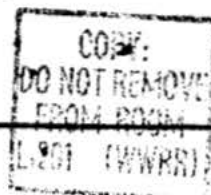


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THIRD COMMITTEE
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at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CALERO RODRIGUES (Brazil)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
(A/37/3 (Part II, chap. III and IX), A/37/12 and Add.1, A/37/84, A/37/324,
A/37/431, A/37/438, A/37/505, A/37/522, A/37/557)

- (a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
- (b) QUESTION OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
- (c) ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. Mr. HARTLING (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the role of UNHCR was the hub of the international community's efforts to solve the problems of refugees in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, by restoring them to a dignified existence and enabling them to better their lives. Under the terms of its Statute, UNHCR's work was humanitarian and social and was entirely non-political. In the past 30 years, there had been not only a sharp increase in the number of Members of the United Nations, representing a wide variety of political trends, but also a growing complexity in the nature of refugee problems and a tendency to introduce politics into problems which, by their very nature, ought to remain non-political. It was crucial that Member States had maintained the purely humanitarian character of UNHCR. Everything possible must be done to preserve intact the non-political credo which was essential for the functioning and survival of UNHCR.

2. The General Assembly had always regarded the original mandate of UNHCR as remaining fundamental and valid and as a solid basis on which to build in accordance with the evolution of humanitarian needs arising from man-made disasters in the world. The role of the High Commissioner in humanitarian efforts had gradually expanded, and that had been reflected in various General Assembly resolutions which had originated in the Third Committee. UNHCR had developed from a body dealing solely with persons able to substantiate a well-founded fear of persecution by reason of race, religion, nationality or political opinion into one covering a far wider range of situations, including numerous categories of displaced persons and repatriates who had often returned home in large numbers after independence or a change of circumstances in their country of origin. That evolution had been based on a continuing dialogue with Governments that had pledged their responsibility, given their support and created favourable conditions for any action proposed by UNHCR. Indeed, the support of first-asylum countries was paramount to the task of UNHCR. Those countries, which were often developing countries, showed great hospitality in receiving refugees. However, in order to deal with the problems involved they needed substantial international help. To that end, other Governments offered resettlement possibilities, sometimes in considerable numbers. They also made generous financial contributions to UNHCR programmes. The participation of such Governments was equally essential, both for the refugees and for the success of the work of UNHCR.

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(Mr. Hartling, UNHCR)

3. UNHCR had received general support in the Third Committee. However, the ability of the United Nations system, and UNHCR in particular, to deal with the refugee problem and meet existing needs was founded on credibility. That was where its performance, on the one hand, and dialogue with Governments, on the other, became important. While strengthening its links and co-ordination with other bodies of the United Nations system, UNHCR had adopted a series of internal measures designed to improve its capacity to deal with problems in the event of a crisis and in the longer term. In the process, it had kept Governments informed of its activities through field representatives all over the world, through direct contacts during missions and through the ambassadors of Governments at Geneva or New York. It deeply appreciated the positive approach taken by Governments today and, above all, the confidence they had shown it.

4. A decision on the continuation of UNHCR beyond 31 December 1983 must be taken at the current session. He was sure that Member States would agree that the Office of the High Commissioner should simply be continued. In that connection, the UNHCR Executive Committee, at its thirty-third session, had adopted a decision which expressed the belief that the mandate of UNHCR was sufficiently flexible and adaptable to changing requirements and thus adequate in the evolving refugee situation. He was sure that Governments would continue to preserve the strictly humanitarian character of the Office. It was by virtue of that character that UNHCR was able to avoid involvement in the so-called root causes, the reasons that caused persons to leave their countries in large numbers. Obviously, the root causes must be tackled, but that must be done in appropriate forums, since it was a political activity. Assistance to victims of discord and repression must be a humanitarian and non-political task.

5. In order to build their future, refugees needed protection as well as assistance, and he urged Governments to offer the maximum support for the task of international protection. It was for that reason that UNHCR considered it very important that States should become parties to the international instruments relating to the status of refugees, namely, the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. In the past five years, 20 States had acceded to those instruments, bringing the total number of parties to 93 on all continents. Protection also had a more immediate and vital meaning affecting the safety and well-being of the individual, and sometimes even his life. That called for the universal application, at all times and in all cases, of the principles of asylum and non-refoulement. Countries sometimes claimed that political or economic difficulties prevented them from observing those principles. Clearly the application of such principles might cause various difficulties, but an attempt must be made to overcome them, notably burden-sharing by as many countries as possible. The same was true of resettlement, and in that connection many Governments had shown great generosity. However, the need still existed and the momentum must be maintained.

6. He introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) (A/37/522). One of the results of the Conference had been the receipt of pledges with a total value of approximately \$574 million. During the course of the year, donors had not only

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(Mr. Hartling, UNHCR)

clarified the nature of their pledges but also specified the channel through which their contributions were to be disbursed for the benefit of refugees and returnees in Africa. At the present time, all but some \$12 million of the pledges made at ICARA had, at the expressed wishes of donors, been channelled either bilaterally or through various agencies or organizations. The report provided additional information concerning the participation of United Nations agencies and organizations in post-ICARA activities. It gave an up-to-date account of activities and developments that had taken place since the convening of ICARA.

7. UNHCR liked to think of itself as a tool in the service of a humanitarian cause, at the disposal of Governments and the international community. While it had a share of responsibility in its own development, it was the Governments on whom it relied that determined the orientation and limits of its work. He wished to thank all Governments for their support in the common search for durable solutions to refugee problems and looked forward to a constructive debate.

8. Mr. DOUGLAS (United States of America) said that the United States strongly supported the nomination and re-election of Mr. Poul Hartling as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It also reaffirmed its support for the definition of refugees given by the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol and for the mandate of UNHCR. Those had proved to be of enduring validity, and, in the face of the turbulent world refugee situation, the international community had been reminded that UNHCR had a limited and specialized mandate.

9. His delegation was gratified by the importance which the High Commissioner placed on continued internationalization of refugee resettlement efforts. All of the major resettlement countries were prepared to continue to do their part, but the number of refugees throughout the world had reached such proportions that a relatively few countries could not continue to bear the burden alone. It was also gratifying to note the accession of 10 more States to one or both of the basic legal instruments, the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Especially encouraging was the fact that, with the accession of Japan, China and the Philippines, the East Asian region was now well represented among parties to those instruments.

10. It was important to note that the High Commissioner placed special emphasis on the improvement of the administration and financial management of his organization. Scarce resources must be managed with the greatest possible efficiency. The United States Government had adopted a course of budgetary austerity for its domestic programmes, and it was now more important than ever that the United Nations agencies should manage their operations efficiently if the United States was to maintain its level of support. He commended the High Commissioner's efforts to provide special programmes for the handicapped because that group, while small in numbers, was particularly vulnerable. He also commended those countries that had offered resettlement in disproportionately large numbers to handicapped South-East Asian refugees. Special emphasis had been placed on ending pirate attacks against refugees in South-East Asian waters, particularly attacks on women and young girls. The misery and human suffering resulting from those attacks could not be underestimated and the victims concerned were deeply and brutally wounded.

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(Mr. Douglas, United States)

The High Commissioner's initiatives for aiding vulnerable refugees, showing care in managing resources and giving emphasis to burden-sharing were of special importance. The most striking feature of the High Commissioner's report, however, was its documentation that the number of refugees in the world continued to grow despite the enormous resources committed towards durable solutions.

11. The High Commissioner had mentioned his concern about the tightening of criteria for refugee resettlement and asylum in countries throughout the world. The reason for that was that the flow of refugees had reached such proportions as to constitute a mass movement of people from one part of the world to another. The dislocation of whole cultures and peoples was not easily handled by traditional solutions of resettlement or temporary asylum. It called for something more fundamental, namely, the acknowledgement of the root causes that turned people into refugees and the determination of the international community to do something about them. Unless Member States looked at that basic question, future efforts would always be doomed to frustration and inadequacy.

12. Among those root causes were the continued occupation and attempted subjugation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the invasion of Kampuchea by Viet Nam, two current events which alone had caused over 3.5 million people to flee along the bitter road of becoming refugees. Another cause was the use of biological and chemical weapons as indiscriminate and mass weapons of death against those Lao, Kampuchians and Afghans who dared to resist the absorption and extinction of their traditional homelands by foreign troops. There was a clear need for improved attention to the diagnostic and health aspects of that problem. His Government and other Governments had thoroughly documented the use of those weapons in South-East Asia and Afghanistan.

13. Yet another major cause of major refugee flows in the world was the deliberate expulsion of masses of people as part of a country's aggressive foreign policy. For example, in 1979, Cuba had expelled 125,000 persons, who had then taken refuge in the United States. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam had also expelled large numbers of ethnic Chinese. Part of the brutal treatment of refugees was the deliberate splintering of families in order to preserve a means of obtaining currency for foreign exchange. Many Vietnamese refugees had stated that only part of their family had been allowed to leave for that very reason; indeed, one of the major sources of hard currency for the Vietnamese economy came from money sent by refugees abroad to their families still living in Viet Nam.

14. Women and children not only made up the vast majority of refugees in the world but represented the generational strength of their peoples. The protracted dislocation suffered by refugees affected women and children worst of all. The potential for long-term harm to a people and its culture was especially apparent in that connection; years of lingering in refugee camps sapped nations of the contribution of entire generations.

15. In addition to piracy, there were other problems for women refugees that needed to be addressed specifically. Among the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, for example, there were many women who had been widowed or separated from their husbands

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(Mr. Douglas, United States)

by the war and who found themselves the heads of families they were not able to support. His Government therefore hoped that the High Commissioner would make a special effort to implement the mandate given him in paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution A/36/125 on assistance to all women refugees. His delegation believed that the High Commissioner should make a special and separate report annually on the problems of assistance and protection of women refugees, and such a report should include recommendations to the General Assembly.

16. The mass movement of people was a problem for the industrialized nations which tried to resettle populations culturally distinct from theirs. However, it had the most severe impact on developing countries. UNHCR had documented that the largest numbers of refugees in the world today were to be found in Pakistan and Africa, two areas which had only limited resources to devote to refugees. Pakistan, which provided first asylum for nearly 3 million Afghan refugees, and Sudan and Somalia, which provided first asylum for hundreds of thousands of refugees from Ethiopia, had long traditions of hospitality and openness towards refugees. However, the presence of large numbers of refugees in those countries severely strained their economies and put great pressures on their populations. Accordingly, he urged the economic aid agencies within the United Nations system to give high priority to developing countries which accepted large numbers of refugees for first asylum and resettlement.

17. At the most recent meeting of the Executive Committee of UNHCR, the representative of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, replying to a statement made by the representative of the United States, had blamed the United States for the huge numbers of refugees leaving Viet Nam since 1975. It was true that the United States had left Viet Nam seven years before; it was true that the United States had been involved in a brave struggle to help the people of South Viet Nam preserve their independence and way of life; and it was true that there had been war and hardship. However, before 1975 there had been no boat people and there had been no widespread hunger, nor had there been tens of thousands of Vietnamese citizens shipped off to foreign lands as cheap exported labour. During the United States presence in Viet Nam, Buddhist monks had celebrated ancient rites in their temples, there had been freedom of movement and peaceful emigration, and Viet Nam had been an exporter of food. Today Viet Nam's largest export was refugees; over 1.3 million people had left that country since 1975. The horror stories of the boat people were well known to everyone, as was the fact that refugees still continued to leave, choosing to face probable pirate attacks and grave danger of death rather than remain in a country whose future promised only more of today's cruel despair.

18. If members of the Committee wished to pay a tribute to the courage of refugees, then they must themselves find the courage to talk about the conditions which were driving large numbers of people from their homes. Unless Member States were willing to be burdened with the cost of first asylum, resettlement and care, they would have to face up to the fact that ultimately the problem was a political one and that the High Commissioner must look to them for action. Acts of conscious State policy created the vast majority of refugees in the world today, such as 3 million Afghan refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, millions of

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(Mr. Douglas, United States)

refugees in Africa fleeing Soviet, Cuban and Libyan subversion, and hundreds of thousands of Khmer refugees in Thailand fleeing the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. It should not be forgotten that those régimes which were responsible for producing the largest numbers of refugees in the world today did nothing to assist them. Some were parties to the Convention and Protocol, yet they violated them repeatedly and blatantly and contributed not one cent to the international community's work to aid refugees. That was a problem which needed to be discussed, and it was unfortunate that attempts by the Federal Republic of Germany and Canada to have a full and fair discussion of the matter in appropriate United Nations forums had met with delays and even outright resistance.

19. The kind of world mankind wished to live in was, ideally, one in which UNHCR was not needed because there were no refugees. Unfortunately, the international community was far from that goal today, but if States Members of the United Nations had the will to face the root causes of refugee flows, there would be progress towards a just solution of refugee problems. United Nations resources could be effective if used wisely, and Members should commit themselves to that goal with the expectation that the report of the High Commissioner in 1983 would show that common efforts had turned the tide and that the future would be one of hope rather than despair for the world's refugees.

20. Mr. ULRICHSEN (Denmark) said that the continued mass flights of people to neighbouring countries, not only represented enormous human suffering but placed increasingly difficult burdens upon their hosts and the international community as a whole. The magnitude and complexity of the problems of refugees and displaced persons, which were especially serious in Africa, Asia and Latin America, had also increased the heavy responsibilities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. Those problems were compounded by the fact that the majority of refugees were in developing countries, often the least developed, which required substantial international support in terms of assistance and offers of settlement. International support from Member States to UNHCR was therefore imperative.

21. Observing that the current mandate of the UNHCR was due to expire at the end of 1982, he said that the High Commissioner had already taken steps to strengthen and restructure his Office in order to meet new and more complex refugee problems. Although the General Assembly had conferred special responsibilities on the Office in particular situations, the mandate itself had remained untouched. Since the mandate had proven to be sufficiently flexible to deal promptly and effectively with a wide variety of situations, his delegation felt that UNHCR should continue without any changes in its terms of reference.

22. Turning to international protection, he pointed out that, according to the report, although some developments had been encouraging, others had necessarily given rise to concern. For example, there had been an overall tendency among States to pursue more restrictive policies towards refugees and asylum-seekers. It was also of great concern that, in spite of the principle of non-refoulement, some asylum-seekers had been forcibly returned to countries where they were in danger of persecution or even death. Emphasizing the obligation to observe scrupulously the humanitarian rules and principles adopted to protect the individual

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(Mr. Ulrichsen, Denmark)

from persecution, his Government invited those States which had not yet done so to become parties to United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to its Protocol.

23. Threats to refugees and asylum-seekers and violations of their physical safety posed a particularly serious problem, which had continued during the year. Tragic recent examples included the shocking attack on two refugee camps in Beirut, and other such attacks in southern Africa, Central America and Asia. Those cases called for immediate action to provide both aid and protection. Another problem was the plight of refugees in distress at sea. The situation seemed to be deteriorating, since fewer ships were stopping to rescue refugees in distress. Denmark had welcomed the convening of a meeting on the subject in July 1982. Feeling that a more equitable international sharing of responsibilities was preferable to the adoption of more restrictive measures, including narrower criteria for asylum, he expressed the hope that just and expedient solutions could be found, so that further tragedies might be avoided.

24. Welcoming the decline in the number of boat people, he saw that the steps taken to implement the programme of orderly departures had doubtlessly contributed significantly to that decline. He also expressed satisfaction at the conclusion of an agreement between the Government of Thailand and UNHCR on an exclusive programme to combat the piracy to which so many boat people had been subjected.

25. The self-sufficiency of refugees, which had become an increasingly important aspect of the High Commissioner's work, had raised the question of the boundary between humanitarian work for refugees and development assistance. His delegation felt that, even in the emergency phase, assistance which might have a developmental connotation should be provided. The crucial question, however, was to determine where UNHCR could and should phase out its activities and hand over its responsibilities to other agencies. The key factor in any such decision must always be the ability of other competent agencies to take over. Leaving refugees to their own destiny and thereby causing new and humanitarian problems was a course that must be rejected.

26. His delegation was gratified that in recent years UNHCR's budget had stabilized and that the increase in expenditures foreseen for 1983 was a reasonable one. The proposed budget required substantial contributions from all countries, preferably in a manner that would make for a more equitable sharing of the burden. His country's firm support for UNHCR could be seen from its contribution of \$30 million to UNHCR activities in the period 1978-1981. In 1982, Denmark had already contributed about \$11 million, and this figure was expected to be higher in 1983. He also reaffirmed his country's commitment to participate actively in UNHCR's resettlement programmes.

27. The High Commissioner's term of office had been marked by a dramatic increase in the numbers of refugees, an expansion in the scope of UNHCR's programmes and an encouraging increase in participation in the activities of the Office. Increased support from the international community was essential in helping UNHCR continue its activities on a stable basis and improved the Office's ability to adapt to new

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(Mr. Ulrichsen, Denmark)

and demanding situations. During his time in office, the High Commissioner had adhered strictly to the fundamental principle that UNHCR's activities were non-political. There was no doubt that that humanitarian approach to his responsibilities had led a large number of Member States belonging to all regional groups to support the candidature of the High Commissioner for another term in office.

28. Speaking on behalf of the ten member States of the European Community, he said that those countries had often expressed their deep concern about the tragic problems posed by massive flows of refugees in various parts of the world. They had emphasized certain basic principles which should be respected in connection with refugee problems, including respect for the fundamental human rights of refugees. They had also stressed the importance of increased efforts to help refugees and the need for a more equitable sharing of such efforts among the members of the international community. They had given practical evidence of their concern by admitting or agreeing to accept refugees for resettlement and contributing to the funds of UNHCR, both individually and through the Community. The total amount of the Community's contributions to UNHCR since 1974 was approximately \$210 million, including \$115 million in cash and \$95 million worth of food. As a follow-up to the International Meeting on the Refugee Situation in South-East Asia, held at Geneva in 1979, the Community had contributed more than \$40 million through UNHCR for assistance to refugees in that area. Following the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, the Community had, as of 24 September 1982, contributed \$52,200,000 in cash and food. The Community was currently financing programmes dealing with food aid, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and various forms of assistance to a number of African countries; those programmes amounted to more than \$9 million, and substantial aid through UNHCR was planned for the very near future in South-East Asia, Pakistan and Central America.

29. Mr. GÖRANSSON (Sweden) said that the recent increase in the number of refugees constituted an ever-present reminder that preparedness for new emergencies must remain a priority concern for UNHCR. The problem of finding durable solutions for the refugee problem was still largely unsolved; as a result, the assistance activities of UNHCR had grown very rapidly and now dominated the budget. Since most major assistance programmes had developed beyond the emergency phase, UNHCR should be able to concentrate more on durable solutions, such as measures to promote the self-sufficiency of refugees. He was gratified that UNHCR had already initiated many programmes of that nature, often in co-operation with other agencies. Its activities had thereby grown extremely complex and now related inter alia to health, water, education, agriculture and vocational training. Along with those developments, particular attention had been given to the question of the mandate of UNHCR and the co-ordination of activities with other agencies and parties concerned.

30. Turning to the mandate of UNHCR, he said that, in accordance with the general feeling expressed at the thirty-third session of the Executive Committee, his delegation felt that the mandate should be continued unchanged for another five years. He also considered it very useful that the General Assembly was able to authorize the High Commissioner, when the need arose, to go beyond his

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(Mr. Göransson, Sweden)

traditional responsibilities and undertake assistance tasks for uprooted people who would otherwise be left in utter distress.

31. Co-ordination was important for the smooth phasing out of UNHCR involvement and the transfer of responsibility to other organizations; it should, however, be initiated at the earliest possible stage, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 36/225, which was aimed at strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to emergencies. In any emergency situation, a number of agencies were called upon, often by the General Assembly, to take part in assistance activities. They should all respond to those resolutions within their respective field of competence. The UNHCR often found it difficult to engage other agencies in activities for refugees which bordered on development; that was a serious problem, since refugee flows often occurred between developing countries, some of them among the least developed. Plans for the care and maintenance of refugees should take account of the living conditions of the local population and the level of social and physical infrastructure in the country of asylum. Similar considerations must be taken into account in the country of origin when large numbers of refugees were repatriated. Assistance to refugees and returnees in such countries should be seen as an integral part of the development efforts in the area, and development agencies, in consultation with the host Governments, should be more closely involved in meeting the assistance requirements of refugees. As the first-asylum countries had already generously offered a safe haven to refugees, material assistance should be forthcoming from external sources, so that ongoing development programmes would not be disrupted.

32. Although the bulk of UNHCR's financial resources was used for assistance programmes, protection remained its core activity, in accordance with its mandate. It was encouraging to note that the principles of non-refoulement and temporary admission were gradually being accepted as binding norms. However, there had been many reminders of the need to strengthen the protection of refugees. The criminal and reckless attacks on defenceless men, women and children in the Beirut refugee camps illustrated the urgent need for legal and other measures to increase the safety of such people. Attacks on refugees in other parts of the world had been equally dismaying. He hoped that Mr. Schnyder's projected survey of the various aspects of the problem of military attacks on refugee camps and settlements would indicate measures to help curb such aggression. More important, all countries should be urged to accede to international instruments on humanitarian matters and observe the rules laid down therein. It was reassuring that a large number of countries had acceded to those instruments in the past year.

33. It was of the utmost importance that UNHCR should be strongly represented in Central America, where the situation seemed to be steadily deteriorating. His delegation would support any effort by UNHCR to pursue its policies for protecting and assisting refugees and for finding durable solutions.

34. With regard to repatriation, his delegation supported a regional approach, with durable solutions planned in relation to the development of an area, as was the case in the Horn of Africa. He had hoped to see more progress in the programme for returnees to Ethiopia. The situation was, however, difficult and might present

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(Mr. Göransson, Sweden)

more problems than the High Commissioner's report indicated. Generally speaking, an imbalance in assistance between countries or regions might induce large numbers of people to leave their homes only to become refugees or displaced persons. The same logic seemed applicable in Kampuchea, where sustained humanitarian assistance for needy Kampucheans inside their own countries would create the material conditions under which the inhabitants were more likely to remain and which would, at the same time, be conducive to the repatriation of additional numbers of refugees. He sincerely hoped that organized repatriation from Thailand to Kampuchea would soon prove possible for those wishing to return to Kampuchea. As far as Afghanistan was concerned, he repeated his delegation's call for a political solution that would create the conditions conducive to the voluntary repatriation of refugees. In the meantime, the international community would have to provide continued large-scale assistance to ease the heavy burden on Pakistan.

35. There must be greater efforts to achieve peace and security and to create reasonable economic and social conditions for all in order to diminish or eliminate the causes of mass exoduses. Problems connected with food scarcity and population growth must be solved, and respect for human rights upheld. However, in order not to compromise its exclusively humanitarian task of protecting and assisting refugees, it was essential that UNHCR itself should not get involved in the so-called "pre-flow phase". It was important that all countries should remember their obligations under United Nations principles and, in particular, their responsibilities towards their own citizens. However, it was equally important that efforts to eliminate the causes of mass exoduses should in no way infringe the accepted principles of international protection or the right of everyone to leave any country, including his own.

36. The High Commissioner and his staff had dealt ably with the difficult problems before them. His delegation was gratified to learn of the High Commissioner's readiness to serve another term and would give him its whole-hearted support.

37. Mr. BIRIDO (Sudan) said that there had been serious developments concerning the situation of refugees in various regions of the world, including additional flows of refugees in Pakistan, Central America and many parts of Africa, piracy and military attacks on refugees in many regions, and frequent failure to observe the principle of non-refoulement. The magnitude and dangers of military attacks on refugee camps and settlements and the urgent need to protect them had been confirmed by the recent inhuman, and barbaric massacres of Palestinian refugees in Beirut, after the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the Palestinian people. Refugees in southern Africa were facing similar military attacks. He therefore looked forward to Mr. Schnyder's report concerning military attacks on refugee camps and settlements in southern Africa and elsewhere. His delegation agreed that concrete measures and principles should be adopted in the proper international setting to ensure better protection of refugee camps.

38. It was important to orient the work of UNHCR towards field activities and increase the delegation of authority. The conditions of service of field staff should be improved in order to attract persons of the highest calibre. As the Sub-Committee on Administration and Financial Matters had suggested in paragraph 15

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(Mr. Birido, Sudan)

of document A/AC.96/612, the UNHCR should, as a matter of urgency, bring its recruitment policy and procedures in line with the stipulations of its statute and other relevant General Assembly resolutions.

39. His delegation supported the continuation of UNHCR for a further period and felt that its mandate, as modified by relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, had proved to be useful and flexible in responding to changing refugee situations. It was also confident that the Executive Committee would continue to fulfil the functions and responsibilities entrusted to it.

40. Concerning the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, he noted the statement in paragraph 36 of document E/1982/76 that while there had been certain successes, the overall results of ICARA had fallen short of expectations. His delegation therefore supported the view, stated in paragraph 39 of that report, that there was a need to further review with African Governments concerned the burdens imposed on their national economies by refugees and returnees and to provide assistance, where necessary, in preparing complete documentation to support requests for international assistance.

41. In connection with the situation of refugees in the Sudan, he expressed his thanks and appreciation to all those who had given valuable assistance to his Government in its efforts to provide essential services for the growing number of refugees. The competent Sudanese authorities had adopted a number of administrative and organizational measures with a view to increasing the country's ability to absorb and provide more assistance to refugees. Those measures included the establishment of a national council and a special fund for refugees. Donors and voluntary organizations were represented in the Advisory Committee for the fund. Voluntary organizations were also entrusted with the implementation of important projects. The ILO/UNHCR income-generating project for refugees in the Sudan was a good example of co-ordination between United Nations agencies in delivering humanitarian assistance to refugees. In September 1982, a seminar had been held at Khartoum in close co-operation with UNHCR and the Ford Foundation in order to explore and gain an insight into the refugee experience of the Sudan and to submit proposals to improve the situation of the refugees.

42. While the refugees from Chad had started to return voluntarily to their country of origin, the influx of refugees across his country's southern and eastern borders had continued unabated, bringing the total number of refugees in the Sudan to 627,000. In that connection, his delegation fully supported the recommendations included in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of refugees in the Sudan (A/37/178), in particular those concerning education and health, social development and welfare, and the self-support programme for women heads of families. He requested the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with donors and the relevant specialized agencies, to ensure that the necessary sums were made available *for implementing those recommendations*. The report further emphasized, in paragraph 30, the need for co-ordinating the work of United Nations agencies and programmes in phasing out emergency assistance and suggested that those agencies should consider their role and intervention and the phasing out of their assistance in the light of the economic, logistical and manpower constraints in the country.

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(Mr. Birido, Sudan)

He urged the High Commissioner and the relevant specialized agencies to continue their efforts and to ensure the continuity of the basic and essential services. He also emphasized the importance of assisting countries of asylum in their development activities.

43. Turning to the management and leadership of UNHCR, he said, firstly, that while the Office had been established to take care of the problem of refugees in Europe, the overwhelming majority of refugees now came from developing countries and lived in developing countries. That situation was not reflected in the leadership of the Office. It was fair and legitimate that the developing countries should have a say and a role to play in the leadership of UNHCR. Secondly, while the assistance provided by the international community was valuable and important, the real donors, as the High Commissioner had repeatedly said, were the countries of asylum, which shared their land facilities and various essential services with the refugees, in spite of their limited resources and difficult conditions. Thirdly, he was convinced that Member States and the international community as a whole would continue to undertake their commitment to the noble and humanitarian objectives of assisting the refugees through UNHCR, an established institution with a long tradition and practice and a well-defined mandate. Fourthly, his country had had long experience with refugees, currently serving as host to hundreds of thousands of them. It had adopted liberal policies, had acceded to all the relevant international conventions and instruments and had incorporated their provisions into its national legislation. In view of the foregoing, his Government had decided to submit the candidature of His Excellency Mr. Dafalla El Hag Yousif Medani, Minister and President of the Supreme Council for Religious Affairs and Administrator General of Endowment, for the post of High Commissioner. That candidature had been endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League and had received considerable support from African, Asian and European countries. He was convinced that, if elected, Mr. Medani would provide UNHCR with excellent leadership.

44. Mr. CHAVANAVIRAJ (Thailand) said that his country's refugee problem had started in 1975, when tens of thousands of refugees, mostly Lao, had begun to pour into Thailand, after the fall of Saigon and the ensuing political changes in Laos and Cambodia. The number of Kampuchean refugees had increased to more than 300,000 in 1979 and 1980. Had it not been for the open-door policy of the Government of Thailand during that period and the actions of the international community and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, half of the Kampuchean population might have perished.

45. Although there appeared to be a downward trend in the number of Indo-Chinese displaced persons seeking refuge in Thailand, there were still 168,626 Lao, Vietnamese and Kampuchean refugees in the Thai holding and processing centres as of September 1982. There were also nearly 300,000 Kampucheans along the Thai-Kampuchean border who still needed relief assistance and whose numbers might increase if there was an escalation of the fighting in Kampuchea. Since the end of 1978, the massive outflow of Kampucheans, combined with armed incursions and cross-border shellings had displaced almost 100,000 innocent Thai villagers.

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(Mr. Chavanaviraj, Thailand)

He therefore urged donor countries to continue to support the relevant United Nations programmes and to assist his Government in caring for those people.

46. Although some 400,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons had been resettled in third countries, his country's problem remained as serious as it had been in 1979 and 1980. There were still 200,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons awaiting resettlement, but the rate of resettlement had declined sharply in the preceding 10 months. One of the reasons for that drop was that in 1981 many receiving countries had laid down more selective criteria and more difficult procedures for screening and accepting people for resettlement. In adopting an open-door policy, his Government had acted out of humanitarian concern and had been given strong assurances from friendly countries and the international community that ample opportunities for resettlement would be provided. His Government strongly hoped that those assurances, which had been reaffirmed at the International Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, held at Geneva in 1979, were still valid. He stressed once again the view of the five ASEAN Foreign Ministers, expressed at the Ministerial Meeting in Bali in 1979, that the granting of first refuge by the ASEAN countries depended on the commitment of resettlement in third countries and the avoidance of a residual refugee problem. Thailand and the rest of the ASEAN countries were developing countries with limited resources and could not bear that burden indefinitely. They hoped that countries in a position to do so would continue to open their doors to the refugees.

47. His Government also attached great importance to the voluntary repatriation programmes for Indo-Chinese displaced persons, which constituted one of the most important mandates of UNHCR. Little progress had been made in that area, and it was to be hoped that the Office of the High Commissioner would continue to work, in close co-operation with all concerned, to expedite that programme.

48. With regard to the problem of physical attacks on asylum-seekers in the South China Sea, he said that Thailand did not condone such serious crimes and continued to do its best to suppress them. However, because of the vastness of the South China Sea, crimes committed there were extremely difficult to suppress and prevent. Nevertheless, his Government had agreed to launch a suppression programme for a period of 12 months starting in June 1982, with assistance supplied by 12 donor countries through UNHCR. Although the programme had been working well, it was Thailand's firm conviction that the cause of the problem was not being addressed. If the programme was to be successful, Viet Nam would have to continue to co-operate closely with the international community in facilitating an orderly departure of Vietnamese asylum-seekers to third countries. Once again, assistance from the international community was essential.

49. The problem of refugees and displaced persons, which was in most cases the result of internal power struggles or external aggression from other countries, was very serious not only in South-East Asia but also in South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. The ASEAN countries believed that global solutions to the problems of Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons depended on a comprehensive political settlement of the Kampuchean question.

(Mr. Chavanaviraj, Thailand)

50. His delegation conveyed the profound gratitude of the Thai Government and people to all nations and to all international and voluntary organizations for their essential role in helping displaced persons in Thailand. It appreciated the work done by the High Commissioner and his Office and fully supported the renewal of the mandate of UNHCR.

51. Mr. KAMARA (Sierra Leone) said that conflicts and war between nations and the denial of the human, political and civil rights of individuals were the root causes of the diverse and enormous refugee problems facing the world. The question of refugees was probably as old as conflicts and stress within and between nations. What was new was perhaps the size and enormity of the problem. Although UNHCR had addressed itself efficiently to the refugee situation, the problem had continued to grow as a result of man's intolerance, the denial of basic human rights and the growing number of international conflicts in various parts of the world.

52. The report of the High Commissioner presented a grim but realistic picture of the refugee situation. It was clear from the report that the refugee problem was nowhere more acute than in Africa. Of an estimated world-wide figure of 12 million refugees, Africa was said to harbour 5 million. The reasons for that phenomenon were largely rooted in Africa's colonial past, as symbolized by the South African régime, which denied basic human rights to the majority of its citizens and imposed the will of the minority on them. The acts of terror committed by the South African régime had intimidated millions of non-whites and had forced some of them to flee to neighbouring African countries. South Africa not only systematically abused the rights of its people but also disregarded the rights of other nations and attacked its neighbours militarily. Its continued illegal occupation of Namibia also compounded the refugee problem in Africa. Although other problems did exist in Africa, it was evident that the situation in southern Africa was the greatest single factor contributing to the continuation and scope of the refugee problem in that continent.

53. According to the report of the High Commissioner, about 40 of the 50 independent countries of Africa were directly or indirectly affected by the refugee problem. Sierra Leone itself had offered a substantial number of places to Namibian children in its schools.

54. His delegation was pleased to note that the institution of asylum had been further strengthened by the adoption in July 1981 of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights and by the adoption in September 1981 of the Universal Islamic Declaration on Human Rights. It also noted efforts made by countries to establish new laws and administrative measures relating to the status of refugees. It was to be hoped that such measures would be non-discriminatory in their treatment of refugees.

55. His delegation felt that UNHCR had, as in previous years, addressed itself adequately and efficiently to the problems of refugees in all parts of the world. The Office not only should be maintained but should also be supported by all peace-loving nations and organizations. His delegation suggested that the operational capacity of UNHCR should be further expanded.

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(Mr. Kamara, Sierra Leone)

56. He expressed his country's appreciation to the bodies of the United Nations system for their help in dealing with the African refugee situation and for co-operating with the Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity with regard to relief efforts for refugees in Africa.

57. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) had met at Geneva in 1981 to focus attention on the plight of refugees in Africa, mobilize resources for refugee programmes and assist countries of asylum in their efforts to strengthen and increase the capacity of the services and facilities to absorb refugees. The Secretary-General, in his report on the ICARA, said that although world consciousness about the plight of refugees and returnees in Africa had been raised, the overall results of ICARA had fallen short of expectations. Even the ongoing refugee programmes in Africa for 1982 had not been fully covered by pledges made at that Conference. The view of the Secretary-General had been supported by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its meeting held at Nairobi in 1982. There was therefore a clear need for the United Nations and other development and funding agencies to assist African countries further in strengthening their economic and social infrastructures in order to cope with the burden of refugees and returnees.

58. His delegation wished to express the appreciation of the Government and people of Sierra Leone to the Commission of European Communities for its generous contributions to UNHCR.

59. In addition to requesting assistance and support from nations and organizations for refugees in Africa, his delegation appealed to all warring nations and nations in conflict to end their belligerent activities, which were the greatest contributors to the refugee problem throughout the world.

60. Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom) said that refugee problems were a matter of world-wide concern. UNHCR had become a major actor on the world stage, concerned with mitigating the effects of problems whose origins were undoubtedly political. However, it was also concerned with maintaining its humanitarian and non-political character, the only possible basis of its effectiveness.

61. The need to keep the political aspects of problems in their proper perspective had two very important political consequences. Firstly, the Third Committee must see the work of UNHCR in relation to the rest of the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations. The Committee must be fully aware of the work done by UNHCR and of the conditions necessary for its effective functioning. Secondly, UNHCR had to maintain a network of relationships with other bodies within the United Nations system, with intergovernmental bodies outside it and with non-governmental organizations, whose help in dealing with refugees and distress relief were generally indispensable. Such a network was essential both to the efficient discharge of UNHCR's responsibilities and to the preservation of its humanitarian and non-political character.

(Mr. Marshall, United Kingdom)

62. The present Assembly had before it the question of the continuation of the Office of the High Commissioner. Because of the Office's record and the scale of the refugee problem, his delegation wished to see the High Commissioner's mandate renewed unchanged.

63. While there were no new major flows of refugees in 1981 and the flows which had taken place were less considerable than in previous years, refugee problems remained severe in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was distressing but not altogether surprising that, after the great achievements of the international humanitarian community in recent years, there had appeared a degree of "compassion fatigue" which carried with it a reduced willingness to accept refugees for resettlement. Although the climate had become more difficult for UNHCR because of current financial difficulties in most States, the representatives of the Office could never suffer from "compassion fatigue". Their work deserved continuing support. The Nobel Prize announced in 1981 had been a just recognition of their past achievements.

64. The field representatives in the countries of first asylum and the Governments of those countries deserved the gratitude of the international community. Pakistan had received some 2.7 million refugees from Afghanistan as a direct consequence of the Soviet invasion and occupation. Thailand continued to cope with vast numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. The Central American countries, the Sudan and Somalia had continued to receive flows of refugees.

65. Parallel with assistance was the fundamental work of the Division of International Protection in accumulating and refining the legal concepts of refugee work. The members of the Division interceded with Governments to protect individual refugees.

66. Unfortunately, in 1981 new emphasis had had to be placed on the need for the physical, as distinct from the legal, protection of refugees. His country had participated in a new programme during the year to protect refugees against pirate attacks at sea. The Sub-Commission of the Executive Committee dealing with matters of protection had discussed the problem of attacks on refugee camps in Lebanon and elsewhere.

67. His Government continued to play its part by providing political and financial support to refugees. New aid amounting to 1,475,000 pounds sterling had been recently announced for refugees in Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda and for those leaving Viet Nam. In addition to that sum, the contributions of the United Kingdom for the benefit of refugees had totalled £24.5 million in 1981. His country continued to receive refugees and to respond to the particular needs of South-East Asia. It supported the programme of orderly departure from Viet Nam, although administrative difficulties on the Vietnamese side had prevented the programme from being as effective as it might have been.

68. Since 1975, Hong Kong had been a major point of first asylum for Vietnamese boat people. Although nearly 90,000 of them had been resettled, over 13,000 still awaited resettlement. In recent months, Hong Kong had been receiving no less than

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(Mr. Marshall, United Kingdom)

half of all boat people leaving Viet Nam, while only one eighth of the resettlement places had gone to boat people waiting in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, Hong Kong had maintained its exemplary policy of non-refoulement of boat people from Viet Nam. His Government was grateful to UNHCR for all its assistance but was very concerned at the recent trend and urged the resettlement countries to understand Hong Kong's particular difficulties.

69. UNHCR would continue to require large financial contributions for its work in the 1980s. However, the world economic situation had become substantially more difficult than in the past. Some contributors to international organizations were in favour of "zero real growth" in the international system. That expression should not be taken to mean "economy at any price". In the case of UNHCR, it should mean leaner administration and more assistance to the refugees and those who need help. A balance would have to be drawn between the real needs that existed and the new difficulties in providing resources to meet them. It was particularly hard to justify an increase in the number of staff when assistance programmes were shrinking.

70. His delegation was confident that the General Assembly at its current session would lay the foundation for a further five years of invaluable work by UNHCR.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.