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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 332nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 14 October 1981, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom)

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

STATEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 3)(continued)

1. Mr. CHORAFAS (Greece) said that the refugee problem, which had reached gigantic proportions, continued to worsen as a result of various social, political and military developments. The praiseworthy efforts of the international community to remedy the situation had their limits and the considerable resources they entailed were not inexhaustible. No change could be expected in that situation in the near future. Obviously it would be best to deal with the root cause of the problem, but there was no simple or quick solution. In the meantime, an order of priorities must be established for the allocation of funds in both the General Programmes and the Special Programmes.
2. Greece was aware that the expanded tasks facing the Office of the High Commissioner called for a strengthening of the administrative structure as well as the creation of new posts both at Geneva and in the field. However, it believed that before any new nominations were made, existing staff members should be promoted on their merits and ACABQ's suggestions on the subject should be taken into consideration.
3. A topic of special interest to his country was the rescue of "boat people". Greece's position on that subject was well known. Greece was a small country with a very large merchant fleet and was proud to have been able to help a number of refugees that was out of all proportion to his country's size and potential. Other small countries had done likewise. Rescue at sea was a valuable service to humanity, but it would be absurd to impose an additional burden on such small countries merely because they had large merchant fleets. Greece would like to be in a position to assume such a burden but could not do so. It had noted with interest various positive suggestions made in the document on problems related to the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea (EC/SCP/18) and was glad that the study of the problem had been entrusted to a working group.
4. Mr. YU Peiwen (People's Republic of China) noted with satisfaction the effective work done by the High Commissioner during the preceding year in resettling millions of refugees and displaced persons in various parts of the world and in giving them humanitarian assistance.
5. The number of refugees and displaced persons in the world had continued to increase massively in recent years. The High Commissioner had redoubled his efforts to provide relief for refugees in various parts of Africa and the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa had provided an opportunity for pledging generous contributions. However, the consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the aggression and brutal repression practised by the South African racists, unpredictable natural disasters and other factors were such that the African refugee problem was likely to grow more acute, particularly in the Horn of Africa, Sudan and certain other African countries, a state of affairs which could not but arouse serious concern.
6. In Asia, financial assistance from the High Commissioner and the countries concerned had made it possible to provide temporary shelter in Pakistan and Thailand for large numbers of Afghan, Kampuchean and Indo-Chinese refugees. But there again the number of refugees continued to rise, which not only constituted a heavy burden for the receiving countries but also posed a threat to peace and stability in the region. It was to be hoped that the Executive Committee would pay close attention at its present session to the problems caused by the mass exodus of refugees.

7. Many incontrovertible facts testified to the close link between the influx of waves of refugees on the one hand, and expansion and wars of aggression resulting from hegemonism on the other. Afghanistan and Kampuchea were still under the yoke of foreign forces of occupation. Until those forces withdrew, the refugees would not be able to return to their homes. That was the crux of the immense refugee problem. Although there was an urgent need to maintain humanitarian assistance to all refugees, it was also essential to make every effort to eliminate the prime cause of the problem. He suggested that the Executive Committee should urge the General Assembly, at its thirty-sixth session, to take steps to that end.
8. It was essential, particularly in the case of mass influxes, that the right of refugees to asylum should be placed on a legal basis. Countries of asylum had obligations which the international community must help them to fulfil, but the States which were directly or indirectly responsible for influxes of refugees should also bear their fair share of the burden. If they wanted the United Nations to provide the necessary assistance, they must give up their inhumane policies; the United Nations, for its part, should ensure that the assistance provided could under no circumstances be used for purposes of aggression. Those principles must be respected by all: governments, United Nations bodies and charitable organizations.
9. The strengthening of the administrative structures of the Office of the High Commissioner was a matter which required urgent solution. China supported the decentralization measures envisaged by the High Commissioner and hoped that the appropriate decisions would be taken by the Executive Committee at its current session.
10. For purely humanitarian reasons, and despite its own economic difficulties, China had taken in 263,000 refugees and displaced persons from Indo-China; it had done its best to settle them by giving them all possible material assistance and helping them to engage in activities which would enable them to become self-supporting. Those measures had given positive results and the majority of the refugees were beginning a new and independent life. However, some of them had not been able to overcome the difficulties which had arisen and wished to be resettled elsewhere; they could leave China once they had received permission to enter their host country. Those problems were gradually being solved with the assistance of the High Commissioner for Refugees.
11. China hoped that the High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and other institutions with which his country co-operated in accepting refugees would continue to support it in its efforts, thereby enabling it to increase its contribution to the resettlement of refugees.
12. Mr. VRHUNEC (Yugoslavia) said that the constant increase in the number of refugees in the world, particularly in Africa and Asia, enhanced the importance of the role of the High Commissioner's Office and the tasks incumbent upon participants at the current session of the Executive Committee. Refugees, of whom there were now over 10 million who had been forced to leave their homes and could not enjoy their basic human rights, needed international solidarity and assistance in order to survive. Their problems, whatever the cause - and they were largely the result of colonialism and undemocratic and unjust political and economic relations - concerned not just a handful of countries but the entire world community, and no effort should be spared to

assist those unfortunate people. The activities of the Office of the High Commissioner were therefore of great importance and Yugoslavia supported them wholeheartedly. He was pleased to note that seven more countries had acceded to the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees; that gave cause for hope that those instruments would soon become universal and thus gain still further in strength.

13. In accordance with the humanitarian principles in its Constitution and in the international instruments to which it had acceded, Yugoslavia associated itself, as far as it was able, with the efforts to assist refugees. It not only participated in international assistance activities but also implemented and financed direct action in its own territory.

14. At the legislative level it had refined and improved provisions governing the status of refugees and asylum. The protection of refugees had been strengthened. He reserved the right to return to the question of international protection at a subsequent stage in the discussion.

15. Strengthening the management of the High Commissioner's Office was a complex question; on the one hand the constant increase in refugee problems called for an extension of the work of the Office, while on the other there was still a need for maximum saving, particularly in administrative expenditure. In Yugoslavia's view the proposals made could provide an acceptable solution.

16. In conclusion, his Government was firmly resolved to continue its co-operation with the Office of the High Commissioner.

17. Mr. AHMED ABDEL RAHMAN (Sudan) noted that the general situation of refugees in the world still gave cause for alarm. In southern Africa, if the international community did not take the necessary sanctions against the racist régime of South Africa, which was stepping up its aggression, and if Namibia did not achieve independence soon, the situation was bound to get even worse. Events in Afghanistan which had led nationals of that country to take refuge in increasing numbers in neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan, also gave cause for serious concern. The situation in Chad, was no less disquieting. A new group of refugees from that country had recently crossed the Sudanese frontier. Without wishing to go into the deep-seated reasons for the increase in the number of refugees in various parts of the world, his delegation wished to emphasize the fact that States must adhere scrupulously to the basic principles of non-interference and respect for territorial integrity.

18. Six months after the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) which, in making the international community aware of the scope of the refugee problem in Africa, had marked a first step towards its solution, it remained to ask all those who had generously pledged contributions to UNHCR, to countries of asylum and to other humanitarian bodies to fulfil their pledges. In that context, he hoped that the technical group which was seeking to follow up the decisions taken at the Conference would continue to collaborate closely with the bodies concerned and countries of asylum with a view to determining how best to use the contributions, taking into account the number of refugees and the volume of assistance they needed. In his view, the international community should review the situation after a while to see whether the decisions of the Conference had been really effective and to remedy any shortcomings. In fact, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations had said at the eighteenth Conference of Heads of States and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Nairobi, the problem of

African refugees had not ended with the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. The international community must be kept aware of the problem and encouraged to support a sustained effort to cope with it in all its dimensions. It was also essential to deal with the factors underlying refugee situations.

19. In the Sudan, which the High Commissioner had visited a few months previously, the rise in the number of refugees was causing increasingly complex problems. At the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981 a new group of refugees had arrived in the Sudan from Chad. During the first quarter of 1981 there had been an influx of Ugandan refugees. Small groups of refugees of various ethnic and cultural origins continued to enter the eastern part of the country; they were coming to join the hundreds of thousands of refugees to which the Sudan had given asylum during the previous 14 years. Between December 1980 and September 1981 the total number of refugees had risen from 503,000 to 550,000.

20. Repatriation obviously offered the best solution to the refugee problem, and the Sudan sincerely hoped that the people who had taken refuge in its territory would return to their countries of origin voluntarily. Unfortunately, there was no evidence that such would happen.

21. The mass of refugees, the first of whom had arrived in 1965, naturally imposed a very heavy burden on the Sudan, which found it difficult, in view of the resources and infrastructure at its disposal, to offer durable solutions to the older groups of refugees and provide emergency assistance for the newcomers.

22. Furthermore, faced with the difficulties which the presence of refugees caused, some of the Sudanese population, a people which had always had a great sense of hospitality, were becoming increasingly hostile to the refugees, with whom they had to share already strained resources.

23. Despite all the risks involved, the Sudan would continue to shoulder its responsibilities towards refugees, but the international community must help it to strengthen its competent services and must assist those concerned so that they could be rehabilitated and resettled.

24. The scope of the problems - care and maintenance, settlement, self-sufficiency and integration - facing countries which decided to grant asylum to refugees had encouraged his Government to convene a seminar on refugees in the spring of 1982. He thanked the High Commissioner and the Ford Foundation for the generous contribution they had made towards the organization of that seminar.

25. If the High Commissioner was to be able to provide the assistance expected of him and implement increasingly extensive programmes, he must be given all the necessary funds.

26. His delegation supported the idea of strengthening the management of the High Commissioner's Office; the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and those of delegations must be taken into account if the operation was to be carried out on a rational and sound basis. In his view, it would be best to establish an intergovernmental group of experts to assess the requirements of the Office and formulate definitive conclusions on the matter, in the light of the information provided by the High Commissioner and the observations of ACABQ.

27. In conclusion, he reiterated his thanks to all those who had responded to his Government's appeal to help the refugees in the Sudan.

28. Mr. SOROURADDIN (Iran) said that, as the documents distributed at the current session clearly showed, the problem of refugees, whose numbers had increased alarmingly in recent years, was one of the most complex and tragic confronting the world.

29. The international community appeared to have forgotten those refugees who had found shelter in Iran. A land of refuge for centuries, Iran was striving to meet their requirements to the best of its ability, but since they were steadily increasing in number, the Iranian authorities were grappling with difficulties of unprecedented proportions. They had therefore requested assistance from the UNHCR, which had sent a delegation to enquire into the refugee situation in Iran.

30. The arrival in mass of refugees in Iran was due partly to the policies of Iraq. Iraq, which had consistently used its nationals in order to exert pressure on Iran, had expelled over 60,000 Iraqis to Iran in violation of basic human rights, mostly elderly persons, women, children and even the disabled, after confiscating all their property and identity papers. About a week previously, 700 Iraqis expelled from their country in that way had been forced to cross areas mined earlier by the Iraqi armed forces. Iraq must put a stop to its mass expulsions.

31. Further, since the beginning of the war of aggression which Iraq had undertaken against Iran, an increasing number of Kurds had left Iraq to seek shelter in Iran, where they had joined the 30,000 Iraqi Kurds taken in by Iran after the 1975 Treaty of Algiers. Also 1,000 Iraqi officers and soldiers, who were opposed to the war of aggression unleashed by their country, had applied for asylum in Iran.

32. The fact that there were many refugees in Iran was also due to the events in Afghanistan.

33. The Afghan refugees had started to arrive in Iran at the time of the coup d'état carried out in Afghanistan in 1978 and they had considerably increased in number following the Soviet military intervention. Of the 4 million persons who had fled Afghanistan, approximately 2.5 million had sought refuge in Pakistan and 1.5 million in Iran.

34. Thus far, despite its tremendous economic difficulties, Iran had succeeded in meeting the needs of all those refugees without receiving any international assistance at all.

35. However, the war of aggression unleashed by Iraq, which had led to the destruction of refineries, petrochemical complexes and power stations, and the earthquakes in Iran in recent months, which had also caused considerable damage, had had very serious repercussions on the Iranian economy. The Iranian authorities were no longer able to provide all the assistance which the refugees required and had therefore asked for international assistance for that purpose. The authorities very much hoped that a comprehensive assistance programme would soon be established for the refugees in Iran.

36. Although the UNHCR's task was purely humanitarian and social, it would be a mistake to ignore totally the political realities that had led to the emergence of the refugee problem. It should never be forgotten that the root causes of the problem were political and should be tackled first. If the refugees were to accept

voluntary repatriation, which needless to say was the best solution, the political situation which had forced them to flee must first be brought to an end.

37. The refugees were the innocent victims of circumstances beyond their control and, whatever the reasons that impelled them to leave their country, it was only right to help them.

38. World opinion must be alerted to the human tragedies attendant on any act of aggression and any military occupation, events which compelled the nationals of an attacked or occupied country to seek refuge abroad. If public opinion was thus called upon to exert pressure on the aggressors and compel them to withdraw, unconditionally, from the territories they occupied, there would unquestionably be a rapid decrease in the number of acts of aggression and military occupations and force would be used much less frequently in international relations.

39. His delegation considered that the Executive Committee, without relinquishing its non-political character, had a duty to focus the attention of the international community on the plight of refugees, mobilize additional resources for them and help the countries of first asylum to shoulder the increasingly heavy burdens they bore as a result of the growing numbers of refugees. New initiatives needed to be taken to show the refugees that the international community was determined to respond to their appeal.

40. Mr. CORDERO di MONTEZEMOLO (Italy) said that his country was fully aware of the seriousness of the refugee problem and also had been one of the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 35/124, entitled "International co-operation to avert new flows of refugees". It very much hoped that the international community would take appropriate action to prevent new mass outflows of refugees. The action might include a reaffirmation of the need for universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and for observance of the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

41. A study should be made of ways and means of proceeding with the voluntary repatriation of refugees to their country of origin and of sharing the costs equitably among the States concerned.

42. Of the items on the agenda for the Executive Committee's current session, those concerning international protection and the UNHCR's balance sheet and structure were of priority importance. His delegation very much hoped for clear and precise decisions about them.

43. UNHCR's primary task was to provide refugees with the legal protection and humanitarian assistance they needed. If, as many appeared to wish, UNHCR's scope was to be enlarged and it was assigned new responsibilities, there was considerable likelihood that it would no longer be able to discharge its task satisfactorily.

44. Italy was not unaware, however, that the growing number of refugees created problems that were often very complex and called for different solutions. It was also aware that international aid to refugees should not merely consist of providing them with emergency relief; it should also enable them to live decently until a durable solution to their problems could be found.

45. Nevertheless the magnitude of the needs, which compelled the international community to make an increasingly heavy outlay, and the growing economic difficulties experienced by a number of countries, including Italy, made it essential in the interests of UNHCR and the refugees themselves to take stock of the situation and establish an order of priorities, even at the risk of cutting or delaying certain programmes that were not extremely urgent. Thus if countries such as Italy were no longer in a position to provide UNHCR with all the support it needed, it could nevertheless continue its main activities and still furnish assistance to all refugees, as its statute provided.

46. The High Commissioner should consider the possibility of developing less expensive structures.

47. Italy considered that UNHCR should concentrate its efforts on emergency relief programmes. Since its programmes were bound to include measures akin to development assistance, those countries which would not be able to increase their contributions very much in the years ahead should have an opportunity to examine the programmes in detail in order to ascertain whether they really met requirements. That would be the best way of ensuring that refugees and developing countries which accepted refugees could be certain that the support of the international community would not fail.

48. His Government, whose contribution had increased substantially in 1981, believed it was right in wishing to devote the major part of its assistance to special programmes, but that obviously did not preclude it from contributing to emergency relief programmes of an exceptional nature.

49. Mr. NETTEL (Austria) said that in recent years regrettable political events had compelled the Office of the High Commissioner to undertake tasks which had virtually brought it to the limits of its capacity. In 1981 the overall situation seemed to have quietened somewhat and the success of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa had been encouraging. It had been possible to make a start on tasks which had been put off until then and disparities had been overcome. Total expenditure for 1981 had been kept below \$US 500 million and there was hope that activities would be even less costly in the future. However, the apparent stability was fragile. In South-East Asia, South-West Asia, southern Africa and the Horn of Africa the problems continued to be serious and long-term solutions seemed to be out of reach.

50. In Europe, refugees from eastern Europe were imposing a heavy burden on several countries. Austria, a country of first asylum since 1945, was facing the most difficult problems it had encountered in that respect since the end of the 1960s. Furthermore, it had accepted thousands of refugees from Africa, Asia and Latin America. It had made regular financial contributions to UNHCR's General Programmes and Special Programmes and, since the last session, it had helped to finance programmes in Cameroon and Somalia.

51. The UNHCR programme proposed for the year ahead constituted an extraordinary challenge. It had been possible to reduce activities somewhat, but it should be borne in mind that the contributions by Governments were the maximum that could be expected. The enormous tasks undertaken by UNHCR in recent years had made it necessary to strengthen its organization. Improvements in its structure were greatly needed. In that connection, he considered the proposals before the Executive Committee regarding organization, management and staff were satisfactory. The financial implications of the proposals seemed reasonable; it

should be borne in mind that a higher investment in management would enable better use to be made of available resources and so help operational expenses to be reduced. His delegation hoped that a decision on those questions would be taken at the current session; if the decision was deferred, the continuity of UNHCR's work might be affected.

52. Speaking of the importance of the question of the proportion of UNHCR's administrative expenses to be charged to the United Nations regular budget, he said that in the General Assembly his delegation would support every effort to ensure that the proportion was an equitable one. The question of universal solidarity in resolving refugee problems was still more important; it could not be in the interests of the credibility of an international organization with truly humanitarian goals that a few countries should bear a burden incumbent on all. His delegation very much hoped that the Executive Committee would take a decision in that regard, so as to ensure progress at the current session of the General Assembly. Further, it was a matter for concern that UNHCR's increased activities had virtually exhausted its emergency relief capacity. That situation meant that a more balanced division of tasks among the international agencies should be envisaged and that the High Commissioner's mandate, which had constantly been enlarged, should be reviewed. The recently published guidelines concerning UNHCR activities could provide a good basis for such a process. In conclusion, he praised the work performed in the field of refugee protection and stressed the relevance of the legal discussions held in the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection; the discussions should not, however, lead to the relevant legal instruments being weakened.

53. Mr. SALAH-BEY (Algeria) said he deplored the fact that, because of all kinds of conflicts and natural disasters, flows of refugees and displaced persons had reached a point at which States, international institutions and voluntary agencies were forced to limit their activities to emergency assistance, frequently relegating the search for durable solutions to second place. Refugee problems particularly affected the countries of the third world, which despite their difficulties generously granted asylum and so contributed to alleviating the suffering of refugees to the same extent as the so-called donor countries. True international solidarity must be devoid of special considerations and should be demonstrated by assistance for all refugees, given without any discrimination and in accordance with the principles of non-refoulement and equitable burden-sharing.

54. He expressed the hope that UNHCR expenditures would decline in 1981 and 1982, as envisaged, and he welcomed the results of repatriation operations in South-East Asia and Africa. In Zimbabwe, the High Commissioner's special co-ordinating role in the repatriation, resettlement and rehabilitation programmes had come to an end, after 95 per cent of the persons concerned had returned to their country of origin; that testified to the value of the solution of voluntary repatriation.

55. It was not the business of UNHCR to deal with the causes of refugee flows. Political solutions in particular, such as the decolonization of a territory, did not fall within its scope, but it could be involved in the process of planning for durable solutions to refugee problems.

56. Some 10 million refugees throughout the world were currently the responsibility of UNHCR; in addition, there were millions of displaced persons, the victims of disturbances, drought, famine and other natural disasters. In that context, the multiple tasks of UNHCR and the volume of assistance it managed called for a major effort in organization and co-ordination. The High Commissioner had already taken steps to that end; for example, he had created two new groups, one responsible for working out general features of policy and the other for dealing with emergency situations. He had recently prepared guidelines for the activities of his staff in emergency situations. In 1981 he had taken a number of steps towards restructuring his Office. Algeria particularly appreciated the measures designed to develop the protection function and relate it more closely to the assistance function, as well as the steps designed to ensure better co-ordination between headquarters and the field on the one hand, and between UNHCR, international organizations and non-governmental organizations on the other. The proposed restructuring should promote the concept of a "focal point", which would lead to the creation of geographic areas managed by regional sections. In that connection his delegation welcomed the fact that Africa was to remain a geographical unit but it was afraid that the new structure might prove somewhat rigid. It thanked the High Commissioner for the informal meetings he had convened on the question of restructuring and on the general evolution of the world refugee situation. It also welcomed the outcome of the meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection and the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

57. In the immediate future UNHCR must continue to shoulder its responsibilities towards the millions of refugees who needed increased assistance. In the case of Latin America it had been necessary to increase the allocations for the General Programmes in 1981; for 1982 a total of 21.5 million dollars was envisaged. In Asia the flows of refugees from South-East Asia had declined and thousands of people had been repatriated to Kampuchea. The important event of the year for Africa had been the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. The appeal launched at the Conference had made it possible to collect as much as \$572 million, but that should not blind the Executive Committee to the fact that the initial objective had been \$1.25 billion; furthermore, in order to calculate the real total of additional resources obtained as a result of the Conference, it would be necessary to deduct the contributions traditionally paid by donor countries. At all events, the Conference had at least provided an opportunity for acquainting the international community with the situation in the African continent, and its momentum must be sustained.

58. His delegation felt that the 5 million African refugees should receive not only emergency aid but also development assistance, to enable them to become self-sufficient. In that respect, despite a net increase, the appropriations proposed in the High Commissioner's report still appeared unbalanced to the detriment of Africa, which received only 30 per cent of the total amount envisaged for General Programmes, whereas it contained nearly half the world's refugees. Many regions of Africa were faced with refugee problems; recently the situation had worsened in Angola, where 131,000 people had been newly displaced following the invasion by the South African régime. In a report submitted on 25 September 1981, the inter-agency mission, led by Mr. Andersen, had counted 661,000 displaced persons and drought victims in Angola. In southern Africa refugees continued to suffer from the armed attacks of the South African régime, despite the recommendations of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection; the Executive Committee should consider ways to guarantee those victims the necessary international protection.

59. At its thirty-first session the Executive Committee had adopted a programme of assistance to Sahrawi refugees in Algeria. That assistance was not sufficient to meet their needs but it testified to the international community's concern. In order to solve the problems of those refugees, Algeria and Africa as a whole should place their hopes in the conclusions adopted in August 1981 by the OAU committee on Western Sahara, which were based on the exercise of the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. Once conditions permitted, the 150,000 Sahrawi refugees in Algeria could return to their country to participate in the referendum on self-determination; the High Commissioner's assistance would be particularly useful for the repatriation operation. In conclusion, he hoped that the Organization of African Unity and all African countries would find peaceful solutions to the conflicts which were the root cause of the sufferings of refugees in Africa.

60. Mr. MEBAZAA (Tunisia) spoke of the value of the High Commissioner's report (A/AC.96/594) and the usefulness of the humanitarian message it contained. He deplored the fact that despite all the challenges taken up by UNHCR during its 30 years of existence, mass population movements were increasing. Every year there were new flows of refugees in Africa, Asia, America and Europe. There were now some 12 million human beings who had been uprooted in that way and threatened with hunger, disease and underemployment; they imposed heavy sacrifices on countries of asylum, menaced the stability of receiving countries and were a danger to universal peace. Faced with such a situation, the international community must reaffirm its will to increase the assistance given to refugees and to work towards a lasting solution of their problems, through voluntary repatriation to the country of origin. The States members of the Executive Committee had a special responsibility in that regard, and in particular for advising the High Commissioner, so that he could make the best use of the resources at his disposal.

61. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held at Geneva in April under the auspices of the United Nations and in close collaboration with the Organization of African Unity and UNHCR, had given rise to a wave of solidarity commensurate with the hopes of the 5 million refugees in the African continent. Over \$500 million in voluntary contributions had been pledged. UNHCR, in close collaboration with the donor countries and non-governmental organizations concerned, must now maintain that momentum in order to ensure the implementation of programmes in receiving countries. Furthermore, while the situation of some groups of refugees had improved, the most painful refugee problem that mankind had ever known continued: the problem of the Palestinian people, which went back more than 30 years. The international community must take a greater interest in that problem if a durable solution was to be found.

62. His delegation was satisfied by the restructuring measures taken by the High Commissioner. The creation of a Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, for example, had been most opportune. His delegation hoped that efforts would be made in future to strengthen the framework of UNHCR and ensure equality of rights and obligations among its staff. To that end, the High Commissioner should have recourse to external consultants, particularly the Joint Inspection Unit.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

61. La Conférence internationale sur l'assistance aux réfugiés en Afrique, qui s'est tenue à Genève en avril, sous les auspices de l'ONU et en étroite collaboration avec l'Organisation de l'unité africaine et le HCR, a suscité un élan de solidarité à la mesure des espoirs des cinq millions de réfugiés du continent africain. Plus de 500 millions de dollars de contributions volontaires ont été annoncés. Le HCR doit, à présent, en étroite collaboration avec les pays donateurs et les organisations non gouvernementales concernées, maintenir cet élan pour assurer l'application des programmes dans les pays d'accueil. Par ailleurs, M. Mebazaa rappelle que si le sort de certains groupes de réfugiés se trouve amélioré, le problème de réfugiés le plus douloureux que l'humanité ait connu persiste : c'est celui du peuple palestinien, qui remonte à plus de trente ans. La communauté internationale doit s'y intéresser davantage, pour qu'une solution durable soit trouvée.

62. La délégation tunisienne est satisfaite des mesures de restructuration prises par le HCR. La création d'un Sous-Comité pour les questions administratives et financières notamment a été très opportune. La délégation tunisienne souhaite qu'à l'avenir des efforts soient faits pour renforcer l'encadrement du HCR et assurer l'égalité des droits et des obligations parmi son personnel. A cette fin le HCR devrait recourir à des consultants extérieurs, et particulièrement au Corps commun d'inspection.

La séance est levée à 12 h 50.