



Security Council

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Letter dated 22 June 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on the briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees convened on Thursday, 18 June 2020.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefing and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Nicolas de Rivière**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi**

One per cent of humankind now lives in forced exile. In the past 10 years, the number of people forcibly displaced has doubled, to almost 80 million. We have reported this, as many Security Council members may know, in our yearly document, entitled *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, issued in Geneva this morning. This opportunity to meet with the Council is therefore extremely timely, and I want to thank France, and all those present, for inviting me.

These global trends represent, in a way, the human impact of a decade of crises with which Council members are very familiar — wars, violence in different forms, persecution and discrimination against people and groups and countries in which social breakdown prevails. All of this, as the Council knows very well, is accelerated by poor governance, by the climate emergency and by prevailing inequality and exclusion.

These trends somehow show how, when leadership fails and when multilateralism — which the Council represents — does not live up to its promise, the consequences are not felt in the global capitals of our world or in the homes of the powerful and of the rich. They are felt in the peripheries of nations, in border communities, among the urban poor and in the lives of those who have no power.

Among those are the refugees and the displaced whose history is too often told only in numbers and statistics and who appear in newspapers and our social media feed only as pawns in political debates or, frankly, as part of grotesque international squabbles over who can push them back or push them away harder and further. And now for them, for those 79.5 million people, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) also has an impact, which I will refer to in the course of my presentation.

For refugees and for displaced people, but often for host communities as well, COVID-19 has further exposed their vulnerabilities. It has weakened their ability to cope with difficult situations even more. Unfortunately, it has frequently stripped away the residual hope they had of a better future. But this figure that I have mentioned and the impact of COVID-19 in general are also worrying in other ways. They are symptoms of grave threats that are taking shape, because if the consequences of crises that impact the most marginal are neglected, they will come back and affect us all, as COVID-19 has demonstrated.

We in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in the United Nations and in the humanitarian community will continue to do our part. The work that we have done with all Council members and other Member States to establish a global compact on refugees, and last year to organize the Global Refugee Forum, has been invaluable and especially evident in this time of crisis. But we continue to need the leadership and concerted action of the Security Council.

I could bring many things to the Council's attention, but I will focus on three areas of concern, with a few concrete examples.

First of all is the concern that the number of people displaced at the end of 2019, as we announced this morning, has been rising since 2012. The year 2011 was the last one in which this figure went down; since then, it has risen year after year. How can we stop that? This is the biggest and most difficult question, with the pandemic now becoming even more of a risk multiplier, interacting with the drivers of existing crises.

Take, for example, the region that perhaps worries me most at the present time — the Sahel region in West Africa. Among Council members, of course, is the Niger — a country that is very much impacted by this crisis. This is one of the leading regions in terms of driving the displacement figures upwards, at least over the past couple of years, and, as the Council knows, it is the theatre of one of the most complex regional crises, the features of which are worsening. I met many representatives in February, on my last visit to New York, when I had just come back from a tour of Burkina Faso, the Niger and Mauritania, and the indicators have worsened since then.

The impact of climate change has been very devastating to the region. The Council has heard from my colleague, David Beasley, of the World Food Programme, how food insecurity is growing and presents a risk to more than 5 million people in the subregion (see S/2020/340). More than 3,600 schools have either been destroyed or closed down because of violence, and now COVID-19 has placed the entire education system on lockdown.

All of this has become fertile ground for the forced recruitment of young people by armed groups. In addition, livelihoods are being progressively decimated. Social cohesion among groups, as the President of Burkina Faso told me several times, has been impacted, even where it existed and was relatively strong before. State authority has been progressively weakened, and trust in that authority on the part of the population has been eroded, on the one hand, as armed groups spread false information and substitute themselves for the State as service providers and, on the other, because these same groups attack civilians mercilessly, including in refugee camps, prompting security reactions that also impact civilians, such as through extrajudicial killings. All of this has become a very, very dangerous spiral.

The Security Council visited the region in March last year. Since then, to provide just one indicator, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso has increased by eight times. As we speak now, there are almost a million IDPs. The Niger and Mali are also very badly affected. Humanitarian organizations are trying to play their part to support States. We also have a very valuable dialogue with development actors, international financial institutions and the bilateral development agencies of countries of some Council members and very concrete interventions. Recently, a very interesting project was initiated by the African Development Bank to help respond to COVID-19 among displaced populations.

But, frankly, we need a much more strategic application of development aid that tackles the root causes, besides security, and that takes into account the growing displacement element of the crisis. The security responses that have been the focus and are at the centre of the Council's own discussions must also protect civilians and allow for humanitarian access. There needs to be a more tailored, concerted effort to help States build, or rebuild, social cohesion among the different groups.

I always say that the Sahel is the land of strategies. The problem is not a lack of strategies but too many of them, with too little coordination among their security, humanitarian, development and human rights aspects. I therefore wish to make a very strong call to action in that respect. Otherwise, I am worried that the crisis may spill over to neighbouring areas. Dealing with people on the move, we observe this first-hand. We are worried about the spillover into coastal States of West Africa, south of the Sahel. We are very worried about the proximity to the Lake Chad basin, where the crisis fuelled by Boko Haram action has worsened in recent days, and we have seen attacks in Nigeria as well. We are also worried, of course, about the proximity in the north to the Libyan conflict.

The coronavirus pandemic is also impacting the dynamic of population flows in the region. We saw a reduction of those flows in the initial phase of the pandemic, but they are growing again among countries in the region, and also towards the global north. The Council should have no illusion: borders may be more tightly closed now because of the responses to the coronavirus but this will not stop people from moving. Smugglers are very shrewd, and they will adapt to the circumstances and create new offers. The only difference will be that for people embarking on those journeys, travel will be even more dangerous.

Libya continues to be the theatre of complex mixed flows, also impacted by the conflict there. All those present are familiar with the military developments in the country over the past two to three weeks, which, by the way, have created additional internal displacement. Whether the new balance of power among the different parties will be more conducive to stability remains to be seen. I hope so.

What I know is that we must continue to focus on the situation of Libyan civilians and of refugees and migrants. Detention has decreased, at least in the centres where we have access. We estimate that the number of migrants and refugees detained has gone from 5,000 to about 1,500. But for all of them, even those whom we have managed to extract from the centres, life continues to be very risky, made worse by the constraints imposed by the pandemic. Departures by sea towards Europe, which had decreased, have unfortunately picked up again in the past few weeks.

I can only repeat the appeals that I have made to Council members before. I urge the Security Council to capitalize on the Berlin peace process and aim for a permanent ceasefire at least, if not for peace. Meanwhile, let us redouble our efforts to prevent any retaliation and collective punishment against civilians, which are very dangerous. Let us continue to try to create space to mitigate abuses against refugees and migrants, to end arbitrary detention and, very important, to end impunity for the smugglers and traffickers of human beings.

My second point is about protection. Some days ago, my colleague and friend Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, spoke to the Council about how COVID-19 was also a protection crisis (see S/2020/402). I could not agree with him more. COVID-19 has stopped many things, but it does not seem to have stopped war. Despite the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire, conflicts have continued to grow.

Of the figure of 79.5 million people forcibly displaced, 46 million are internally displaced — refugees in their own countries. Internal displacement is a symptom of conflict, and since the pandemic started — since that call for a global ceasefire — there has been new internal displacement in 19 countries. In two months, we have seen an increase of 700,000 internally displaced people globally.

I will not mention all the crises, but let us remember Yemen, frequently discussed by the Council of course, and also new and growing ones, as in the north of Mozambique. They come with the usual features: a great deal of insecurity, attacks on aid workers, restrictions on movement and, from the perspective of the internally displaced, much narrower access to protection, aid and support.

Meanwhile, of course, refugee flows also continue in a context where access to asylum is becoming more difficult. At the moment, 75 per cent of all States in the world have either fully or partially closed their borders. I would like to thank the Council members and other States that, despite that, have continued to admit asylum seekers and refugees. The Niger, for example, has kept its doors open to people fleeing north-western Nigeria, and many other States have put in place practical arrangements, such as quarantine, screening and documentation, for people seeking to cross borders during the pandemic. But let us remember, in the case of almost two

thirds of States, there have been no exceptions to the restrictions, even for asylum seekers.

I would like to recall another important statistic in this respect. Despite all the political rhetoric, 85 per cent of refugees continue to be in developing countries — in poor or middle-income countries. Seventy-three per cent of refugees have taken refuge not far away, in a country next to their own.

But we must remember that, despite that imbalance, international protection is a global responsibility, based on the fundamental principle of responsibility-sharing. The negative trends in terms of refugee protection in Europe, in North America and in the Asia and the Pacific region are placing the right to asylum, now additionally threatened by the pandemic, in further jeopardy.

Meanwhile, in the very large host countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, the pressures are mounting. If one analyses the responses to the coronavirus pandemic in relation to refugee movements, there are interesting aspects.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, we appealed to States to include refugees in their responses. In the health sector, this was done by most States. Everybody understood that it was important to include them, because if anyone is excluded, the risk spreads to the entire population. Many refugees themselves contributed to this response, including in Europe and North America.

It is much more difficult, in my analysis, to realize that inclusion in the responses that States are now putting in place to offset the social and economic impact of COVID-19. This is more complicated from both an economic and a political perspective, although, of course, refugees and displaced people are among those most impacted by COVID-19 in this respect, as they depend largely on informal economies that are gravely limited by lockdowns. In some countries, this situation is further exacerbated by an increase in stigmatization, scapegoating and even xenophobia with respect to refugees and vulnerable migrants.

Take the Venezuela situation, for example — one of the most dramatic of the last few years. More than 5 million people have left the country, 4.5 million of whom have moved elsewhere in the region, to 17 States in Latin America. Eighty per cent of those 4.5 million depend on the informal economy and, since the lockdowns in those countries, have entered a spiral of debt, destitution and, often, eviction. Tens of thousands of them — out of lack of stability, lack of means or of livelihood — are opting to return to Venezuela amid a very complicated situation, including from the health point of view.

That is why I want to appeal for redoubled efforts to support countries hosting Venezuelans. A few days ago, the European Union (EU) and Spain chaired a pledging conference, which was quite successful. It is important that those pledges are now realized. Humanitarian assistance is also key, by the way, for those that opt to return to Venezuela. It is also very important that international financial institutions and development partners play their role in support of host countries — hoping, of course, for a peaceful political solution of the Venezuela crisis that will allow these tensions to abate.

I would also like to refer to Syria, a situation with which Council members are very familiar. We have already, during the pandemic, entered the tenth year of this crisis, in a country devastated by war — a war, however, whose geography and dynamics have evolved considerably. Armed conflict inside Syria has largely abated, although it is still present in a few locations and remains, as members know, especially acute in the north-west, in Idlib.

At the beginning of the year, 1 million civilians were displaced in that area; 25 per cent of them, thanks also to the ceasefire that has held, have been able to return home. So, the figure is still very big, but it has decreased. And here I would like to make my first appeal to the Council members, to use all the influence they can muster to maintain the ceasefire and, of course, to continue to work towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

But as Council members know, we tend always to look at Syria through the prism of these acute aspects of the crisis. It is important to look at it more broadly, also from the perspective of Syrians themselves, including the 5.5 million refugees still living in neighbouring countries. What does their future look like? I am afraid that if we look at it through their prism, from their angle, it looks like a very crippling legacy of prolonged crisis — as is evident upon visiting Syria — now exacerbated by a very dire economic situation, made worse by the consequences of the pandemic lockdowns and other widespread destruction.

Most refugees in the region continue to tell us that they want to return home. They also, of course, continue to speak about their concerns, which prevent some from making that decision: security, rights, access to education and work. So it is very important — and we will continue to do this — to work with the Government of Syria on concrete measures to remove those obstacles and build the confidence of people to return.

But I want to be quite frank with the Council. The quest for solutions for those most impacted — in particular, the return of refugees and displaced people — continues to be difficult, because the political tensions in the region and international political tensions, with which Council members are very familiar, are very high. So, my strongest appeal today is, in fact, to please depoliticize humanitarian issues, including issues related to refugees and to their return, whenever possible.

We really need the Security Council to work on an international posture that allows, finally, solutions to this conflict to emerge and creates space for communities to actually recover — something that we frequently tend to forget.

In the meantime, I am also worried about the situation in the broader region. Around Syria, a number of countries have been very generous in hosting — and still do host — millions of refugees. They have helped save millions of lives. They have saved an entire generation of Syrian children. But now there is a deep economic downturn, caused by the lockdowns and by COVID-19, that risks creating poverty that will wipe out the gains achieved in the past few years.

In Lebanon, 70 per cent of refugee households have lost access to livelihoods because of the nature of the work they were engaged in. And this is added, of course, to the general fragility of the country, with which Council members are familiar.

The situation is also difficult in Jordan and in Turkey. In a few days, the fourth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region — an aid conference chaired by the EU and the United Nations — will take place. It is an important opportunity to ensure that the progress we have made pending solutions is not reversed; to step up the support to host countries, which is much needed at this juncture; and to send a very strong signal from the international community.

We need also to continue to support the right of return of people who wish to go back to their country, but as for the Venezuelans, to ensure that these returns are driven not by despair or lack of choices, but are done as a deliberate, informed and sustainable choice.

The last point that I want to mention, which is a consequence of the other two, is the need to not give up on solutions. Two-thirds of the refugees and people crossing

borders come from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar. So, if we could make progress on solutions in just one of these five countries, this would automatically transform the lives of millions of people.

Take the Sudan and South Sudan, two situations overlapping and intersecting for decades. Between the two of them, these countries account for 10 per cent of the world's refugees and internally displaced people. But we do have some opportunities there. It is encouraging that the Darfur peace discussions continue, for example, and that there is — although stop and start, as Council members know very well — some progress in the South Sudan peace process, including the announcements that we observed yesterday. But both processes are very fragile, and need support — indeed, bold support — in terms of, for example, how the international community will help the Sudan on its road to recovery, because setbacks are very possible. And there, as everywhere else, the pandemic is complicating the challenges.

My last visit before the lockdown was to Khartoum, in March. I was impressed by how the Government was striving to overcome the very damaging legacy that it had inherited. And, in spite of the very difficult economic and other challenges present in the country, I was struck by their commitment to the important discussions that we were having, and continue to have. In the humanitarian domain, these include issues of food security, for example, and also solving internal and external displacement — areas in which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is very much involved, and in which the United Nations is investing resources.

It is vital that these investments continue, that we continue to involve the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the quest for solutions to displacement in the two countries, and that we sustain the momentum, even if the foreseeable future is likely to present some very tough moments.

The last practical, operational situation that I want to mention in relation to solutions — it may seem counterintuitive, but it is not — is Myanmar. Council members know this situation very well, and I have come before the Council many times to discuss this matter.

There are still almost a million Rohingya in Bangladesh. Here, I want to commend Bangladesh, including for having led a very significant response to the pandemic. We have managed, so far, to limit the pandemic in one of the most overcrowded and underresourced places in the world. This was really thanks to Bangladesh's leadership, but it will continue to need support.

What worries me is that, among the refugees, there is a growing sense that solutions are not coming — that solutions, especially in terms of returning to Myanmar, continue to be elusive. We see this despair, and are multiplying our mental health programmes, because people are really very desperate. We also see this translated into increasing departures on boats towards South-East Asia. This is extremely dangerous for people, and also a very complicated issue to deal with at the regional level, although we are working with States to do that.

My point here is that we need to maintain the focus on solutions. The big issues remain, we should have no illusions: statelessness, access to rights by the Rohingya community in Myanmar. And now it is complicated by the growing conflict caused by the Arakan Army. But I believe, and I have also said it many times to the Council, we need to continue to work on concrete steps.

We have made some very concrete proposals to the Government of Myanmar to move things forward. We have proposed intensifying contacts between the Myanmar authorities and the refugee communities. We have proposed linking the small development projects the United Nations is running in Rakhine state, with

growing space now, with the refugee community — to be more strategic and to create more options for solutions. We have encouraged the Myanmar Government to make progress on areas that are very important for refugees: freedom of movement; citizenship, at least a gradual process; and solutions for internally displaced people.

So, my message to Council is that we are grateful for its focus. I would ask Council members to, please, continue to focus on these issues, and, please, help us make progress on these steps. They may seem like small steps, but it is only through small steps that we will move positively towards a solution. This is what refugees themselves are telling us, and I think it is very important — even in Myanmar, where contrary to the Sudan and South Sudan, the signals are less evident — not to give up, not to give in to a narrative of impossibility.

Let me conclude with just a few further reflections on those major rising displacement trends I mentioned at the beginning. They reflect, really — I am sad to say, but I will be frank — divisions that are far beyond the theatre of the armed conflicts that cause this displacement. We see it every day in our field operations. We see the impact of regional and international rivalries. We see — apologies if I sound very direct here — we see the consequences of so much hypocrisy and indifference, which play out, unfortunately tragically, in the lives of those who are uprooted and traumatized.

I say to Council members, please echo and follow up on the ceasefire call of the Secretary-General. I ask them to use their leadership and influence, the tools and resources they have at their disposal, to seek out and to expand space for solutions.

You know, Mr. President, that we humanitarians follow the Council's debates very anxiously and very closely. We worry about the Council's divisions. By the way, we are not naïve. From long experience, we understand very well the complexity of international politics. But we expect the Council, the world expects it, to show unity — at least where humanity is most wounded and trampled. We expect the Council, the world expects it, to send decisive, clear and unanimous messages to end conflicts and pursue avenues for peace.

Resolving forced displacement is not just a moral or humanitarian imperative; it concerns areas that are at the heart of the Security Council's mandate — areas that are critical for regional and international stability, and for the stability of the international economy; areas that are crucial to achieve justice in a world that yearns for reconciliation, and to ensure that truly no one is left behind.

Annex II**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve**

We sincerely thank you, Sir, for organizing this briefing, which is without a doubt very timely and relevant in light of the current circumstances.

We thank Mr. Grandi very much for his briefing today. His briefing and the *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019* report launched today provide us once again with a very sobering account of the unprecedented total of nearly 80 million people displaced, of whom almost 30 million are refugees and others forcibly displaced outside of their countries. These figures seem to have become the barometer of our collective inability to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts. We should not forget that behind each one of these figures, we find the hopes and fears of a woman or a child.

Flows of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are all too often a direct consequence of blatant and repeated violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Respect for international humanitarian law by all parties to conflicts would, without any doubt, help decrease forced displacement and better manage internal displacement. Respecting international humanitarian law means facilitating humanitarian assistance to displaced persons and protecting them. Respecting international humanitarian law also means not bombing entire cities or spaces and infrastructure essential to the survival of the civilian population, and thus helping to create an environment conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and IDPs. These issues of return and reintegration must form an integral part of every peace process, accompanied by measures such as transitional justice to achieve reconciliation and sustainable peace.

We are particularly struck by Mr. Grandi's accounts of the dramatic increase of refugees and IDPs over the last couple of months in the Sahel; of the horrifying violence, including gender-based violence, against vulnerable populations; and of the risk of the conflict spilling over into neighbouring countries, not to mention of the compounding effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on this already dire situation. These elements, including refugee and IDP flows, are indeed often an alarm signal or an early warning for emerging, re-emerging or worsening situations of violence and conflict, and should be analysed as such in reports to the Security Council in order to enhance our capability to react and prevent.

Finally, this staggering figure of almost 80 million forced displacements represents a major question mark about the current international and regional cooperation on the matter. Better and purposeful cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union is needed. Belgium is grateful for the creation of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and encourages the Panel to keep up the good work despite the hurdles that COVID-19 is presenting.

Belgium also supports Mr. Grandi's efforts to call for renewed momentum for solutions and for efforts to build sustainable peace, as this is key to resolving refugee flows and internal displacement. We agree that the global compact on refugees is a useful tool in that regard. Noting that 85 per cent of refugees are in developing countries, the Pact rightly prioritizes support for host countries, the sharing of responsibilities and burdens and the quest for durable solutions.

Finally, we want to commend Mr. Grandi and all staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) around the world for their robust engagement in the response to complex emergencies, especially now, in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. We are proud and grateful to count UNHCR

as one of our most important humanitarian partners and hope to continue our financial support this year at the same level as in previous years — approximately \$21 million. We also want to thank Mr. Grandi for the annual *Global Trends* report, launched today.

I would like to ask the following questions.

As Mr. Grandi mentioned, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross called the COVID-19 crisis a “protection crisis” when he briefed the Council a few weeks ago (see S/2020/465). Based on Mr. Grandi’s assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the protection needs of refugees and IDPs, could he elaborate on how UNHCR has adapted its strategies to tackle those challenges?

What is his assessment of the impact of climate change on the already existing vulnerabilities of refugees and IDPs displaced by conflict? How is UNHCR adapting its work to better take into account the effects of climate change as an increasing driver of displacement and conflict?

Annex III

Statement by the Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Yao Shaojun

I thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his informative briefing. China appreciates the tireless efforts made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in helping refugees in various locations.

Today UNHCR issued its annual report, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*. According to what we heard from Mr. Grandi, the situation of refugees globally remains worrisome. A complex range of crises have led to a constant increase in refugee flows. Humanitarian needs are also on the rise but are not being adequately met owing to social and economic difficulties, including the coronavirus disease pandemic. Against that backdrop, I should like to highlight the following points.

First, the issue of refugees should be tackled in a multilateral framework. The refugee issue is a global challenge that requires a global response. We need to enhance cooperation among and strengthen the role of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and UNHCR. We need to work in compliance with the relevant international law and implement the commitments made under the global compact on refugees.

Developing countries host 85 per cent of global refugees, and their burden must be shared and alleviated. We call on the international community, especially those actors with the capacity and responsibility to do so, to scale up support and assistance to host countries and communities. It is also important to eliminate xenophobia, racism and discrimination against all refugees.

Secondly, we must address the root causes of refugee flows and displacement. Most refugees come from conflict situations that are on the Security Council's agenda. We must take a holistic approach and deploy broader efforts on peace and development. We need to make a greater investment in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, poverty eradication and development cooperation. Only in this way can we create the conditions necessary for refugees to return and enable them to enjoy a peaceful and prosperous life in their home countries.

The various United Nations bodies should contribute according to their respective mandates and achieve synergy in that regard. The Security Council should promote dispute settlement by peaceful means and find political solutions to hotspot issues on its agenda.

Many civilians become refugees when their home countries are dragged into conflict through the use of force unauthorized by the Security Council. Such violations of the Charter of the United Nations should not happen again.

Thirdly, we must uphold the principles of objectivity and neutrality. In dealing with refugee matters, the international community and UNHCR must stay objective and neutral and avoid the use of double standards and politicization. That is key to the credibility of the international refugee-protection mechanism. That mechanism should not be used as a shield for terrorists and criminals or as a tool for interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

China has been working actively with the international community to address the global challenge of refugees by adopting a people-centred approach. We are promoting the political settlement of disputes, participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and providing humanitarian and development assistance to people in need. We have maintained good cooperative relations with UNHCR and are willing to further strengthen such relations.

Annex IV

Statement by the Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic, José Singer Weisinger

I thank Mr. Filippo Grandi for his briefing.

The beginning of 2020 surprised us with an unprecedented situation: a global pandemic that caused upheaval in all nations' social order and health systems. None of us was prepared for the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, nor are we prepared for its still-unknown long-term consequences.

Restriction of movement, the closure of borders and the suspension of asylum procedures, inter alia, are but some of the measures taken in almost every nation to stop the spread of the virus. Those measures have profound implications for migrants, displaced people and refugees, and political leadership in mitigating their negative effects on the most vulnerable is now more important than ever, in a spirit of solidarity and based on our shared humanity.

Half of the global refugee population are children. They experience profound emotional and physical traumas, and their future is compromised now more than ever. Millions live in overcrowded facilities, exposed to all sorts of abuse, including human trafficking, deprivation of freedom, torture and sexual violence.

Women refugees are also highly vulnerable to all forms of violence, including sexual violence. Even after they exit a conflict zone, finding safety can be elusive. It is important to react properly to cases of abuses and enable access to justice, legal remedies and reparation.

Many families from Afghanistan, which has the second-largest refugee population in the world, continue to live their lives outside their country. One example is Nadia, who was born a refugee and always thinks of Afghanistan as the land of her ancestors. She is 17 years old and was born in Pakistan, where her parents fled to 40 years ago.

Syrian doctors are at the front line of the fight against the pandemic in France. They could very well be in their homeland, but conflict forced them to flee and seek refuge outside it. They have to live every day knowing that today they could be useful in their country, where an outbreak of the pandemic could have catastrophic consequences.

Africa's largest refugee population is from South Sudan. More than 4 million South Sudanese women and children live as refugees in bordering countries due to conflict, climate change and food insecurity. The prospect of the potentially devastating impact of a COVID-19 outbreak is deeply concerning.

About 1 million Rohingya live in refugee camps across eastern Bangladesh, in conditions that were crowded and hot before the coronavirus and are now even more dire. They live densely packed in squalid conditions and are unable to maintain social distancing and proper hygiene, with limited access to water and health services. The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis within a crisis for the Rohingya and many other refugees.

The Dominican Republic is very familiar with the situation involving the unprecedented exodus of more than 4 million Venezuelans. The conditions that forced them to flee are, sadly, still present and are now compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation in their host countries resulting from measures to control the spread of the virus affects them greatly and directly.

We could go on and on citing different examples of how refugees live their lives day by day. Many of them left their very souls in their countries and have to endure many, many difficulties. We believe that COVID-19 has helped all of us to relate to their struggles.

We stand ready to advocate for a global, sustained and inclusive dialogue aimed at alleviating the particular suffering of refugees and helping them to exercise their right to return to their places of origin or choice in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner. As a Rohingya refugee said, “No big hope before, but now zero hope”. Let us rebuild that hope for them.

Annex V**Statement by the Political Coordinator of Estonia to the United Nations, Kristel Lõuk.**

I would like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Grandi, for his comprehensive briefing today and for the resilient and determined efforts he has shown throughout his work. As refugees and other people displaced by conflict are especially vulnerable to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, we highly commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for scaling up the responses in these critical times.

Estonia has been a stable contributor to the UNHCR. Since 2001 we have supported the Office with operational grants as well as with direct contributions towards helping to alleviate specific humanitarian crises around the world.

Today we are witnessing an unprecedented number of people around the world being forced from their homes by conflict or persecution. We recognize the crucial role of the Council and its member States in seeking to take unified action to address the root causes of displacement. Resolving global security crises and sustaining peace is our joint responsibility. For that reason, we are glad to see international efforts, such as the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI, working in close cooperation with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya in tackling the growing terrorism threat and transboundary criminal activities such as arms and human trafficking.

In the light of the global pandemic, humanitarian aid has become more important than ever. People on the move are much more likely to find themselves in vulnerable positions that can expose them to the risks associated with COVID-19. The situation is worsened when displaced people face barriers in accessing health services and experience food insecurity due to various factors. We need immediate measures as well as contributions to mitigate the unprecedented social and economic impact on refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

Given the critical humanitarian situation in north-west Syria, where there are some 2.8 million people in need, we call on the members of the Security Council to support the renewal of the cross-border aid mechanism in July. With regard to the dire situation in Yemen, where more people have been displaced as a result of the continued fighting and where there is the possibility of a cholera outbreak, full access into and within Yemen for international aid workers, medicine and medical supplies must be ensured.

Estonia is committed to helping those in need and has financially contributed to help to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 in Syria and Libya and in the framework of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.

As we just heard from the High Commissioner, the global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is estimated at around 46 million. It is deplorable that owing to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, which has lasted six years already, there are more than 1.4 million IDPs across the country. The situation of displaced persons in Ukraine is precarious. Women and children residing in rural areas, as well as elderly people, are in especially vulnerable positions. Estonia has contributed to alleviating the IDP situation in Ukraine by supporting the UNHCR's programmes with earmarked funds of \$200,000. In addition, the Estonian non-governmental organization Refugee Help has worked towards securing the livelihoods of refugees and IDPs in Ukraine.

It has become more evident than ever that we need digital solutions in improving the ability of the international community to collectively respond to crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has proved that digitization is key to securing business continuity and service delivery in global health crises. During the Global Refugee Forum, Estonia pledged to cooperate with the UNHCR on digital identification, and since then we have been taking steps to implement that pledge. Today this has become even more relevant, as there is an urgent need to identify and reach vulnerable people efficiently from a distance during periods of lockdown and travel restrictions while simultaneously guaranteeing their security and privacy.

Finally, as this year we are marking World Refugee Day in this time of COVID-19, I would like to underline that the international community should better address the needs of displaced persons during this pandemic, ensuring that they are fully protected by international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law.

Annex VI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the personnel of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their outstanding efforts to protect refugees and defend their rights. France's commitment to unconditional respect for the right to asylum is well known.

As the High Commissioner reminded us, the number of people forced into exile or to become refugees has never been so high. I am thinking in particular of the Sahel, notably Burkina Faso, where the number of internally displaced persons has more than quadrupled in less than a year.

The sharing of responsibilities in a spirit of solidarity must be the guiding principle of our action. Hosting refugees is not only an international obligation but also a moral duty. It is the responsibility of States to protect, on their territory, foreign nationals who have fled their country due to persecution. Only a collective global approach will allow us to improve the overall treatment of refugees, lead to a better management of migration flows and fight effectively against migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

That is why the implementation of the global compact on refugees is a priority. France is actively working towards the implementation of the commitments it undertook at the Global Refugee Forum, in particular regarding the issue of resettlement, with 10,000 places for 2020-2021, legal cooperation and the inclusion of climate and environmental criteria in its humanitarian strategy. We call on all States to step up their efforts.

Refugees and displaced persons are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has led to the suspension of asylum procedures in many countries, an accelerated rate of return even if conditions for return are not met and increased stigmatization. Refugees are also highly exposed to the socioeconomic impact of this crisis. We must be vigilant and integrate refugees and displaced persons into national and international pandemic response strategies.

It is up to the Security Council to create conditions conducive to reaching lasting solutions to crises. Insecurity and massive violations of human rights are the primary causes of displacement. In Syria, Venezuela, Libya and Myanmar, only a political solution can lead to long-term stability and address the challenges arising from population displacement.

Lastly, we will not compromise on the fundamental principles regarding the return of refugees, which must be voluntary and take place in safe and dignified conditions.

Annex VII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Juergen Schulz

I would like to thank High Commissioner Grandi for his briefing. It is important that the Security Council be briefed on a regular basis on the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and their relevance for our work. We appreciate this follow up to UNHCR's April 2019 briefing (see S/PV.8504) during our presidency. The UNHCR report *Global Trends — Forced Displacement in 2019*, published today, brings the sad news of a record 79.5 million refugees worldwide — 68 per cent of whom originate from just five countries, and 6.6 million from Syria alone.

Germany appreciates the indispensable role of UNHCR in protecting and assisting millions of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. This is all the more important these days because, while the pandemic is affecting everyone across the globe, its impact will be most devastating for people in the most vulnerable situations, including refugees and displaced persons.

We commend the work of UNHCR's staff, who continue to provide protection and assistance to the most vulnerable despite lockdown measures and often at the risk of their own health and safety. Prevention measures introduced in displacement sites have helped to avoid a major outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Germany has also supported UNHCR financially in its endeavour to keep those under its mandate safe from COVID-19. To answer the call of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan and UNHCR's COVID-19 appeal, Germany provided €300 million in additional funding — €35 million specifically for UNHCR. We did so in a way that gives organizations, including UNHCR, the leeway they require to adapt their humanitarian operations flexibly to the continuously changing situation and needs.

In the face of this crisis, we strongly believe that determined action, global solidarity and multilateralism are more needed than ever. We strongly echo the High Commissioner's statement that an effective response to the pandemic and respecting international refugee law and standards are not mutually exclusive. We call on all Member States to ensure and protect the rights of refugees through preventive measures, to safeguard the humanitarian space and to grant exemptions for humanitarian workers and goods.

More equitable burden-sharing is indispensable if we are to provide sustainable solutions for refugees and those who host them. It is therefore very encouraging — six months after the very successful first-ever Global Refugee Forum — to see progress in the implementation of the many Forum pledges and other instruments. The impressive variety of pledges, good practices and new initiatives is indeed encouraging, and they require meaningful and dedicated implementation and follow up. As a co-convenor of the Forum, Germany is fully committed to further supporting the implementation process. We therefore call upon all Member States to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Today's meeting can also help encourage the broader membership to engage in the follow-up process, mobilize serious commitments and make substantial contributions. The Council should stand firmly by UNHCR's side in that endeavour.

With regard to Libya, we are deeply concerned about consistent reports on the humanitarian and human rights situation of refugees and migrants, in particular in detention centres.

Regarding overarching principles for the repatriation of refugees, we strongly appreciate UNHCR staying firm on the necessity of having key protection mechanisms in place as a precondition of any assisted voluntary repatriation. We recall once more that, in the case of refugees and internally displaced persons, all repatriations must be voluntary, safe, dignified and well-informed.

We must redouble efforts to deliver a better future for Rohingya refugees with freedom of movement, a decent livelihood and, in the long run, the possibility of gaining citizenship in order to address the risks posed by measles, mumps and rubella. We appreciate the willingness of the Government of Bangladesh to continue hosting the Rohingya refugees.

In that context, I also want to speak about Syria. It is not the lack of infrastructure that prevents internally displaced persons and refugees from returning home. The main barrier is the climate of fear and injustice and the weak rule of law in Syria. Damascus must provide credible and verifiable security guarantees that would allow for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Syrians to their country.

Meanwhile, cross-border humanitarian assistance remains fundamental to reaching those in need in the north-west and north-east of Syria. As a co-penholder of the Syrian humanitarian file in the Council, Germany is strongly committed to supporting UNHCR and other humanitarian actors in securing as much humanitarian access as possible, now more important than ever because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ahead of World Refugee Day this Saturday, Mr. Grandi reminded us that the number of displaced people has increased even further from last year's record numbers and that there is a strong need for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors to further enhance cooperation in order to effectively address today's manifold and often protracted displacement situations and to promote durable solutions in the interest of the displaced and their hosts.

The Council is aware of Germany's ongoing work on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict situations. In the light of the COVID-19 crisis, the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence has risen to truly alarming levels. Against that backdrop, we encourage UNHCR to strongly focus on its protection mandate, in particular with regard to women and girls, who are often the most marginalized in a displacement context.

Let me assure the Council that Germany will remain a committed and reliable partner and donor of UNHCR across the board of its activities, especially in these unprecedented times of COVID-19.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations

I would like to thank Mr. Grandi for his important briefing and for spotlighting the key refugee-related trends and issues set forth in the annual report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We would also like to thank UNHCR for doing its utmost to ensure that operations on the ground can be sustained during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I would like to share some thoughts on this issue.

First, Indonesia reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. We must continue to ensure sustainable humanitarian assistance for refugees in a safe and dignified manner while we mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, the global pandemic has created a perfect storm for irregular migrants. Poor living conditions renders them more susceptible to infections. In some cases, they have no access to social or health services, as policies to limit movement, while necessary to manage the virus, hamper access to various basic services and may exacerbate inequality, discrimination and exploitation.

In that connection, we welcome UNHCR efforts to help countries address those challenges, including the recent extension of the tripartite agreement among UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of Myanmar to improve conditions in Rakhine.

We also believe that effective inter-organizational cooperation between UNHCR and other relevant United Nations organizations, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, will have a greater impact on our collective efforts to resolve the various challenges facing Palestinian refugees. Indonesia calls upon all Member States to maintain their support to ensure the safety and well-being of Palestinian refugees during these difficult times, especially given the severe threat posed by the current pandemic.

Secondly, no country can resolve refugee crises in isolation. We need to continue fostering a global perspective that promotes the collaboration and participation of all regions and countries — origin, transit and destination. In response to refugee movements, Indonesia has taken action to address irregular migration despite not being party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. In the Bali Process, we have sought to create a comprehensive approach to irregular migration through border management, the development of a victim-centred approach and raising awareness of safe migration. Recently, Indonesia also proposed a practical mechanism to address irregular migration during the pandemic.

Thirdly, let us not lose sight of our humanity during the pandemic. We all face difficult circumstances. However, as the Secretary-General mentioned in his policy briefing, ensuring the safety of others ensures our safety.

Indonesia hopes that the international community will continue to approach the refugee issue in the spirit of equitable burden-sharing and shared responsibility, and that each country will take action according to its respective responsibility and capacities.

We should promote durable solutions through increased cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination or resettlement.

Indonesia urges countries with the means to do so, particularly State parties to the 1951 Convention — to honour their commitments, especially with regard to funding for transit countries, which are predominantly developing countries.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the need for relevant international organizations to continue strengthening their capacities and assisting countries in handling irregular migration while adhering to the applicable health protocols.

Annex IX

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Gennady Kuzmin

We welcome the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, and thank him for his briefing.

Assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons today is an essential component of the intensive efforts aimed at maintaining international peace, security and stability. We deeply appreciate the effective work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in major humanitarian crisis situations that lead to mass flows of refugees. We support UNHCR's commitment to expanding its efforts on the basis of the Global Compact on Refugees.

The work of UNHCR has never been easy, but 2020 has brought an unprecedented level of difficulty. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has left no safe place on the planet, and refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are now the most at risk.

In that regard, we welcome UNHCR's focus on close cooperation with States, with a view to including refugees in national programmes to combat COVID-19 and conducting information campaigns among the population. Its efforts to alleviate the effects of infection by increasing the supply of humanitarian goods, water and sanitation in camps, hospitals and other institutions deserve wide support.

We share concerns regarding the current situation in a number of Middle East and African countries. Refugee camps and reception centres suffer an acute shortage of personal protective equipment and medicine. The health-care system in most host countries is weak and overloaded. In many instances, those countries' capacity to respond to the pandemic is impeded by illegal unilateral sanctions.

The provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees, IDPs and their host countries should not be subject to politicization. The High Commissioner stated that very clearly. We call yet again for an immediate and complete lifting of unilateral sanctions and other restrictive measures that undermine the capacities of States to effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite barefaced efforts to block the return of refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic, we see positive momentum. The initiative to facilitate Syrian refugees' voluntary return home, launched by Russia in 2018, shows significant progress. The number of Syrians refugees and IDPs returning to their homes continues to grow, and today exceeds 2 million. UNHCR plays a major role in that regard, and we hope that the Office will continue to assist Syrians refugees and IDPs.

Russia supports the Syrian Government in its efforts to restore basic infrastructure, such as water and electricity supplies, schools, hospitals and housing. Today a special focus of our actions is the implementation of a set of measures to fight COVID-19. Overall, the country is becoming increasingly safe for people.

Unfortunately, there is an unresolved humanitarian situation in Rukban camp, where thousands of people are forcibly being held in unacceptable conditions. The lack of qualified medical care and personal protective equipment in wholly unsanitary conditions could lead to a sharp outbreak of COVID-19.

From time to time in the Council, we hear stories about the mass exodus of people from the tyranny of Government. For example, some colleagues love dearly to refer to the economic migration from Venezuela in the refugee context. Now we have the reverse flow — thousands who left the country are now rapidly coming back.

The main reason for that is xenophobia in host countries, triggered by the pandemic. As it turns out, now they are indeed refugees in a real sense. Moreover, around 90 per cent of all COVID-19 cases in Venezuela are found among the returnees, who evidently were denied health care and exposed to the virus in host countries.

In conclusion, I would like to once again underscore that Russia will continue to strengthen the international refugee protection regime and comprehensively support UNHCR's activities, which are vital for the millions who have been forced to leave their homes.

Annex X**Statement by the Second Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Halimah DeShong**

Let me begin by thanking High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his useful and timely briefing.

As the international community continues to navigate the complex risk landscape of the twenty-first century, of which the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is but the latest emergent threat to international peace and security, we must renew our efforts to protect those rendered most vulnerable. In order to do so successfully, integrated and comprehensive strategies are urgently needed to unify and mobilize the entire United Nations system so as to address both the root causes and the symptoms of insecurity.

In that regard, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes today's initiative as an opportunity to further strengthen the institutional nexus between the Security Council and other agencies operating across the peace and security, human rights and development pillars of the United Nations. The work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is essential to our efforts to promote lasting peace and security. We therefore commend the High Commissioner and his staff for their tireless efforts despite the challenges posed by COVID-19.

The rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and those made stateless as a result of political, socioeconomic and environmental forces over which they exert little influence must be safeguarded, as these individuals are also empowered to live dignified lives. Aside from being enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is a moral imperative for all actors in the international system to promote the political inclusion, social welfare and economic participation of all persons, without discrimination of any kind. In pursuing this shared responsibility, the principles of international law, including international humanitarian law and refugee law, must be upheld, while the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States, including those affected by conflict, are fully respected. To this end, the Security Council has a crucial role to play in hosting discussions such as today's to consider the key drivers of, and adequate responses to, global insecurity, especially at a time when the traditional challenges to international peace, such as conflict, converge with the emerging threats of climate change and pandemics.

In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, the challenge of displacement touches and concerns all of us. Indeed, all regions — from the Americas to Asia and the Pacific — have been affected by displacement, which has exacerbated protection risks in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore in our collective interest to ensure that all States have the necessary tools to confront their development challenges and build peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This remains the primary blueprint for systematically addressing the root causes and symptoms of insecurity, including conflict and mass human displacement, in our efforts to build a more equitable and secure world.

As we grapple with the health, economic, social and security implications of COVID-19, we must redouble our efforts aimed at reducing inequalities, encouraging good health and well-being and promoting climate-friendly and inclusive growth and development for all. The Global Compact on Refugees forms a critical aspect of this progressive vision. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore calls upon all States Members of the United Nations, in the spirit of solidarity, to renew their support for the Global Compact. We also call for greater technical and financial support for such regional and subregional organization as the African Union, which play an invaluable role in maintaining international peace and security.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations**

At the outset, I would like to thank France for convening today's meeting on refugees, which is timely, as we will be observing World Refugee Day this coming Saturday, 20 June. This year's World Refugee Day comes at a time when the number of displaced people around the world is considered to be at its highest ever and against the backdrop of negative socioeconomic changes. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has underscored the need for a more inclusive and equitable world.

I would also like to thank Mr. Filippo Grandi for his enlightening briefing. South Africa commends the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in pursuing its mandate of refugee protection and promoting refugee inclusion amid difficult conditions.

The drivers that result in forced displacement include violent conflicts, human rights violations and persecution, natural disasters, humanitarian risks and climate change. These drivers have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, we are deeply concerned about the additional risks imposed by COVID-19 on refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, all of whom are already living in difficult conditions and are often lacking access to essential facilities and services. Addressing the structural drivers of conflict requires long-term strategies, joint partnerships and ownership. The role of States in pursuing political solutions and preventive diplomacy remains paramount.

We concur with the observation that the magnitude of the current figures presented by UNHCR indicates that the world needs a concrete solution if this high number of refugees and displaced persons, which we are witnessing for the first time in history, is to be addressed. In this regard, I wish to highlight the following.

First, the African continent is one of the regions affected by massive forced displacements and hosts more than a third of the world's displaced population. The African Union has redoubled its efforts to address this phenomenon. The Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration underscore the recent global shift towards putting topics relating to refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and migration at the centre of the global policy discourse. In order to fulfil the aspirations of Agenda 2063, the African Union Assembly adopted the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, which articulates Africa's new humanitarian architecture, with a view to addressing the root causes of the problems and achieving durable solutions.

Secondly, on global action to address the needs of refugees, we agree with the sentiments expressed in the Global Compact on Refugees insofar as they relate to averting and resolving large refugee situations. This requires early efforts aimed at addressing the drivers and triggers of refugee crises, as well as improved cooperation among human rights, political, humanitarian and development actors, as well as measures that promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding through mediation. We welcome the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), which took place in December 2019, enhanced international cooperation and solidarity and galvanized support for equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing in refugee situations. South Africa made concrete pledges at the Forum that will ensure enhanced protection for refugees in our country.

Thirdly, we believe that the achievement of peace on the African continent is a prerequisite for sustainable solutions on forced displacement. In this regard,

South Africa has dedicated itself to making progress on this crucial aspiration. In collaboration with the African Union, we have made strides towards preventing and ending conflicts through our involvement in high-level political mediation and reconciliation efforts, as well as contributing to peacekeeping and peacemaking missions on the African continent. The fact that 75 per cent of the new African Union Peace Fund will be used to support mediation and preventive diplomacy is indicative of the growing recognition by the African Union of the importance of political solutions to Africa's conflicts.

Fourthly, it is important that host countries, with the collaboration of UNHCR, promote, facilitate and coordinate the voluntary repatriation of the displaced to their homes or places of habitual residence in safety and dignity. Repatriation must take into consideration specific contexts and cultural dimensions, and it must not be the result of a false choice between undignified displacement and undignified return. Furthermore, it is important that repatriation must not lead to further internal displacement once people return. We would like to emphasize that displaced persons must be involved in every stage of the repatriation process.

In conclusion, South Africa specifically commends those African countries that opened their borders to accommodate refugees regardless of their resource constraints, and calls on the international community to deliver on its commitment to burden- and responsibility-sharing. We further commend those countries across the globe that continue to accept refugees in need of resettlement. In this context, I wish to underscore that regional and international collaboration and partnership are vital.

Annex XII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Kais Kabtani**

At the outset, I would like to thank High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his informative briefing, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the efforts it has made in the challenging times presented by the coronavirus disease and with the risks the pandemic poses for international peace and security, especially in conflict zones and war-devastated countries, and particularly on the most vulnerable populations — refugees, displaced persons and returnees.

The question of refugees and displaced persons remains a major source of concern, as it reflects to what extent our world is unstable. Unfortunately, the statistics today indicate that the problem is getting worse, since the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons have been growing, owing to conflicts, war, poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation related to climate change. While we commend the crucial role that UNHCR and the other humanitarian organizations play in providing assistance to these populations, we underline the urgent need to multiply and intensify regional and international efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of the problem. This is a sad reflection of the status of peace and security in world today after 75 years of multilateralism, and it is putting the financial and human resources of humanitarian and refugee organizations under enormous strain.

The resolution of the problem of refugees and displaced persons is a matter of high priority. It is clear that promoting long-term conditions for peace, stability, national reconciliation and development is not possible without taking adequate steps to ensure the dignified voluntary and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes and places of original residence, to reverse the consequences of conflicts and to heal as much as possible the wounds they have caused. Otherwise, their plight will remain unresolved, with all the impact that that could have on the global situation.

In the meantime, it is crucial to facilitate the flow of humanitarian assistance and provide protection to these populations. In this regard, the international community should take action to prevent all forms of exploitation of refugees and displaced persons for political gains and to stop the boats of death from attempting to cross the seas in search of safety.

To address the issue of refugees, we need to focus not only on curing symptoms but also on identifying the root causes of flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. Armed conflicts continue to be the principal drivers of the plight of refugees. The Security Council and its members have a major responsibility and role to play in preventing conflicts from erupting.

Properly addressing the structural causes of problems of refugees requires a holistic approach that strengthens the nexus among peace, security and development and which also investigates newly identified causes, such as climate change, as the High Commissioner has noted. Fifty-one years ago, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa was adopted, and 11 years ago, the African Union (AU) adopted the Convention for the Protection and Assistance for Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. These pioneering legal and policy instruments reflect the AU's strong commitment to the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable migrants in all circumstances, which we wholeheartedly commend. Many African countries have demonstrated a remarkably high level of solidarity, providing asylum to refugees at a time of increased anxiety, xenophobia, border closure and denial of asylum in many parts of the world.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Allen**

I thank High Commissioner Grandi for his briefing, although I regretfully missed it because I was carrying out my democratic duty to elect new members of the Security Council. I thank him for the tremendous efforts that he and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are undertaking across the globe to help those most in need, particularly in the light of the huge impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The United Kingdom is a strong and steadfast supporter of UNHCR, and last year we contributed \$122 million in core and country-level funding.

I wish to echo the concerns expressed today about COVID-19's impact on refugees and internally displaced persons. We have provided \$184 million for the new United Nations appeals, including \$25 million for UNHCR, as part of an overall \$1 billion contributed to the COVID-19 response since the crisis began. That money for UNHCR and the United Nations appeals will help install handwashing stations and isolation and treatment centres in refugee camps, provide protection and education services to forcibly displaced children and increase access to clean water for displaced people in areas of armed conflict.

As the High Commissioner set out, efforts to build and sustain peace are the key to resolving displacement. The COVID-19 crisis is therefore an opportunity for us to redouble our conflict-prevention and peacebuilding efforts in support of the Secretary-General's vision of building back better.

We agree that a continued focus on solutions remains critical. We have consistently emphasized the importance of longer-term development measures that increase refugee self-reliance as well as the importance of access to key services and opportunities, including education, work and training, delivered in a way that also looks to support generous host communities and countries. In this respect, I wish to commend Jordan's recent announcement that, in its continued support for refugees across all sectors, it will allow all registered refugees, regardless of nationality, access to subsidized public health care. Indeed, we commend the generosity of all countries in the region that have hosted Syrian refugees for so long.

The entrenched conflict in Syria and the failure to reach a political solution, or even a lasting nationwide ceasefire, continues to prevent large-scale returns. While we hope that Syrians will ultimately be able to return to their homes, we agree with the United Nations assessment that conditions in Syria do not currently allow for this to occur. We continue to look to UNHCR to uphold the principles and the thresholds that should be met before facilitating returns, and we agree with the High Commissioner on the importance of measures to avert the ongoing acceleration of forced displacement. In north-west Syria, where over 1 million civilians were displaced because of the most recent chapter in the conflict, preserving the ongoing ceasefire and extending the mandate of the United Nations cross-border aid mechanism are our priorities for averting further displacement.

In Myanmar, the recent escalation of violence in Rakhine and Chin states has led to significant new displacement. This uptick in violence risks setting back efforts aimed at creating conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of Rohingya refugees. We welcomed Myanmar's recent announcement that the memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR has been extended until June 2021. However, more progress is required on creating conditions to allow for Rohingya repatriation. This remains important and urgent, given the increasing desperation in the camps in Cox's Bazar,

the threat posed by COVID-19 and the perilous boat journeys that refugees continue to risk in the Bay of Bengal, facilitated by ruthless traffickers, for which a recent regional solution is essential. We have urged the Government of Myanmar to set up a transparent and credible long-term plan to advance those priorities. We hope they will use their report to the International Court of Justice to do that and will publish it as part of the commitment to transparency. Let me pay tribute to, and again thank, the Government and the people of Bangladesh for their incredible generosity in supporting so many refugees on their territory.

Finally, let me say that the United Kingdom remains committed to doing its part to meet the needs of the 50 million internally displaced persons across the globe, 90 per cent of whom are displaced as a result of conflict and violence. We are a long-standing advocate and supporter of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, which we believe represents a critical opportunity to galvanize political attention, tackle the growing challenge of internal displacement and find solutions that all countries can take forward.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Kelly Craft**

I thank High Commissioner Grandi for his briefing today.

The United States commends the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its efforts to assist and empower millions of refugees and internally displaced and stateless people around the globe. Especially in times like these, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the thousands of aid workers in the field who are not only staying and delivering assistance to the most vulnerable, but are doing so at a very real risk to their own health and safety. I think it is very important that we reiterate in every statement we make our appreciation for those aid workers and the fact that they are risking their lives — and many times their families — in order to help others. So, to all those aid workers, including all of those in the High Commissioner's team, I want to express our sincere gratitude for being the front line.

UNHCR's task of addressing multiple global crises, from Syria to Venezuela, Burma to South Sudan, while also responding to a global pandemic, is daunting. However, we are confident that, with sufficient burden-sharing by donors, refugee-hosting countries and the private sector, UNHCR can tackle that challenge.

UNHCR is a key partner whose work complements United States humanitarian policy and assistance around the world. The United States Government is the largest single donor to UNHCR, providing nearly \$1.7 billion in funding in fiscal year 2019. We support UNHCR's efforts to ensure that it is fit for purpose and as effective and efficient as possible. We appreciate how it has adapted its approaches through new initiatives that promote self-reliance and interim solutions, as well as how it has established new or expanded modes of assistance. UNHCR has pursued serious and comprehensive reform efforts over the past few years, and we expect that its internal transformation processes will indeed result in a more agile, accountable and innovative organization.

UNHCR's work in response to coronavirus disease is helping to mitigate the spread of the virus among forcibly displaced persons, who remain at great risk while living closely in densely populated areas with poor sanitation and poor health care. While the peak of the coronavirus may still be weeks or months away in many regions, we have seen rapid and determined responses to flatten the curve in very challenging circumstances. Along with those responses, we must continue to be vigilant and ensure that contingency plans are in place to support and protect the most vulnerable amongst us.

Before I conclude, I would like to ask High Commissioner Grandi a question. As we all seek to continue supporting principled humanitarian action from this platform, we wish to enhance international cooperation, galvanize support for more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing and ensure principled, safe, voluntary, dignified and informed refugee returns. And I will say that again, because it is so important that we all speak to the refugees and let them know that we, as a Council, will be ensuring principled, safe, voluntary, dignified and informed refugee returns. So, I would like to know, as a Council member and as the United States, what can we do — what can I do — to advance those aims?

Finally, once again, I want to thank UNHCR front-line workers for being out front to try and mitigate this virus.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

We join others in thanking the High Commissioner for his briefing and expressing our appreciation for the dedicated work that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), especially thousands of its staff, has been doing on the ground to help protect refugees around the globe.

The tragic plight of refugees in many parts of the world has stirred up the concern of the international community. The latest statistics we heard today are alarming. For the last decade, every year we see a new record high of forcibly displaced people and every year we witness an unprecedented increase in refugee flows, driven mainly by decades-long conflicts in the world. But more worryingly than the numbers themselves, the figures show us a gloomy picture of the greater sufferings that those people are enduring. Their situation is fraught with inadequate living conditions, discrimination, stigmatization, limited access to basic services, among others. Emerging challenges, such as people smuggling and trafficking in persons, threaten not only their safety and security but also their lives. The adverse impact of climate change and the current coronavirus disease pandemic make their already desperate situation reach another level of severity.

In that context, efforts by host countries are commendable more than ever, but their generosity should not be taken for granted. The international community needs to recognize and share the growing burden upon their shoulders. Accordingly, we particularly emphasize the importance of burden- and responsibility-sharing to assist refugees and host countries. The Global Compact on Refugees and the first-ever Global Refugee Forum, where more than 800 commitments were made, have engendered a new confidence in boosting cooperation at all levels in order to address refugee issues. Constructive engagement and dialogue among concerned parties is also the only way to guarantee the successful return and reintegration of refugees.

In that connection, we call on all relevant stakeholders to focus on the humanitarian nature of our work to resolve refugee-related issues. Saving people is humane because that is the very nature of our moral norms and obligations. All genuine efforts must be people-centred, non-politicized and in accordance with the principles of respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned and of non-interference in internal affairs.

Another crucial factor is the pursuit of a comprehensive and holistic approach in order to make sure that we do not overlook any aspects of the challenging situation facing refugees. Conflict prevention and resolution, sustainable economic growth and the maintenance of peace and security are all mutually reinforcing towards durable solutions. To address the root causes of conflict is to address the root causes of refugee issues. We call on all warring parties in the world to show political will and make greater efforts with a view to achieving permanent ceasefires and creating the conditions conducive to lasting political solutions to conflicts.

Regarding emerging challenges to asylum, as mentioned by the High Commissioner, we would like to further emphasize the need to ensure transparency in the granting of refugee status to asylum seekers. At the same time, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between refugees and irregular migrants for economic purposes so as to develop suitable policies, especially in the context of growing non-traditional security threats, such as epidemics, natural disasters and climate change.

For our part, Viet Nam attaches great importance to enhancing cooperation at the regional and global levels, including through participating in the Bali process,

working with the UNHCR and implementing the Global Compact on Refugees. We will continue to play our part and work closely with other members of the global community in an active and responsible manner.
