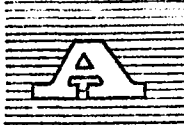


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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 344th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 12 October 1982, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. KHARMA

(Lebanon)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.55 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. MARTINEZ (Argentina) expressed appreciation of the practical approach and honesty of the excellent statement made by the High Commissioner the previous day; it had brought to the fore the basic issues of concern to the international community in the area of refugee assistance. His delegation approved in principle Mr. Hartling's conclusions and the solutions proposed by him, and was particularly pleased that he had emphasized the basically apolitical nature of the High Commissioner's work, which was the best guarantee of its effectiveness.
2. Since the Committee's previous session, the refugee situation seemed to have become more stable although as the figures indicated, the problem was still serious. However, it appeared to have worsened in certain regions, such as Asia and Central America, where mass refugee movements were still taking place. In most of the countries or regions from which the refugees were coming, the likelihood of an improvement in the situation which had caused them to leave was still remote, and voluntary repatriation - which, in his delegation's opinion, provided the best long-term solution - would certainly not take place for some time. That confirmed once more the fact that the problem was primarily a political one and that only political decisions could resolve it. Nevertheless, it was not for the Executive Committee to examine those questions: the Committee could only seek to remedy some of the most serious consequences of the problem, in a spirit of humanity and solidarity. It must therefore refrain from giving the discussions a political tone, and instead work in a spirit of co-operation in which consensus prevailed.
3. In his report on UNHCR assistance activities, the High Commissioner stated that, because the situation had become stabilized, he had been able to channel activities towards a search for durable solutions. That was a welcome development, since it should enable, in the medium-term and long-term, the refugees to become self-sufficient and consequently, the assistance programmes to be ended. The documents on assistance indicated that most of the programmes had gone beyond the emergency phase and that others had been concluded, resulting in budgetary savings. That trend might continue unless new developments brought about other mass refugee movements. The High Commissioner must not, however, lose sight of his basic objective of providing emergency aid. As soon as refugees no longer needed aid to assure their survival, that assistance must stop. It was certainly not easy to decide when that should happen: but extending assistance unduly could be as harmful as withdrawing it too soon.
4. The ties between UNHCR and the Executive Committee had become closer during the previous year. If the Executive Committee was to be able to discharge its functions in conformity with its mandate, its members must have access to information on the execution and activities of the Programme. The Committee was becoming more and more aware of its responsibility in determining policies and supervising the execution of the various programmes and projects, and it had to be acknowledged that no one could replace it in that task. The renewed interest it was showing in the future of the Programme was very encouraging, and its informal meetings and the activities of its two Sub-Committees had helped to establish a more sustained and fruitful dialogue between it and UNHCR.

5. At the previous meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters - which had proved its value - it had appeared that UNHCR could still be improved in many respects and that, in the interests of the Programme, it should continue its efforts to achieve a broader geographical distribution among its staff. With regard to the preliminary conclusions of the Administrative Management Service report - which his delegation generally approved - the issue should be studied in depth before they were implemented.

6. The Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection had clearly proved that it met a real functional necessity. That year, the Sub-Committee had considered a number of very serious problems requiring rapid action, such as the desperate situation of many boat people; such cases were a heavy burden which should be equitably shared among all countries able to help to solve them. As it had already shown, Argentina was quite willing to shoulder its share of that burden. Argentine merchant ships had taken on more than 100 refugees at sea during the previous year, and 83 more by the beginning of September 1982. On each occasion, the Argentine Government had provided the necessary guarantees to enable those refugees to land. The Sub-Committee had also dealt with a matter of prime importance, namely, the military attacks against refugee camps. The measures taken by the High Commissioner in that area were a step in the right direction, and it was to be hoped that the deliberations in the Executive Committee would lead to specific recommendations. The Argentine Government had strongly denounced the massacres at Chatila and Sabra in Lebanon. It would like to repeat that denunciation and request that measures should be taken so that such acts, which were a disgrace to mankind, would never happen again.

7. In the face of the refugee problem, the international community had generally shown itself to be equal to the task, and it had been possible to carry out programmes under fairly normal conditions. In that connection, Argentina wished to thank the countries that contributed the most to solving the problem by making large financial contributions and giving refugees in their territory a generous reception, and that laid on them a heavy burden that was not being shared as it should be, since the countries concerned were mainly developing ones. The Argentine Government intended to continue co-operating with the High Commissioner to assist refugees and hoped that the session of the Executive Committee would produce satisfactory results, so that it would be able to discharge the humanitarian task which the international community had entrusted to it.

8. Mr. DOUGLAS (United States of America) said that his country was deeply concerned by the worsening of the refugee problem and was resolved to contribute to the work of aiding refugees, no matter how long the problem endured. It was already playing a leading role in that area, as indicated by its considerable financial support. In 1982, the United States had made a contribution of \$120 million to UNHCR and \$115 million to other groups which assisted refugees, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Intergovernmental Committee on Migration, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, in the Middle East. It had also implemented a generous resettlement programme in the United States itself, which had made it possible for more than 600,000 persons, almost half of the Indo-Chinese refugees resettled throughout the world, to resettle in the country since 1975. In the previous year, the United States had resettled close to 100,000 refugees, at a total cost of \$2 billion,

and the following year it might admit up to 90,000 more, committing a further \$1.6 billion to that effort. Assisting refugees was not only a national commitment: it was also a personal commitment for many individuals in the United States and for the voluntary agencies giving their time and resources to that cause. The people and Congress of the United States had, however, emphasized how important it was for the international community to give serious attention to that problem. It was obviously not enough simply to support UNHCR, which was merely an instrument in the joint effort. Countries themselves must take measures at other levels and make places for the thousands of persons for whom resettlement was the only hope.

9. Under Mr. Hartling's leadership, UNHCR had moved in the right direction. It had demonstrated its willingness to pursue innovative approaches to difficult protection problems, by implementing an anti-piracy programme in the Gulf of Thailand. Those efforts deserved support, for it was absolutely necessary to ensure the protection of helpless refugees, and especially to remain vigilant to prevent armed attacks on them. Recent tragic events in Lebanon had underlined the extreme vulnerability of refugees and reinforced the need for action to protect their camps. UNHCR had also reinforced appreciably its capacity to plan and administer refugee assistance programmes. Moreover, by creating an emergency response unit, UNHCR had shown that it could and would take operational responsibility where necessary. That unit had recently proved its value and abilities in Honduras, where it had spearheaded a programme for refugees from Nicaragua.

10. Other positive developments were the fact that UNHCR had acknowledged the need to improve the technical expertise of its staff in key fields, the fact that management training was being accorded its rightful place, and the greater emphasis placed on readiness of staff for field assignment. Finally, UNHCR was attaching great importance to voluntary repatriation and refugee assistance in countries of first asylum as well as to resettlement in areas which traditionally had not accepted refugees. Those examples were ample proof of Mr. Hartling's competence. Under his enlightened leadership, UNHCR had successfully adjusted to changes in the world which affected refugees. The United States was therefore resolved to support his re-election.

11. His delegation would also like to take the opportunity to reaffirm its support for the Convention and Protocol definition of the term "refugee", and for the UNHCR mandate, which had proved to be of enduring validity. It was important that UNHCR's goals should remain clear and that the definition of refugees and persons who qualified for assistance should not become a subject of division and confusion. The United States was convinced that the General Assembly should extend the arrangements for UNHCR without any alteration of the definition of the term "refugee" or the mandate of that body.

12. With regard to the development of the refugee problem since UNHCR had been founded in 1951, despite the billions of dollars that had gone into assistance and resettlement of a record number of persons, today there were more refugees than ever (10 million, as against 6 million in 1951), for their numbers were constantly growing. Many Governments were failing to discharge their basic responsibility of safeguarding the welfare of their citizens. In many countries, the pursuit of self-interest by those in power and the imposition of dehumanizing ideologies were substitutes for the free democratic processes to which people aspired. Over the previous 12 months, the world had again seen the excesses of irresponsible regimes, which knew no bounds in the actions they took to deny political liberty to their

people. The Polish Government, under pressure from the Soviet Union, had thus imposed martial law and declared Solidarity to be illegal. Similarly, the Sandinistas of Nicaragua had assured the world that they were fighting oppression. The previous year, however, thousands of Nicaraguans had become refugees fleeing their own Government's oppression. The same was true of Cuba, Ethiopia, Viet Nam and Cambodia.

13. Currently the largest refugee group was the outcome of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Viet Nam's invasion of Kampuchea had also created an exodus. It should not be forgotten that the regimes which were responsible for producing the largest number of refugees did nothing to assist them. Some were parties to the Convention and Protocol, which did not prevent them from violating those instruments repeatedly and blatantly and from refusing to contribute to the international community's work to aid refugees. In recent years, the relatively new phenomenon of massive expulsion as an instrument of foreign policy had caused immeasurable suffering. For example, Viet Nam had expelled some hundreds of thousands of its citizens in 1979 and in 1980.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that he would like to remind Mr. Douglas that, in conformity with its Statute, the Executive Committee must deal only with the humanitarian aspects of the refugee problem, and not its causes.

15. Mr. DOUGLAS (United States of America) said that he agreed with the High Commissioner that it was not the mandate of UNHCR to resolve political questions and that it would be a serious mistake to politicize that body. It was for States to attack the problem, to adopt a strong human rights policy and to bring pressure to end the injustices which had caused the refugees to leave. Finally, the solution of the refugee problem was not to be found in resettlement or development aid. The important thing was for more countries to guarantee their citizens basic human rights and offer them economic opportunities.

16. In his opinion, a definitive solution to the refugee problem would not be immediately forthcoming, and the United States was resolved to co-operate with the High Commissioner and the members of the Executive Committee in developing the appropriate policies and programmes for ensuring continued assistance to refugees and enabling society and national political institutions to support those efforts.

17. Mr. SIMPSON (United States of America) said that United States Congressmen were following the work of the Committee with great interest. The United States, however, had been confronted with one problem for many years, namely, national immigration control. The Senate had adopted the Internal Immigration Bill to resolve the problem raised each year by the entry of some 1 million persons, 425,000 of them legal immigrants, 90,000 refugees and 500,000 illegal aliens, in addition to persons seeking asylum. The United States had never been a country of first asylum. The duty of every nation was first and foremost to control its frontiers, and the Congress had made a decision to that effect. Suggestions could be made and decisions taken within the Executive Committee, but nothing could be done without the support of the national legislature. That must be considered, together with the fact that, in the United States, people had difficulty in grasping the difference between a refugee, a person seeking asylum, a foreigner with temporary residence, etc. A common vocabulary was needed. In conclusion, he did not understand why the best solution, which in his opinion was resettlement, was not recommended. That was the recommendation he intended to make to the Congressmen of the United States.

18. Mr. ANGLES (France) said he would like first of all to draw attention to the breadth and diversity of UNHCR's current tasks, which affected 10 million people. Crisis situations, which had increased in number during the previous decade, had invested the problem of refugees and displaced persons with tragic proportions. They had had the effect of increasing UNHCR's responsibilities and of considerably diversifying its activities. UNHCR had gradually found it necessary to deal with persons displaced in their own country, to facilitate repatriation and resettlement in the country of origin, to undertake resettlement from the country of temporary asylum to the country of permanent asylum and to assume responsibility for co-ordinating programmes of humanitarian organizations, voluntary agencies and United Nations bodies concerned with certain crises. That development was reflected in the funding of general programmes which had risen from \$120 million in 1978, to \$360 million in 1982, a threefold increase in five years, despite the stabilization recorded during the last year.

19. In the second place, the High Commissioner and his staff should be thanked for their hard work on behalf of refugees. The results achieved would not have been possible without the solidarity of the international community, but the High Commissioner and his staff had played a leading role in the work accomplished, and the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize to UNHCR in 1981, for the second time in its history, had been a just reward.

20. Though there was reason to be proud of the work accomplished, UNHCR's activities could be improved further. Much had already been done to rationalize the organization's structures, procedures and working methods. However, it was important to strive continually for greater effectiveness in the aid dispensed to refugees. It was certainly difficult to make predictions which could prove false the next day. However, sustained efforts must be made to improve structures, and the ideas contained in the report of the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/612) seemed to offer a sound basis for preliminary reflection. In particular, the orientation of UNHCR's work towards the field should be strengthened and priorities in the activities to be undertaken defined; that would be possible only if there was the widest co-operation among all parties affected by the refugee problem.

21. The extent of the difficulties still to be resolved was apparent in all regions of the world: in Africa, which had more than 5 million refugees, and in particular in the Horn of Africa; in South-East Asia, where the number of refugees had stabilized, but where it was more than ever necessary to mobilize the efforts of the countries able to receive those refugees to whom the solution of voluntary return could not be applied; in Pakistan, which was currently sheltering 2.7 million Afghan refugees, and on the American continent where serious crises impelled entire populations to take refuge in zones of relative security and where UNHCR's activities on behalf of the Salvadorian refugees must be continued and extended.

22. In that context, France, a traditional country of asylum, would continue its policy of admitting those who qualified for protection because they were victims of or threatened by persecution in some form or another. In particular, France would do its utmost to meet the expectations of refugees from South-East Asia seeking a country of resettlement. The work on behalf of those refugees since 1975 had cost more than 2.5 billion francs. The continuation of that work would require still more sacrifices, in particular financial ones. A specific mechanism

for the teaching of French and for socio-vocational adjustment had been set up in May 1975 for the refugees, whether or not they passed through reception centres. The refugees would follow either a course of French language classes or a vocational training course, according to each case. Moreover, the entire system of vocational training was being mobilized for refugees who wished to learn a trade.

23. Furthermore, France would continue to offer hospitality to refugees from other continents. Since 1973, it had admitted more than 8,500 Latin American refugees. France's regular contribution to the UNHCR budget would increase very substantially for 1982 and its pledge would be made ultimately to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in New York, at the beginning of December.

24. France had made every attempt to respond appropriately to the requests for aid which it had received on behalf of refugees from all continents. A special contribution had been made to the programme implemented by UNHCR on behalf of the Salvadorian refugees in Central America, and relief had been dispensed through various organizations to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and refugees in certain African countries. That type of aid would be continued. Finally, France was always prepared to give favourable consideration to a request for bilateral aid from countries which agreed to admit into their territory displaced persons who were a heavy burden on their national economy.

25. Lastly, he would like to deal with the high-priority problem of protection of persons seeking asylum and of refugees. Current events too often provided examples of acts of violence, often murderous, against helpless persons. Assistance and protection were the two inseparable aspects of a policy which must aim to preserve the essential rights of that category of particularly under-privileged and vulnerable men and women. France condemned unconditionally the extortion and crimes committed against refugees living in camps or resettlement zones, whether they were under UNHCR protection or not. It would give its full support to initiatives for ending acts against which the conscience revolted. The work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection had been useful in that connection.

26. His Government was also concerned at the acts of piracy against the boat people. A French naval vessel had been sent into the Gulf of Thailand in order to frighten off the pirates in that region, and the Government had welcomed the preparation by UNHCR of a programme to combat piracy in the Gulf of Thailand, to which it had contributed.

27. France wished generally to express its strong support for the principles contained in the basic international instruments in the area of protection, and was convinced that the development of international protection of refugees and displaced persons was based primarily, not only on respect for those principles, but also on their full implementation. It wished to repeat its appeal to all the countries that were not yet parties to those instruments to endorse without reservation the principles of the right of asylum and non-refoulement and to demonstrate their active support for peoples in adverse circumstances.

28. Mr. PICTET (Switzerland) congratulated Mr. Kharma on his election as Chairman of the Committee; his presence on the Executive Committee was a reminder that amid the most difficult trials there was room for hope, and that Governments could join forces to reduce the suffering of innocent victims throughout the world.

29. The sole object of the present session was to sustain the High Commissioner in his humanitarian task; however, many situations that had become tragic could have been avoided if better co-operation at the national and international level had been established in time. Switzerland was therefore pleased that the matter had been receiving serious consideration for some time, both in the United Nations and in many public and private organizations. That consideration should continue, even if it seemed doubtful that it could lead rapidly to specific procedures, given the current state of international relations. Failure to respect obligations of international law might have serious consequences, not only for thousands of individuals, but for other States, or even an entire region of the world. It had become all the more imperative to avoid the recurrence of mass population movements since recent experience had shown how difficult it could be to implement local integration or resettlement in third countries, failing voluntary return to the country of origin, when the fate of several thousand, even several million, individuals was at stake. His delegation reaffirmed the absolute necessity of guaranteeing, on one hand, the inalienable rights of refugees, the humanitarian nature of UNHCR activities and the political neutrality indissociable from it, and, on the other, the competences which States had entrusted to other bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

30. Despite the continuation of many refugee situations, the current year had brought some more encouraging news. For the second consecutive time, the High Commissioner was able to report a reduction in the total number of refugees and displaced persons in his charge. No new major crisis had occurred to make his task more difficult. It was true that, for institutional reasons, the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees was largely outside his sphere of competence. UNHCR had achieved some very encouraging results with regard to voluntary repatriation, both with projects undertaken previously, as in Chad, and newly-established projects, as in Ethiopia and Kampuchea. The progress achieved by UNHCR in financing projects to promote the integration of refugees and to encourage activities for generating income locally were promising. Finally, although they had not made it possible to resolve all the difficulties, impressive results had been achieved in resettling people in third countries, whether they were refugees from Indo-China, Afghan refugees, or Polish refugees in Austria. More generally, at a time when international co-operation was being established on all aspects of the refugee problem, UNHCR was receiving fewer requests for emergency assistance than in the past and could therefore devote more time to finding durable solutions.

31. The documents made available to the members of the Committee emphasized the central role played by UNHCR in most fields of operation. The internal restructuring of UNHCR was also off to a good start. The High Commissioner now had an instrument which was adequate in all respects: modernized management methods, staff enjoying better working conditions, both in the field and at Geneva; and a high budget, despite a slight drop in the volume of operations, which gave it an impressive capacity for action. Since it was not operational and acted in areas as varied as nutrition, health, education, creation of jobs, community development and so on, UNHCR had to use specialized staff for the execution of its programmes, which was not always an easy matter. Switzerland, therefore, hoped that the High Commissioner would ensure that, in his relations with other bodies, his mandate was always strictly applied, that the best qualified forces were used regularly in the field and consistently given proper support, and that special attention, at every level,

was given to the co-ordination of activities on behalf of refugees. To that end, it would be useful for the UNHCR executing agents, particularly intergovernmental organizations, to participate in all phases of the operation, from project design to evaluation. In that connection, he referred to the distribution of tasks between UNHCR, ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, as had been agreed at Manila the preceding November.

32. In the area of protection, his delegation would like to mention the work undertaken by UNHCR which, at the instance of the ICRC and with the active co-operation of the Thai authorities, had made it possible to tackle specifically the problem of piracy in the China Sea, which was affecting the Indo-Chinese refugees. However, the efforts of UNHCR in that area had been coming up against increasing obstacles in respect of opportunities for integration and resettlement in third countries. Switzerland was no stranger to that phenomenon. After a very considerable effort during the past four years to settle nearly 8,000 Indo-Chinese refugees in Switzerland, it had to be acknowledged that the country's capacity to integrate them was being tested.

33. Nevertheless, Switzerland would always pay particular attention to family reunions, difficult cases of integration and other programmes or specific projects such as the implementation of the Disembarkation Resettlement Offer Scheme (DISERO) and the project for the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees at the Thai frontier. The number of applications for individual asylum had substantially increased in recent years, from 3,000 in 1980 to 4,200 in 1981. The marked increase in those applications and the fact that refugee assistance presented problems that were increasingly complex had delayed execution of the projected programmes. To make up for that delay, the staff of the competent administration would be nearly doubled.

34. With regard to Switzerland's financial participation in the international effort, official assistance to refugees and displaced persons had amounted to more than SwF 23 million in 1980, taking account both of bilateral aid and of contributions to international organizations. In addition to the contributions made to UNHCR in the previous year, which had totalled nearly SwF 6 million, there were also more than SwF 2 million which represented the services of the Swiss volunteer corps for UNHCR programmes. Moreover, the previous autumn the Federal Parliament had voted a further appropriation for international humanitarian aid for the years 1982 to 1985, which had made it possible to double Switzerland's regular contribution to UNHCR that year, to SwF 3.5 million. A further contribution to the general programmes might soon be made. It would amount to SwF 1.4 million and would be earmarked for UNHCR activities on behalf of refugees in Sudan, Pakistan, Honduras and Somalia. Finally, Switzerland hoped that it would soon be in a position to pledge its contribution to the general programmes for 1983.

35. Mr. SUZUKI (Japan) recalled that in the previous year, there had been a large number of Polish refugees and more recently, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacre of Palestinian refugees. His country would like to express its anger at those cruel acts and its deep concern at the situation which had been created in Lebanon. On the other hand, the crisis phase in Indo-China, western Asia and Africa seemed to have passed thanks to the concerted efforts of the international community. He was particularly grateful to the High Commissioner for the fact that, in many places, greater emphasis was being placed on refugee assistance programmes aimed at self-reliance. Unfortunately, however, practically no solution had been found to the root causes of refugee influxes, stemming from various international conflicts. As long as those root causes persisted, the responsibilities of the High Commissioner would remain great for some years to come. For that reason,

his Government would support the extension of the UNHCR mandate at the current session of the General Assembly. Since 1979, Japan had been making a financial contribution to the activities of UNHCR of the order of \$60 million. In 1982, a Japanese contribution of \$17.5 million had already been pledged, and there would be a further contribution of \$28.6 million for assistance programmes, which would bring his country's total contribution to \$46.1 million.

36. Turning to some of the major refugee situations, he expressed satisfaction at the decrease in the influx of Laotians into Thailand and in the outflow of boat people; that might be the result of the "Humane Deterrence Policy" of the Government of Thailand, which was understandable in the case of those persons who wished to cross the frontier for merely economic reasons. The voluntary repatriation of the Laos had already produced positive results. As for the voluntary repatriation of Kampucheans, UNHCR must expedite negotiations with the parties concerned; at the meeting held in June 1982 of ASEAN Foreign Ministers, the Japanese Minister had proposed a new practical scheme for the voluntary repatriation of Kampucheans, in which Japan was prepared to take part, if necessary. The voluntary repatriation of the boat people, however, was unfortunately practically impossible; resettlement offers in third countries were decreasing and the case-load in first asylum countries was increasing. The Government of Viet Nam should therefore endeavour to restrain that exodus, and the Orderly Departure Programme should be further promoted.

37. As for the Afghan refugees, a tribute should be paid to the humanitarian efforts of the Government of Pakistan, which had admitted 2.7 million. In September 1982, the Japanese Foreign Minister had visited a refugee camp in Pakistan and renewed his commitment to continuing Japanese assistance through UNHCR and WFP. With regard to the African refugee situation, Japan viewed with admiration and gratitude those receiving countries which were dealing with the influxes on the basis of the "non-refoulement" principle. At the ICARA Aid Conference in April 1981, Japan had made a pledge of \$20 million to assist those refugees and it noted with satisfaction that the Conference had achieved its primary objectives. In June 1982, a Japanese team had been dispatched to three countries in the Horn of Africa; on the basis of its report, Japan would continue to support African countries facing both refugee problems and difficulties with their own development. The situation of refugees in Central America had worsened and the role of UNHCR would be of considerable importance for several years to come; Japan would continue to follow the development of the situation in that region.

38. Concerning protection activities for refugees in Japan, he pointed out that his country, which was a party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, had already granted temporary refuge to a large number of persons and was receiving an increasing number of applications. In February 1982, a reception centre had been opened to screen more effectively new arrivals of "temporary refugees"; moreover, mainly in order to cope with the rapid increase of cases of arriving boat people and with a view to increasing its capacity to deal with changing situations; the Japanese Government was re-examining its over-all policy on refugee questions; in particular, it was constructing a new centre to accommodate those refugees and displaced persons.

39. With regard to the administration and financing of UNHCR, his delegation welcomed the proposed stabilization of budget estimates. However, due to the current serious economic difficulties, the need for more effective use of resources should be stressed more than ever. Careful programming in co-ordination with other agencies and strict control of the project implementation were also extremely important. The recent efforts to improve the management of UNHCR were in keeping with the sincere wishes of the members of the Committee who wished to help UNHCR to discharge its responsibilities. Generally speaking, praiseworthy efforts had been made so far to strengthen the functions and structure of UNHCR, but there was obviously still room for improvements, such as those recommended in the reports of the ACABQ, AMS and the Board of Auditors. His delegation had already made some suggestions to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, and had high expectations concerning the outcome of the exchanges of views to be held during the present session.

40. Mr. OLAIFA (Nigeria) said that, although the High Commissioner's work was entirely non-political, humanitarian and social, the events that gave rise to mass departures of peoples should engage the attention of the Executive Committee. He referred to the study recently carried out by the former High Commissioner for Refugees, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, on the question of human rights and mass exoduses, on behalf of the Commission on Human Rights. He quoted from paragraph 2 of the foreword to that study, contained in document E/CN.4/1503, which emphasized, in particular, that in order to resolve the problem of mass exoduses, the political will of Governments was indispensable. The increasing number of refugees and displaced persons in recent years made that political will more necessary than ever.

41. The situation of refugees in Africa had taken on tragic proportions, and it continued to worsen because of the upheavals in that continent. The African countries continued to receive large numbers of those unfortunate people; that state of affairs affected their economies, since most of the countries were in the category of least developed countries. For its part, Nigeria had had its share of the mass influx of refugees from Chad in recent years. The Federal Government of Nigeria had helped those refugees, and not only financially - the assistance it had provided so far amounted to over \$20 million - but also by providing them with land so that they could settle. The Office of the High Commissioner had provided the Chad refugees with much commendable assistance, especially on the occasion of the recent voluntary repatriation operation of Chad refugees - the most durable solution, which should be applied when conditions permitted.

42. His Government had pledged a contribution of \$3 million to the International Conference on Assistance to Africa. Unfortunately, most of the pledges made at that Conference had been tied to specific projects and agencies, with the result that those countries which had looked forward to assistance from ICARA proceeds had been frustrated in their expectations. For future conferences of that nature, specific guidelines on contributions should be sent to potential donors, so that pledges would serve the purposes of the Conference.

43. Nigeria had always emphasized both in words and deeds its commitment to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol; it had consistently applied the principle of non-refoulement and would continue to open its doors to people seeking its protection, so long as such action did not compromise its own security. In that connection, he observed that UNHCR had entrusted Mr. Schnyder, a former High Commissioner for Refugees, with the task of carrying out the study on military attacks on refugee camps which the Executive Committee had requested; a preliminary report would be presented at

the current session, and a final report at the thirty-fourth session. His delegation hoped that the recommendations resulting from that study would help to lessen those extremely disturbing attacks, such as the ones against refugee camps at Chatila and Sabra in Lebanon, which had claimed hundreds of innocent victims.

44. His delegation supported strengthening the functions of the Executive Committee in order to make it more responsive to recent trends in refugee matters. With regard to recruitment of UNHCR staff, he emphasized the fact that persons charged with taking care of refugees should be quite conversant with their background. An equitable geographical spread in the recruitment of personnel was very desirable in order to achieve that objective. He also hoped that the High Commissioner would take the necessary steps to ensure that the Director of Assistance, who had been on fixed-term appointments for the last three years, served under the same conditions as his colleagues. Finally, he pointed out that his country had completed arrangements for the establishment of a UNHCR office in Lagos, providing office and residential accommodation for a staff of six. His Government would continue to give, within the limits of its resources, both material and financial support to the humanitarian work of UNHCR.

45. Mr. REPSDORPH (Denmark) congratulated UNHCR on responding to the immediate and longer-term needs of innumerable refugees for more than 30 years. The attacks against the refugee camps in Beirut, which had been unanimously condemned, had once more emphasized the need to implement measures to protect refugees against all forms of violence. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the preliminary report submitted by Mr. Schnyder, former High Commissioner, on military attacks on refugee camps and settlements, prepared at the request of the Executive Committee at its thirty-second session. That report, and the views expressed in the Sub-Committee on International Protection provided a sound basis for efforts to find solutions to that important problem.

46. The mandate given by the General Assembly to UNHCR since its inception was precise and sufficiently flexible to allow it to meet effectively the variety of refugee needs. His delegation would support the continuation of that mandate at the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly. He would like to stress the fact that the continuation of the mandate as it stood did not prevent the General Assembly from conferring special responsibilities on UNHCR in particular situations.

47. He would like to express appreciation for the fact that the High Commissioner was prepared to agree to the renewal of his mandate, although his first term of office had coincided with an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and the emergence of increasingly complicated problems, in particular in the field of protection. Fortunately, there had also been a broader participation of countries in the activities of UNHCR, which should improve its capacity to adapt to new situations while, of course, maintaining a non-political, strictly humanitarian approach.

48. His delegation considered the increase in expenditures foreseen for 1983 to be reasonable, although the projected financial target of \$372 million for the general programme and the emergency fund would require substantial contributions from all countries: it was to be hoped that those contributions would be made in a way which would bring about a more equitable burden-sharing. From 1978 to 1981,

his Government had contributed some \$30 million per year to UNHCR and had contributed \$7 million since the beginning of 1982. Subject to parliamentary approval, his Government intended to make an additional contribution to UNHCR of \$4.5 million, which amounted to 7.5 per cent of the \$60 million shortfall against the general programmes funding requirement of \$360 million.

49. Denmark continued to participate actively in UNHCR resettlement programmes, and, in addition to its fixed quota of 500 refugees per year, in 1982 it had received 350 Indo-Chinese refugees rescued at sea by ships flying the Danish flag. Its yearly quota also included a number of handicapped refugees under the programme known as the "Ten or more".

50. His Government attached great importance to the discussions held between the UNHCR and the Secretariat of the United Nations in New York on funding UNHCR administrative costs and would recommend to the General Assembly the transfer of 20 posts which had been proposed.

51. In the area of documentation, that prepared on assistance programmes for the current session showed a substantial improvement. Since the informal meeting in January on that question, the information received by Governments on UNHCR activities corresponded by and large to their needs, and further requests might have negative effects on UNHCR's operational activities.

52. In the field of protection, his Government once again emphasized the need for scrupulous observance of the rules and principles adopted to protect the individual from persecution and invited States not yet parties to the Convention and its Protocol to redress that situation. Accession to those instruments, however, would still not solve the basic problem, which was the non-observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms in many parts of the world.

53. The events which had occurred in Lebanon, Asia, southern Africa and Central America had once again stressed the need for adopting immediate measures to protect refugee camps and resettlement zones against military and paramilitary attacks. The convening of a meeting in July on the plight of refugees in distress at sea had been a positive step. He would like the current session of the Executive Committee to give added impetus to the process of elaborating the interesting proposals made on that occasion and he requested the High Commissioner to submit a report on that subject within six months. A number of deterrent measures adopted by States could have potentially negative effects on established principles concerning international protection. A more equitable sharing of responsibilities in the area of resettlement would be preferable to the adoption of restrictive measures, including narrower criteria for the granting of asylum, which could further worsen the situation of the most vulnerable groups.

54. The Orderly Departure Programme had fortunately reduced the total number of boat people and the agreement recently concluded between UNHCR and the Thai Government, on behalf of a number of Governments including his own, which embodied a programme to combat piracy, should offer grounds for hope in that sphere.

55. With regard to the interconnection between humanitarian work for refugees and development assistance, his delegation agreed that UNHCR intervention during the initial phase involved indispensable measures having a developmental connotation and that measures to enable refugees to achieve self-sufficiency during

the process of finding durable solutions for them had an even clearer link with development. The crucial point, however, lay in determining when UNHCR should phase out its activities and hand over its responsibilities to other agencies. The decisive factor must always be the ability of the other competent agencies to take over, for a system which would leave refugees to their own devices and thereby give rise to new humanitarian problems must be rejected at all costs.

56. Mr. EWERLÖF (Sweden) noted that, in his introductory statement, the High Commissioner had referred to controversial issues such as the definition of refugee status and the relationships between refugee assistance and aid to development, issues which would probably require close attention from the Executive Committee in the years ahead.

57. The growing complexity of the refugee problem was indisputable, but there were a few encouraging signs, such as the fact that most assistance programmes went beyond the emergency phase and that no new large-scale refugee flows had occurred for some time. It should therefore be possible for UNHCR to concentrate on the situations which were threatening to become permanent, particularly in a number of African countries.

58. The nature of UNHCR activities had changed over the years and its activities had become extremely complex and more diversified. It had therefore found it necessary to co-operate with other competent agencies and to develop its own technical expertise in some key areas in the field.

59. Only a pragmatic and flexible view of its mandate would make it possible for UNHCR to cope with those situations and to adjust its activities, resources and programmes to those urgent and changing needs. When the members of the General Assembly were called upon to extend the mandate of UNHCR, they could do so with no hesitation, confident that it had already proved its worth.

60. Whereas UNHCR had exclusive responsibility in respect of protection, assistance was nowadays entrusted to a variety of organizations, which General Assembly resolutions often called on to intervene in their respective fields. As long as an emergency situation prevailed, UNHCR would naturally be the co-ordinator of those efforts, but plans should be made in advance for host countries and development agencies to take over when that phase ended. In that connection, the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to emergencies, mainly by co-ordinating the action to be taken by the parties concerned, should provide a framework for improved co-ordination of efforts in emergency situations in the future.

61. It was encouraging to note that the principles of non-refoulement and temporary admission were increasingly being accepted as binding norms. Recent additional ratifications of the refugee instruments were also reassuring.

62. Whereas initiatives were being taken to eliminate the causes of mass exoduses, it was essential for UNHCR to confine itself to its strictly humanitarian task of protecting and assisting refugees. It was the responsibility of the entire international community to deal with the problems which caused those exoduses and which, if not dealt with successfully, might be reflected in additional work for UNHCR.

63. On another matter, the imbalance of obligation between countries of origin and asylum should be pointed out. Recipient countries came under greater pressure than the country of origin to provide a solution. All countries must constantly be reminded of their obligations and responsibilities towards their citizens in pursuance of United Nations principles. The possibility of voluntary repatriation, furthermore, largely depended on the attitude of the country of origin. It was, however, of equal importance that efforts to eliminate the causes of the exodus should in no way infringe principles of international protection or the right of every person to leave his country.

64. The criminal attacks against the refugee camps in Lebanon were a reminder of the urgent need to adopt legal and other measures to protect refugees against military attacks and increase their safety. His delegation had taken note of the report which Mr. Schnyder had submitted to the Sub-Committee on Protection.

65. His delegation also urged the High Commissioner to spare no effort to ensure that the obligation of ships' captains to assist refugees in distress at sea was complied with and to eliminate the factors which at present made them reluctant to fulfil those obligations.

66. Referring to the very serious refugee problems currently facing UNHCR, he said that the situation in Central America was steadily deteriorating and that several hundred refugees and displaced persons were currently receiving no assistance at all. The international community had an obligation to exert pressure on the Governments in question for a political solution to that problem and for ratification of the international refugee instruments by those States. For its part, UNHCR must strengthen its protection and assistance in that area.

67. His delegation supported the idea UNHCR had put forward for a regional approach to the situation in the Horn of Africa. The living conditions of the local populations should be taken into consideration, both in large-scale repatriation operations and mass movements of refugees. UNHCR had been successful in carrying out programmes elsewhere in Africa and he welcomed the fact that a similar operation seemed possible for the Horn of Africa.

68. His delegation would like to commend the High Commissioner for his efforts to promote self-sufficiency for 400,000 repatriated Kampuchean and hoped that an organized repatriation programme from Thailand to Kampuchea would soon be possible.

69. He hoped that a political solution could soon be reached to enable the refugees in Pakistan to return to their country; however, large-scale assistance from the international community continued to be needed to ease the heavy burden on the Pakistan Government, whose efforts in the face of that difficult situation, were admirable. The UNHCR programmes aiming at self-sufficiency for those refugees were welcome, as was its co-operation with other agencies like the World Bank and ILO.

70. In the administrative sphere, his delegation stressed once again the need for a reinforced UNHCR field organization to make possible further delegation of authority. It was encouraging to note that the 1983 budget showed a slight reduction and it was hoped that that trend would continue, as UNHCR was gradually able to phase out its assistance to programmes for refugees who had achieved self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, voluntary contributions could hardly be expected to diminish in the years to follow, due to UNHCR commitments. In response to the special appeal for the regular programme issued in June 1982, his Government had decided to add a further SKr 30 million to its regular contribution of SKr 50 million earlier in the year.

71. The last five years had been the most difficult ever for UNHCR, and his delegation was impressed by the way in which the High Commissioner and his staff had discharged their responsibilities in extremely difficult circumstances. It welcomed the fact that Mr. Hartling was prepared to serve another term, and supported him wholeheartedly.

72. Mr. ROZENTAL (Observer for Mexico) said that the latest issue of the journal Refugees indicated the scope of UNHCR activities in Central America and particularly in Mexico. In the previous year, nearly 75,000 Guatemalans and 140,000 Salvadorians had crossed Mexico's southern frontier and taken refuge in that country. That situation presented many delicate problems for Mexico and other neighbouring countries directly concerned. His Government had made available considerable human and material resources to make it possible for those persons to settle in the country, and it had also had to strengthen activities of its Commission for Aid to Refugees, whose responsibilities had suddenly been greatly increased. On its side, UNHCR had decided to open a permanent office in Mexico in order to cope with that new situation.

73. Despite the heavy burden that effort represented for a developing country, Mexico would do its utmost to respect its tradition as a country of asylum. In that connection, he would like also to mention the contribution Mexico was making in agreeing to resettle Polish refugees at present in countries of first asylum.

74. He expressed appreciation of the high degree of competence and human qualities of the High Commissioner and his staff, with whom his Government had prepared short- and medium-term projects for assistance to the hundreds of thousands of persons in its charge. First and foremost, a distinction must be established between the traditional flow of Guatemalans and Mexicans who crossed the frontier daily and the mass exodus of refugees from Central America who had fled their countries in order to escape the violence, fighting and persecution rife in that region. With the help of UNHCR, the Government had finally been able to reach a modus vivendi, which was encouraging.

75. His delegation would warmly support the extension of Mr. Hartling's mandate in the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.