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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 318TH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva  
on Tuesday 7 October 1980, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BIRIDO (Sudan)  
later: Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom)  
later: Mr. BIRIDO (Sudan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 3: GENERAL DEBATE (continued) (A/AC.96/INF.160)

Mr. SALAH BEFY (Algeria) said that his delegation would confine itself to the humanitarian aspects of the problems before the Executive Committee, although it was fully aware of the close link between the increasing number of refugees in the world and the increasing number and intensity of civil and international conflicts. The temptation should be resisted to use the human suffering of refugees for ideological or propaganda purposes, and all refugees deserved equal attention without partisanship in favour of particular categories.

In practical terms, the original machinery of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had to be adapted to its newer broadened responsibilities resulting from increased international tension. His delegation welcomed the steps already taken in that direction in line with a number of General Assembly resolutions. In view of the current dimensions of the task facing UNHCR, however, even greater reorganization and adjustment was required. For the same reason, UNHCR needed the help of other United Nations agencies and of non-governmental organizations, and their efforts must be better co-ordinated so as to avoid gaps on the one hand, and duplication of effort on the other. The interagency missions which had been sent to certain countries were a step in the right direction, but there should be more of them and they should be given a clearer mandate to harmonize the efforts of all the United Nations bodies concerned, while recognizing the primacy of UNHCR for the humanitarian problems. The members of the Executive Committee could also help the High Commissioner more systematically by engaging in useful exchanges of information with him in informal meetings. Moreover, the holding of a second session of the Executive Committee during the year, if circumstances warranted, could only be of benefit to all concerned.

Limiting his specific observations for the sake of brevity to the problems of the African continent, he pointed out that the number of refugees in African countries was far greater than the number receiving assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner because many of those countries preferred to absorb as many refugees as they could into their own population rather than register them for international assistance. The Office of the High Commissioner simply did not have the material or financial means to protect the approximately 5 million refugees and assimilated persons in the African continent. What was more, various conflicts and natural disasters, such as drought, had led to a precipitous rise in the number of displaced persons in Africa, creating a situation requiring urgent attention. Their fate could not be separated from that of persons holding refugee status because both categories were bound by common suffering, a fact which had been recognized in a number of General Assembly resolutions broadening the High Commissioner's mandate to cover displaced persons.

With regard to the specific case of displaced persons in Ethiopia, he urged the Executive Committee to give special attention to the recent appeal to the international community by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1980/54, to take measures to alleviate their plight in order to show that it was concerned about displaced persons as well as refugees.

Another matter deserving attention was the fact that, in spite of considerable international assistance, the countries of asylum were, first and foremost, donor countries, in that they had to bear heavy economic, financial and social burdens in receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees. It was particularly unjust, under the circumstances, for Africa, the poorest continent, to be relatively less favoured in the matter of aid from the international community, even though its difficulties were well known. That situation should be rectified, not at the expense of other areas which also received a large number of refugees, but by according the African continent equitable treatment in proportion to its needs.

To mark their solidarity with the countries of asylum and to emphasize their strictly humanitarian character, contributions to international aid should not be earmarked for particular programmes or specific groups of refugees, so that UNHCR could have a free hand in using those contributions to meet emergencies as and where they arose.

In conclusion, he announced that his own Government had decided to increase substantially its contribution to UNHCR, to supplement the direct contribution it was making as a country of asylum.

Mr. SUZUKI (Japan) said that his country, which intended to contribute constructively to a solution of the world's refugee problems, was making progress towards accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

While refugee problems were basically of a humanitarian nature, it was essential to understand that they could be resolved only by tackling their causes. The refugee problem in Asia, in which Japan naturally showed the greatest interest, was seriously affecting the peace and stability of the region. Although the number of Kampuchean refugees and displaced persons was decreasing, the situation was still fluid and another mass influx into Thailand could not be ruled out. He earnestly hoped that the root cause of the problem would be removed by the withdrawal of all foreign forces in the area so that peace could be restored and a prompt political solution achieved. As to the question of the "boat people", his Government had always maintained that the Government of Viet Nam should restrain the disorderly exodus of refugees, which, happily, was now diminishing. The Japanese authorities were, however, discussing with the Vietnamese ways of ensuring orderly departure in cases where family reunification was involved.

Japan's contribution towards relief and assistance for Indo-Chinese refugees had amounted to \$US 90 million in fiscal year 1979 and would amount to approximately \$US 100 million in 1980. As to the resettlement of refugees in Japan, his Government had doubled its quota from 500 to 1,000 and was assisting those admitted in such areas as language and vocational training, finding employment, and so forth. His Government had always offered temporary asylum to the "boat people", and nearly 4,000 of them had been allowed to land in Japan since April 1975.

To cope with the increasingly important problem of Afghan refugees, Japan had contributed one billion yen to UNHCR in response to the High Commissioner's appeal, in addition to the substantial financial and material aid it had provided through the Government of Pakistan and the World Food Programme. Following a visit by its Foreign Minister, Japan had sent a mission to the Afghan refugee camps in order to identify specific possibilities for Japanese relief operations, and he urged other countries and international bodies to co-operate in the assistance activities in that region.

The financial and administrative burden of the refugee problem on UNHCR was growing, and his Government, as one of the major donors, wished to stress that additional effort was needed in order further to improve UNHCR operations. More detailed and up-to-date information on the financial situation and on specific activities was required in order to cope effectively with all of the various appeals issued by the High Commissioner. His Government therefore welcomed the steps which had already been taken in that direction, particularly those aimed at strengthening the dialogue between UNHCR and the Governments concerned, and hoped that an appropriate exchange of views would take place well in advance so that the programme could be implemented satisfactorily. It also welcomed the Canadian proposal to set up a working group to give detailed consideration to financial and administrative matters.

Mr. KASTOFT (Denmark) said that his delegation welcomed the steps the High Commissioner had already taken to adjust his Office to the increasing burden being placed upon it, and it noted the intention to increase training activities for UNHCR staff. In view of the increasing need to respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies, it supported the idea of increasing the emergency fund and giving it wider scope. Emergency operations required still further improvements in the co-ordination and management of United Nations humanitarian assistance, and Denmark was prepared to assist in further deliberations on that subject with a view to avoiding gaps and overlapping.

In order to help UNHCR meet the vastly increased financial burden resulting from the magnitude and seriousness of the refugee problem, Denmark, as part of its total expenditures on behalf of refugees, had contributed some \$US 3 million to the general programmes in 1980, which was double its ordinary contribution in 1979, and intended to increase it further in 1981. When contributions in response to special appeals were added, Denmark's total assistance to UNHCR in 1980 so far amounted to some \$US 8 million. He mentioned those figures not only to show how seriously his Government took the refugee problem but also to renew its earlier pleas for a more equitable sharing of the burden among donor countries.

With reference to the observations of the representative of Zimbabwe, he said that the information given would form a basis for decisions on the best utilization of the Dkr. 10 million earmarked for Zimbabwe in 1981.

Denmark had taken an active part in the resettlement programme and had given special attention to the handicapped and other particularly vulnerable persons in offering asylum to refugees from Asia, Africa and Latin America. It had also made extraordinary appropriations for the reception of Indo-Chinese refugees rescued by Danish ships. In that connexion, he noted the importance his Government attached to the Workshop on Integration of Refugees from Indo-China in countries of resettlement. He also pointed to the specific action undertaken in his country to ensure each refugee the enjoyment of rights and opportunities on an equal footing with Danish citizens. Extremely important to the successful integration of refugees was the widespread involvement of the entire population so as to ensure understanding and acceptance, and the work of the High Commissioner in disseminating information on the situation of refugees was therefore of great importance.

His Government welcomed the growing interest in expanding the scope of UNHCR activities to include refugee programmes containing resettlement and development objectives. It was prepared to seek financial means to support specific projects aimed at resettling refugees in developing countries because such projects would not only contribute to a more durable, but also to a more economical solution, and one which would be beneficial to the host country.

Mr. LIANG Yu-fan (China) praised the results achieved by the High Commissioner and his associates in providing relief and aid to millions of refugees and expressed his appreciation for the assistance provided by various countries.

There had been an alarming increase in the number of refugees in recent years, with a corresponding increase in the amount expended by UNHCR on aid. The increasing gravity of the problem and the concomitant violations of peace and security were causing general concern. In addition to the continuous flow of "boat people" from Viet Nam, there had been a fresh exodus of refugees from Afghanistan at the end of the previous year after its occupation by a foreign Power. He paid tribute to the ASEAN countries, particularly Thailand and Pakistan, for the aid they were giving, and noted that it was the responsibility of the international community to provide further necessary assistance. Other serious situations existed in Africa, arising from the excesses of colonialism and South African racism, and there were masses of refugees in dire difficulties in the Horn of Africa. Newly independent Zimbabwe was faced with the heavy task of healing the wounds left by colonial rule. His delegation endorsed the aid furnished to African refugees by the High Commissioner and supported the initiative for an international conference on refugee problems in Africa. It also supported the extension of aid to refugees in other areas of the world.

Since the previous session of the Executive Committee it had become clear that it was essential to put an end to the root causes of refugee problems. The fact that Afghanistan had been occupied by armed force, that Kampuchea continued to be trampled underfoot and that the border areas of Thailand had been invaded showed that it was necessary to check policies of expansionism if the flow of refugees was to be diminished. Only by calling for the withdrawal of the aggressors could world peace and stability be ensured.

In the UNHCR's efforts to cope with an ever expanding task, a significant event had been the recent holding of the Workshop on Integration of Refugees from Indo-China in Countries of Resettlement. His delegation also believed that the Executive Committee should give careful consideration to the Canadian proposal for arrangement of the Committee's work to ensure a better exchange of information and improved management of financial and administrative questions.

His Government had joined in the relief efforts by the international community. It had so far resettled 263,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, and in the past two years had provided a total of some \$US 600 million for that purpose. In that connexion, he thanked the UNHCR, the World Food Programme and other international organizations for their aid. Through the UNHCR or bilateral channels his Government had donated some \$US 3.2 million for relief to refugees; although only a modest contribution, it represented the profound sympathy of the Chinese people for innocent refugees. Despite the difficulties being encountered by China as a developing country, it was continuing its efforts to fulfil its humanitarian obligations by resettling the grossly persecuted Indo-Chinese refugees.

Mr. ABDEL-RAHMAN (Sudan) paid tribute to the work accomplished by the High Commissioner since the Committee's previous session. Welcoming the representative of independent Zimbabwe, he noted the constructive manner in which the High Commissioner had been able to repatriate and settle several hundred thousand refugees in Zimbabwe as well as thousands of Chadians who had taken refuge in Cameroon.

The fact that nearly 50 per cent of the world refugee population was now in Africa had been overshadowed by recent events in other regions. It was high time that the international community again directed due attention to Africa. He recalled the attempts being made to find just and durable solutions to refugee problems and referred to the 1979 Arusha Conference, General Assembly resolution 34/61, resolution CM/814 (XXXV) of the seventeenth African Summit Conference, and Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/54. He hoped that the High Commissioner in co-operation with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and other relevant bodies would undertake the necessary preparatory work for an international pledging conference for African refugees.

The large influx of refugees into the Sudan, totalling some half million, had prompted it to designate 1980 as the "Year of the Refugee". An International Conference on Refugees had been held in Khartoum in June 1980 and had been attended by Representatives of many governments, intergovernmental organizations and voluntary agencies. The Conference had adopted resolutions embodying his Government's policy objectives of accommodating all refugees in regular settlements, to be integrated into the over-all development plan for the areas adjacent to the settlement, with a view to the maintenance of harmonious relations between the refugees and the local population.

Draft legislation was now being submitted for the establishment of a National Refugee Fund as recommended by the Conference, to be financed by national and international fund-raising activities and donor pledges. Moreover, his Government was taking measures to strengthen its Office of the Commissioner of Refugees in Khartoum.

The Conference had co-incided with the visit of an inter-agency mission sent in compliance with ECOSOC resolution 1980/10. The mission had recommended a comprehensive assistance programme, which would require \$US 232 million to finance urgent programmes in settlement projects, food aid, education and training, health, agriculture and pre-implementation sectoral planning assistance, plus an additional \$US 70 million for social development and welfare services, transport and industry projects.

His Government wished to stress the urgent need to implement the conclusions and recommendations of the Conference and the inter-agency mission. He drew attention to the magnitude of the assistance needed and the importance of burden-sharing in the contributions of donor countries and institutions. In that connexion, both UNESCO resolution 109 EX/Decision 7.1.8 and ECOSOC resolution 1980/53 called for maximum financial and material support to be given the Government of the Sudan in its efforts to provide shelter, food and other services to the growing number of refugees.

In connexion with UNHCR assistance activities and the proposed voluntary fund programmes and budget for 1981 (A/AC.96/577 and Add.1 and 2), he registered his delegation's deep concern with regard to the small allocation of assistance proposed for the Sudan. The Sudan had now been overtaken by events and had received 10,000 more refugees from Ethiopia and 2,000 from Uganda since the previous May. As a least developed country, it was faced with serious difficulties and scarcities of essential commodities and energy. He therefore hoped that the Committee would recommend a substantial increase in the proposed assistance to the Sudan so that his country could continue to provide aid to the growing number of refugees. At the same time, he thanked those friendly countries which had attended the Khartoum Conference and made financial contributions and pledges of assistance.

He commended the High Commissioner on the establishment of a Fund for Durable Solutions (A/AC.96/582 and 583), which would make a great contribution to the solution of refugee problems. He noted with appreciation the readiness of major donor countries to contribute together with the World Bank, UNDP and the World Food Programme, and proposed that the High Commissioner should take the necessary measures to make the Fund's objectives, size and nature known to other possible donors.

His delegation agreed in principle with the Canadian delegation's proposal for the establishment of a sub-committee on financial and administrative questions and noted that the proposed body should be open to all members of the United Nations.

His delegation fully supported the measures taken by the High Commissioner to enable him to meet the growing demands on his Office, in particular the creation of a Policy, Planning and Research Unit, the setting up of an Emergency Unit and the extension of training facilities, which he hoped would also include the training of national staff directly engaged in refugee work in countries of asylum. In conclusion, he stressed the efforts being made by his country, with support from the international community to meet the urgent daily needs of refugees.

Mr. SAHM (Federal Republic of Germany) expressed his appreciation to the High Commissioner and to ICRC, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and many other international organizations for their outstanding work, as well as to the many private relief organizations which were trying to help in solving refugee problems.

Since the catastrophic situation which had occurred in Europe at the end of World War II, the refugee problem had changed its focus and now affected more particularly the Third World countries. The refugee population totalled some 10 to 12 million people and the crisis showed little sign of abating. After the tragic events in Indo-China and Afghanistan, the international community must now direct its attention to the situation in Africa, where the plight of millions of refugees was worsened by a gloomy food situation. Latin America also continued to be of concern.

It was his Government's view that urgent action must be taken to deal with the root causes of world-wide refugee situations and his Government had taken the initiative in the United Nations General Assembly to that end. He was glad to note that the Special Committee of the General Assembly was going to consider the proposal for the adoption of the necessary measures within the framework of a common policy, with special emphasis on prevention.

In common with many others, his Government had done its utmost to provide all possible support for the work of the High Commissioner and it would continue to do so. But more humanitarian aid was needed, and the appeals for more aid should be heard particularly by those who, to some extent, were responsible for some of the present grave situations and who had the economic capacity to increase their assistance.

In connexion with the High Commissioner's opening statement, he noted that the latter was working in the direction of adapting his organization and operations to the new challenges posed by the refugee situation. He was much interested in the experience to be gained from the working of the new Planning Unit and the Emergency Unit set up in UNHCR. Both might be too limited, in terms of personnel, for execution of the important tasks entrusted to them.

He endorsed the Canadian delegation's proposal concerning the establishment of a working group to study financial and administrative matters. On the question of apportioning administrative costs between the United Nations regular budget and UNHCR's voluntary funds, parliaments and many private contributors found it hard to understand that a large part of the voluntary funds provided for general or special programmes was being absorbed by administrative costs. Document A/AC.96/584 contained constructive proposals in that connexion.

He agreed that better co-ordination of activities was needed in order to avoid overlaps and gaps in refugee relief work. The matter was to be studied by the Secretary-General at the request of ECOSOC, and it was to be hoped that a method would be found which ensured maximum efficiency while respecting each organization's sphere of responsibility. The many existing official and unofficial contacts would doubtless be helpful.

In concluding, he urged the High Commissioner not only to continue the many activities he had outlined but also to expand contacts with Governments in order that the latter might more closely follow UNHCR's current work and future plans. Governments, for their part, should strive both to identify and remedy the causes of refugee movements and to provide stronger support for UNHCR's work.

Mr. LANG (Austria) said that the information given by the High Commissioner clearly reflected the many serious problems UNHCR was faced with, demanding increased efforts from all concerned. Admittedly, the question of co-ordinating and managing United Nations emergency assistance went beyond UNHCR's sphere of responsibility, but it was a legitimate concern of the international community and would have to be dealt with by the General Assembly. He wished to assure the High Commissioner that Austria was grateful for the work he and his staff had done during the past year, and that it would continue to support UNHCR.

The increasing efforts by countries and organizations to mobilize resources testified to the world community's readiness to relieve the suffering of refugees. The Austrian Government expressed its solidarity with the countries of first asylum, particularly developing countries, whose willingness to help, despite the additional strain entailed, reflected the principle of burden-sharing which must underly any solution of refugee problems.



During the past year, Austria had participated in world-wide efforts to absorb refugees. For several decades it had been a country of first asylum; in 1979 it had experienced the highest influx of refugees from Eastern Europe in a decade, and it expected to receive an even higher number during 1980. Austria had nevertheless resettled about 1,000 refugees from Indo-China and was considering welcoming a further 500 for final settlement. Austria had also contributed to programmes in Somalia, Chad, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Indo-China.

His delegation acknowledged the work of other international organizations such as UNICEF, WFP, WHO, ICRC and ICFTU. The increasing scale of disasters had compelled those organizations to seek new resources, and their approach had of necessity been solution-oriented. But their work could benefit from improved co-ordination, with a view to defining respective areas of action. The experience of recent years would surely make it possible to reorganize international relief work so as to use the available funds more effectively; such a reorganization should not adversely affect the dedication which was the secret of the successes achieved.

The international community could solve the refugee problem only through a permanent dialogue involving countries of first asylum, recipient and donor countries and international organizations, in which the last-named should serve as focal points. His delegation welcomed the suggestions made in the High Commissioner's introductory statement about continued dialogue between his Office and the Executive Committee, and it agreed that, with regard to information flows, substance was more important than form and a pragmatic approach was best. In that connexion, his delegation welcomed the stepping up of UNHCR's public information activities, since public awareness was indispensable for future successful operations.

Austria appreciated the high priority given by the High Commissioner to refugee protection and was particularly pleased with the work accomplished by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, which should continue to promote the aims of the Convention and the Protocol. In future, either the Sub-Committee's sessions should be extended or the topics reduced, in order to facilitate in-depth consideration.

The Austrian Government had always viewed the uprooting of human beings as contrary to the basic concept of human dignity. It had been pleased to see that view expressed at the Arusha Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, held in May 1979, at which the need had been voiced for the legal problems of refugees to be viewed in the wider context of respect for human rights.

Mr. Marshall (United Kingdom) took the Chair.

Mr. MATIKO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, as could be seen from the High Commissioner's statement and from the documents before the Committee, the world refugee problem had worsened; new emergency situations had arisen in Pakistan, Latin America and Africa. But the independence of Zimbabwe and the repatriation of its refugees were most welcome events, and his delegation endorsed that country's appeal for international assistance. His delegation

was also pleased to note that the refugee problem in South East Asia, which had led to the convening of a special Executive Committee session in July 1979, had decreased considerably, thanks to the international community's commendable response, which, it was hoped, would be likewise extended to the millions of refugees and displaced persons in Africa.

With regard to the Fund for Durable Solutions, his delegation agreed that the most desirable durable solution was voluntary repatriation to the country of origin. But the next best solution was assimilation in the host country; therefore, the utmost material and moral support should be given for that purpose wherever voluntary repatriation was not possible - particularly in areas where refugees and the people of the country of asylum had ethnic ties.

His delegation greatly appreciated the role of UNHCR since its establishment in 1951. But the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees had emphasized protection rather than integration in the host country's society, and the world had changed greatly since that time. Many countries, especially in Africa, were now independent and did not automatically reflect either side of the "cold war" of the 1950s. Nowadays, too, the refugee problem was changing almost daily in scope and character. Therefore, the High Commissioner's mandate must be constantly reviewed, new responsibilities accepted and new solutions sought. As was shown by the recommendations of the Arusha Conference and the OAU Council of Ministers at its thirty-third session, Africa regarded integration and ultimate naturalization of refugees as one of the best durable solutions. The African States therefore hoped the High Commissioner would stress the development aspects required for such a solution, although protection was still needed, particularly in southern Africa, where refugees needed protection not only in law but from the racist régime's armed forces. Except in colonial situations such as in Namibia, refugees should be viewed as prospective nationals of the country of asylum, rather than temporary residents, and given development assistance accordingly.

The transfer of refugees from Ulyankulu to Mishamo, referred to by his delegation in 1977, had been completed before December of that year. The Ulyankulo settlement, which now contained 25,000 refugees from Burundi, had been handed over to the Government of Tanzania at the end of June 1980; the Government thus faced an extra yearly financial burden of some \$US 500,000 which added to the value of land given to the refugees, represented a further contribution by Tanzania to refugee assistance. In addition, Rwandese refugees had been given a total area of 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> of fertile land in Tanzania; the Government had agreed to grant them citizenship and, although it had requested legal assistance from UNHCR to help the refugees pay citizenship fees, it was waiving certain legal requirements in order to simplify the process and reduce the cost. Over 20,000 refugees had thus obtained Tanzanian citizenship by 4 October 1980, and others would do so the following month, thus reducing by some 36,000 the total refugee population in Tanzania.

A census was to be taken, with the co-operation of UNHCR, of the thousands of refugees spontaneously settled in Western Tanzania, with a view to deciding how best to assist them. A settlement had also been made available for refugees from South Africa as a temporary measure, while the authorities and UNHCR sought a permanent solution; it was hoped that the refugees would benefit from the small-scale industrial projects being established with a view to making them self-reliant shortly.

Only the elimination of the minority régime in South Africa and the total independence of its peoples could fully alleviate the human suffering in that region. The independence of Zimbabwe was a lesson to the world in that connexion. Tanzania commended UNHCR's role in the repatriation and resettlement of Zimbabwean refugees, and particularly commended the people and Government of Zimbabwe for the spirit of reconciliation shown. It also called on the international community to play a more positive role in bringing about a political solution in Namibia.

The Government of Tanzania invited the Executive Committee to hold its next regular session at Arusha. While it was aware that the Committee had met away from Geneva only once, it thought that the venue proposed would be a token of appreciation by the Committee of the African refugee problem; a regular session held in Africa, while dealing of course with refugee problems everywhere, would honour that continent, which had the largest number of refugees in the world. Moreover, delegates would have an opportunity to visit refugee settlements in African countries. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/140, his Government was prepared to meet the additional costs arising from the change of venue from Geneva. Therefore, his delegation requested the Committee to give favourable consideration to the invitation.

Miss WINKLER (Observer for the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)) welcomed UNHCR's efforts to find ways to respond more effectively to the increasing burden of the refugee problem, such as the establishment of an Emergency Unit with which the voluntary agencies would be glad to co-operate. Greater co-ordination was required within the United Nations system, between the United Nations system and the voluntary agencies, and among the agencies themselves, and such co-ordination was a major concern of ICVA.

ICVA member agencies supported the Sudanese Government's efforts to find viable solutions for some 500,000 refugees to whom it had granted asylum and welcomed the International Conference on Refugees held at Khartoum in June 1980 as a first step in that direction. Document A/AC.96/583, on the establishment of a Fund for Durable Solutions, indicated that the situation in the Sudan would come under the terms of reference of the Fund, and the voluntary agencies endorsed such support for projects in the Sudan and Somalia and other needy countries, and urged governments to pledge contributions to the Fund. They believed that the concept of burden-sharing, emphasized at the Arusha Conference in 1978, should be supported by all governments. Although over half the refugees of concern to UNHCR were in the African continent, less than one-third of the material resources in current UNHCR programmes were destined for Africa. A continent which had been so magnanimous to refugees should not be penalized for its generosity and a more balanced distribution of resources was warranted. The OAU/UNHCR initiative to develop a mechanism to follow up the Arusha Conference was to be welcomed and the voluntary agencies were ready to participate in such a process.

The workshop on the integration of Indo-Chinese refugees in their countries of resettlement had been very successful and the proposal for the establishment of a refugee resettlement resource centre deserved the Executive Committee's support. The voluntary agencies were also involved in the resettlement of refugees and had donated over \$20 million to UNHCR programmes during the first nine months of 1980. Education was another important field in which UNHCR and the voluntary agencies could co-operate to advantage, since the agencies had teaching personnel available and their contacts with local institutions offered the possibility of educational programmes for refugees at relatively low cost. Public information on all refugee matters was extremely important for the promotion of better understanding and support for humanitarian causes, which subsequently encouraged governments to be more responsive to the resettlement of refugees.

Special attention should be given to the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria, the Kampucheans in Thailand, the Afghans in Pakistan and Latin American refugees for whom voluntary repatriation or local settlement or resettlement were not yet possible. The voluntary agencies appreciated the efforts of several countries to help handicapped persons, unaccompanied children and adolescents, and the elderly among the refugees and hoped that their efforts would be emulated. ICVA welcomed UNHCR's promotion of assistance to refugee women and felt that the High Commissioner might consider appointing a member of his staff to deal specifically with that task. In conclusion, the voluntary agencies pledged their continued support to efforts to restore the human dignity of refugees as partners of UNHCR in the field of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Birido (Sudan) resumed the Chair.

Mr. NKOBI (Observer for the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC(SA))) said, after giving details of the brutal behaviour of the South African régime, which was falsely pretending to modify its policies, that it was time the world took a serious look at the reasons for the refugee problems in the region. Many South Africans went into exile as a result of apartheid, oppression, police brutality, exploitation, starvation and discriminatory laws, such as the pass laws and migrant labour laws, of the Pretoria régime. In other words, the black people had no basic human and political rights. ANC therefore considered the problem of South African refugees as a political matter, which required a political solution. Since the Soweto uprisings of 16 June 1976 there had been a steady flow of students, schoolchildren and workers, young and old, leaving South Africa. Hundreds of those people had been mercilessly killed and many thousands injured. Many of those who had left the country bore the physical and psychological scars of the brutal tortures suffered while they were at the mercy of Pretoria's fascist police thugs.

In addition to housing, food, clothing and general care, the refugees from South Africa were in need of medical treatment and particularly of transit accommodation, with basic facilities in places such as Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Lusaka, Maputo, Angola and Tanzania. ANC was involved in activities connected with the school complex in Mazimbu, Tanzania, and a farm in Zambia. UNHCR had helped in other areas, besides Zambia and Tanzania, and ANC was in the process of preparing comprehensive reports on that invaluable aid. It was essential that the assistance for transportation of students be continued. The building of a store in Lusaka for ANC Headquarters was a matter of high priority and several buildings needed renovation before the rainy season set in. It was hoped that UNHCR would also help with the completion of a small print shop which was now almost operational. In addition, ANC needed assistance to provide for contingency measures.

Several agencies and potential donors had stated that ANC was too independent and did not co-operate in asking for help. ANC was in fact very sensitive about burdening its helpers and therefore spread its requests as widely as possible.

ANC's main thrust was now directed towards the internal situation in South Africa and consequently the drain on its resources to maintain bases both outside and inside South Africa was tremendous. ANC would need the continued support of its friends which would obviously have to increase in proportion to the escalation of its struggle with the apartheid régime. UNHCR had assisted ANC in various ways such as meeting travel costs, paying subsistence allowances and school fees, helping with the purchase of agricultural supplies for two farms in Lusaka and assisting in sponsoring students at various levels of education. The development of a large farm was a project recently submitted to UNHCR.

ANC was under no illusions about the hardships it would have to suffer to liberate its country. But, as all progressive mankind knew, peace and stability in the whole of southern Africa could only be achieved through the overthrow of the racist militarist régime in Pretoria. The problem of refugees fleeing from South Africa would only be resolved when the world was rid of the scourge of fascist South Africa. He expressed sincere thanks for the material assistance and steadfast support of UNHCR, which would help to win his country's freedom from racism, apartheid, exploitation and oppression so that it could achieve true democracy for peace and social progress.

Mr. BIGHINATTI (Observer for the League of Red Cross Societies) said that out of over 30 disaster operations with which the League was concerned nearly half related to refugees. That was perhaps the largest number of refugee operations in which the League had been involved simultaneously since it was founded over 60 years ago. He hoped that political solutions could be found to solve the problems arising from such man-made catastrophes and prevent their recurrence. The tremendous increase in the number of refugee operations had placed a considerable strain on the League and its member societies as well as on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other non-governmental organizations involved in refugee relief. Every possible effort would be made to continue relief actions for refugees, resources permitting. The close co-operation and co-ordination with UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, and with governments and non-governmental organizations had avoided duplication and ensured the efficiency of relief programmes, and should be continued.

The recognized completely neutral and non-political role of the Red Cross in its relief and protection efforts enabled it to speak for refugees when necessary, thus offering an avenue for the expression of needs that was helpful to both UNHCR and interested governments in carrying out aid programmes in an impartial and humanitarian manner. In order to continue that practice, the Red Cross must maintain its financial independence. He thanked the governments and societies which had helped to make that possible.

On the recommendation of the League's General Assembly, ICRC and the League were preparing a special review and policy guidelines to define the role of Red Cross assistance in refugee situations more clearly so as to ensure appropriate and efficient involvement in refugee relief. Detailed discussions would be held with UNHCR so that the League had a clear understanding of its role and support in relief activities. He reiterated the League's sincere appreciation for the excellent co-operation with UNHCR and wished the meeting success for the sake of the millions of refugees.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN asked delegations to consider the offer by the Republic of Tanzania to act as host of the next session of the Executive Committee in Arusha, so that a decision could be taken on the matter before the end of the current session. A decision should also be taken on the proposal by the Canadian delegation, supported by many other delegations, for the establishment of an informal working group on financial and administrative aspects.

Mr. HARTLING (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he supported the Canadian proposal, which was in line with his desire for a constructive dialogue with the members of the Executive Committee.

The CHAIRMAN said that there had been considerable support for the Canadian proposal and he therefore suggested that an informal working group on financial and administrative aspects, open to all members of the Committee and representatives of observer States, should be set up on an experimental basis. The group could consider the following documents: A/AC.96/576 and Add.1 under item 5, A/AC.96/577, section VI, and Add.1 and A/AC.96/585 under item 7, and A/AC.96/578 and 584 under item 8. Those documents covered the most important areas in the field of financing and administration. Regular assistance programmes would be discussed in the plenary Committee as in the past. He stressed the experimental nature of the undertaking. He suggested that the informal working group should be chaired by Mr. Marshall, of the United Kingdom, and not more than one representative per delegation should participate in its work. The group should be small so that it could complete its work as soon as possible and report to the Executive Committee.

Mr. McKINNON (Canada) welcomed the High Commissioner's reaction to his delegation's proposal and agreed with the Chairman's suggestions regarding the working group's mandate and membership.

The CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Executive Committee adopted the proposal for the establishment of an Informal Working Group on Financial and Administrative Aspects.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.