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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 348th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 October 1982, at 3 p.m.

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. Kharma	(Lebanon)
later:	Mr. Ewerlöf	(Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

UNHCR ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES (agenda item 6) (A/AC.96/606 and 607, A/36/12/Add.1, EC/SC2/8)

1. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director of Assistance), introducing the discussion on assistance programmes, reminded members that at previous sessions he had already dealt with a number of matters relating to assistance activities, such as determination of the number of refugees, better balance in assistance to various groups of refugees throughout the world, and the priority to be accorded to durable solutions rather than to indefinite assistance. At the current session he would deal more specifically with the question of the implementation of assistance programmes and projects, referring to the problems encountered and reviewing the measures taken or envisaged with a view to improving implementation.

2. With regard to the problems encountered, he said that the extremely rapid growth in UNHCR assistance programmes throughout the world had often outstripped the capacity of UNHCR to ensure effective implementation; the methods of the 1970s had often proved inadequate to meet the challenges of the 1980s. In the new programmes it had often been necessary to aim at speed and to be content with outline planning. As a result programmes had not always fully met the needs of individual groups while at the same time, because of their size, they had tested the administrative and management capacities of the governmental and non-governmental bodies responsible for implementation and imposed a burden on the systems and procedures of UNHCR itself. In many cases it had not been possible to make full use of the funds approved for a financial year in the course of that year. Limited absorption capacities, which had sometimes made it necessary to delay the implementation of projects for several years, had also been encountered. As earlier planning models could no longer meet new needs, the services of technical consultants had been used with a view to minimizing the risks of unsuitable planning. During that period of rapid growth, a large number of staff had also had to be recruited, so rapidly that it had not been possible to provide them with adequate training or, owing to lack of resources, to acquaint them thoroughly with UNHCR procedures and methods of project planning and monitoring. Sometimes, implementation had had to be entrusted to new implementing agencies whose staff also had often had limited training, and the results had not always been very satisfactory. Nor had they always been satisfactory when traditional operational partners had been requested to deal with new geographical regions or new areas of assistance. It was clear that the range of implementing agencies for UNHCR projects should be extended and the quality of the directives given to these agencies improved. That situation had been given the High Commissioner's close attention and, with his support, was being improved. Members' views in the matter would be extremely valuable.

3. An important step towards improved implementation had been the establishment of a project management system (PMS) which had been used for the first time in the 1979-1980 programming cycle. The system made for better evaluation of project proposals; and better planning, follow-up and monitoring of projects. It had now proved itself and its final element, evaluation, had been introduced in 1980.

4. In the area of internal consideration of the implementation of projects, the Division of Assistance Programmes and the four regional offices had already carried out a detailed examination of current implementation rates. UNHCR delegations in the field and the responsible officers at headquarters were reviewing the implementation of each project. A number of measures for improving implementation were available: UNHCR could strengthen the capacity of operational partners by assuming responsibility for the financing of certain implementing agency posts in such fields as accountancy and the monitoring and follow-up of operations; it could second administrators or experts to government services to assist in the planning and execution of programmes; it could supplement the training of the staff of implementing agencies by means of technical or management seminars; the use of experts from the United Nations system was also envisaged, sometimes for the purpose of providing technical support for implementation; and, in some cases, UNHCR officers were sent to the field as consultants and to follow up projects. The High Commissioner expected to complete his internal evaluation of implementation before the end of 1982 and to incorporate the results in the arrangements adopted for the execution of the programme for 1983.
5. On the subject of planning, he noted that a detailed submission had to be prepared for each project that was the subject of a request for funds. Planning was based mainly on an estimate of needs by UNHCR delegations in the field. Submissions were reviewed at headquarters and a final recommendation was then made to the Executive Committee in order to obtain the necessary funds. In many cases, the needs would warrant a request for more funds but the methods or conditions of implementation were deemed inadequate; such assessment of absorption capacities had played a significant role in 1982 in the consideration of proposals from delegations in the field. It would be noted that, for the first time, the total sum recommended for the revised general programmes for 1982 was lower than the total approved in the previous year. That was largely the reflection of a stricter assessment of implementation capacities and a concern to ensure that funds were used effectively. If, however, the implementation was more rapid than planned, the reserve funds of the Programme could be drawn upon.
6. The establishment of new structures had also been of benefit in the co-ordination of implementation: a Programme Management Bureau had been set up, within which there was a Technical Support Group that would allow for far better identification and use of implementing agencies and technical experts in the planning and execution of programmes. The Technical Support Group was to be strengthened by a health and nutrition specialist seconded - it was hoped - from WHO, a building specialist seconded from Habitat, and a water and sanitation expert recruited directly by UNHCR. In addition, the reorganization of the former Counselling and Education Section, now known as the Social Services Section, meant that more effective social welfare services would be available to refugees.
7. Although the PMS involved tighter planning, that planning still often had to be simply outlined and confined mainly to the provision of essential objects which the refugees required in order to survive. It still happened that insufficient attention was given to special and vulnerable groups such as the handicapped, women and children, and the elderly. Fortunately, the recruitment of staff with special responsibility for those groups and the activities of the Social Services Section had enabled those deficiencies to be remedied to some extent. A drawback of the broad planning it had been necessary to adopt was that it led to the financial needs of some programmes being over-estimated or under-estimated but with the introduction of the PMS and the increase in its technical resources UNHCR was now able to determine costs and personnel needs in an efficient and economic manner.

8. There were too few technical experts attached to UNHCR to resolve all the problems but, in co-operation with the regional offices, they could identify cases where outside technical support would contribute to a solution, and they could also evaluate the technical recommendations made by outside consultants. In addition, the incorporation of the project evaluation component in the management system had led to better identification of the problems that arose within the framework of programmes and enabled lessons to be learned for similar activities in the future. On the conclusion of each project, the implementing agency was requested to submit a self-evaluation report. Those reports were reviewed by delegations in the field and were then forwarded to Geneva with comments and recommendations. Every year certain projects were the subject of a more detailed mid-term evaluation, if necessary with the assistance of technical experts who made up evaluation teams. A summary of mid-term evaluations already carried out appeared in document EC/SC2/8 which had been submitted to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

9. The new administrators, who had had to be recruited in large numbers, had often been handicapped by lack of training and of manuals. The Office of the Director of Assistance Programmes had solved the problem in part by holding periodic training courses for staff responsible for assistance projects. Since 1979 several seminars had been organized in that connection in the field and at headquarters; in subsequent years, their number and duration had increased and their content had been improved. The Division had also organized more technical seminars on the planning and implementation of integrated social services, the planning of rural settlement centres, and certain aspects of resettlement. For the first time, in 1982, the staff of implementing agencies had taken part in some of those courses. The results of that training had been good and it was to be extended in 1983.

10. The activities which he had described were activities over which UNHCR had almost complete control. However, with a view to ensuring effective implementation, the Programme Division was also going to study ways of increasing the options open to Governments. The Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organizations would facilitate identification of new operational partners and co-ordination of the evaluation of their capacities and special areas of competence. The Liaison Unit would also be responsible for compiling experience and information from the past on co-operation between the implementing agencies and UNHCR. The Technical Support Group was simultaneously endeavouring to identify firms that could provide consultants or even assume responsibility, in whole or in part, for project execution. Efforts in the sphere of inter-institutional co-ordination had also been intensified particularly in the context of pilot projects designed to involve agencies of the United Nations system in new spheres of activity. He pointed out in that connection that in collaborating with implementing agencies UNHCR continued to be the primary source of financing. Implementing agencies participated in project execution, but much effort and co-ordination would be required if they were also to participate in the financing of projects. One of the significant exceptions was the long tradition of co-operation between UNHCR and WFP.

11. Referring to UNHCR policies regarding the choice of implementation methods, he said that at the request of a Government the Office of the High Commissioner often played an operational role, particularly during the initial phase of an emergency programme. It was during that initial phase that most implementing agencies were associated with projects financed by UNHCR but sometimes the voluntary agencies were small and their powers limited and even United Nations specialized agencies usually

had sectoral competence. In emergency situations, UNHCR solved the problem which such restrictions imposed by playing a co-ordinating and advisory role. However, after the emergency phase, its task was rather to identify an organization capable of assuming full responsibility for a multi-sectoral programme particularly in regard to co-ordination and guidance at which stage it confined its own role to following up implementation. Unfortunately, few implementing agencies had such a capacity for multisectoral co-ordination; UNHCR then asked smaller implementing agencies to co-operate with others which ensured general co-ordination, or it took the measures to which he had already referred with a view to improving the management capacity of a particular implementing agency. Sometimes, it had to continue to perform the task of direct co-ordination but that required more staff and involved higher administrative costs. UNHCR therefore attached great importance to the identification of agencies that could ensure the co-ordination of all aspects of a multi-sectoral programme.

12. Lastly, a detailed account of assistance activities by region and by country appeared in the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1981-1982 (A/AC.96/606). That report took account of the comments and suggestions made at the previous session and most delegations, both at the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters and in plenary, had already decided that it was an improvement.

13. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Director for Assistance and invited comments on the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1981-1982.

14. Mr. CORNELL (Sweden) said he welcomed UNHCR's efforts to strengthen its activities away from headquarters and to delegate more authority to the field. Although it was not an operational agency like UNICEF, UNHCR should be present in the field and actively involved in assistance operations so as to co-ordinate and monitor activities effectively.

15. His delegation noted with satisfaction that in many programmes UNHCR had placed the emphasis not on emergency measures but on promoting the self-sufficiency of refugees. It should, however, remain ready to respond to new emergency situations by organizing assistance activities in accordance with the principles set forth in the handbook on emergency activities, whose constructive and problem-oriented spirit should also underlie the reports submitted to the Executive Committee.

16. In general, the flow of information from UNHCR had greatly improved and assistance documents now contained a wealth of information, facts and figures for each programme which it was essential for donors to know. It would, however, be advisable for UNHCR to publish information of a more analytical nature on specific problems which it faced in the field and in particular on those referred to by the High Commissioner in his opening statement. It would also be useful for donors to be familiar with the arrangements between the UNHCR and the implementing partners, their responsibilities and functions and the extent to which their knowledge and experience could be applied elsewhere. Despite the problems involved in making precise estimates of a refugee population, assistance documents should indicate the number of beneficiaries more clearly in each case since, without even an indicative figure, the programme would be difficult to evaluate.

17. His delegation noted with satisfaction the introduction of a systematic project evaluation system and hoped that it would be expanded. In order to avoid duplication with the evaluation activities of donor countries, it would be useful if full evaluation reports on programmes could be made available to those countries and if they could be invited, from time to time, to participate in evaluation missions.

18. Sweden realized that UNHCR faced difficulties in many Central American countries and would therefore like to see a strengthening of its presence in that region so that it could vigorously pursue its policy for protection of and assistance to refugees and continue to seek durable solutions as it had done in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. The Swedish Emergency Unit, for its part, was currently providing UNHCR with technical assistance in the implementation of a road project in the eastern part of Honduras which would facilitate the delivery of supplies to Miskito Indians who were refugees from Nicaragua.

19. His delegation appreciated the steps taken by the UNHCR in the Horn of Africa to facilitate voluntary repatriation. It had hoped that the programme for returnees to Ethiopia would be more advanced but the situation was perhaps more complex than was apparent from the report. A regional approach seemed indicated in that case but real progress might have to await political solutions. In the meantime, the UNHCR and the voluntary agencies, such as the League of Red Cross Societies and the Lutheran World Federation, might gather useful experience on how an effective repatriation programme could be organized.

20. According to a study on the matter carried out by the Swedish mission, the Afghan refugee programme in Pakistan was being well run thanks to the combined efforts of the Pakistan Government, UNHCR and non-governmental organizations. That programme illustrated the importance of educational activities as an integral part of assistance. Of half a million children in Afghan refugee camps, only 50,000 received some form of education. It would be desirable to devote more resources to those programmes, particularly in camps where refugees stayed for a long time, since education afforded the best means of preparing children for the future irrespective of the durable solution adopted.

21. A large part of the refugees who had arrived in Sweden in recent years came from non-European countries where the culture, language and way of life were very different from those in the receiving country. Many lacked the education and skills required for employment in the industrialized countries. To prevent such refugees from becoming second-class citizens, many receiving countries now offered language courses and vocational training suited to their special needs. Furthermore, interpreters should be trained so that refugees could be assisted in their own language during the initial period of integration and efforts should also be made to train children in their mother-tongue. It should be borne in mind that refugees might one day be able to return to their countries of origin and that they should be prepared to contribute to development of these countries. In order to overcome the difficulties encountered in teaching languages spoken by very few people - including the recruitment of competent teachers - programmes of that kind could concentrate on a few ethnic groups of refugees: that would enable the receiving country to make more efficient use of its resources by benefiting a larger number of refugees belonging to such groups. UNHCR should assume part of the responsibility in that area and it might be useful for interested countries to discuss the subject. The International Refugee Integration Resource Centre should help to collect and disseminate useful information in that connection. It would, of course, only be possible to concentrate resources in that way if resettlement was carried out according to a plan. Naturally, there was no question of running the risk of being less prepared to respond to emergency cases but, if more countries provided resettlement opportunities, UNHCR might have enough flexibility to consider the question of concentration of resources even in such emergencies.

22. Mr. Ewerlöf (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair.

23. Mr. KAAKUNGA (South West Africa People's Organization - SWAPO) said that the future of the Namibian refugees was bleak, given the gloomy prospects for success of the United Nations Plan for Namibia (Security Council resolution 445 (1978)), even if token progress had been made in the negotiations for its immediate implementation. That was because the South African racist regime had decided, with the active encouragement of the present administration of the United States, to link the question of the independence of Namibia to the entirely separate issue of the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. The United States had in fact used that pretext to encourage the fascist regime of South Africa to maintain its illegal occupation of Namibia and continue with its repression in defiance of international public opinion. In that connection, he wished to reiterate that the right to independence was an inviolable right. It was completely unacceptable for the process of independence to be delayed in such a manner, and SWAPO trusted that the remaining members of the Contact Group - the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany and Canada - would do everything possible to dissuade the United States from prolonging the suffering of the Namibians.

24. The armed forces of the racist regime of Pretoria were torturing and murdering an increasing number of innocent Namibian people with complete impunity. In the north of the country, in particular, they resorted to looting, destroyed crops and massacred livestock so as to intimidate the people and force them to accept an allegedly "more representative" puppet administration. The aim of that regime and its allies was to create a politico-military force as an alternative to SWAPO. But it had to be realized that they would never reduce SWAPO's prestige in the eyes of the Namibian people and that their latest manoeuvres, like the earlier ones, were doomed to failure. He urged all Governments and all democratic organizations throughout the world to denounce Pretoria's latest attempt to set up a Bantustan regime in Namibia.

25. The number of Namibian refugees under SWAPO care in Angola and Zambia now stood at 70,000. The majority of them were to be found in the Namibian Health and Education Centres, in the Kwanza Sul province of Angola, which the Government of Angola had made available to SWAPO in 1968 after South Africa's fascist army had brutally killed thousands of unarmed people in Cassinga (Angola). Living conditions in those centres were extremely difficult and UNHCR's assistance fell far short of meeting their needs, particularly in terms of shelter and transport. He trusted that UNHCR would increase its assistance and would participate in the project for the construction of a Namibian secondary technical school at Loudima (People's Republic of Congo). In that connection he asked the Chairman whether it would be possible to organize an informal meeting of possible donors during the session. In addition, SWAPO would need farm implements so that the refugees could cultivate the land which the Angolan Government had made available to them and it appealed to the generosity of UNHCR and other charitable organizations. It had also requested UNHCR for assistance in the construction of a poultry farm and hoped that that project would be approved.

26. Lastly, he expressed SWAPO's solidarity with the PLO and the Palestinian people, with its comrades in arms in South Africa who were fighting under the leadership of the African National Congress, and with all peoples fighting for their freedom.

27. Mrs. KSENTINI (Algeria) said she trusted that, as a result of UNHCR efforts to overcome the difficulties referred to by the Director of Assistance, it would be possible to make up for the enormous delays that had built up in the implementation of some projects. It should be possible to increase capacity for the implementation of programmes, particularly if the downward revision in expenditure for 1982 was the result of a strict evaluation of that capacity.

28. Her delegation was pleased to note the improvements in the presentation of the High Commissioner's report on assistance activities and the effort at rationalization which enabled programme development and the status of projects to be followed more closely. That effort should be sustained and the introductory part of the report expanded to cover all situations. The last report, for instance, made no reference to UNHCR assistance activities for the benefit of refugees in Algeria.

29. Her delegation would also have liked to have further information on the amount and earmarking of funds received following the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. In general, it welcomed the downward trend in estimated expenditure recorded since 1981 but it trusted that that trend was not due to any disengagement on the part of UNHCR nor to any slackening in assistance but rather to a relative stabilization of the situation of refugees throughout the world. It was to be hoped that those optimistic forecasts would not be belied by new situations requiring urgent and increased action by UNHCR. It was, however, regrettable that the allocation of resources by region was still far from complying with the principle of equality of treatment among refugees. For instance, Africa, which had 50 per cent of the world's refugees, received only 31 per cent of resources and of UNHCR's assistance. The lower estimates for 1983 were not warranted by the repatriation programmes implemented in Africa since the situation of refugees there required, on the contrary, increased assistance. While it was true that UNHCR was asked for emergency assistance less than in the past, it would be advisable for it to concentrate its efforts on self-sufficiency projects. It should therefore be encouraged to pursue that course while taking care to ensure that the assistance was equitably shared among the regions and various categories of refugees.

30. Her delegation was puzzled by the view that refugees should be brought to a level of self-sufficiency comparable to that of local populations. If that principle were adopted, aid to refugees would have to be proportional to the GNP of the receiving country; the poorer that country was, the less assistance the refugees would need, unlike refugees received in more developed countries. According to that theory, UNHCR should also not try to educate refugees in countries where there was a high rate of illiteracy. She would welcome the comments of the Director of Assistance on the matter.

31. UNHCR should lay down general criteria based on the principle of equality in the area of assistance and should introduce an objective, general and stable information system in order to provide the international community with a more accurate idea of the situation of refugees throughout the world.

32. Mr. LANG (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the measures taken by UNHCR to promote self-sufficiency for refugees were assuming increasing importance and often took account of matters affecting the development of host countries. Those activities, however, exceeded the competence of UNHCR, which was rightly endeavouring to strengthen its co-operation with other United Nations agencies. UNDP, in particular, should become more closely involved in the aspects of assistance to

refugees which concerned development. It was also necessary for the central development planning authority to become involved at the earliest stage possible where development aid assumed significance in assistance to refugees. It was important to avoid any duplication in funds, administration and infrastructure and to integrate assistance projects into national development plans.

33. His Government supported the policy of transferring supervision of UNHCR projects which had a definite developmental character to the competent organizations. The talks between UNHCR and the World Bank on possible job opportunities in refugee areas of Pakistan were an example of that policy. His Government was also pleased to note the co-operation between UNHCR and the World Food Programme and recommended that studies should be carried out on food-for-work programmes.

34. His delegation welcomed the flexible attitude shown by UNHCR in adjusting its action to the changing needs of refugees and was confident that it would continue to do so in the future.

35. Mr. ZAFERA (Madagascar) paid tribute to UNHCR for its activities in Asia, Central America and Africa and for the capacity to adjust which it had shown in carrying out its growing responsibilities. The relative stabilization of the refugee situation in those regions in no way lessened the diversity and complexity of the problems.

36. He had already referred, at the Committee's thirty-second session, to the critical situation of refugees and receiving countries on the African continent although, even without that additional burden, those countries would have merited the international community's special concern. At that time his delegation had noted a disproportion between the financial resources allocated to assisting those refugees and those provided in other regions of the world. The hopes placed in the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa had unfortunately been disappointed; but an exhaustive assessment had still not been made and UNHCR should respond to OAU's request by undertaking a precise evaluation of the results of the Conference with a view to ascertaining whether another one should be organized. The situation of refugees in Africa was still as tragic as before, despite the efforts of the international community and the devotion of the UNHCR staff and, in particular, of the Division of Assistance.

37. His delegation noted the improvements in the presentation of the report on UNHCR assistance activities, but regretted that the report did not always show what stage had been reached in the implementation of programmes. That applied, in particular, to the programme for Sahrawi refugees which had not been fully implemented in 1981 and which had not even been started in 1982. Despite a substantial increase in estimated funds for 1983, the programme still fell far short of the needs of those refugees, to whose plight his delegation had already drawn the Committee's attention at its previous session.

38. Mr. PEKANE (African National Congress of South Africa) said that over the past year the situation in South Africa had worsened considerably. The South African racist regime had increasingly violated international legal norms of a humanitarian nature such as, for example, the 1949 Geneva Convention and the Additional Protocol of 1967 which accorded prisoner-of-war-status to captured freedom fighters. Those violations had resulted in death sentences being passed on three South African patriots and members of the ANC. He appealed to UNHCR, all other United Nations agencies and the international community at large to act together in saving the lives of those persons, as they had already done on another occasion. The occupation of Namibian and Angolan territory by the racist South African forces also characterized the regime's disregard for the principle of national sovereignty and constituted a violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

39. The internal situation had also deteriorated and the racist regime had introduced more stringent laws. A bill on the orderly removal and settlement of persons, the purpose of which was to amend certain sections of the Urban Areas Act, was currently before Parliament. The bill would, inter alia, prohibit the presence of black people in so-called "white" areas after certain hours. Heavy fines would be imposed on employers who employed persons on conditions that were in breach of its terms. Tens and thousands of men and women were thus likely to be removed from their homes and to swell the ranks of displaced persons. Their plight should therefore be taken into consideration since they too were victims of apartheid. Despite the deteriorating situation the struggle for liberation had intensified, but a growing number of patriots had had to seek refuge in neighbouring States because of police harassment.

40. In the present situation, it was essential for UNHCR and the international community to provide ANC with increased aid. He would be submitting to the High Commissioner proposals for the further development of the agricultural self-help projects in Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania. ANC also requested the High Commissioner's assistance in airlifting the ANC refugees who were in Lesotho.

41. Lastly, he appealed to the High Commissioner and the United Nations as a whole to find a way of preventing the military attacks on refugee camps which had claimed thousands of victims in southern Africa.

42. The CHAIRMAN invited members to consider, section by section and country by country, the "Report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1981-1982 and proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1983" (A/AC.96/606).

Section I - Africa

Algeria

43. Mr. SKALLI (Morocco) said that his delegation had noted the contents of the report under consideration with great interest. It again referred to a problem which was of concern to his Government and to which a final solution had, unfortunately, yet to be found, namely, the problem of the so-called "refugees" in the camps in and around Tindouf. Resources were allocated annually for assistance to those refugees without any thought of promoting durable solutions for them. His Government had the impression that Morocco's repeated approaches to UNHCR had been met with a lack of understanding which it was hard to reconcile with its mission.

44. In the section on "Sahrawi refugees", it was proposed to appropriate a higher sum for them than in previous years and to allocate that sum to health, education and self-sufficiency. Paragraph 9 of the report stated: "Following a recommendation made by the Executive Committee at its thirty-second session that special attention should be given to the promotion of durable solutions, over half the proposed amount will be used for projects leading to self-sufficiency". That was the first time that the concept of self-sufficiency had been mentioned but the way in which the sentence was worded suggested that self-sufficiency was a durable solution in itself whereas it could be no more than a temporary measure designed to alleviate the sufferings of persons in camps until such times as a permanent solution had been found. The ideal solution could only be voluntary repatriation or, failing that, permanent settlement, in keeping with the spirit, mandate and policy of UNHCR, the decisions of the Executive Committee and the deep convictions which the High Commissioner himself was known to hold.

45. Why had UNHCR waited seven years before realizing the need to draw up projects that would lead to self-sufficiency? How much longer would be needed before durable solutions were found? There was even a question whether self-sufficiency might not make voluntary repatriation more difficult and more risky. In fact it was not for the first time that the Committee had dealt with the problem at the thirty-second session. It had already suggested the proper course to follow with a view to its solution in 1976, when it had unequivocally linked the granting of assistance to the implementation of permanent solutions. On 10 October 1976 it had taken a decision in which it had requested the High Commissioner to continue his programme and at the same time to undertake discussions with Governments with a view to the speedy implementation, in accordance with the usual policy of his Office, of permanent solutions including voluntary repatriation and durable settlement. No effect had been given to the part of that decision relating to the implementation of durable solutions, and at its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions, the Committee had therefore appealed for its speedy implementation. At its thirty-first session the Committee had taken a further decision, in view of the persistence of the problem, in which it had requested the High Commissioner to continue or undertake discussions with Governments with a view to the speedy implementation, in accordance with the usual policy of his Office, of permanent solutions including voluntary repatriation and durable settlement. Lastly, the Chairman of the Committee at the thirty-second session had also felt it necessary to make an important statement reminding members of that decision.

46. None of those efforts had had any practical result. Morocco had always demonstrated its willingness to contribute in an effective manner to the promotion of durable solutions. In that connection, his Government had entered into certain solemn and specific commitments. Firstly, it was prepared to receive all persons proved to have originated from the former Spanish Sahara. Secondly, it agreed that the voluntary repatriation operation should be organized by UNHCR and in accordance with its normal procedures. Thirdly, it would grant any safeguards UNHCR might require to ensure that those persons who had opted for free return lived in freedom and dignity among their people. Fourthly, it undertook to allow UNHCR delegates to verify at any time that those persons were enjoying in a continuous manner full liberty and all the economic, social and political rights guaranteed under the Moroccan Constitution.

47. That position had been explained to the High Commissioner when efforts had been made to put the Executive Committee's decisions into practice. Following the decision adopted by the Committee in October 1980, the Moroccan authorities had notified the High Commissioner that they were prepared to receive senior UNHCR officials in Morocco in order to carry out a detailed examination of all aspects of the matter and determine the modalities of and time-table for the implementation of permanent solutions. A UNHCR mission, headed by Mr. Zollner, the Director of Assistance, had visited Rabat from 22 to 26 July 1981. The Moroccan inter-ministerial delegation had on that occasion reaffirmed to its UNHCR partners the commitments it had entered into before the Executive Committee, namely, that those persons who agreed voluntarily to return to their homes would enjoy all the guarantees relating to their security and resettlement and would benefit from all the rights and prerogatives enshrined in the Constitution. Going still further, Morocco had undertaken, on humanitarian grounds, to assist with the settlement of persons originating from the former Spanish Sahara far from its borders in accordance with the 1969 Convention governing special aspects of the problems of African refugees. UNHCR's moral authority would be strengthened if it made a public announcement of the willingness to co-operate with it of those who agreed.

48. No mention had been made, in the report under consideration or its introduction, of continuing contacts, which had however been announced to the Committee by the Director of Assistance at the previous session. A reference to those contacts would have enabled members of the Committee to assess the problem in full knowledge of the facts.

49. Over the years and in the various sessions, the figure given for the number of so-called "refugees" in the camps had continued to rise. Since that figure did not tally with the facts, he once again asked for it to be verified and for UNHCR to carry out a census and an authentication of the origin of those people, as requested by the Secretary-General of the United Nations himself. The truth should be made known publicly and any ambiguity regarding that aspect of the matter dispelled. In that connection, he drew attention to an interview granted by Mohammed Lamin, President of the so-called "Polisario" organization on 15 February 1981 to the Swiss newspaper "Vingt-Quatre Heures". According to Mr. Lamin, the total population of the future "Sahrawi State" would not exceed 70,000 people, which was a realistic figure since it corresponded to the number of people who had inhabited the territory at the time of colonization. Since almost the whole of that population lived in the place where it had always lived, it was apparent that the number of persons originating from the former Spanish Sahara who were in camps in and around Tindouf was minute by comparison with the total number of inhabitants of those camps, most of which came from various countries in the region and not from the territory formerly administered by Spain.

50. Although assistance was needed to alleviate the sufferings of thousands of natives of western Sahara who were in the camps, his Government could not allow the implementation of durable solutions to be postponed indefinitely. Given the wisdom and humanitarian feelings of the High Commissioner, his devotion to the cause of genuine refugees throughout the world and his concern to find durable solutions, Morocco still hoped to see him overcome the difficulties which had arisen with a view to the solution of a problem which, in view of the arrangements made by the Moroccan Government, it should be possible to settle effectively and expeditiously.

51. The CHAIRMAN said that a member of the Secretariat would reply to the various points raised at the end of the discussion on the item.

52. Mr. TAFFAR (Algeria) said he noted with satisfaction that, in accordance with the wish expressed by Algeria, assistance to refugees on Algerian territory was now the subject of a separate chapter. That was an improvement which would enable members to follow the implementation of programmes more closely. The fact that the figure of 165,000 had been included as the number of Sahrawi refugees who had found asylum in Algeria was another cause for satisfaction. In his view the figure attributed to Mr. Lamin was a misprint in the newspaper concerned and a nought was missing.

53. The increase in the funds allocated to Sahrawi refugees on Algerian territory attested to the international community's growing interest in those refugees. A sum of \$2,850,000 had been allocated to them, representing a substantial increase by comparison with the previous financial year but corresponding to only 2.8 per cent of the real needs of that refugee population for 1983. That was still far from being in accordance with the principle of burden-sharing and Algeria expected from the international community an effort that matched the extent of the needs. The Director of the Division of Assistance had referred to the difficulties encountered in carrying out certain programmes for the Sahrawi refugees. It was to be hoped that he would overcome those difficulties and that the programmes would be carried out within the periods stipulated.

54. It was true that the task of UNHCR was to promote durable solutions, and voluntary repatriation, where the conditions were met, certainly provided the most appropriate solution. But it was obvious that it could be envisaged only when the causes which were at the origin of the situation had disappeared. Those causes were well known. Repatriation had to be combined with an over-all political solution to the problem. Algeria wanted voluntary repatriation to become a reality, but only when the right to self-determination and independence had been exercised in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT DECISION ON THE GENERAL DEBATE (HCR/EC/XXXIII/CRP.2)

55. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the draft decision on the general debate (HCR/EC/XXXIII/CRP.2) paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph (a)

56. Mr. ZAHIRNIA (Iran) proposed that the words "cruel ... attacks", in the third line, should be replaced by "cruel events"; that the rest of the paragraph should be deleted; and that a new paragraph should be added to read: "Vigorously condemned the inhuman attacks on refugee camps and the massacre of thousands of innocent Palestinian refugees - women, children and old people - and of Lebanese citizens."

57. Mr. TAFFAR (Algeria) supported the Iranian proposal but said that, in his view, condemnation was out of place alongside congratulations addressed to members of the Bureau.

58. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the new paragraph should be placed further on, between existing paragraphs (d) and (e).

59. It was so decided.

60. Paragraph (a), as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph (b)

61. Paragraph (b) was adopted.

Paragraph (c)

62. Following an exchange of views in which Mr. TRAUTTMANSDORFF (Austria), Mr. TAFFAR (Algeria), Mr. WILLIAMSON (United Kingdom), Mr. LEJRI (Tunisia, Rapporteur), Mr. IVRAKIS (Greece) and Mr. MATIKO (United Republic of Tanzania) took part, the CHAIRMAN suggested that, in the first line of the French text, the words "dans le monde" should be added after "le nombre de réfugiés".

63. The proposal was adopted without opposition.

64. Paragraph (c), as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph (d)

65. Paragraph (d) was adopted.

Paragraph (e)

66. Mr. DESY (Belgium), referring to the French text, said he wondered whether it was in fact correct, from the legal point of view, to refer to refugees and displaced persons "relevant du mandat du Haut Commissariat". It would be better to use the phrase "dont s'occupe le Haut Commissariat" which would also be closer to the corresponding words in English "of concern to the Office".

67. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat suggested the phrase "relevant de la compétence du Haut Commissariat".

68. Mr. DESY (Belgium) said that that wording was acceptable to him.

69. Mr. MATIKO (Tanzania) proposed that the word "displaced" should be deleted since the High Commissioner's terms of reference did not authorize him to deal with persons displaced in their own country.

70. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the English text should remain unchanged and that, in the French text, the words "du mandat" should be replaced by the words "de la compétence".

71. Paragraph (e), as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph (f)

72. Paragraph (f) was adopted.

Paragraph (g)

73. Paragraph (g) was adopted.

Paragraph (h)

74. Paragraph (h) was adopted.

75. The CHAIRMAN said that the new paragraph proposed by the Iranian representative and already adopted should be inserted after paragraph (h).

76. Mr. MATIKO (Tanzania) said that, in his view, it would be better to place the new paragraph after paragraph (i).

77. Mr. Matiko's proposal was accepted.

Paragraph (i)

78. Paragraph (i) was adopted.

Former paragraph (j)

79. Former paragraph (j) was adopted.

Former paragraph (k)

80. Former paragraph (k) was adopted.

Former paragraph (l)

81. Mr. TRAUTTMANSDORFF (Austria) proposed that the word "more", in the last line, should be deleted.

82. Former paragraph (l), as amended, was adopted.

Former paragraph (m)

83. Mr. BIELER (Switzerland) asked whether, for the sake of clarity, the number of the resolutions and decisions referred to could not be shown in brackets.

84. Mr. DEVLIN (Canada), supporting that proposal, suggested that if the list of the resolutions and decisions in question was too long it could be given in a foot-note.

85. Mr. MATIKO (Tanzania) said that in his view the word "relevant" was sufficient.

86. Mr. COPIN (France) said that the proposals of the Swiss and Canadian representatives were very sound. The word "relevant" was too vague.

87. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Executive Committee should adopt the text with the amendment proposed by the Swiss representative.

88. Former paragraph (m), as amended, was adopted.

Former paragraph (n)

89. Former paragraph (n) was adopted.

Former paragraph (o)

90. Former paragraph (o) was adopted.

Former paragraph (p)

91. Mr. TRAUTTMANSDORFF (Austria) proposed that, for the same reasons as applied in the case of paragraph (c), the end of the sentence should be reworded to read: "in many regions, and in particular in Asia, Africa and Central America".

92. Mr. ZAHIRNIA (Iran) asked whether paragraphs (p) and (c) could not be combined.

93. The CHAIRMAN said that the Rapporteur would look into the matter. He proposed that the Committee should adopt paragraph (p) with the amendment submitted by the Austrian representative.

94. Former paragraph (p), as amended, was adopted.

Former paragraph (q)

95. Former paragraph (q) was adopted.

Former paragraph (r)

96. Former paragraph (r) was adopted.

Former paragraph (s)

97. Former paragraph (s) was adopted.

98. The draft decision, as amended, was adopted.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.