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REPORT ON THE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

(Submitted by the High Commissioner)

1. It is to be expected that the vast majority of refugees would wish to avail themselves of solutions which would enable them to maintain their roots or, at the very least, to preserve their regional or cultural identities. Thus, voluntary repatriation or local settlement are the solutions to refugee problems which are pursued wherever possible. In circumstances where refugees cannot benefit from either of these two solutions, resettlement, often to areas outside their region, becomes the only remaining option.
2. The High Commissioner assisted a significant number of refugees to return to their country of origin in 1979 and 1980, while hundreds of thousands more received local settlement assistance during the same period. Circumstances were such, however, that for many thousands of refugees who could neither return home nor remain where they were, the international community was called upon to extend offers of admission to enable them to begin new lives. Such was the case of a high proportion of refugees from the Indo-Chinese peninsula whose plight attracted world-wide attention and to whom Governments responded admirably with generous offers of admission; such was also the case of smaller numbers of refugees in other parts of the world whose plight was no less desperate, and for whom resettlement opportunities had to be sought.

I. Overview of the general situation

3. During 1979 and the first half of 1980, resettlement opportunities were offered by some 30 countries willing to admit refugees permanently. However, the influx of refugees in need of resettlement in various countries of first asylum in Africa, Europe, Latin America and South-East Asia called for a continued and sustained effort on their behalf. The following paragraphs describe the principal developments in each of these regions, highlighting in particular the extraordinary response by the international community to events in South-East Asia.

4. Events in the Horn of Africa, as well as continued unrest in southern Africa have led to increased efforts towards the resettlement, both within and, where necessary, outside the continent, of refugees of urban origin arriving in some of the major cities of Africa, who cannot be absorbed within the country of first asylum. In co-operation with the Organization of African Unity's Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees (BPEAR) efforts were made to follow up on recommendations adopted in this respect by the Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa held in 1979 at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania.
5. Members of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme were advised at its thirtieth session that the drive to resettle refugees in Latin America had succeeded in reducing the backlog of persons seeking resettlement and that the on-going needs were of a level which could be met by current response, provided the willingness to admit refugees from Latin America continued. It should be noted however that there continues to be a refugee influx in various countries in Latin America, and that offers of admission for such refugees are therefore still required. The average monthly rate of resettlement out of Latin America during 1979 was 136, and 76 in the first half of 1980. It is estimated that some 150 resettlement places per month will be needed in 1980.
6. Resettlement activities in Europe were pursued, as in previous years, with the close collaboration of ICEM and a number of voluntary agencies, with UNHCR placing special emphasis on the handicapped and on those who had remained in camps for extended periods of time. The influx of Eastern European refugees increased during the course of 1979 and 1980, however, necessitating a sustained effort on the part of traditional resettlement countries to match the needs.
7. The main preoccupation in the field of resettlement continued to be refugees from the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Following the meeting convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 and 21 July 1979, 269,111 refugees were resettled in 30 countries between August 1979 and 30 June 1980. Although the backlog, which stood at 360,000 persons in July 1979, was reduced to some 220,000 by the end of June 1980, this sizeable number still waited in camps in various countries of temporary asylum, while new refugees continued to arrive, although at a slower pace than in early 1979.
8. During the period under review numerous individuals or groups of refugees in various parts of the world were in need of urgent action to ensure their safety. In some cases, action was required within a matter of hours. These situations were a constant reminder of the need for Governments to develop a streamlined procedure allowing a limited number of refugees to be admitted on an emergency basis in circumstances of real urgency.
9. The reporting period saw an increased involvement on the part of countries willing to admit refugees but unable to bear alone the costs of integrating them. UNHCR has provided financial assistance to countries lacking facilities to receive refugees and has prepared plans to assist with their integration. It will be necessary in 1980, and for some time to come, to continue to underwrite some of the costs of resettling refugees in these countries, whether in rural settlements or through other durable solutions. In this connection, it is important to ensure that a sound plan for the refugees' socio-economic integration is developed before the resettlement operation begins and that such a plan can be implemented effectively.

10. Handicapped refugees continue to be the subject of concern and particular attention. Although both mentally and physically handicapped persons continue to be admitted by some countries of resettlement under the "Ten or More Plan" and similar schemes, the fact remains that it is precisely those refugees who are in most need of resettlement (for medical treatment) who are among the most difficult to place. Their situation demands continued vigilance to ensure that their needs are not overlooked. The situation of handicapped refugees will become all the more relevant in 1981, which has been designated as the International Year for Disabled Persons.

II. Review of Operations

A. Africa

11. The resettlement caseload in Africa, though relatively small compared to other regions in the world, grew noticeably in 1979 and early 1980 as a result of events in the Horn of Africa and continued uncertainty in southern Africa. Many hundreds of refugees of urban origin, primarily from Ethiopia, arrived in such centres as Djibouti, Cairo, Nairobi and Khartoum, placing a severe strain on local resources. While it is difficult to be sure of precise figures, it can be estimated that some 2,000 to 3,000 urban refugees in various parts of Africa need to be resettled elsewhere, either within the African continent or outside. These do not include refugee students on whose behalf UNHCR seeks educational placement opportunities in various countries if places in educational institutions in their country of asylum are not available.

12. The Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, referred to above, adopted recommendations regarding the resettlement of African refugees. It reaffirmed the principle of integrating refugees within their cultural regions, and urged African countries to share in the responsibility of absorbing refugees. These recommendations are now being translated into a plan of action by the OAU/BPEAR. A high-level delegation from within the OAU Commission of Ten plans to undertake missions to selected African countries with a view to promoting the principle of "burden-sharing". The UNHCR Field Resettlement Officer for Africa is collaborating closely with the OAU/BPEAR Office in Addis Ababa in the formulation and implementation of these plans.

13. In cases where there is no possibility of absorption in Africa, the High Commissioner has appealed to several resettlement countries outside the region. However, some resettlement countries find themselves severely handicapped by their inability to process refugees due to the lack of local immigration offices. It would therefore be desirable for countries to develop the appropriate procedures to enable on-the-spot processing of resettlement applications.

B. Asia

14. 1979 will surely be remembered as the year in which the situation of Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons became critical. At the end of 1978, 135,119 persons who had arrived overland and 67,836 "boat people" remained in camps. In the early months of 1979, the numbers of arrivals by boat increased dramatically from just under 10,000 in January to 26,602 in April, with a record 54,871 in June 1979 while an average of 7,085 persons per month crossed into Thailand overland.

15. It will be recalled that on 20 and 21 July 1979 the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened in Geneva a Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia which was attended by representatives of 65 countries. One major result of this meeting was that the number of resettlement opportunities increased to some 260,000 for the twelve-month period ending 30 June 1980. Thirty countries stood ready to admit Indo-Chinese for permanent resettlement. Thus, departures from camps began to rise very markedly, from 6,610 in January 1979 to 18,161 in July, with a monthly average of 24,157 for the remaining five months of the year. It is most encouraging to note that this very high rate of departure continued into 1980, reaching a record 29,924 in February and averaging 24,419 over the first six months of this year, including those travelling to Refugee Processing Centres.
16. At the same time arrivals by boat decreased very substantially from July 1979 onwards, averaging 5,583 per month from after the July meeting to the end of the year and 4,878 in the first four months of 1980. The numbers have been rising perceptibly again since May 1980, when they reached 10,915 compared to 2,690 in January.
17. The High Commissioner would like to pay tribute to the admirable efforts of many countries in accepting, often at very short notice, large numbers of Indo-Chinese for resettlement. The Office is aware of the task undertaken by Governments and voluntary agencies in receiving the refugees and in assisting them to integrate. In some countries, the participation of the general public has been notable, especially following the dramatic events of mid-1979 which led to an unprecedented awareness of the plight of the "boat people" in particular. In many cases, reception arrangements included not only those selected in the camps in South-East Asia by representatives of the receiving countries, but also Vietnamese rescued on the high seas by merchant vessels. At least 8,000 persons were so rescued in the course of 1979, and the figure for the first half of 1980 is proportionately higher, at some 6,000 persons.
18. With regard to rescue at sea, many ships which have rescued Vietnamese in distress have experienced delays in port as refugees have not been allowed to disembark prior to the satisfaction of certain conditions. Particular problems have arisen with vessels flying flags of convenience. Following discussions with a number of Governments, a resettlement reserve of 1,160 places, contributed by six nations, was placed at the disposal of UNHCR to permit prompt disembarkation from ships flying flags of convenience or flags of States unable to offer resettlement guarantees. UNHCR makes every effort to effect the resettlement of these persons to appropriate destinations, but a reserve is necessary in order to allow for speedy disembarkation regardless of the final destination. As of mid-1980, some 577 places were still available out of the total of 1,160 places provided for this purpose. It is essential that this reserve be maintained to provide for the rapid disembarkation of persons rescued at sea.
19. During 1979, the Office intensified its efforts on behalf of the "vulnerable groups", such as unaccompanied minors and the handicapped. Social workers employed by UNHCR or seconded to UNHCR by voluntary agencies interviewed unaccompanied minors in the camps with a view to determining the family situation of each individual and to making recommendations as to the best solution for each case. In this effort, UNHCR took as a framework the internationally-established conventions relating to the welfare of children, and co-operated closely with agencies such as the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the International Union for Child Welfare, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Social Service. The Office consistently referred to the European Convention on the Adoption of Children, to the ECOSOC Draft Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to Adoption

and Foster Placement of Children Nationally and Internationally, to ECOSOC resolution 1979/28 on Adoption and Foster Placement of Children and to the International Council of Voluntary Agencies recommendations on unaccompanied refugee minors from South-East Asia. The surveys carried out by UNHCR showed that the overwhelming majority of unaccompanied minors in the camps were in the 15 to 17 age group, that only a very small number were in fact orphans and that approximately half had relatives either in other camps or in third countries. Therefore, every effort was made to locate relatives or to ascertain whether other persons might be in a position to care for these children before any permanent solution was proposed.

20. Another vulnerable group on whose behalf special efforts were made were the socially, physically or mentally handicapped. In both "boat" and "land" camps there are many hundreds of persons belonging to families containing one or more members suffering from a minor handicap; but there are also those who have more severe ailments requiring hospitalisation, artificial limbs or long-term therapy and rehabilitation. Some countries have been exemplary in accepting large numbers of handicapped refugees. For the humanitarian, compassionate approach of such countries the High Commissioner is especially appreciative.

21. Whereas up to the end of 1979 the collection, recording and processing of bio-data on Indo-Chinese was done manually, an electronic data processing system was introduced in 1980 to facilitate the tracing and resettlement of Indo-Chinese, and eventually other groups of refugees, requiring resettlement.

22. A significant development in the period under review was the creation of a Refugee Processing Centre (RPC) at Bataan in the Philippines, and the construction of another RPC on Galang Island, Indonesia. It will be recalled that at the July 1979 meeting convened by the Secretary-General (mentioned at paragraphs 7 and 15 above), the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines offered to host Refugee Processing Centres to help relieve congestion in the existing camps. Over 9,000 refugees accepted by the United States of America have proceeded to Bataan; a further 7,000 to 8,000 will be accommodated in that Centre in a few months' time when the second phase of the building programme is completed. On Galang, arrangements are sufficiently well advanced to permit the RPC to open towards the end of October 1980. Meanwhile, the Government of Indonesia has offered to allow groups of up to 15,00 accepted refugees per month to enter Galang prior to the opening of the RPC. They will be sheltered in the first asylum camp on Galang, which has accommodation for over 15,000 people.

23. Members of the Executive Committee are aware of the large-scale influx into Thailand in 1979 of several hundred thousand Kampuchians, some 150,000 of whom were accommodated in UNHCR holding centres. Of those Kampuchians who arrived in Thailand in the last eight months, 1,706 have been helped to join relatives in third countries. Priority has been given to those with immediate family in third countries, and subsequently to those with secondary relatives (brothers or sisters) whom they wish to join. As selection missions have not had access to the holding centres for Kampuchians, the refugees have been preselected on the basis of basic biographical data and then transferred to a special camp where their resettlement processing can be completed. Biographical data has also been provided to embassies at their request as countries of potential resettlement are identified.

24. In the course of 1979 and 1980 the Office has undertaken efforts to interpret to receiving Governments the needs of Kampuchean refugees in Viet Nam, a limited number of whom have been identified and registered for resettlement. A total of 943 Kampuchean refugees had been resettled with UNHCR assistance in 1980 by 30 June. Through the generosity of the Austrian and French Governments, transit facilities were provided in Vienna and Paris to facilitate the processing of a number of these refugees on their way to countries of final destination. However, resettlement opportunities for this group of refugees, many of whom have relatives or other ties abroad, are still required.
25. The Orderly Departure Programme from Viet Nam was a subject which received particular attention at the July 1979 meeting. At that time, receiving countries and the Vietnamese Government reiterated their mutual commitment to the establishment of a humanitarian option for persons wishing to leave Viet Nam. Although over 3,000 persons have left Viet Nam for various countries of new residence under this programme, its successful implementation requires the establishment of legal departures to all destinations on a continuing basis, an end which has not yet been achieved. The High Commissioner remains committed to this programme and calls upon Governments concerned to facilitate its fullest possible implementation.
26. The High Commissioner wishes to emphasize the continuing need for resettlement opportunities for Indo-Chinese. As of 30 June 1980 there were 94,486 "boat people" in camps awaiting resettlement. In Thailand, without counting the recent arrivals from Kampuchea, 128,853 persons who had arrived overland were awaiting a durable solution. A further 9,631 persons were in the newly-constructed RPC in Bataan, the Philippines, on their way to being resettled. Paragraph 24 above refers to the needs of Kampucheans in Viet Nam. As the High Commissioner had the opportunity to express to Governments by letter in February 1980, countries are urged to maintain their efforts to provide new homes for the large numbers of Indo-Chinese who have no alternative but to seek resettlement in third countries. Renewal of the special quotas offered in 1979 and an increase of such offers wherever possible is essential. The Office is prepared to provide all possible support in the implementation of the resettlement operation by documenting needs, consulting on the scope of resettlement quotas, co-ordinating the work of selection missions as well as by offering guidance on integration schemes.
27. In order to prepare for final resettlement, a comprehensive programme of language training and orientation has been drawn up in consultation with concerned Governments and voluntary agencies and is being implemented in various countries of South-East Asia. This programme consists of regular language training for all refugees awaiting resettlement as well as intensive language training and orientation for those proceeding to the United States. These training programmes will be carried out by specialized voluntary agencies in first asylum camps as well as in the RPCs.
28. A Workshop on the Integration of Indo-Chinese in Countries of Resettlement is to be held from 29 September to 3 October 1980 to facilitate the exchange of information on methods and procedures of integration between countries admitting Indo-Chinese refugees, and to serve as a forum for the presentation and discussion of integration techniques by the participants.

C. Latin America

29. As in previous years, the situation in Latin America required close attention to ensure that the influx of new refugees was balanced by a proportionally steady level of resettlement. Refugees continued to be registered for resettlement in such countries as Argentina and Brazil along with small numbers in Peru. Particular efforts were made to secure permanent resettlement opportunities to refugees granted temporary asylum in Brazil.

30. At 30 June 1979 the number of refugees in countries of asylum in Latin America awaiting resettlement stood at 423 persons, the majority of whom had registered for resettlement in the preceding 12 months. During 1979 the rate of registration of new refugees averaged 100 persons per month.

31. At 30 June 1980 the number of refugees awaiting resettlement in countries of asylum in Latin America stood at 284 persons, and the rate of registration of new refugees for resettlement averaged 86 persons per month. In addition to this number there were 546 persons, mainly in Chile, waiting to join family members already resettled abroad. This latter figure had increased by over 200 since the same time in 1979. On present indications, therefore, offers of admission for some 1,900 refugees in Latin America will be required during the coming 12 months, of which some 500 would be needed from countries where family members already reside.

32. Over 40 countries have contributed to the overall effort to resettle Latin American refugees since the beginning of this operation, but, in recent years, it has been the efforts of a relatively small number of countries that have kept the problem within manageable proportions. It is encouraging that these countries recognize the continuing nature of the problem. It must, however, be stressed that the needs in Latin America, although relatively small numerically, will require continuing attention to prevent the excessive backlogs of refugees awaiting resettlement that have occurred in the past.

33. In the period under review, 90 per cent of those Latin American refugees resettled under UNHCR auspices were accepted in Europe, some 8 per cent in North America and the remainder in other parts of the world. These figures do not include persons who were admitted to various countries without UNHCR involvement.

34. Almost 120,000 persons left Cuba during the first quarter of 1980, of whom the vast majority (over 115,000 persons) reached the United States by boat, with smaller numbers travelling by plane to Costa Rica, Peru and Spain. At the request of the Governments concerned, the High Commissioner agreed to assist in the resettlement of those refugees who needed to be resettled elsewhere, particularly those with family members abroad, and to that effect the High Commissioner contacted a number of resettlement countries and assigned staff members to the refugee centres to process potential applications. Close co-ordination was maintained with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration which had earlier sought resettlement openings for these persons.

D. Europe

35. Although the influx of Eastern European refugees has increased somewhat, particularly in the first asylum countries of Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, an increase in the number of opportunities for resettlement to such countries as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States has been instrumental in avoiding a drastic rise in the caseload. A number of refugees, including the physically or mentally handicapped, have not met selection criteria, however, and have thus been exposed to extended waiting periods. Measures have been taken to promote their resettlement within the framework of special schemes.

36. Many countries of Western Europe have experienced an unusually high influx of spontaneous arrivals, many of them from the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan. The host Governments have offered permanent settlement to a number of these persons, while others have found their way to countries overseas or have returned to their countries of first asylum.

III. Conclusions

37. UNHCR's expenditures in 1979, mostly for transportation costs and for other costs related to resettlement processing, amounted to some \$14.1 million. Most of the transportation was entrusted to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM). UNHCR financed transportation costs in those instances where transportation was not covered by the Government of the country of resettlement. Funds were also used to finance resettlement counselling, mass registration, documentation, medical examinations, resettlement grants and other related expenses when these were not covered by the Governments concerned.

38. In the period under review, the co-operation of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the many voluntary agencies was, as always, instrumental in ensuring the smooth operation of the resettlement programme. ICEM provided valuable services in arranging the transportation of thousands of refugees every month, while ICRC expanded its activities in tracing relatives and arranging mail services, most notably in South-East Asia. Voluntary agencies played crucial roles in first asylum camps by assisting immigration officials from certain countries in processing resettlement applications and, in resettlement countries, by taking a very active part in reception and integration arrangements and by sustaining public interest through individual sponsorships.

39. It has been encouraging to note, during the past year, a broadening of acceptance criteria to include refugees who hitherto might have stood little chance of being accepted under earlier criteria. It hardly has to be stated that requirements for resettlement may not coincide with needs for manpower foreseen under countries' immigration programmes. The overriding consideration in the forging of refugee programmes usually is - and indeed must be - a humanitarian one. It is therefore essential that criteria be as flexible as possible and that careful consultations between Governments and UNHCR take place prior to the formulation of admission criteria. In this way, the needs of the refugees can best be met by those countries willing to provide durable solutions to their plight.

40. The integration of tens of thousands of refugees into totally different climatic, social, economic and cultural conditions will challenge the resourcefulness of the governmental and private sectors for years to come. Mindful of this, the High Commissioner continues to pursue all avenues to urge Governments to accept refugees for resettlement within their own geographical regions. Mention has been made above of efforts undertaken in Africa in co-ordination with the OAU/BPEAR. Mention should also be made of the contribution in Asia of the People's Republic of China, which has not only admitted and is integrating some 265,000 refugees from Viet Nam, but has offered to accept an additional 10,000 refugees from neighbouring countries of first asylum.

41. As set forth in the preceding paragraphs, the needs for resettlement are widespread, despite the enormous efforts undertaken by the international community over the last year. The outbreak of conflicts and social upheavals which has caused the uprooting of large numbers of people around the world requires the High Commissioner to explore all possible durable solutions. Whereas local settlement assistance can be provided in the majority of refugee situations, when voluntary repatriation is not sought the High Commissioner must continue to call upon the international community for resettlement opportunities in those situations where resettlement is the required solution. Despite the remarkable efforts made on behalf of refugees in South-East Asia, one must not lose sight of the fact that needs for their resettlement persist and that refugees in other parts of the world are often in situations of equal distress, where local settlement is not feasible and where resettlement is the only solution which can offer the possibility of a productive and secure life.

ANNEX

REFUGEES AND/OR DISPLACED PERSONS FROM LATIN AMERICA
AND FROM THE INDO-CHINESE PENINSULA RESETTLED IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES^{a/}

COUNTRY/TERRITORY OF RESETTLEMENT	REFUGEES FROM LATIN AMERICA			REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS FROM THE INDO-CHINESE PENINSULA				GRAND TOTAL
	Jan-Dec 1979	Jan-June 1980	Cumulative Total since 1973	Jan-Dec 1979	Jan-June 1980	Cumulative Total		
						since 1975	of whom "boat people"	
Algeria			127					127
Argentina	71		1,465	948	332	1,281	38	2,746
Australia		12	838	14,247	7,700	37,913	30,076	38,751
Austria	6	5	404	335	468	1,038	739	1,442
Belgium	72	17	413	1,600	393	3,190	1,044	3,603
Brazil	9	3	46	66	2	68	66	114
Canada	229	13	3,294	24,729	23,635	58,701	37,676	61,995
China			832	1	2,554	2,555	8	3,387
Colombia			101					101
Costa Rica	1	3	104					104
Cuba	1	1	727					727
Czechoslovakia			29					29
Denmark	114	57	410	892	177	1,473	1,173	1,883
Ecuador	2	5	98					98
Finland	2		51	100	15	115	115	166
France	234	46	2,391	13,522	5,802	65,416	8,975	67,807
Germany, Democratic Rep.		1	319					319
Germany, Federal Rep. of	31	2	618	9,063	2,764	14,209	10,306	14,827
Greece				52	43	95	95	95
Hong Kong				146	47	9,372	250	9,372
Hungary		1	334					334
Iceland				34		34	34	34
Iran						47		47
Ireland			25	212		212	212	237
Israel			7	300		366	366	373
Italy	16	1	341	1,709	313	2,273	1,634	2,614
Japan				135	391	540	355	540
Luxembourg			53	63	1	70	64	123
Malaysia				551	5	2,142	8	2,142
Mexico	13	8	708					708
Mozambique	3		23					23
Netherlands	164	10	877	2,065	585	2,978	2,711	3,855
New Zealand	7	8	389	1,047	938	2,667	1,970	3,056
Norway	63	26	327	981	306	1,888	1,798	2,215
Pan-ma	2		181					181
Paraguay			14			31	31	45
Peru			123					123
Philippines				5		131		131
Portugal			39					39
Romania	1		1,170					1,170
Spain	29	6	187	251	257	508	1	695
Sweden	832	319	4,713	1,557	64	1,621	1,621	1,334
Switzerland	105	30	880	2,565	1,629	5,315	2,992	6,195
United Kingdom	33	3	1,365	5,143	3,659	10,001	9,260	11,366
United States of America	62	14	714	110,452	84,592	254,852 ^{b/}	140,552	255,566
USSR			63					63
Venezuela	11	14	337					337
Yugoslavia	1		41					41
Other countries and areas			110	258	2,982	3,791	3,301	3,901
TOTAL	2,114	605	25,288	193,029	139,654	484,893	257,471	510,181

^{a/} Figures also include refugees "sur place" and asylum-seekers accepted for permanent settlement in the respective countries in so far as they have been notified to UNHCR.

^{b/} Not including approximately 130,000 persons who arrived in the United States in mid 1975.