



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 52nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 83: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

(b) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/36/3/Add.22, A/36/61, 66, 77, 82, 111, 113 and Corr.1, 118, 152, 203, 457, 463, 552, 640 and 672)

(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (A/36/12 and Add.1)

(b) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/36/316)

1. Mr. FARAH (Djibouti), after praising the work of UNHCR, expressed gratification that progress had been made towards alleviating some of the most pressing problems of the refugees in Djibouti. It was estimated that at the present time the number of refugees in Djibouti was between 50,000 and 55,000, in other words, more than fifteen per cent of the country's total population. The presence of refugees in the capital and other cities of the country was causing the already poor living conditions in the urban areas to deteriorate and was posing various social, health and hygiene problems. The National Assistance Committee for Refugees and Disaster Victims, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and various governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies, was continuously seeking ways and means of assisting those refugees.

2. Every effort was being made to provide the refugees from the rural areas, who constituted the vast majority of the refugee population, with food, medical treatment and shelter, but the situation of refugees in Djibouti would become even more precarious unless the international community provided the financial, technical and material assistance needed, as well as the necessary opportunities for resettlement. Several projects for the integration of refugees had already been examined, including agricultural projects, the fishing industry, handicrafts, and vocational training.

3. Djibouti, like the neighbouring countries, had suffered from four years of prolonged drought, accompanied by enormous losses of livestock (40 per cent of the herds) with the result that about 130,000 nomads were threatened with famine. The Government of Djibouti had had no alternative but to establish 17 temporary camps throughout the country to accommodate the displaced nomadic population. It had been necessary to provide a continuous programme of assistance to help the nomads settle down to normal living conditions. For all those purposes, he must stress once again, the full support of the international community was essential.

4. Miss RASI (Finland) said that the responsibilities of UNHCR had grown during the three decades of its existence. Unfortunately, that growth reflected the increase in the number of refugees worldwide. Currently, more than 10 million people were the concern of the High Commissioner.

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(Miss Rasi, Finland)

5. Half of the world's refugee population was to be found on the African continent. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa had raised world consciousness of the magnitude of the refugee problem there. The Finnish delegation also noted with particular concern the situation of refugees in South-East Asia, Pakistan and Latin America.

6. Although the over-all refugee situation had worsened over the last years, some positive results had been achieved; for example, the return to their country of refugees from Zimbabwe, and the resettlement of Indo-Chinese refugees. Another positive development was that the refugee-processing centres in Galang and Baraan were already fully operative.

7. The Government of Finland had consistently supported and continued to support the High Commissioner in his humanitarian undertaking. In 1981, it had made special contributions to the High Commissioner's Programme in addition to its yearly regular contribution, which had once again been increased. Precisely, for that reason, it regarded as essential an in-depth consideration of the increasingly complex implications of the growth of the programme. For the same reason, the Finnish delegation had been in favour of establishing a subsidiary body of the Executive Committee, namely the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. Such a sub-committee was essential as a logical consequence of the current size of the programme, and it should therefore remain in existence. However, in deciding upon the Sub-Committee's future terms of reference, the UNHCR Executive Committee should not be guided exclusively by experience of its operation during the current year, which had been exceptional in several respects. Past experience suggested that, in future, the Sub-Committee should focus on an in-depth consideration of those items on the Executive Committee's agenda which were administrative and financial in nature.

8. One part of the UNHCR's mandate did not seem to arouse international interest: namely, the international protection of refugees. It was to be hoped that more countries would accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, so that those instruments would become universally applicable.

9. Mr. ULRICHSEN (Denmark) said that the High Commissioner for Refugees and the international community should continue making strenuous efforts to resolve the serious problem of refugees in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It was indeed sad that almost half of the some 10 million refugees in the world were to be found in the least developed countries.

10. Over the year particular attention had been focused on the situation of refugees in Africa, which remained the region with the largest number of refugees. The protracted conflicts in the Horn of Africa and in Chad had created immense suffering for the millions of refugees in that area. The occupation of Namibia and the military attacks by South Africa on the front-line States had been responsible for a deterioration in the situation in southern Africa. Fortunately, there had also been positive developments in that region, for example in Zimbabwe,

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(Mr. Ulrichsen, Denmark)

where thousands of refugees had been voluntarily repatriated to their newly-independent homeland.

11. The immense problems faced by refugees in Africa had been dealt with at the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. The Conference had been a success, in that it had aroused international interest and support for the 5 million refugees in Africa and had elicited pledges for almost \$600 million.

12. The problem of refugees in Asia was still serious because of the considerable increase in the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the continued exodus of refugees from Indochina. The Danish Government had made several contributions to the activities of UNHCR in Asia. In addition, during 1980 Denmark had accepted some 900 refugees for resettlement. Some 400 of those had been Indochinese refugees rescued at sea.

13. In Latin America the considerable increase in the number of refugees and other persons displaced as a result of the events in El Salvador was particularly disturbing. According to available information the number of Salvadorian refugees in neighbouring countries had grown to 180,000. His delegation commended the High Commissioner for his efforts to protect those refugees and provide them with material assistance. The Government of Denmark had supported those efforts by a recent contribution to UNHCR's programme in the region.

14. The various programmes of UNHCR in the above areas of the world, and especially the success of the voluntary repatriation programmes, confirmed the Government of Denmark in its view that high priority should be given to refugee programmes in the region itself. That would not only be in the interests of the refugees themselves, but would also ensure the most effective use of the funds available for refugees. Every means should be sought to help refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency, to become assimilated in areas of asylum or to be repatriated. That might also alleviate the burden which would otherwise fall upon host countries, which were often among the poorest in the world. The Government of Denmark supported the policy of UNHCR aimed at achieving long-term solutions and in that regard agreed that part of the assistance granted should be supplementary and thus be considered as development assistance.

15. One of the main challenges in discharging UNHCR's mandate lay in the field of international protection. The over-all situation in that regard was more encouraging than in previous years, since there had been no large-scale recurrences of refoulement of persons seeking asylum and there had been further accessions to the relevant international instruments. However, certain problems of extreme gravity still existed in that field. Reports had been received of the forcible return of individuals or small groups of persons. Reports of physical violence against refugees and persons seeking asylum, especially in the South China Sea, were also disturbing. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner that the High Commissioner should examine the problem and the need for special measures to protect such

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(Mr. Ulrichsen, Denmark)

refugees, and welcomed the decision to convene a working group to study the general problems arising from the rescue, disembarkation and resettlement of persons who had put to sea in search of asylum.

16. The increased responsibilities for refugees and the concomitant financial needs had resulted in a heavier workload for the Office of the High Commissioner. His delegation considered it necessary to undertake administrative reorganization to reflect that trend, and had noted the measures adopted by the High Commissioner to improve the management of his services. The establishment of a subcommittee on administrative and financial matters was a welcome step which would support the High Commissioner's efforts.

17. The close co-operation between UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations was gratifying. In particular, the involvement of voluntary agencies and the general public in UNHCR's activities was a prerequisite for maintaining and increasing support for the High Commissioner's humanitarian work. To that end, in 1981 the Danish Refugee Council had organized a country-wide fund-raising campaign, which had been supported by Her Majesty the Queen and the Prime Minister.

18. With regard to UNHCR's budget, it was gratifying to note that after some years of considerable increases in expenditure the budget appeared to have stabilized. The proposed target of over \$US 380 million for the 1982 general programme appeared reasonable. Nevertheless, all countries should make substantial contributions, if possible in a way which would achieve a more equitable distribution of the burden.

19. Denmark's support for refugees, which included contributions from humanitarian organizations and expenditure on settling refugees in the country, had amounted to more than \$31 million in 1980 and was expected to increase substantially in 1981. With regard to 1981-1982, it should be recalled that the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs had announced at the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) a grant of \$9 million, in addition to Denmark's regular and supplementary contributions to international organizations.

20. Mr. LAGOS (Chile) said that he noted from the Report of the High Commissioner and the other documents submitted under the present item, that the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were concentrated mainly in Africa and Asia. The situation in Africa was particularly tragic, especially in Sudan and Somalia, where the flows of refugees had reached alarming proportions. Equally serious was the movement of more than two million Afghan refugees to Pakistan who, together with those already in Iran, showed the magnitude of the tragedy. All the countries which had welcomed those displaced persons needed urgent help from the international community.

21. The movement of refugees from Indochina, already more than 400,000, was also disquieting. The tragedy there was all the greater since not only had they had to leave their homes, but their lives were endangered by intolerable acts of piracy. His delegation supported the measures proposed by the Executive Committee of UNHCR to put an end to their sufferings.

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(Mr. Lagos, Chile)

22. The mass movement of refugees from Indochina and Afghanistan was the result of foreign intervention and aggression. While it was not suggested that UNHCR should study the causes of such mass population movements, the problem was so widespread that the competent bodies should tackle it frankly and purposefully, without the selectivity that characterized their activities and which derived from the balance of forces prevailing in them.

23. Unfortunately, the Latin American region, too, had not escaped the increase in the flow of refugees, basically the result of the serious situation in Central America. As far as Chile was concerned, UNHCR assistance had continued to concentrate on family reunification, in which the Government of Chile was collaborating with UNHCR.

24. The depressing picture presented by the world refugee situation called for support and solidarity on the part of all States in the task which UNHCR was performing jointly with other humanitarian bodies. In his delegation's opinion, no member country of the United Nations could evade its responsibility for solidarity. It was regrettable, therefore, that as the United Kingdom delegation had indicated, some developed countries were not making an adequate contribution to the Office's activities.

25. Chile had always responded to the appeal of the international community to play its part in assisting refugees. In the past few years, as the country's economic situation had improved, the Government had doubled its contribution to UNHCR and had made dollar contributions to the fund for assistance to refugees in Pakistan and the Kampuchean assistance fund. Chile was one of the 99 States which had attended the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and had contributed \$15,000 to UNHCR. Chile was also prepared to offer technical assistance and co-operation in fields in which a number of African States had requested assistance. In the same spirit, his delegation would attend the UNHCR Pledging Conference to be held on 20 November. It reaffirmed its readiness to collaborate in the Office's activities.

26. Mr. VAN WELL (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the world-wide refugee situation showed no signs of improving and the problem of refugees was aggravated by current conflicts. The thirtieth anniversary of UNHCR increased people's awareness of the situation and showed that the United Nations system had been right to renew UNHCR's terms of reference over the years because the United Nations had been able to make valuable contributions through the Office to the solution of the manifold problems of refugees. The Federal Republic of Germany would continue to support the High Commissioner's work and to provide all possible assistance.

27. Those who could take action to prevent flows of refugees must respond to appeals, and when such flows occurred, all countries which had the economic capacity to do so must share the international burden and provide assistance.

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(Mr. Van Well, Federal Republic of Germany)

28. The ever-increasing flows of refugees had meant heavier funding for UNHCR programmes. The 1980 budget was four times the 1977 budget. His Government supported the proposals made by the High Commissioner for strengthening the management of his services. He noted with satisfaction that the High Commissioner would be seeking the assistance of the Administrative Management Service in undertaking a thorough review of the managerial method and organizational structure of his Office, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

29. In view of the growing importance of refugee questions in the United Nations system, his Government welcomed the closer contacts between UNHCR and Member States and noted with particular satisfaction the improvement in the Executive Committee's consultative machinery.

30. Mrs. AKAMATSU (Japan) also noted that over the past years movements of refugees had continued in various parts of the world, notably in South-East Asia, Western Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was distressing that no permanent solution was in sight for so many of the tragedies which had compelled millions of innocent people to abandon their homes. Her delegation reiterated its sympathy and concern for the plight of those people and for the people and Governments of receiving countries whose ways of life had been adversely affected in many instances. As the Foreign Minister of Japan had pointed out in the General Assembly on 22 September, it was of urgent importance in solving the refugee problem not only to provide relief assistance to refugees, but to find ways of eradicating the root causes of refugee problems.

31. However, as long as the movements of refugees and displaced persons continued, and as long as the local populations of receiving States were affected, it was the responsibility of the international community to extend relief assistance to all those who were suffering and to work for lasting solutions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had an important role in that effort and had already produced remarkable results by limiting its scope of action to humanitarian concerns as distinct from the political activities of the United Nations. Japan attached great importance to UNHCR's role and activities and in recent years had made substantial contributions: more than \$64 million in 1980 and \$52 million so far in 1981.

32. With regard to the principle of international protection of refugees, her delegation was pleased to report to the Committee that in October Japan had acceded to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and on 1 January 1982 intended to accede to the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Its accession to those international instruments was another indication of Japan's commitment to securing international protection for refugees.

33. Japan's principal concern was the situation of its Asian neighbours in the Indochinese Peninsula. Although international relief operations had been successful in the crisis period from 1979 to 1980 and the number of refugees and

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(Mrs. Akamatsu, Japan)

displaced persons had decreased, today, six years after the start of the movement of refugees, it had to be admitted that the problem had become chronic and still threatened the peace and stability of the region. The number of refugees had reached 245,000 and thousands more were expected; there was an increasing number of residual refugees who could not resettle in a third country and who had already been living for a long time in first asylum countries, and the burden on receiving countries, particularly Thailand, was still heavy. For that reason, the Japanese Government understood the reasons for the recent effort of Thai authorities to dissuade more refugees from attempting to come to the country.

34. Her Government had always maintained that the Government of Viet Nam should restrain the disorderly exodus of people who risked their lives in overcrowded, unseaworthy vessels, and promote the Programme of Orderly Departure. Some progress had been made in that respect, but the Programme should be extended. At the same time, a number of refugees in asylum camps wished to return home and, in such cases, efforts should be made to help them to do so.

35. Her Government welcomed the recent decline in the number of Kampuchean refugees in Thailand. Furthermore, there was no sign that a mass influx would recur, although the number of Kampucheans along the Thai-Kampuchean border was not decreasing. As to the movement of refugees from Laos to Thailand, although it seemed to be diminishing it was still a matter for concern. In that situation also, UNHCR's efforts to promote repatriation on a voluntary basis were most welcome.

36. To date in the current year, her country had pledged the sums of \$40 million to UNHCR, and \$5 to UNICEF and ICRC. At the same time, it had pledged rice worth \$20 million to WFP. In addition, an assessment of the Government of Thailand's assistance needs was currently being prepared.

37. Of equal concern to her country was the ever-increasing flow of Afghan refugees into Pakistan, whose Government had to provide for more than 2 million refugees. Concerned that the influx of refugees might have adverse effects on the peace and security of the region, her Government had dispatched several survey teams to Pakistan. It had also pledged \$7 million to UNHCR for its 1981 programme for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and was considering providing wheat to a value of \$8 million through the World Food Programme.

38. The refugee population of Africa, the largest in the world, was estimated at more than 5 million. That was a tragic problem of more than merely regional concern which all members of the international community must work together to solve.

39. It was in the spirit of international solidarity that her country and others had participated in the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held in April 1981. At that Conference, her country had pledged the sum of \$20 million specifically for the relief of African refugees.

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40. Mrs. NGOC DUNG (Viet Nam) reaffirmed her delegation's support for UNHCR's programmes of assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Africa and Latin America, and emphasized its deep appreciation of the goodwill, the spirit of co-operation and the diligence manifested by UNHCR in its work of assistance to Vietnamese refugees and to Kampuchean refugees in Vietnamese territory.

41. It was an indication of the fruitful co-operation established between Viet Nam and UNHCR that a delegation from her country had visited Geneva in October 1981 at the invitation of UNHCR, to evaluate, together with senior officials of that body, the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between her Government and UNHCR on 30 May 1979.

42. Her Government continued to apply vigorous punitive measures against those responsible for organizing illegal departures, which had had a considerable effect in reducing the number of such departures. However, it was aware that the solution of the refugee problem continued to be a very complex and difficult matter, owing to political, social and humanitarian factors and to the variety of motives which impelled people to seek asylum.

43. Furthermore, her country was still living under the threat of a second armed attack from its powerful neighbour to the north, represented by the 400,000 troops which were permanently massed along its borders. In such circumstances it was understandable that some people might be tempted to emigrate in search of the possibility of living in peace abroad. In her delegation's view, those persons were not so much refugees within the meaning of that concept embodied in international conventions as they were people who emigrated for economic reasons. While her Government did not encourage that emigration, it nevertheless recognized that there were strong humanitarian reasons for permitting the departure of such people. That was why it had signed the Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR in 1979.

44. In spite of every effort, difficulties were being encountered in implementing the Programme of Order Departure. In the first place, mention must be made of the deliberate policy of incitement to illegal departure engaged in by the United States and China, whose zeal in pursuing their campaign of vilifying Viet Nam in the eyes of the world excluded any concern for the lives or the unspeakable sufferings of the emigrants. It was obvious that those two Powers were pursuing three aims: to destabilize the countries of Indo-China, whose political, social and economic reorganization was in full swing following their complete liberation; to provoke an exodus of professionally-qualified people at the very time when they were most needed for the successful rebuilding of the nation; and to use the refugees as a source of recruitment of mercenaries to be used in subversive activities against the countries of Indo-China.

45. In order to block legal departures, the United States immigration authorities had created all kinds of difficulties for those who wished to leave the country legally, whereas if the same people left the country illegally by boat they were

(Mrs. Ngoc Dung, Viet Nam)

accepted immediately, without any kind of formality. That discouraged orderly and safe legal departures and encouraged illegal departures. In addition, the Voice of America broadcast crucial information about the presence off Viet Nam's coasts of ships of the Seventh Fleet dispatched there on "rescue operations".

46. On the question of how to use resources more fully so as to meet more effectively the needs of the world's growing numbers of refugees, her delegation wished to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that humanitarian aid given for refugees was being used for other purposes. In view of its immense political implications, that aspect of the problem exceeded the scope of agenda item 83. However, her delegation held that to keep silent in the face of such abuses might have even more damaging consequences.

47. It was common knowledge that along the border between Kampuchea and Thailand there existed sanctuaries, in the guise of Kampuchean refugee camps, for armed Pol Pot units and other reactionary elements. The tragic lot of the Kampuchean refugees had also been cynically exploited to mobilize international assistance with the aim of supplying the needs of the guerrillas and other subversive elements working against the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

48. Since the legitimate representatives of the Kampuchean people could not be present to express their views in the Committee, a circumstance which her delegation considered regrettable in the extreme, she drew attention to the fact that in spite of the daily conflicts provoked by the reactionary forces which were violating Kampuchean territory, the Government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea had always displayed a spirit of co-operation in its dealings with UNHCR in an attempt to solve the problem. It had more than once declared that it regarded the Kampuchean citizens who had sought refuge in Thailand and in other countries as victims of genocide and of forced migration. Accordingly, the Council of the People's Republic of Kampuchea would not oppose their return to the country. As a result of that humanitarian attitude, the People's Republic of Kampuchea had welcomed back 56,000 refugees who had returned to the country in the course of the first seven months of 1981.

49. In order to help put an end to the suffering of refugees from the countries of Indo-China, her delegation proposed the following measures: (1) the Powers that were hostile to the countries of Indo-China should put an end to all activities encouraging the exodus; (2) they should put an end to the policy of using the refugees as a means of destabilizing Viet Nam and to the economic blockade, to threats of war and to economic and military pressure against Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea, and contribute to the reconstruction of those three countries of Indo-China and compensate them for the enormous destruction they had caused; and (3) receiving States should co-operate with UNHCR and Viet Nam to guarantee the continuation of the Programme of Orderly Departure and facilitate its acceleration.

50. Specifically, the discriminatory measures in respect to the status of refugees, which encouraged them to leave their countries illegally, should be brought to an end, and formalities for receiving refugees should be less complicated. The

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(Mrs. Ngoc Dung, Viet Nam)

Kampuchean refugees who had sought asylum in Viet Nam when their country was under the Pol Pot regime and who did not wish to return home should also be resettled in third countries under the auspices of UNHCR.

51. Mrs. MALLOUM (Chad) reminded the Committee that three-quarters of the world's refugees were from the African continent. It was disquieting to note that the 1970 total of 750,000 refugees had increased to over 5 million; that situation was largely the result of the repression of the peoples of Namibia and South Africa by the apartheid regime. Those countries that kept the young African States chronically underdeveloped and stirred up disturbances were likewise responsible for that situation. Currently, her country was torn apart by fratricidal warfare imposed from the outside which had resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Chad citizens and the forced emigration of those survivors who had had to flee to neighbouring countries in search of asylum.

52. With respect to the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, which Chad had been unable to attend, her delegation welcomed the results achieved and was grateful to the international community for its generous donations. Her delegation was, however, of the opinion that the Conference should also have focused its attention on the assistance which should be offered to the countries of origin in order to facilitate the return of the refugees. In that connexion, she said that her Government had declared a general amnesty aimed at permitting the return of all Chad citizens who had gone into exile or sought refuge in other countries. Currently, her Government and UNHCR were doing their utmost to reintegrate those persons into Chad society. In the circumstances prevailing in her country, reintegration posed the same problems as those facing countries of asylum; therefore, her delegation would support any measures designed to provide assistance to the countries of origin.

53. Refugees were persons who had undergone moral and material hardships and their dignity should be respected. In that connexion, she noted that the receiving States were making great sacrifices to accommodate the refugees; she hoped that they would also assist Chad and UNHCR in promoting the gradual return of Chad citizens to their country instead of supplying them with arms to sow death and destruction upon their return. Only the establishment of peace would permit her country to welcome back all its nationals and reduce the great sacrifices made by the receiving countries.

54. Mr. ALMOSLECHNER (Austria) said that his country would continue to co-operate with UNHCR and would give it every possible support. In that context, he noted the success of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa; however, as the reasons for the mass movements of refugees in most areas remained unchanged, the recent improvements in the over-all refugee situation had to be assessed with caution.

55. The situation in South-East Asia still called for close attention because there was very little hope of finding basic solutions. In the Horn of Africa, too,

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(Mr. Almoslechner, Austria)

solutions that would meet the most basic needs of the refugees were not yet within reach.

56. In Europe, the increasing flow of refugees had confronted his country with the most severe administrative and financial problems it had faced in over a decade. Although Austria had long been directly faced with refugee problems, it had also supported the activities of UNHCR on numerous occasions and had made contributions to special programmes such as those of Cameroon and Somalia. While his country's cash contributions had been modest, it had played an important role as a donor in kind by granting first asylum.

57. Mr. FONT (Spain), after briefly reviewing the history of the situation, said that in view of the permanent nature of refugee problems, the General Assembly should identify their causes in order to be able to deal with them at their earliest stages. In that connexion, his delegation, which supported that preventive approach, believed that the Assembly should also continue to focus attention on the humanitarian aspect of the refugee problem.

58. It was encouraging to note that the large-scale refoulement of persons seeking asylum had not recurred and that, on the whole, States had followed liberal practices with respect to the admission of such persons, granting them at least temporary asylum. Moreover, there had been positive achievements such as the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Zimbabwe and the naturalization in Tanzania of Rwandese refugees. It was likewise encouraging to note that the number of States parties to international instruments relating to international protection of refugees had increased.

59. However, the criminal attacks against refugees in the South China Sea still continued. His delegation appealed for greater vigilance in order to avert those atrocities.

60. The work of UNHCR in the Horn of Africa and in the Sudan and Zimbabwe was commendable. In Asia, the efforts of UNHCR and the generosity of the Government of Pakistan had contributed considerably towards alleviating the problem of the Afghan refugees until arrangements in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions could be made.

61. In conclusion, he said his delegation wished to emphasize that refugee status should not be something permanent; regrettably, it was precisely the lack of solutions that was helping to perpetuate that status. In those circumstances, the work of UNHCR was of the greatest importance even though, for the time being, it could provide only palliatives.

62. Miss CAO-PINNA (Italy) said that her country was a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of UNHCR, in addition to being a country of first asylum and resettlement of refugees within the limits of its possibilities, and that it had been increasing its contributions to the UNHCR refugee programmes carried out in recent years.

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(Miss Cao-Pinna, Italy)

63. In his statement the High Commissioner had recalled the evolution of the refugee problem and its rapid intensification in the past five years. He had also spoken of the difficulty of finding durable solutions in certain areas and of predicting future refugee flows because their causes were beyond the control of the High Commissioner's office. Her delegation shared the High Commissioner's concern at the persistence and gravity of the problems of refugees throughout the world and his views on the need for the international community to continue supporting its activities.

64. Another problem in that sphere was the decrease in the High Commissioner's annual budget for 1981 and 1982; in her delegation's opinion, ways of ensuring the necessary balance between the level of the budget and the size of the programmes carried out should be considered. That, in her delegation's opinion, would require efforts to be made in two directions: political and humanitarian.

65. By political action she meant intensification of moral pressure on all Governments to encourage them to respect fully both the human rights and the fundamental freedoms of individuals and the principles of international protection of refugees and displaced persons. Everyone knew that the refugee problem stemmed from mass violations of human rights; it was also known that in many cases refugees were still exposed to the threat of refoulement, arbitrary detention and physical violence.

66. In that connexion she commended the work done by the Commission on Human Rights on the problem of mass flows of refugees and drew attention to General Assembly resolution 35/124 on international co-operation to avert new flows of refugees. Italy attached great importance to those undertakings and to any action aimed at creating conditions which would enable refugees to return to their countries of origin.

67. With reference to humanitarian action, she said that the fundamental problem was that of the scope of the High Commissioner's mandate, which in recent years had expanded to cover not only emergency assistance but also quasi-developmental components. That necessitated an in-depth examination of each programme and consideration of the possibility of entrusting to other organizations within the United Nations system the task of seeking the most appropriate solutions.

68. In conclusion she said her delegation hoped that the principles to which she had referred would be reflected in the final text of the Guiding principles applicable to UNHCR's activities recently presented by the High Commissioner to the Executive Committee.

69. Mr. CHAVANAVIRAJ (Thailand) said that the Government of Thailand would continue to uphold a policy based on humanitarian and security considerations in relation to refugees. Thailand, situated as it was at a crossroads, had traditionally been a country of refuge for countless people of different races. Thirty years earlier Thailand had received an influx of some 70,000 Vietnamese

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(Mr. Chavanaviraj, Thailand)

refugees during the first of the so-called Indo-China wars. Since then Thailand had received refugees from Viet Nam, Kampuchea and Laos fleeing from the new political regimes in their countries. Between 1975 and 1978 Thailand had received some 14,000 refugees from Kampuchea. However, none of those influxes could be compared with the outflow of refugees from Kampuchea since 1979, when thousands of people had crossed the border into Thailand every day and hundreds of thousands had gathered along the border waiting for an opportunity to cross it. Those had been trying times for Thailand, a developing country neither large enough nor rich enough to take care of all those refugees. But with the help and co-operation of other countries, as well as of the United Nations system and other organizations, the crisis had been surmounted and millions of lives had been saved.

70. Nevertheless, it was imperative to find a durable solution to the problem of the Kampuchean refugees, which, in the view of Thailand and the other ASEAN countries, could be achieved only through a definitive political settlement of the Kampuchean problem.

71. The Government of Thailand was working in close co-operation with UNHCR and other organizations dealing with the voluntary repatriation of refugees in Thailand. Under that arrangement, many Laos had returned home and more were expected to follow. With regard to the Kampuchean refugees, although fighting continued in their country, the Thai Government was also co-operating with UNHCR in seeking to enable them to return to their homes. As no other durable solutions to the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees was in sight, the Thai Government would be obliged to close down refugee camps with the exception of four: Khao I Dang, Panat Nikhom, Nakhon Panom and Loei. The reasons for that decision were mainly administrative and financial. The Vietnamese leaving their country by boat still represented an enormous problem for Thailand and the other countries in the region. His delegation hoped that Viet Nam and the other parties concerned would strictly abide by the undertakings they had entered into at the Meeting on Refugees held at Geneva in July 1979.

72. The examination of the situation of refugees in various parts of the world had shown that the root cause of the problem was political in nature. Therefore, while the role of UNHCR continued to be vital and deserved the support of all, it was essential to continue seeking durable political solutions if the refugee problems in various parts of the world were to be overcome.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

73. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that the time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions on item 83 was Tuesday, 17 November 1981, at 6 p.m. The time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions on items 12, 129, 138 and 30 was Friday, 20 November 1981, at 6 p.m. Also, the list of speakers who wished to speak on items 12, 129, 138 and 30 would be closed on Friday, 20 November 1981, at 6 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.