekers wanting to travel across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

The Middle East and North Africa continued to be a region of origin, destination and transit for refugees and migrants. Trafficking and smuggling, as well as loss of life at sea, remained of serious concern. North Africa was particularly affected by irregular mixed movements, including of people in transit to Europe. UNHCR worked on developing standard operating procedures for protection and assistance following disembarkation after rescue at sea operations, and on strengthening institutional protection mechanisms.

UNHCR continued to call on the international community to remain engaged in the Western Sahara refugee situation. Sahrawi refugees living in camps near Tindouf, Algeria, had been displaced for 40 years and were increasingly vulnerable.

Partnerships continued to be crucial in the region and the UNHCR partnership with countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf resulted in substantial support for the Syria situation and other humanitarian responses. Collaboration with the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also expanded significantly in 2014.

Several countries in North Africa continued to work towards establishing national asylum legislation, including Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. UNHCR also significantly strengthened its capacity to ensure the efficient registration of refugees upon arrival in the countries of asylum. In 2014, almost 745,000 people were registered in the Middle East and North Africa. UNHCR and partners assisted national authorities in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) by promoting gender equality, supporting national protection systems and community-based interventions, improving data collection and analysis, and strengthening advocacy. In countries hosting Syrian refugees, more than 66,300 survivors of SGBV received specialist support in 2014.

In 2014, in coordination with host Governments, more than 174,000 Syrian refugee children and some 17,600 Iraqi refugee children received support from UNHCR to enrol in primary education. Particular attention was also given to health services, with 270 health facilities offering specialized and emergency care for Syrian refugee families being constructed or maintained across the region. With more than 2 million new Iraqi IDPs in 2014, the delivery of basic humanitarian assistance and services was a considerable challenge. UNHCR efforts were focused within the protection, shelter/non-food items, and camp coordination and camp management clusters. Ten IDP camps were built in different parts of Iraq, including seven in the Kurdistan Region. UNHCR distributed over 64,000 kits of core relief items and 19,100 emergency shelters to internally displaced Iraqi families.

In 2014, UNHCR spent $1.2 billion on 15.6 million people of concern.

Europe

In 2014, the number of people of concern to UNHCR in Europe rose significantly. By the end of the year, Turkey had registered more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees and had received around 87,800 non-Syrian asylum seekers. The Russian Federation received more than 235,000 applications for refugee status and temporary asylum, primarily from Ukraine. The 28 member States of the European Union (EU) together recorded more than 570,800 asylum claims, a 44 per cent increase from 2013 (396,700). Five countries received almost 70 per cent of all applications—Germany (173,100), Sweden (75,100), Italy (63,100), France (59,000) and Hungary (41,400). The largest number of asylum applications (120,600) came from Syrian nationals, who accounted for 22 per cent of all new applications in the EU. Other top countries of origin included Serbia and Kosovo (54,600), Afghanistan (38,100) and Eritrea (36,300). A positive development in 2014 was the increasing number of Syrians who were granted refugee status when compared with the number granted subsidiary protection, reversing the previous trend, with 19 countries having regular resettlement programmes.

During the year, in addition to hosting 1.7 million Syrian refugees, Turkey also saw the arrival of tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees fleeing increasing violence in Iraq. UNHCR continued to provide policy and technical support to the Government of Turkey through advocacy, coordination and capacity-building efforts in areas such as registration, access to territory, documentation, legal counselling and management of urban refugee caseloads.

In 2014 in Ukraine, the number of people internally displaced reached 823,000 and significant numbers of Ukrainians crossed an international border in search of safety.

During the year, the movement of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe continued to take a high toll on human lives: some 3,500 people died or were reported missing in the Mediterranean in 2014, compared to 600 in 2013. The number of people arriving by sea almost quadrupled, from 60,000 in 2013 to more than 218,000 in 2014, half of whom were from Eritrea and Syria. Most of the 170,100 people who disembarked in Italy were rescued by the Italian Navy operation “Mare Nostrum”. Through the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative, UNHCR proposed guidance for joint European action based on the principles of solidarity,
responsibility-sharing and protection for those fleeing persecution and violence, while stressing the need for a joint European search-and-rescue effort, and for the provision of credible legal alternatives to dangerous irregular movements.

The Office remained concerned about reports of asylum seekers being forced back or prevented from accessing territory and procedures in some European countries, and called for these practices to cease immediately. It also called on States of disembarkation to improve the systematic identification of people with international protection needs rescued at sea, as well as reception conditions. The Office encouraged the comprehensive use of the 2003 Dublin Regulation (on ensuring quick access to asylum procedures) to facilitate the transfer of some asylum seekers to other EU countries, including for the purpose of family unity. Following a temporary halt of transfers to Bulgaria under the Dublin Regulation in early 2014, Bulgaria acted to redress certain systemic deficiencies in its reception conditions and asylum procedures, and by April, transfers to Bulgaria resumed.

In spite of increased awareness of the problem of statelessness, more than 600,000 people throughout Europe continued to live without a nationality due to combination of legal, administrative and/or practical factors. In 2014, UNHCR priorities in Europe were to ensure access to territory and asylum procedures; improve the quality of asylum systems, including for people with specific needs; prevent loss of life at sea; secure durable solutions, including by preventing and resolving situations of statelessness; and strengthen the Office’s external relations and resource mobilization support. As part of these endeavours, the Office published a report entitled Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity, urging European countries to do more to help Syrian refugees who were in growing numbers seeking safety in Europe.

The Office worked closely with the EU border agency Frontex, both bilaterally and as the Chair of the Frontex Consultative Forum. This included supporting the Vega Children initiative to enhance the detection and protection of child victims of smuggling and trafficking at EU airports. UNHCR also continued to advocate for alternatives to detention in law and practice, particularly in countries that routinely detained asylum seekers, and welcomed the participation of Hungary, Lithuania, Malta and the United Kingdom as focus countries for the implementation of its Beyond Detention strategy.

UNHCR also provided assistance to Governments in seeking durable solutions for people displaced from Kosovo. In Serbia, it supported the development of a durable solutions strategy for some 90,000 vulnerable displaced people. It also continued to promote the voluntary return and reintegration of minority groups of displaced people willing to return from Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In Georgia, UNHCR advocated for improved access to livelihoods and Government-run housing solutions for some 90,000 IDPs in need. In Azerbaijan, it advocated a rights-based approach to government housing and assistance projects for IDPs.

In Ukraine, the Office worked with the Government, local authorities and NGOs to identify and respond to IDPs’ immediate and long-term needs in the areas of protection monitoring, shelter and non-food item distribution: the inter-agency cluster approach was activated in December. At the end of the year, UNHCR also adopted the Strategy to Protect and Assist Persons Affected by the Conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

During the year, UNHCR spent $209.3 million for the region—$129.6 million in Eastern Europe, $26.5 million in South-Eastern Europe, and $53.2 million in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe—on a total population of 6.5 million persons.

**Policy development and cooperation**

**Partnerships and coordination**

According to the High Commissioner’s annual report [A/70/12], the Office collaborated with nearly 910 partners: 720 were NGOs, and almost 75 per cent of these were national or local NGOs. NGOs also received approximately 75 per cent of the $1.32 billion in funds disbursed by UNHCR to partners during the year. The World Food Programme remained one of the UNHCR’s most important operational partners, including in the increasing use of cash- and voucher-based assistance. The Office expanded its partnership with UNICEF, issuing revised guidance for country-level collaboration and establishing joint programmes on community-based health care, immunization and child protection in emergencies. Close coordination with the International Civil Aviation Organization led to the adoption of a resolution requiring all newly issued travel documents for refugees and stateless persons to be machine-readable. UNHCR continued to invest significantly in partnerships with development actors, including the World Bank and UNDP, to enhance the complementarity of humanitarian and development actions from the start of displacement. Along with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office also issued the “Joint note on mixed situations: coordination in practice” in 2014 to clarify roles and responsibilities in mixed internal displacement and refugee situations. The Office continued to roll out the Refugee Coordinaton Model, which standardized UNHCR best practices from the field, while regional refugee coordinators led the responses for all the largest refugee emergencies, including the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Syria.
Evaluation activities

At its sixty-fifth session, the Executive Committee had before it a report [A/AC.96/1139] of the High Commissioner that reviewed the activities of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) from mid-2013 to mid-2014 related to protection, emergency response and durable solutions. In the area of protection, PDES completed a comprehensive review of the UNHCR role in assisting States with the assumption of responsibility for refugee status determination. In the context of emergency response, the Office commissioned independent evaluations of its utilization of the Central Emergency Response Fund, as well as its response to the Syrian refugee emergency in Jordan and Lebanon. Work on solutions included a review of the UNHCR engagement with assisted voluntary return programmes and of the strategic use of resettlement. The Office also commissioned and published reviews of the UNHCR policy and practice on voluntary repatriation and integration of resettled refugees in labour markets. Other issues reviewed included livelihoods programming and the UNHCR mental health and psychosocial support for persons of concern and for staff.

Inspections

At its sixty-fifth session, the Executive Committee had before it a report [A/AC.96/1138] of the High Commissioner activities of the Inspector General’s Office from mid-2013 to mid-2014. During that period, the Office conducted four standard inspections of the UNHCR operations in Egypt, Italy and Pakistan and the Regional Support Hub in Kenya using multifunctional inspection teams. During the same period, the cycles for five inspections conducted in 2011 and 2012 were closed. As of 30 June 2014, the rate of compliance with the recommendations stood at 84 per cent.

In his annual report [A/70/12], the High Commissioner indicated that, starting with the 2014 projects, the Office had changed to a risk-based approach to auditing projects implemented by partners using UNHCR funds, and, in November, issued simplified procedures for procurement undertaken by implementing partners in order to align them with the UNHCR own procurement policies and procedures. In December, UNHCR and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) signed a revised memorandum of understanding to strengthen arrangements for internal audit services. A cross-functional working group was established to assess the strength of the organization’s fraud prevention. The Independent Audit and Oversight Committee continued to assist the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee in exercising their oversight responsibilities, focusing on issues including internal audit, inspection, evaluation, fraud prevention, personal accountability and enterprise risk management. An NGO Investigation Specialist Roster, administered on behalf of the Office and its NGO partners by the Danish Refugee Council, was also launched in December to strengthen accountability and performance quality among the UNHCR NGO partners by carrying out investigations, at short notice, for NGO partners that lacked their own investigative capacity.

OIOS activities. In July, OIOS submitted to the Executive Committee a report [A/AC.96/1137] on its internal audit of UNHCR for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 in the areas of staffing and budget resources; cooperation and coordination; and disclosure of audit reports.

CPC consideration. At its twentieth meeting [A/69/16], on 13 June, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2016–2017. The Committee also had before it a conference room paper on the topic [E/AC.51/2014/CRP.I]. The Committee recommended that that the General Assembly approve programme 21, subject to a number of modifications indicated in the report.

Financial questions

The annual budget of UNHCR for 2014 amounted to $6.6 billion, comprising an initial budget of $5.3 billion approved by the Executive Committee in 2013 [YUN 2013, p.1168] and almost $1.3 billion for eight supplementary budgets subsequently created to address unforeseen emergency needs. Contributions from donors in 2014 reached a record $3.3 billion, with 53.4 per cent of voluntary contributions provided by its top three donors and 82.2 per cent by top 10 donors. UNHCR received $208.2 million from private donors, surpassing $200 million for the first time and constituting a three-fold increase as compared to 2009. The IKEA Foundation remained the largest private-sector partner, contributing $29 million in 2014. Expenditures during the year totalled $3.35 billion, with $1.1 billion spent in Africa; $1.2 billion in North Africa and the Middle East; $269 million in Asia and the Pacific; $209 million in Europe and $61 million in the Americas (see p. 000).

As of 2014, the biennial programme budget of the Office presented the consolidated budgetary requirements based on a global needs assessment of persons of concern to the Office. Subsequent to the approval of the budget by the Executive Committee, a global appeal was launched for fundraising purposes. The High Commissioner authorized the allocation of funds for the implementation of programmes and projects based on the availability of funds. During the implementation period, the High Commissioner might revise the budget with supplementary bud-
gets that were normally funded through additional appeals. In the first year of the biennium, the High Commissioner submitted to the Executive Committee the revised biennial budget, which updated the requirement for the first year and revised the requirements for the second year.

**Biennial programme budget 2014–2015.** In a September report [A/AC.96/1136, Corr.1 & Add.1], the High Commissioner revised the estimates of the biennial programme budget for 2014–2015 and requested the Executive Committee to approve the revised requirements. As at 30 June 2014, the budget for 2014 amounted to $6,236.2 million, representing an increase of $928.4 million, or 17.5 per cent, against the original 2014 budget approved in October 2013 of $5,307.8 million. According to UNHCR, this increase was mainly due to the establishment of five supplementary budgets for South Sudan ($415.9 million), the Iraq situation ($289.3 million), the Central African Republic situation ($150.8 million), the Syrian situation ($59.9 million) and the mainstreaming of the emergency/non-food item project in the Sudan ($12.5 million). In a September report [A/AC.96/1136/Add.1], the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) provided its comments and recommendations on the UNHCR revised biennial programme budget for 2014–2015.

In October, the Executive Committee approved total revised requirements for 2014 amounting to $6,236,218,896, and approved the programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters amounting to $6,234,449,630 for 2015.

**Accounts (2013).** The audited financial statements of voluntary funds administered by UNHCR for the year ending 31 December 2013 [A/69/5/Add.6] showed a total expenditure of $2.7 billion and a total income of $3.2 billion, with a net surplus of $460 million.

Key findings of the Board of Auditors covered issues relating to financial matters, internal audit arrangements, the Syrian situation, health services, implementing partners and counter-fraud measures. The Board noted that multiple refugee crises in 2013 reached levels unseen in the previous decade. In Jordan, the Board found that UNHCR had handled the Syrian situation well, but that more flexible employment practices might have enabled it to respond more quickly. There were good examples of local flexibility and innovative practices, for example, the local procurement of biometric registration systems and enhanced use of cash payments to reach urban beneficiaries. Such approaches, however, created new risks and required different and tailored controls. The provision of health services by UNHCR met a good standard, although scope existed to use available health data to improve strategic planning and target resources on local health priorities as well as to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of interventions. UNHCR had used International Public Sector Accounting Standards-based financial information to improve financial management in some areas, such as inventory management, but there remained scope to further review asset holdings. Counter-fraud measures also required a substantial degree of further development. The Board recommended, inter alia, that UNHCR establish appropriate target levels for inventory holdings and other assets; review and further refine its methodology for allocating costs across programme and management categories; evaluate the performance of the biometric registration procedures implemented in Jordan, with a view to providing a standard global system for the biometric identification and registration of refugees; explore whether greater use could be made of partner agreements extending beyond 12 months; adopt more widely a flexible approach to emergency staffing, including the contracting of staff from other organizations; and require country offices to explicitly refer to the main burdens of disease when bidding for health programme resources, to achieve a clearer balance between local needs and global strategic priorities.

In July [A/AC.96/1135 & Corr.1], the High Commissioner submitted a note to the Executive Committee on accounts for the year 2013, as contained in the report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly (see above). In a September note [A/AC.96/1135/Add.1], the High Commissioner reported on measures taken in response to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2013.

**Management and administrative matters.** At the September session of the Standing Committee [A/AC.96/1141], the Director of the Division of Human Resources Management presented the report on human resources issues, including staff security [EC/65/SC/CRP.20]. She remarked on the challenges of human resources management for an organization that must respond across the globe to rapidly evolving emergencies, as well as support ongoing protracted crises, and whose staff were fully mobile, working in remote and often dangerous locations, frequently separated from their families. She elaborated on some of the tensions the Office must reconcile in supporting the people who served the forcibly displaced and ensuring that they had the personal and professional capacities needed to deliver on the UNHCR mandate.

UNHCR worked in 124 countries with some 458 offices worldwide. As of 1 August, the organization had 9,036 staff, of whom 8,000 were working in the field. In the period from 1 August 2013 through 31 July 2014, UNHCR advertised approximately 1,031 positions and processed 1,278 requests for temporary assistance. To enhance workforce diversity and capacity, the Talent Outreach and Acquisition Section was established.
in Budapest, Hungary, in January 2014 with the objective of strengthening the Office’s outreach strategy and recruitment processes. This change had already been initiated in mid-2013, with the launch of the Entry Level Humanitarian Programme. Also in January, the sixth annual meeting of the Staff Management Consultative Council (SMCC) discussed staff support and welfare, and reviewed progress on prior SMCC recommendations and formulated 16 priority recommendations to the High Commissioner. In the first half of the year, individual support provided by the Staff Welfare Section to staff included 2,662 therapeutic actions in 88 operations worldwide, with the majority of requests made by individuals serving in duty stations with difficult conditions of life and work. The largest category of individual interventions relates to working conditions, including work-related stress that interfered with a sense of well-being. New draft policies on UNHCR-provided accommodation in the field and on environmental and occupational health and safety were under consideration.