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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 345th MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 13 October 1982, at 9.30 a.m.

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. KHARMA	(Lebanon)
later:	Mr. EWERLOF	(Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.55 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. ALESSI (Italy) said that his delegation shared the concern expressed by other speakers about the worsening of the international situation and the consequent increase in the number of refugees. The best way to find satisfactory solutions was through renewed international solidarity. The tasks entrusted to the High Commissioner were not easy and the means at his disposal were often limited; the Committee's duty was to help him to strengthen his capacity to handle emergency situations, which remained the basic responsibility of UNHCR. He must therefore be enabled to provide refugees with both the necessary legal protection and a minimum of material assistance.
2. The Italian Government attached particular importance to the implementation of all instruments relating to international protection and was concerned about the numerous infringements of international provisions concerning the principles of asylum and non-refoulement. The need to ensure protection had been illustrated by the recent inhuman attacks on refugee camps in Lebanon and elsewhere; the Committee should therefore take action to strengthen the existing system of guarantees.
3. When the best solution for dealing with refugees - voluntary repatriation - was not feasible, UNHCR's rôle should be to offer them the possibility of enjoying normal conditions of life. To that end, international solidarity must ensure equitable burden-sharing among all the members of the international community. In devising programmes for the benefit of refugees, however, the donor countries must bear in mind their responsibilities towards the economically pressed developing countries of first asylum and maintain co-operation on international guidelines. UNHCR should accordingly provide to Governments in good time all the necessary information to make their contributions more effective.
4. His Government's action for the benefit of refugees in African countries had amounted to more than \$20 million in 1981, apart from its increased annual contribution to the general programmes of UNHCR. In the first 10 months of 1982 it had contributed more than \$14 million to alleviate the problems of refugees in Pakistan, Thailand, the Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, Angola and Zaire, in addition to \$27 million worth of food aid to developing countries of first asylum and \$8 million to alleviate the recent dramatic problem in Lebanon.
5. By co-ordinating their policies within the United Nations system, Member States would work in accordance with their commitments to eliminate persisting violations of human rights and to promote a new international system based on peace and progress.
6. Mr. HUSLID (Norway) expressed his Government's deep gratitude for the great honour conferred on his country, Crown Princess Sonja and Norwegian voluntary agencies by the award to the Princess of the Nansen Medal.
7. The drastic growth of UNHCR commitments, the new tasks assigned to it and the complexity of the new refugee situations called for a clearer definition of the limits of material assistance and the conditions for phasing out UNHCR assistance. Attention had rightly been focused on the question of emergency assistance versus development aid on a long-term basis. His delegation noted with satisfaction that UNHCR was concentrating its efforts on its primary tasks and that voluntary repatriation had taken place in certain refugee situations. In most major operations, however, few large-scale durable solutions were in sight, and the emphasis had shifted from emergency relief

to self-sufficiency and income generation. In that connection, the initial results of the Office in interesting other international agencies in projects of a development nature were to be welcomed. His delegation considered that the existing mandate of UNHCR gave it the necessary flexibility to adapt to changing developments in the world refugee situation and expressed appreciation for the High Commissioner's wise interpretation of that mandate.

8. The main refugee problems were still to be found in Africa, Pakistan, South-East Asia and Central America. Norway had actively supported the programme in southern Sudan which had recently encountered difficulties and should be given due attention by the High Commissioner. During 1982, Norway had contributed approximately \$US 7 million to various programmes and would continue to give financial support despite growing pressure on resources.

9. The importance of the problem of protection had been demonstrated by the recent terrible events in Lebanon, and his delegation welcomed Mr. Schnyder's preliminary report on military attacks on refugee camps as a good basis for further work on such problems within UNHCR.

10. His delegation also welcomed the convening of the working group on the rescue of asylum-seekers at sea; securing more equitable burden-sharing was a matter of concern in view of the decrease in the number of flag States offering assistance to such persons. Similarly, it stressed the importance of the scrupulous observance of the principle of non-refoulement in accordance with humanitarian principles.

11. His delegation noted with appreciation the decline in the refugee flow from Viet Nam; Norway was very concerned about the safety of refugees in that region and was contributing to the anti-piracy programme recently launched. Since 1975 more than 3,500 Vietnamese refugees had been accepted for resettlement in his country, as well as 225 Polish refugees. Norway's receiving capacity was, however, exhausted and it was difficult to respond in a positive manner to new groups of refugees.

12. His delegation expressed appreciation for the improvement in the flow of budgetary and financial information to the members of the Committee, but care should be taken not to impose on the secretariat unnecessary and costly burdens which might divert its attention from its main commitment to refugees. Nor should disproportionately more information be demanded from UNHCR than from other international organizations. His delegation noted with satisfaction the decrease in the projected total expenditure for 1983, but was perturbed by the fact that while administrative costs were expected to increase, operational costs would be decreasing. In 1983 the general programmes would account for 87.6 per cent of total voluntary fund expenditures, and his delegation welcomed the trend to recruit new contributors. It hoped, too, that the organizational changes introduced to strengthen UNHCR management would enable the Office to improve its efforts within priority areas.

13. Transparency with regard to past performance should not be regarded as an end in itself. UNHCR's main function was to cope with crises and emergencies, and flexibility and improvisation were accordingly called for. The complex work of UNHCR had more than one dimension, not only that of the relationship between the organization and the members of the Committee. Like the High Commissioner, he hoped that the current session would lead to a clear confirmation of the Office's mandate.

14. Mr. PRASONG SOONSIRI (Thailand) said that in his country the total number of Indo-Chinese displaced persons (89,476) and Kampuchean illegal immigrants (79,150) had not significantly decreased because of the continuing influx and the continuing armed conflict in Kampuchea. In addition, there were about 300,000 Kampucheans encamped in the Thai-Kampuchean border areas. The Thai Government would continue to uphold its humanitarian principles with regard to Indo-Chinese displaced persons as long as other countries and the international organizations honoured their obligations to assist it. Thailand's involvement with displaced persons from neighbouring countries went back more than 35 years and had caused it grave social, economic and security problems, for which it had only limited resources. However, much needed help and sympathy had been received from friendly countries and international organizations since the new Indo-Chinese influx which had begun in 1979.

15. Despite the emergency assistance received, little progress had been made with the voluntary repatriation plan for Indo-Chinese displaced persons which his delegation had mentioned at the previous session, even though the great majority of those persons had a strong desire to return home. They were prevented from doing so by fears for their safety or government opposition in their home countries. The correct solution was to tackle the problem at its root and deter the emigration of Laotians, Kampucheans and Vietnamese, for otherwise the problem would become endless and cause unnecessary loss of human and material resources.

16. The cross-border feeding programme organized by UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for hundreds of thousands of Kampucheans along the Thai-Kampuchean border had served to deter them from entering Thailand, where they would have constituted an intolerable burden on the Thai Government and UNHCR. Despite the great value of that programme, however, other forms of aid to people inside Kampuchea were of doubtful value because they were reported to be diverted to purposes other than the alleviation of Kampuchean suffering. He therefore called for support for the cross-border assistance programmes rather than programmes within Kampuchea itself.

17. In looking after displaced persons, the Thai Government had sacrificed public funds for the administration of holding centres. Its help had not been widely publicized and could not be assessed in monetary terms alone. It had also had to formulate an assistance plan to relieve the 80,000 Thais who had been driven from their homes by the Kampuchean influx since 1979; those persons needed further help from the international community today.

18. Referring to the piracy problem in South-East Asia, he said that it could be dealt with effectively only through full international co-operation; much of the Gulf of Thailand belonged to many coastal States and not only Thailand was responsible for suppression of piracy there, although it had taken such action to the full extent of its capabilities. UNHCR had donated \$US 3,670,000 to spend on the piracy suppression programme within 12 months. In order to solve the problem, however, Viet Nam must be persuaded to co-operate with the international community and facilitate the orderly departure of emigrants to third countries. For its part, the international community must work with the States of the region.

19. One of the most serious problems facing the Thai Government and people was that the number of displaced persons accepted by Western countries had dropped sharply in recent months. In addition, many countries had established more restrictive procedures for the acceptance of displaced persons for resettlement. By applying such procedures, those countries were surely neglecting their humanitarian obligations. When Thailand opened its doors to those unfortunate people, it did not apply difficult criteria. The Thai Government and people continued to abide by humanitarian principles and had faith in the pledges given by other countries that the displaced persons would soon be resettled. The new trend was unfair and inconsistent with the principle of mutual responsibility. The decline in the interest shown by the international community and the fact that Thailand would eventually have to bear the burden virtually alone caused his Government serious concern. It realized, however, that refugees and illegal immigrants were victims of war and political circumstances and that their problem must be solved on the basis of strict humanitarian principles. It felt that it could assist those unfortunate persons on that basis and therefore expected others to act in a similar manner. If other countries changed their criteria and adopted new rules, his Government might be forced to do likewise.

20. He wished to draw the attention of members to the following points: in accepting displaced persons for resettlement, third countries should accelerate their programmes and should not adopt stringent conditions; UNHCR should activate the voluntary repatriation programme as soon as possible; in coping with the Vietnamese "land and boat people", an effective system of orderly departure from Viet Nam should be implemented.

21. The problem of displaced persons and refugees in every part of the world had its root cause in the power struggle of people within a nation or in external aggression from another country. It remained the task of UNHCR energetically to assist those unfortunate people throughout the world. The fact that UNHCR had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1981 was evidence of its praiseworthy achievements.

22. In conclusion, he expressed the profound gratitude of his Government and people to all countries and international and voluntary organizations for the vital role they were playing in providing assistance to the displaced persons in his country and hoped that they would continue to see the usefulness of their role in that common humanitarian effort.

23. Mr. TIAN JIN (China) said that UNHCR had done a great deal of work for refugees in various parts of the world and had achieved tangible results since the Committee's previous session. His delegation expressed appreciation to UNHCR for the efforts it had made to improve the quality and quantity of information it provided to members of the Committee.

24. The refugee situation in the world still caused anxiety and concern. In Asia, the occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet troops had continued to force many innocent persons to flee the country, resulting in an increase in the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran over the past year. In Pakistan alone, there were 2.7 million refugees, and his delegation hoped that the international community and UNHCR would render further assistance to the Government and people of that country in order to alleviate their burden. The refugee problem in Indo-China was also far from solved. Large numbers of Kampuchean refugees were stranded in Thailand, unable to return to their homeland. For many years, Thailand had made great efforts to provide relief to the Indo-Chinese refugees and had fulfilled its humanitarian obligations. It should be noted that, despite the existence of the Programme of Orderly Departure, statistics showed that in 1981 the number of "disorderly departures" had been 10 times greater than "orderly departures". In Africa, too, there was still no sign of an improvement in the refugee situation and it continued to be the continent with the greatest number of refugees. Countries such as the Sudan, Somalia and Zaire had accepted large numbers of refugees. As a result of the policy of apartheid pursued by the South African authorities, a great many civilians had been forced to flee to neighbouring countries, creating a heavy burden for the front-line States.

25. Referring to the question of international protection of refugees, he said that on 23 August 1982 the Standing Committee of his country's National People's Congress had adopted a resolution on accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees. On 1 October 1982, the Permanent Mission of China in New York had formally deposited with the Secretary-General its instrument of accession to the Convention and the Protocol. Having regard to its specific conditions, the Chinese Government had expressed reservations with respect to article 14 and article 16, paragraph 3, of the Convention and article 4 of the Protocol.

26. Since 1979, his Government had accepted large numbers of Vietnamese refugees and had made arrangements for their resettlement in the spirit of the Convention and the Protocol. The economic and social treatment which his Government had accorded to the refugees was almost the same as that accorded to its own nationals. It could therefore be said that, with the exception of the above-mentioned reservations, the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol posed no problem for his Government. He was convinced that through his Government's accession to those instruments, the work of resettling refugees in his country would be facilitated and that co-operation between China and UNHCR in the international protection of refugees would further develop.

27. The safety of refugees had aroused increasing concern among the international community. In recent years, refugee camps in southern Africa, along the Kampuchean-Thai border and in Pakistan had suffered frequent military attacks. In that connection, his Government and people strongly condemned the brutal massacre, after the invasion of West Beirut by Israeli troops, of more than 1,000 Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Chatila camps. That inhuman act was a gross violation of the norms of international law and his delegation hoped that the Committee would, at its current session, reiterate the need for strict adherence to the relevant treaties and take further measures to protect refugee camps against military attacks.

28. In formulating major UNHCR policies and reviewing assistance programmes, the Committee should play its due role. His delegation had noted an improvement in the relationship between UNHCR and the Committee since the previous session and hoped that efforts along those lines would be continued.

29. Many developing countries had pointed out that UNHCR had not paid sufficient attention to geographical balance in the recruitment of staff. Candidates from a few countries accounted for almost half of the total number of UNHCR staff. Although some improvement had been made in that regard, the situation still fell far short of the expectations of the developing countries and he hoped that it would be changed as soon as possible.

30. Referring to resettlement work in China, he said that from the end of 1978, when there had been a large influx of Vietnamese refugees, until April 1982, his Government had received 268,700 refugees, who had been resettled at 209 centres. For that purpose, it had appropriated the equivalent of nearly \$US 600 million. Through active co-operation with, and assistance from, UNHCR and WFP, progress had been made in improving their welfare. According to a preliminary investigation, at more than 100 resettlement centres most refugees were able to earn a living through their own efforts. He wished, however, to draw attention to the many difficulties still encountered by his Government in that connection. China was a developing country with a large population and limited economic strength. The Indo-Chinese refugees had been resettled in the five southern provinces, where population density was very high and added to the difficulties, since nearly half of the refugees were children who required special care. Some of the refugees who had been separated from their families did not wish to resettle permanently in China and had asked to be reunited with their relatives in a third country. His delegation looked forward to continued co-operation and assistance on the part of UNHCR in the solution of those problems.

31. In support of the relief work of UNHCR, the Chinese Government had decided to make a contribution within its capacity to the general programme for 1983. It would be announced at the forthcoming Pledging Conference in New York.

32. Mr. Ewerlöf (Sweden) took the Chair.

33. Mr. NETTEL (Austria) expressed satisfaction at the recent improvement in the relationship between the Committee and UNHCR. The introductory statement of the High Commissioner had highlighted the limits of the humanitarian role of UNHCR, and stressed its strictly non-political character and the importance of the international division of labour in maintaining its ability to react effectively to emergencies until durable solutions were found. His delegation therefore strongly supported the wish expressed by the Commissioner that the mandate of UNHCR should for the time being remain unchanged. In his delegation's opinion, UNHCR had been brought to the limits of its capacity and any enlargement of its mandate would be detrimental to its effectiveness. An effort should be made to find a solution through the more effective international division of labour.

34. He paid a tribute to the dedication of the High Commissioner and his staff, and said that the Committee should actively support UNHCR in its efforts to improve housing conditions for staff in the field. It was essential not to forget the importance of adequate housing for staff morale and for the attractiveness of posts in the field.

35. The documents before the Committee showed a downward trend in UNHCR's total expenditure. Despite those promising figures, however, there was no indication of a significant improvement in the international refugee situation, which could be described as stable. Even that stability was fragile and the numerous areas of tension in the world threatened to cause new refugee situations. Refugees would therefore continue to test the solidarity of the international community because no country could solve by itself the problems caused by a large influx of refugees.

36. Austria had always strictly applied the principle of non-refoulement and had therefore faced a constant refugee problem since the Second World War. At present, Austria was not only a country of first asylum but also a resettlement country, since it was becoming clear that it would have to integrate a large number of homeless refugees who could not be resettled in other States. Voluntary repatriation was for the time being impossible. In dealing with that situation, Austria enjoyed valuable support from a number of countries and the international community through UNHCR, the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) and many non-governmental organizations. His delegation therefore wished to express sincere gratitude to all the countries and organizations that co-operated with Austria in its efforts to grant asylum to refugees and to find durable solutions for them. It was especially grateful to the resettlement countries which had made it possible for Polish refugees in Austria to find new homes within their territory. In that connection, he mentioned the United States of America, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Scandinavian countries, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. As his Government's expenditure for refugees had tripled between 1981 and 1982 and amounted to nearly \$100 million, it was particularly grateful for the generous contribution made by the Netherlands Government through UNHCR. Financial support had also been given by EEC and Liechtenstein.

37. UNHCR's proposed programme for the coming year constituted a great challenge which would require extraordinary efforts by the contributing countries. Even if the target for 1983 could be met, the contributions of member Governments would reach the limits of what could be expected, in view of their increasing budgetary constraints.

38. His Government strongly supported the efforts of UNHCR and the Secretary-General to share in a more equitable manner the financial burden which the activities of the Office entailed for the international community. The credibility of an international organization with humanitarian goals could not be enhanced if only a fraction of its members bore the burden which the organization itself had allocated to all its members. The joint efforts of UNHCR and the Secretary-General to identify categories of posts to be financed under the title of "administrative expenditure", and therefore out of the United Nations budget, seemed to be a useful exercise. His Government would firmly support a recommendation by the Committee to the General Assembly for a procedure which would ensure more equitable burden-sharing.



39. He regretted that the AMS study of management methods had not been completed, and stressed the **urgent** need to strengthen UNHCR's organizational structure and management. His Government would therefore support early consideration of the full AMS study.

40. In his delegation's opinion, the deliberations in the Sub-Committee on International Protection had not been very encouraging. The discussions concerning the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea and the procedures for the determination of refugee status had made it obvious that many countries facing economic problems had reached the limits of their capacity to accept new refugees. However difficult those specific problems might be, all countries should be careful not to undermine the fundamental principles of humanitarian law by extending and misusing their powers of discretion in applying them. The principle of non-refoulement should never be deprived of its true spirit by subjectively interpreting the conditions that a person involuntarily repatriated would have to face in his country of origin.

41. In conclusion, he reaffirmed his delegation's view that the tragic and complex problem of military attacks on refugee camps and settlements exceeded the powers and mandate of UNHCR. His delegation would therefore appreciate early consideration, in the competent political organs of the United Nations, of ways and means to prevent such horrible events as those which had recently occurred in Lebanon, southern Africa, Central America and Asia.

42. Mr. IVRAKIS (Greece) welcomed the improvement in the documentation before the Committee, which now almost satisfied the need for transparency and detailed information.

43. Special tribute should be paid to the nations which bore the brunt of refugee problems. However, it was sometimes very difficult for Governments to commit more funds to UNHCR. Despite its economic difficulties, his own Government had substantially increased its contribution to UNHCR's programme in 1982. Although he agreed that it was necessary to tackle the roots of the problem of mass exoduses, in the meantime certain basic priorities must be established for the allocation of funds in UNHCR's general and special programmes.

44. Valuable work had been done by the Director of the Assistance Division and UNHCR field representatives in countries of first asylum and first refuge, despite the difficulties they had faced. The efforts of the Protection Division to codify the legal concepts of refugee problems were also commendable. The brutal attacks against refugee camps in southern Africa, Central America and recently Lebanon underlined the need for stronger security measures for the physical protection of refugees and refugee camps. His Government condemned such acts and considered them a crime against humanity. In that connection, it expressed broad support for the preliminary report by Mr. Schnyder and for the way he envisaged continuing his study on the protection of refugee camps.

45. His delegation had expressed its views on the problems of "boat people" on several occasions and most recently in the Sub-Committee on International Protection. It appeared that encouraging progress had been made and the ideas in documents EC/SCP/21 and 24 were very constructive. In particular, the improvement and expansion of the Disembarkation Resettlement Offers (DISERO) scheme, as suggested, might be the best initial step to ease existing problems. His delegation was pleased that a decision had been taken to continue studying the problem.

46. Mr. INAN (Turkey) said that the past year had been marked by a relative stabilization of refugee problems; there had been no new mass flows of refugees, but millions of refugees were still awaiting a solution, particularly in Africa and Asia. Huge problems remained in Africa despite some encouraging signs, such as the repatriation of refugees to Chad and the replacement of many assistance programmes by programmes for the promotion of self-reliance.

47. In Asia, the situation of Afghan refugees continued to attract attention. Turkey had recently resettled 3,815 Afghan refugees in its territory through a transport programme financed by UNHCR and executed by ICM; he wished to thank both those organizations. His Government had taken measures costing \$50 million to facilitate the full integration of those refugees in Turkish society. Reference must unfortunately be made to the tragic events of recent months in Lebanon. The Committee could not remain silent over the massacres which had occurred in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps on the pretext that the fate of Palestinian refugees came under the jurisdiction of another United Nations body. The protection of refugee camps against military attacks was an item on the agenda of the Sub-Committee on International Protection and it was the duty of the Committee to condemn all attacks against camps and expose those directly or indirectly responsible. Referring to the Latin American, and particularly Central American, regions, he said that the refugee situation was finally receiving the attention it deserved.

48. It was clear from that brief survey that the needs of refugees and the complexity of their situations remained enormous, and there was little likelihood of a swift solution. It could therefore be said that international action was increasingly aimed at seeking to live with the problem rather than eliminating it, as was borne out by the activities of UNHCR itself. In 1981, some 62 per cent of general assistance programmes had been devoted to meeting the immediate needs of refugees, and about 24 per cent to durable solutions. Those proportions had remained practically the same in 1982. However, under its Statute, UNHCR must give priority to seeking durable solutions to refugee problems, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement and integration. In making that point, he merely wished to draw attention to a frequently forgotten fact, namely, that yesterday's priorities did not conform to the realities of today. Nowadays, durable solutions were exclusively dependent on the will of Governments, and UNHCR had no alternative but to wait, and make refugees wait, in more or less bearable conditions until possibilities of durable solutions arose.

49. The current situation called for a new conception of roles and responsibilities, with the emphasis on complementarity and interdependence. Relations between UNHCR and Governments did not merely involve providing or receiving funds. He agreed with the High Commissioner that UNHCR's action was not the exclusive responsibility of its staff, but also the responsibility of Governments. However, it must be borne in mind that the attribution of responsibility went hand in hand with recognition of authority. The Committee provided opportunities for the kind of participation required, but it had not yet fully explored them.

50. He was pleased to note a considerable improvement in the preparations for the current session and in the exchange of information concerning the different situations requiring action. In that context, it would seem that the revelation of certain facts concerning personnel management had not had the catastrophic effects which some had feared. Secrets always led to mistrust among those who did not share them and should be avoided if a solid infrastructure was to be built for the benefit of refugees. The work of the two Sub-Committees had thrown further light on that question, and particularly administrative and financial matters. In short, the Committee now had the necessary information and must decide how best to use it. In his delegation's view, it was not sufficient for the Committee merely to take note of the facts as it had in the past; the interests of refugees alone must guide the Committee's decisions; and certain fundamental principles, which might at first glance seem inflexible, must be established and respected.

51. It would be wrong to assume that the Committee had been set up to approve automatically the financial ceiling for UNHCR's assistance programmes. The initial mandate had been broader than that and had subsequently been further expanded by various General Assembly resolutions. It could undoubtedly be further improved to serve the cause of refugees, but that was for other bodies to decide. In his view, the strengthening, or at least reaffirmation, of the Committee's mandate could not but benefit refugees, because it could broaden UNHCR's basis for action and make it more aware of its responsibilities. However, the Committee had other means of action than merely awaiting the result of action by other bodies. He therefore proposed that, as of its next session, the Committee should include on its agenda an item entitled "Consideration of action taken on decisions adopted at preceding sessions". In practice, some of the Committee's decisions or conclusions were not taken into account; one example had been referred to in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. The question he was raising did not specifically concern the substance of a decision, but raised a matter of principle. An international body which did not ensure that its decisions were implemented could not be expected to do its work properly.

52. A spirit of mutual co-operation, respect and understanding within the Committee would strengthen international action for the benefit of refugees. It was to be hoped that the renewal of the mandate of the High Commissioner and his Office would encourage the Committee to take further steps to achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring better conditions for refugees.

53. Mr. MEBAZIA (Tunisia) said that it was the duty of the Committee to provide the Office of the High Commissioner with the means to achieve its objectives and to give the High Commissioner advice and guidelines so as to enable him to discharge his responsibilities more effectively. The Tunisian delegation thanked the High Commissioner and his staff for their devotion to the cause of refugees and welcomed the improved dialogue and flow of information between the Committee and UNHCR.

54. Although progress had been made with regard to international protection in recent years, results in 1982 had not come up to expectations. The principle of non-refoulement was not always respected; acts of piracy against "boat people" continued; and refugee camps were sometimes the target of military attacks aimed at exterminating the inhabitants. Praiseworthy efforts were being made to assist refugees and alleviate their suffering, but the international community must provide

all refugees with effective international protection. The recent events in Lebanon and the systematic massacre of civilians in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila had shocked the conscience of the world. Such actions should no longer be allowed to go unpunished. Some argued that UNHCR was not entitled to provide protection for Palestinian refugees since UNRWA alone dealt with matters concerning them. However, UNRWA's mandate regrettably contained no provision concerning international protection, and the competent bodies of the United Nations system, together with the international community, must make arrangements to protect all refugees without exception.

55. He was pleased to note that UNHCR's general programmes appeared to be progressing satisfactorily, but hoped that joint action would be taken by the United Nations, OAU and UNHCR to ensure that the priority or additional projects concerning Africa could be properly implemented. Unfortunately, only 61 per cent of the contributions pledged to agencies other than UNHCR at ICARA in April 1981 had so far been received.

56. The documents submitted to the Committee should be concise, substantive and clear. He regretted that the AMS report on the strengthening of the management of UNHCR had not been circulated to members for their views, and supported the proposal made by the representative of Turkey.

57. Mr. SKALLI (Morocco) said that, as the number of refugees assumed intolerable proportions and gave rise to serious problems, in particular for the developing countries, the role of the High Commissioner was becoming increasingly important. UNHCR did not have adequate resources to deal with those problems and must therefore be highly selective in its activities, granting aid solely to those refugees whose bona fides had been substantiated. It should not concentrate all its efforts on providing assistance, no matter how necessary that might be at the initial stage, but should promote durable solutions, which alone would lead to a reduction in the number of refugees and, consequently, in the cost to UNHCR and the international community. In his view, it was essential that UNHCR should take all offers of durable solutions into account and should inform the Committee of any obstacles encountered in that connection. In addition, a fund should be established as an additional means of promoting durable solutions.

58. The refugee phenomenon was no longer an individual matter, having assumed the more complex form of mass exoduses. For instance, the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan alone stood at over 2.7 million and constituted the largest group of refugees in the world. A tribute was due to the Government and people of Pakistan which, despite its limited resources, had displayed outstanding hospitality. It was also gratifying to note the assistance furnished to Afghan refugees by several other countries.

59. The problems on the African continent, which had the highest concentration of refugees in the world, continued to grow and a number of countries with serious social and economic difficulties had not been spared a mass influx of refugees. That applied, inter alia, to the Sudan, Somalia, Angola, Burundi, Zaire and Botswana. All those countries had made praiseworthy efforts to alleviate the suffering of the refugees.

60. The problems in Asia were no less serious. The attitude of the Government of Thailand merited praise; together with those ASEAN countries which had made great sacrifices, Thailand should be able to count on the increased support of the international community in coping with the serious problems involved.

61. The problem of the physical security of refugees and displaced persons was dramatic and there had been repeated attacks by military forces on refugee camps in different parts of the world. The phenomenon, though new, had already assumed alarming proportions. For instance, in southern Africa refugee camps had been subjected to frequent military operations by the South African racist regime, causing numerous victims among both the refugees and the inhabitants of the receiving countries. More recently, Lebanon had been the scene of horrifying events that had been unanimously condemned. Israeli forces had massacred innocent victims in the Palestinian camps at Sabra and Chatila, and the horror of those murders was indicative of the Zionist entity's determination to defy the international community and violate every principle of humanitarian law. His delegation reiterated its condemnation of those barbarous acts.

62. His delegation was pleased to note the increased attention which UNHCR was paying to the question of military attacks on refugee camps and the Committee's request, at its thirty-second session, that the High Commissioner should examine the humanitarian problems posed by such attacks. It was likewise pleased to note the conclusions of the Sub-Committee on International Protection in that connection, and trusted that measures would be taken to protect refugees against such attacks and to help the victims.

63. In view of the growing complexity of UNHCR's task, it would seem desirable for the Committee to modify its working methods and role by extending its mandate and strengthening its powers. In that way, it could play the role of a genuinely executive body and would be better able to serve the cause of refugees and displaced persons. In that connection, he endorsed the suggestions made by the Turkish representative and, in particular, the proposal that a new item on consideration of action taken on decisions adopted at preceding sessions should be included in the agenda for the following session.

64. In connection with the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1981-1982 (A/AC.96/606), he noted the reference, in the second sentence of paragraph (xli), to the thirty-eighth session of the OAU Council of Ministers, which in fact had not taken place owing to lack of a quorum. His delegation was extremely surprised at that reference, which revealed undue flippancy, to say the least, on the part of the authors. His delegation fully agreed that UNHCR should not concern itself with the political aspects of the problems which it faced and found it difficult to understand how an official UNHCR document could refer to a meeting that had been opposed by a considerable number of African States. He wished he had not had to raise the matter but the authors had left him with no alternative. The fact was that all African Heads of State were currently engaged in seeking ways and means of making OAU united and effective once more.

65. Mr. SOFFER (Israel) said that the problem of refugees throughout the world was a matter of deep concern, and the people and Government of Israel were particularly sensitive to their plight. Israel had constantly sought means of

effectively integrating the refugees it received and was ready to share its experience with other countries and with the High Commissioner. The tragedy of Indo-Chinese refugees, and in particular the "boat people", had stimulated both popular and government support, which had culminated in the offer of asylum to thousands of those refugees, in the provision of medical services and equipment, and in contributions in cash and kind to UNHCR and UNICEF. Israel continued to follow with interest the plight of refugees in other parts of the world, especially Africa; it had participated in ICARA and contributed to the UNHCR African refugee programme.

66. At the previous session, he had made a proposal regarding refugee children, whose distress transcended borders and peoples. It was his hope that that proposal, which had also been formally submitted to UNICEF, would serve to meet the special needs of refugee children.

67. Commending the High Commissioner and his staff on their devotion to their task, he said that rapidly changing political circumstances and the emergence of new refugee problems had increased the challenges with which UNHCR was faced. Since refugee problems often compounded international problems by aggravating tension between States, the elimination or reduction of the source of such discord was one of UNHCR's most important tasks. Refugees were sometimes exploited by those who sought to further their own political aims, a fact which was particularly reprehensible since it resulted in a worsening of the refugees' situation.

68. The predicament of the millions of refugees caught up in political upheavals often received no world attention because access was denied to the media and international humanitarian organizations. That fact provided UNHCR with a special challenge inasmuch as the extent of the refugees' distress and needs should be accurately assessed and all refugees throughout the world should be treated in a consistent manner.

69. Referring to certain issues raised by previous speakers which, in his view, fell outside the scope of UNHCR activities, he said that their comments revealed a biased and hostile approach to the events which had occurred at the camps of Sabra and Chatila in Beirut and about which he had already had occasion to express his indignation and sympathy. However, in the light of the Chairman's request that the general debate should not be used for overt propaganda, he would refrain at that juncture from responding to such unfounded and irresponsible statements.

70. UNHCR had proved to be an effective instrument in devising and executing humanitarian assistance programmes for refugees. It had succeeded in meeting the emergency needs of refugees, while also helping them to stabilize their lives and become economically active. Israel supported the Sub-Committee on International Protection and trusted that the mandate of UNHCR would be renewed in its present form by the General Assembly. Israel would continue to lend its full support to UNHCR in its crucial humanitarian work for refugees.

71. Miss ILIC (Yugoslavia), welcoming the election of the United Nations Council of Namibia to membership of the Committee, expressed the view that, in order to cope effectively with refugee problems, the Committee's membership should reflect more closely the universal character of those problems. It should also abide strictly by its mandate regarding UNHCR assistance programmes. To enable UNHCR

to respond more effectively to its increasingly complex tasks, it should be composed of highly qualified personnel recruited on a more equitable geographical basis, particularly in the case of higher-ranking posts. In that connection, her delegation welcomed, inter alia, the more intensive flow of information between UNHCR and the Committee and trusted that that trend would continue.

72. The points she had made were even more important at the present time, when the number of refugees stood at over 10 million and the refugee problem affected virtually the whole world. Most refugees found either first asylum or a permanent solution in the developing countries of Africa, Asia or Latin America, which could not bear the heavy burden without substantial international assistance, provided primarily through UNHCR. Negative trends throughout the world, characterized by ever greater use of force in international relations, also contributed to the increase in the number of refugees and to a deterioration in their situation. In view of the gravity of the problem, her delegation believed firmly in the need to extend international moral and material help to refugees and, consequently, supported the assistance rendered by UNHCR. The approval which its work received from the international community was reflected in the 93 accessions to, or ratifications of, the 1951 Convention and the ratification of other basic instruments dealing with refugees. Her delegation believed that States parties should observe those instruments faithfully but that each had a sovereign right to decide which of its organs would be responsible for recognizing the status of refugee and to what extent the participation of others in such a procedure was necessary.

73. In Yugoslavia, assistance for refugees was carried out as part of the health and welfare services, with particular attention being given to housing problems. The lasting solution to the problem of refugees mainly took the form of integration and training for self-support. Although integration had been financed with UNHCR assistance, the protection of persons who had not been integrated or were incapable of supporting themselves was financed exclusively from the federal budget. The Socialist Republics also provided various forms of protection. Some 300 refugees and their relatives benefited from such aid.

74. With a view to assisting handicapped refugees, a centre for the rehabilitation and treatment of the aged and/or disabled persons, constructed with UNHCR financial assistance, was to be opened in the near future. The centre had a capacity for over 90 handicapped persons and the cost of institutionalizing them amounted to an estimated 10 million dinars.

75. Her delegation wished to voice its deep indignation at the military attacks on refugee camps and the massacre of innocent people in southern Africa, Lebanon and elsewhere. Her Government and people had vigorously condemned recent crimes against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples and had demanded that effective measures should be adopted to prevent Israel from taking any such action in the future. Her delegation supported the study to be undertaken by Mr. Schnyder and was confident that the High Commissioner could help to prevent such attacks and extend maximum aid to the victims.

76. Mr. RWANYARARE (Uganda) said that UNHCR had been established for a specific function, which had since changed in both complexity and scope. That function now encompassed virtually the whole globe and the whole spectrum of human problems, necessitating increased manpower and large sums of money. The mandate which had enabled the Office to perform its obligation was even more relevant at the present time and his delegation would support its renewal. His delegation was gratified to note the decline in the number of refugees and the simultaneous decrease in the budget for the current year. There was no room for complacency, however, and even more vigilance must be exercised in seeking lasting solutions.

77. His Government had played its part in bringing about a reduction in the number of refugees. He was pleased to report that all the Ugandan refugees who had been in exile prior to 1979 had returned and been resettled in Uganda, while great progress had been made in resettling those who had gone into exile following the war of liberation. He thanked UNHCR for its continuing assistance since the war in resettling large numbers of returnees from the Sudan and Zaire. Mr. Obote, the President of Uganda, had called upon all those still outside the country to return home and take part in rebuilding it. His appeals had paid dividends as there had been a recent influx of returnees from the Sudan and Zaire.

78. His Government, which had acceded to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, condemned the brutal attacks on refugee settlements in Lebanon and southern Africa, and called upon UNHCR to do everything possible to guarantee the safety of refugees in such camps.

79. His delegation welcomed the recommendation on improvements in the management of UNHCR and on decentralization of powers, which would improve efficiency. It also supported the proposal for in-service training of staff and would urge that such training should be extended to local UNHCR staff and to the staff of UNHCR's executing partners in the field.

80. Most of the refugees who had lived on the borders of Uganda for more than 20 years were now self-sufficient: only a small fraction lived in refugee settlements, the majority being dispersed throughout the country, either settled on small homesteads, engaged in agriculture or having taken up paid employment. Assistance by his Government and UNHCR had been rendered mainly to enable those refugees to consolidate their self-sufficiency. However, the settlements of Nakivale and Orukinga, destroyed during the war of liberation, had still not been rebuilt and many refugees had left them to settle outside. That had resulted in some friction with the local population, which had forced the refugees to return to the settlements or to cross into Rwanda or Tanzania. His Government was in the process of dealing with the causes of the friction and hoped that the disputes would be solved amicably.

81. He could not agree that the Committee should refrain entirely from talking about the root causes of the refugee problem. Such causes were part of the environment in which the High Commissioner operated and he should therefore be aware of them. Furthermore, as a United Nations agency, UNHCR would influence other agencies directly engaged in tackling those causes. Most refugees were to be found in the least developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where underdevelopment and poverty not only complicated but actually caused the refugee problem. In the endeavour to find durable solutions, therefore, a global policy aimed at bridging the gap between the rich nations and the poor was as relevant as UNHCR's whole work of relief and rehabilitation.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.