



assistance framework to be developed for 2019. He further stressed the need for the UN to provide an even more holistic package of services to the benefit of the population of Burundi.

6. Ms. Ursula Müller, Assistant Secretary-General of OCHA, briefed on the humanitarian situation. She highlighted that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance had tripled over the past three years, rising from 1 to 3.6 million, more than a quarter of the population. Food security, nutrition and protection are areas of particular concern. Economic factors such as the negative trade balance, rising inflation, increased unemployment and shortages of foreign reserves as well as the impact of climate change have contributed to the current trend. Moreover, food prices have increased by more than 50 %, and 25 % of the population are now estimated to be acutely food insecure (a 7 % increase compared to 2016). Acute malnutrition rates exceed the emergency threshold in 11 of the country's 18 provinces. On displacement, she highlighted the dependency of IDPs on host communities that are already vulnerable. Returning refugees pose particular challenges to the host communities. To prevent further deterioration there is a need for continued support to the political dialogue, and for Member States to step up their support to the humanitarian response plan. The volume of the 2018 plan has doubled from last year's response plan (which was funded at 63 %). On a more positive note, the malaria epidemic, which resulted in some 9,400 deaths from 2015 to 2017, has successfully been contained.

8. Ms. Ninette Kelley, Director of the New York Office of UNHCR, informed on UN involvement in efforts to enable the return of refugees from Tanzania to Burundi. She emphasized that host communities are under significant stress in Burundi as well as in the countries of the region. Last year only 25 % of UNHCR's response plan were covered. She highlighted some of the specific vulnerabilities of the refugee population, stressing that more than 54 % are children, out of which 3,600 are unaccompanied. Under the auspices of the Burundi-Tanzania-UNHCR tripartite agreement, 13,000 refugees returned to Burundi in 2017, with another 60,000 planned for 2018. The level of confidence the refugees put into the return program depends, however, largely on the unresolved political situation. Ms Kelley informed that there has also been an influx into Burundi of around 7,000 refugees from the DRC, arriving predominantly into two communities, and posing a challenge for them. There is a risk of increased influx given the instability across the border.

9. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary General of PBCSO, highlighted how the PBC has been useful in terms of rallying continued support for Burundi. He highlighted that PBF investments are aimed at supporting projects that can help open a space to support and complement the political dialogue process. In late 2017, PBF had over the past year approved some 10 million USD for Burundi. The programs which PBF supports include a cross-border project between Burundi and Tanzania that will be

implemented as part of the Great Lakes Strategic Framework, as well as support to a UNHCR-led project that aims to strengthen the resilience of host communities. A large

constitutional reform, stressing that the reform represents one of the thorny issues between opposition and the government, hence jeopardizing the dialogue process.

14. Several delegates expressed concern about the lack of socioeconomic development. Continued dialogue with the IMF and the World Bank was encouraged. Some delegations expressed the need for the European Union's economic measures against Burundi to be removed, stressing its negative impact on Burundi, while others offered their support to the European Union's decision, and highlighted that the EU is providing funds directly to civil society and other implementing partners in Burundi, for the benefit of the population. Many delegations appealed for continued and increased funding to the humanitarian response plan. Several delegations, particularly from the region, expressed their view that the situation is improving, seeing the return of refugees as well as the decision to host the COMESA summit as indicators of positive change.

16. Ambassador Shingiro concluded by responding to the delegates and appreciating the many messages of support to Burundi, while highlighting that some, in conflict with the views of Burundi's neighbors, were not recognizing the progress Burundi has seen since 2015. He further appealed for