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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 429th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.
on Wednesday, 5 October 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. JAMAL United Republic of Tanzania

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International protection

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. BANDIAL (Pakistan) said that he wished, first of all, to thank all those whose support had enabled his country to become a full member of the Executive Committee.
2. As the High Commissioner had noted in his lucid and comprehensive statement, issues concerning financial requirements were the crux of refugee problems.
3. The members of the Executive Committee were fully aware of the enormity of the problem faced by Pakistan in providing shelter for the mass of refugees from Afghanistan. It was true that in that humanitarian enterprise the Pakistani authorities had enjoyed the support of a large number of organizations and countries which could never be thanked enough. However, for some time, certain changes in the perception of assistance for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan were creating an uncomfortable feeling that with the signature of the Geneva Accord and in anticipation of the repatriation of those refugees, donors were losing interest somewhat in the question and that their contributions might not be of the same order as in the past. Such a perception, whether due to the Geneva Accord or merely donor fatigue, would be totally unrealistic because so far there had been no repatriation, nor was it in sight, in view of the circumstances prevailing in Afghanistan.
4. Despite limitations of infrastructure and financial resources, Pakistan had provided asylum to all those refugees and had shared its limited resources with them, and it very much hoped that one day they would be able to go back to their country in dignity, honour and safety. Their repatriation should not be in the form of an immediate exodus. In the initial stages, it would be cautious and small-scale and would gain momentum if conditions inside Afghanistan were secure and stable. In June 1988, the Pakistani Government had concluded an agreement concerning repatriation with UNHCR and had also devised a tentative repatriation plan in close co-ordination with UNHCR and other voluntary agencies. The plan was mainly concerned with organizing transport and tentage, whenever necessary, for the returnee refugees, issuing them with a number of basic food products and also making provision for seeds and agricultural implements to be made available to them in Pakistan. United Nations agencies, voluntary organizations and the international community as a whole were studying, independently, the measures to be taken for the rehabilitation of the refugees and the reconstruction of their country. For the time being, however, since no improvement was in sight, the refugees would have to stay where they were, in Pakistan, and the authorities of that country were required to provide them with relief and assistance. The efforts made by the international community on their behalf should not, therefore, be relaxed.
5. The presence of so many refugees on its soil was expensive for Pakistan. Administrative services, transport services, water resources and land resources in particular had been subjected to tremendous pressure. In addition, there were the acts of sabotage, frontier violations, disruption of law and order and bombings that caused considerable loss of life and material damage and which seemed to have stepped up in pace recently.

6. Despite those costs which could not be quantified but whose consequences, in view of the size and resources of the country, were enormous, the Government and the people of Pakistan were firmly resolved to continue to give assistance to the Afghan refugees.

7. That assistance took the form, inter alia, of an income-generating programme intended to provide employment and generate supplementary income for Afghan refugees and locals, to repair the damage caused to the ecology and infrastructure by the presence of refugees and to create the conditions for lasting development. Phase I of the programme executed between 1984 and 1987 having given entire satisfaction to UNHCR and the World Bank, phase II had been launched with a budget that was twice that for the preceding phase.

8. Mr. KETSELA (Observer for Ethiopia) said that his country, which had a long tradition of hospitality, had done and would continue to do its best, with the co-operation of UNHCR, to improve the conditions of thousands of people who had come in search of asylum to its territory, as it had undertaken to do by ratifying the various international instruments on refugees.

9. As the donor agencies, the ambassadors of the various countries and the resident representatives of international organizations had been able to ascertain, the number of refugees in Ethiopia had increased considerably since the previous year, from 240,000 to 775,304, an advance of over 332 per cent.

10. In the western part of Ethiopia, three new camps in the administrative districts of Illubabor, Kesa and Wollega, accommodating a total of 318,402 refugees, complemented the camp of Itang in the district of Illubabor, built in 1984 to accommodate 65,000 refugees.

11. In the eastern part of the country, the number of refugees had also increased from under 100,000 the previous year to 459,902, accommodated in several camps at Hartisheik, Aware and Harshin, in the administrative district of Haharghe.

12. In co-operation with UNHCR, the Ethiopian Government had made a very great effort to provide the refugees not only with foodstuffs and essential products, but also health services and education in the camps. With regard to health services, medical centres had been opened. Further, since health problems in the camps were often the consequence of the lack of drinking water and ignorance of the real causes of disease, measures were being taken to provide satisfactory drinking water supplies and information campaigns had been undertaken to inform refugees about the nature and cause of disease, particularly diseases due to the water supply which were the most common. With regard to education, in the camp at Itang, 18 per cent of school-age children (from 6 to 15 years old) were receiving education. In the camp at Assosa, the proportion was 37 per cent. It was hoped to be able to provide that kind of service at an early date in the other refugee camps.

13. The Ethiopian Government had done its utmost to improve the living conditions for refugees and returnees, but in view of the extent of the problem, in future it would need very much more substantial assistance from UNHCR to be able to maintain the service roads to the camps, strengthen transportation systems, provide drinking water supplies, develop and improve health services and teaching methods, take measures against deforestation, and so on.

14. Like the international community as a whole, Ethiopia continued to believe that voluntary repatriation was the best solution to the refugee problem. Under repatriation programmes which Ethiopia had carried out in co-operation with UNHCR and OAU, many thousands of Ethiopians had returned to their country through the eastern and western frontiers. After transitting through the reception centres set up along the border where they were issued with essential products, the returnees were rehabilitated into society, with remunerated employment and a normal life. In addition to essential articles, people repatriated from Somalia had received building materials, clothing, agricultural implements, seeds, as well as a cow and an ox for each family.

15. Ethiopia which had always tried to maintain relations of good neighbourliness with the States of the region, had rejected the politization of refugee questions and had supported the adoption and implementation of amnesty laws and decrees, could only be gratified at the return of its nationals. Further, at the time of the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia whose new Constitution guaranteed civil liberties and personal freedom to all citizens without distinction, the Ethiopian Government had called on all those who, for one reason or another, were living abroad to return to their country in order to participate in national reconstruction. That appeal had been heeded. A programme had been developed to simplify the reintegration into the national economy of the ever growing numbers of returnees.

16. The many problems confronting the Ethiopian authorities to enable them to respond to the vital needs of the refugees did not preclude them from seeking durable solutions.

17. The refugee resettlement programme carried out with the assistance of UNHCR had enabled a number of families to settle on land belonging to the State.

18. He wished to thank UNHCR and the international community once again for the assistance they had provided to his country, without which it would have had considerable difficulty in helping the refugees in an effective way.

19. The Ethiopian Government scrupulously discharged its humanitarian responsibilities and saw to it that all financial and material resources dispatched to Ethiopia under refugee assistance programmes reached those for whom they were intended. It was also in the process of reviewing its organizational machinery to improve as far as possible the services provided to refugees and returnees and hoped, in their interests, that the links forged in recent years with UNHCR would become still closer.

20. Mr. GONZALEZ (Observer for Mexico), after thanking, on behalf of his Government, the donor countries and various agencies actively involved in the fate of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico and, in particular, UNHCR whose effective assistance it appreciated, gave a brief description of the refugee situation in his country.

21. At Chiapas, there were still 22,500 refugees who resisted resettlement and who, on the decision of the Government, received only basic assistance and medical care.

22. The 18,500 refugees resettled at Campeche and Quintana Roo had over 20,000 hectares of land and were working on various agricultural and handicraft products. There was also the programme for the restoration of Mayan ruins in which more than 2,500 refugees had taken part since 1986.

23. The results achieved in the context of production projects carried out by the refugees had improved considerably, particularly in the agricultural sector. Thus, in 1988, refugees had succeeded in producing 8,000 tonnes of cereals which, once their food needs had been met, had provided them with a surplus of approximately 60 per cent.

24. Although it continued to believe that voluntary repatriation was still the best solution for all the Guatemalan refugees, Mexico had developed for them, for the period 1989-1991 a productive integration plan so that they would not become a burden on the country and instead be actively involved in the economic development of the subregions where they were located. The plan, which would require an investment of \$5 million, would be funded by the European Economic Community.

25. Thus far, more than 8,000 refugees had returned to their country, 3,500 of them under the voluntary repatriation programme in which COMAR, UNHCR and CEAR (Comision especial de atencion a repatriados) set up by the Guatemalan Government, were taking part.

26. An in-depth study was needed in respect of the refugees at Chiapas; even if their presence did not really endanger the security of the country, a solution needed to be found urgently.

27. With regard to the world-wide situation of refugees concerning which the High Commissioner had given a very clear summary, the Mexican Government noted substantial progress in several fields. It particularly welcomed the clearly affirmed humanitarian character of the activities conducted by UNHCR to stimulate voluntary repatriation operations and the efforts to co-ordinate the measures specifically concerning the repatriation of refugees and those intended to strengthen infrastructure and to develop services inside countries, since even if they were carried out by agencies other than UNHCR, they brought about an improvement in the life of the people displaced within those countries and could only, ultimately, promote the return of all refugees.

28. Just as problems concerning two countries required a bilateral settlement, so would conflicts and problems concerning an entire region, provided that its limits were clearly defined, be more easily settled at the regional level. Particularly when humanitarian problems were involved, the solutions adopted would be all the more valid as they would be the outcome of a process of consultation and co-operation among the countries directly concerned. With that in mind, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico had decided to convene in Guatemala in May 1989 the first international conference on Central American refugees with a view to identifying practical solutions for the migratory phenomena which were of common concern.

29. In the context of the travaux préparatoires for the conference during which solutions would be put forward in order to secure effective reintegration for refugees and persons displaced in their country of origin, or, when that was impossible, to integrate them in countries of asylum, the

Mexican Government was in the process of devising the methods for making a national diagnosis on the basis of which it would then be possible to make a regional diagnosis and to work out a specific plan of action.

30. As far as Mexico was concerned, the plan of action might take as its starting point the support programme for voluntary repatriation drawn up by COMAR for Mexico and by CEAR for Guatemala, with the assistance of UNHCR. That programme which had been operational since the previous year could be supplemented by incorporating in it the possible new solutions identified as a result of the ongoing travaux préparatoires.

31. His delegation was confident that the strictly humanitarian approach adopted in addressing the problems of Central American refugees could only strengthen confidence between countries and thus make an effective contribution to peace in that region of the world.

32. Mr. NAHINANA (Observer for Burundi) said that he had followed with attention and interest the statement by the High Commissioner on the situation of refugees in the world and believed that the hopes for peace in various conflicts but also the emergence of new trouble spots called for more solidarity at the international level.

33. The Republic of Burundi had willingly played its part for almost 30 years, admitting refugees with whom it had unhesitatingly shared its meagre economic, social and cultural resources and it thanked all those who had helped it to discharge that duty of international solidarity. It also wished to express its gratitude to the neighbouring countries that had admitted the Burundi nationals who had sought refuge on their territories.

34. The Government of Burundi was highly sensitive to the tragedy of those thousands of citizens whom the massacres and killings perpetrated by one ethnic group with a view to the extermination of another ethnic group had compelled to flee abroad. It categorically rejected those extremist acts and urged all citizens to seek a durable solution to the problem of national unity by drastically different methods.

35. The Government of the Third Republic of Burundi under the leadership of its President had been actively engaged for a year in rooting out the causes of tension and instability which might cause an exodus of certain groups. It had, inter alia, restored religious freedoms and ended arbitrary detention. At the same time, it had endeavoured to strengthen national unity and had taken a series of political and administrative initiatives in token of its will to enter into a dialogue and to find a just and durable solution to the problem.

36. The authorities of Burundi, who were in favour of consultation and transparency, considered that the problem of inter-ethnic relations must be resolved by means of a democratic and peaceful debate. Moreover, as impartial observers could testify, no other régime since the colonial era had done so much in so short a time as that of the Third Republic for the cause of social justice and national unity.

37. Regrettably, the laudable efforts deployed for a year to find a just and enduring solution to the ethnic problems by developing a policy based on social justice and democracy had not prevented extremists from engaging in

indiscriminate slaughter in two communes in the north of the country in the month of August. Those massacres financed by small groups with the aim of sabotaging the policy of dialogue and consultation introduced by the Government were the cause of the large numbers of refugees from Burundi arriving in Rwanda.

38. His delegation thanked the Rwandese Republic, which had admitted the refugees from Burundi, as well as the countries and international agencies that had provided them with humanitarian aid.

39. His Government has just established a national commission entrusted with devising lasting solutions to the ethnic differences that had bathed the country in blood and with instituting national unity. As for the Burundi nationals in exile, the Government favoured voluntary repatriation and it was seeking to create conditions conducive to that form of repatriation, in co-operation with the host countries and UNHCR. Having taken a firm decision to simplify the voluntary repatriation of the refugees, the Third Republic requested the international community to assist it in easing the way for the resettlement of persons displaced inside and outside Burundi and the reconstruction of the zone devastated by the recent disturbances in the north.

40. Mr. TRAN HOAN (Observer for Viet Nam) recalled that the refugee problem was a humanitarian one to which a comprehensive and enduring solution should be applied and said that Viet Nam intended to work for such a solution.

41. As far as South-East Asia was concerned, his delegation welcomed the initiative of the ASEAN countries to convene an international conference on the Indo-Chinese refugees in 1989 and it was ready to participate in such a conference, in conformity with the draft decision to be submitted at a later date by the Thai delegation.

42. With regard to the situation in Kampuchea, he said that at the Djakarta meeting, at which the opposing factions and the ASEAN and Indo-Chinese countries had been represented, the participants had agreed that the settlement of the problems involved two separate components, namely, the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops in the context of a comprehensive political solution designed to prevent the return of Pol Pot, and the ending of foreign interference and the supply of arms to the opposing factions.

43. Mr. ANDIMA TOIVO YA TOIVO (Observer, South-West Africa People's Organization) stressed the usefulness of the multilateral humanitarian assistance extended by the international community to Namibians who had sought refuge in Angola and Zambia. He thanked all the donors and assured them that the future legitimate Government of Namibia under SWAPO would in its turn help other victims of racial and social injustice.

44. Following the quadripartite talks between Angola, Cuba, South Africa and the United States, it was highly likely that in the following year Namibia would accede to independence, in conformity with Security Council resolution 435 (1978), thus paving the way for peace and development in the region. However, peace would be enduring only if the racist régime of South Africa ended its manoeuvres to destabilize the front-line States. That was why SWAPO requested the international community to discontinue all relations with the Pretoria régime and to apply comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against it.

45. SWAPO hoped to be able to begin to repatriate the Namibian refugees even prior to the full implementation of the resolution and, accordingly, it wished to co-operate fully with UNHCR. In that operation, which would be the first phase in the process of Namibia's decolonization, it would need outside help for immediate needs as well as for medium-term development programmes. The UNHCR Executive Committee might make a special appeal for contributions for that purpose.

46. On the eve of Namibia's long-awaited accession to independence, South Africa must not be allowed to negate the agreements concluded, to ensure that the question of Namibia could at last be definitely settled.

47. Mr. MBASANEKAYA GOBOSE (Observer, Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania) said that his liberation movement applied a policy of economic self-reliance, for which it received considerable assistance from UNHCR. In Tanzania, where the Government had allocated land to it, it was giving priority importance to achieving self-sufficiency in food for its members.

48. Members of national liberation movements in southern Africa were being hounded by the racist régime of South Africa even on the territory of the front-line States. Raids were carried out against refugees who had found asylum in those countries and whose victims included the local population. The South African racists sought in that way to destabilize all States in southern Africa. It was to UNHCR's credit that it had consistently assisted the refugee camps which were the target of military raids and it should continue to do so.

49. It was to be hoped that the Declaration and Plan of Action of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa (SARRED) would be implemented. Development assistance to refugees was particularly important because it enabled them to learn skills in exile which would be of use to them when they returned to their own countries.

50. In conclusion, the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania expressed its solidarity with the Palestine Liberation Organization, since both movements were combating minority racist régimes which were hand in glove with each other.

51. Mr. KOTSOE (Observer, African National Congress) was gratified that a representative of the United Republic of Tanzania was presiding over the session, since that country had become a second home for many victims of apartheid and other refugees. The United Republic of Tanzania had enabled the ANC to build on its soil an educational complex, the Solomon Manlangu Freedom College, comprising a day-care centre, a nursery school, a primary school and a secondary school, attached to which were productive centres such as a farm, a furniture factory and a garment factory. It was there that the members of the ANC, who had been denied the right to education by the apartheid régime, acquired skills. The promotion of self-sufficiency was the other objective of the complex. The role played by UNHCR in that regard was considerable and the ANC was deeply grateful to it.

52. He pointed out that while the South African racist régime sought to launch so-called peace initiatives and to put up a good show for the benefit of neighbouring countries, the arrest, imprisonment and killing of young

people continued in South Africa and the racist régime even exported its barbaric acts to those neighbouring countries. That situation had led many young people and families to leave South Africa.

53. The Tanzanian Government had once again demonstrated its commitment to the liberation struggle of the people of South Africa by giving the ANC a second piece of land on which the ANC had built a vocational training centre and temporary accommodation facilities. The ANC had decided to undertake those projects because it assigned the highest priority to education. He appealed once again to UNHCR and to the members of the Committee to assist the ANC in developing those projects.

54. In conclusion, he urged all progressive mankind to call for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and all South African political prisoners, the immediate release and return to Swaziland, of Ebramim Ebramim, who had been kidnapped in Swaziland. Finally, he affirmed his organization's solidarity with SWAPO and the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO.

55. Mr. ELLIS (World Food Programme) said that the co-operation between the WFP and UNHCR had continued to develop in recent years. An agreement had been reached between them to convene twice-yearly meetings to review the major refugee feeding operations and to assess the results of their co-operation. Following that agreement, the High Commissioner and the Executive Director of the WFP had met on 27 September in Geneva to consider, *inter alia*, the question of WFP involvement in co-ordinating the food aid supplied for refugees in Ethiopia.

56. The situation in Afghanistan also called for close co-operation between UNHCR and WFP. In collaboration with UNHCR and the Office of the Co-ordinator, WFP had evaluated food needs until the end of 1989, broken down into three categories: support for returning refugees, food-for-work programmes and vulnerable group feeding. In anticipation of spontaneous returns and bearing in mind the lead time required by donors for procurement and shipment, WFP had appealed for immediate contributions of 50,000 tonnes of wheat (out of the total 283,000 tonnes needed), 1,500 tonnes of oil (out of a total of 25,000 tonnes) and 300 tonnes of dried skim milk (out of a total of 10,500 tonnes) towards a strategic stock to be maintained in Pakistan. To avoid the problems caused by random scheduling of such consignments, a concerted effort was necessary. WFP and UNHCR had consequently designed a unified logistics operation called UNILOG to be based initially in Pakistan. UNILOG would not only provide transport and communications services to United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and private voluntary organizations but would also disseminate regular information on local port and transport facilities to allow better scheduling of consignments.

57. Refugees continued to dominate WFP's emergency operations. During the first half of 1988, 28 emergency operations had been approved to allow 267,000 tonnes of food, worth \$87.3 million, to be distributed to some 6 million people. Sub-Saharan Africa received 62 per cent of that aid. In that region, 9 out of the 16 emergency operations had been aimed at aiding refugees and displaced persons. In both the Middle East and North Africa and in Latin America, three out of four of the operations and in Asia and the Pacific one out of the four operations had been in support of refugees and

displaced persons. The largest group of recipients of WFP emergency assistance therefore comprised refugees and displaced persons, almost 6 million in all.

58. In 1988, there had been an unprecedented demand on WFP's emergency resources, and its International Emergency Food Reserve was almost totally exhausted. WFP needed at least 300,000 tonnes of food by the end of 1988 in order to be able to meet its commitments. The major emergency operations currently being carried out were in Ethiopia, for refugees from southern Sudan and Somalia, and in Malawi, for refugees from Mozambique.

59. WFP needed urgent help if it was to avoid breaks in supply to Malawi by the end of the year and it urged donors to respond generously and promptly to its appeal.

60. In the first half of 1988, joint WFP/UNHCR missions had assessed refugee food aid requirements in Afghanistan, Iran, Malawi and Zaire. Joint missions had visited countries hosting refugees, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Honduras, Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Staff from the two agencies also met frequently to discuss current operational problems. They shared their information on joint food pipelines and delivery schedules.

61. It was easy to see why WFP considered its relations with UNHCR of critical importance in their joint efforts to relieve the suffering of refugees. WFP pledged itself to continue and enhance that close working relationship.

62. Mr. PURCELL (Intergovernmental Committee for Migration) recalled that UNHCR and ICM had had the closest relationships since they had been founded out of the common heritage of the International Refugee Organization. One of the areas in which ICM had traditionally been called upon to provide its services to the international community was refugee resettlement. When that durable solution was considered to be appropriate and necessary, ICM assisted Governments in carrying out the required pre-resettlement procedures for moving refugees. If requested, it provided similar services for refugees of concern to UNHCR, both for third country resettlement and voluntary repatriation. For 37 years it had provided logistical back-up for the resettlement or voluntary repatriation of nearly 3 million refugees or persons in a refugee situation.

63. ICM's mandate was not limited to assisting refugees. ICM was entrusted with facilitating orderly migration for persons in need of international assistance, whatever their juridical status. However, it had been recognized from the very beginning that some refugees under the mandate of UNHCR would also be in need of such assistance. That was the basis for ICM's collaboration with UNHCR.

64. The complementary, non-political humanitarian objectives of the two organizations had been mutually re-enforcing over the years without duplication of effort. As the new Director-General of ICM, he was committed to ensuring that they would continue to be so in the future. That was a commitment to those who supported the work of both organizations, both morally and financially, and likewise a commitment to refugees and non-refugees who looked to one or other of the two organizations for assistance. Indeed, if UNHCR and ICM did not respect their commonalities and their differences, they

would not render service to anyone and would risk damaging the complementarity which had been one of the assets on which the international community had been able to count for nearly four decades.

65. In conclusion, he affirmed his confidence that the links between ICM and UNHCR would be further strengthened in the years to come.

66. Mr. BRANDRUP (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) said that concern for the well-being of refugees was the basis of the partnership of the non-governmental organizations. The year 1988 had been a disconcerting one, notably because of the shift by Governments from humanitarian concerns to considerations of "State security" and "immigration control". It was disheartening that the principles and the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights today seemed to arouse much less enthusiasm among Governments and peoples than a few years ago. It would nevertheless be useful for the voluntary agencies to organize a consultation with UNHCR on its public information strategies, in order to work out how they could best support the general objectives that they shared with the Office.

67. In Mozambique, the violence continued to produce massive numbers of internally displaced persons, while one million refugees had fled to neighbouring countries. Over time, it had become clear that the violence directed against civilians was mainly the work of RENAMO. ICVA, seeking to promote a definitive solution to the tragedy of Mozambique once again called on the international community to contribute still more in response to the material needs of uprooted Mozambicans and to take the requisite action to cut off the flow of arms supplies to RENAMO from abroad.

68. For years the people of Sudan had shown themselves willing to respond to the humanitarian needs of displaced civilians from neighbouring countries. Sudan itself now had need of the generosity of the international community. ICVA called upon UNHCR to act as a catalyst for the formulation, negotiation and appraisal of appropriate actions for Sudan as well as for the promotion of peace moves.

69. In Namibia, the voluntary agencies saw a solution on the horizon. The negotiations of recent months had laid the foundations for the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) and all the parties seemed prepared to start the process by 1 November 1988. The non-governmental organizations had a significant contribution to make to that process, in view of their knowledge of Namibia and experience of working with Namibian refugees. ICVA therefore proposed that the United Nations should convene a meeting as soon as possible with the non-governmental organizations and agencies that had an interest in the Namibian situation, in order to share information and explore the best ways of responding to the aspirations of the refugees.

70. The problem of the persons displaced within their country for reasons other than natural disasters had been one of the main topics of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa. However, that problem was not confined to Africa; the situation in Afghanistan and in Central America, to mention those two regions only, showed that a new dimension had been added to the general problem of the uprooted. In some instances, the number of displaced persons in a given country exceeded the number of those who had taken refuge abroad and, often, their conditions were worse than those of refugees, as a result of

the lack of mechanisms that would encourage the international community to share the burden. For those reasons, the non-governmental organizations welcomed the provision concerning internally displaced persons in the Plan of Action adopted by the SARRED Conference. They considered it as the first step in a process which should be pursued until the responsibility of dealing with displaced persons was well established within the United Nations system. In the meantime, they would support ad hoc arrangements to assist displaced persons.

71. The appointment in May of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan as Co-ordinator for United Nations Humanitarian and Economic and Assistance Programmes Relating to Pakistan had helped to mobilize maximum international support for Afghanistan's rehabilitation. Good operational relationships were being developed between the voluntary agencies and the Co-ordinator's Office. It was essential that the Co-ordinator should be given the necessary resources to carry out his task. Thus, for the moment, funds were needed for the de-mining programme, on which all other efforts depended. Similarly, UNHCR and the voluntary agencies were deeply involved in the preparation of what might turn out to be one of the largest orderly repatriation operations ever undertaken. However, for the time being, programmes of support to the Afghan refugees should be maintained at their current levels.

72. The non-governmental organizations fully supported the concept of voluntary repatriation, but had a number of concerns in the case of Sri Lanka. Every possible effort should be made to ensure that UNHCR was able to verify the voluntary character of the repatriation of Tamils. Moreover, several Western Governments which had admitted Tamil refugees or asylum-seekers had interpreted the UNHCR programme as a signal that conditions were suitable for the return of the Tamils. However, in several cases, Tamils who had returned from Europe or elsewhere had not been able to obtain identity documents and had thus been at risk. Many had also been unable to return to their villages. UNHCR should therefore take care not to lend encouragement to unfounded interpretations of current conditions in Sri Lanka.

73. The non-governmental organizations were following the ongoing discussions on the situation in South East Asia between UNHCR and the countries of resettlement and first asylum, with a view to the possible convening of an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in April 1989. The voluntary agencies strongly supported that process and urged that Viet Nam and Laos, countries of origin, should also take part in those discussions. They noted with concern the discrepancy between the stated policy of the Government of Thailand of granting first asylum and its actual implementation. They were also concerned at the lack of adequate protection of refugees in the camps controlled by the Khmer Rouge. They had been particularly shocked by a major act of refoulement, namely, the removal to Kampuchea by the Khmer Rouge of some 7,000 refugees. The international community and the Thai Government could not evade their responsibility for that occurrence, since they had acquiesced in Khmer Rouge control of those persons. In the circumstances, ICVA urged the international community and the Thai Government to assure access to protection of, and adequate care and counselling for, victims of violence on the Thai-Kampuchean border and to seek freedom of choice for the refugees now confined to camps under Khmer Rouge control to move to other camps.

74. The repatriation of some 9,000 Indians from Honduras to Nicaragua in 1988 was undoubtedly the most encouraging development to occur in Central America.

At the same time, the situation of another refugee group in Honduras was particularly alarming. Within the last year, two major repatriation movements had taken place from Honduras to El Salvador. The remaining 14,000 or so Salvadorian refugees in Honduras were living in closed camps, frequently the target of harassment and intimidation by the Honduran armed forces. On more than one occasion, a refugee inside the camp had been killed by members of the armed forces. The social pressures of eight years of confinement in closed camps had led to unfortunate incidents among refugees themselves and hardened the positions taken by their representatives which, in turn, had complicated their relations with the Honduran authorities, with UNHCR and with the voluntary agencies. The situation was continuing to deteriorate and the "humanitarian space" for the work for and with the refugees was diminishing fast. There was an urgent need for the parties involved to strive to reverse that trend. The voluntary agencies were pledged to play their part.

75. While the non-governmental organizations appreciated the High Commissioner's remarks in his opening statement on the role of the European Consultations on Refugees and Exiles, they had also noted, with some surprise, the absence of any reference to their role in the implementation of refugee-related projects of a developmental nature. They could do more than simply act as executing agencies, particularly in the planning stage, where their knowledge of the groups concerned could be one of the key factors in the success of such projects.

76. Mr. CORNILLON (Inter-Parliamentary Union) first of all drew attention to the interest shown by parliamentarians throughout the world in the refugee problem and their contribution to resolving it. He recalled that the Inter-Parliamentary Union was an organization that was almost 100 years old and that it had given birth to the very concept of international co-operation on which all the work of the United Nations was based. At the present time, 110 parliaments were represented in the Union and the European Parliament was also an associate member.

77. The interest shown by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the question of refugees was not new but, in giving it increasing attention, the Inter-Parliamentary Union had wished to respond to the extension and aggravation of the problem, as was reflected by its work on the question at its seventy-eighth and eightieth conferences. Unlike a number of international organizations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union did not provide direct assistance to refugees at first hand. Its contribution was of a different order.

78. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, which was primarily a political organization, laboured indefatigably with a view to eliminating or at least reducing the root causes of the problem of refugees. Those causes were mainly the massive and flagrant violations of human rights, internal and international military conflicts and foreign occupation. Developments in the situation in several regions of the world gave ground for some hope.

79. The activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union focused primarily on the area of protection. It did not confine itself to advocating the fundamental principles established in the 1951 Convention, but urged total and unconditional accession to the international legal instruments by all countries and called on States which had tied their ratification to reservations to waive those reservations. Its positions were particularly

interesting as they had been taken unanimously with the participation of parliamentarians from countries which had not yet ratified those instruments or which had done so with major reservations. In the same texts, the members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union indicated their desire to see those legal instruments implemented concretely, mainly by the adoption of legislative or administrative measures. That commitment by parliamentarians was of particular significance in that it was made by men and women responsible for authorizing their Governments to ratify international legal instruments or urging them to do so, elaborating legislation in line with international norms and monitoring their implementation in areas such as asylum, employment and social rights of refugees.

80. In matters of assistance to refugees, the Inter-Parliamentary Union had come out strongly in favour of increased funding for refugee aid as well as a better sharing of the burden they constituted. He recalled that parliamentarians were in possession of budgetary power. The Interparliamentary Union had not stinted its support to the activities undertaken by UNHCR, the other intergovernmental bodies and the non-governmental organizations. At the same time, it had advocated much greater consultation among all organizations that might be required to work together in the field, and better co-ordination of their activities. That initiative had also been greatly facilitated by the assistance of UNHCR which had made available to parliamentarians experts or documents enabling them to take informed decisions on each occasion. In 1989, the Union would give special attention to the specific problem of child refugees in the context of the rights of the child and to the situation of refugees in the context of the problems of ethnic minorities.

81. He hoped that the co-operation would continue and grow, since it was an admirable example of a concerted and complementary approach to a major international problem by Governments on one hand and parliaments on the other; a concerted approach was necessitated by the dimension of the problem and was a prerequisite for achieving the desired results.

82. Mr. WANATABE (League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) recalled that in 1981, in Manila, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement had pledged support for the efforts of the High Commissioner and that since that time there had been no let-up in its efforts, as many national societies had been playing a very significant role in relieving human misery in many countries. However, it could not fail to be disturbed at the erosion of goodwill in some parts of the world and the lack of satisfactory solutions to problems of human suffering.

83. A workshop organized by the League in Switzerland the previous year had revealed that refugees and asylum seekers suffered mainly from psychological problems related to traumas suffered in their country of origin or during their flight and compounded by problems of adjustment in the host countries. That aspect should be emphasized, since the persons dispensing humanitarian aid did not always take sufficiently into account the fact that some refugees had been pushed to the limits of human endurance. At the request of representatives of European Red Cross Societies meeting in Geneva two weeks earlier, he requested Governments to apply the Red Cross principles and to observe the Universal Declaration of Human Rights when dealing with people who had been uprooted.

84. Mr. TABIBI (World Muslim Congress) said he was pleased that the Executive Committee's session had begun on a note of hope sounded by the High Commissioner and by the Chairman.

85. One of the High Commissioner's most delicate tasks was the resettlement of five million Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran. With valuable assistance of those two countries, the High Commissioner had to concentrate primarily on eliminating the main obstacles to the return of the Afghan refugees. The first thing to be done was to clear away the 50 million or so mines and booby traps laid throughout Afghanistan which constituted a very great danger to the refugees and also impeded any reconstruction programme.

86. The second hurdle was that of establishing contacts not only with the small group of people in Kabul but also with the Mujahedeen who controlled 90 per cent of the country and were willing to co-operate with the High Commissioner and the United Nations. The third hurdle was the establishment of close co-operation between the High Commissioner and the Co-ordinator, at Headquarters level as well as in the field. Fund-raising efforts and the resettlement and reconstruction programmes should also be co-ordinated. Finally, one should not lose sight of the fact that the war had caused a million and a half casualties among the Afghan refugees, among whom there were one million widows and 800,000 maimed children who needed assistance on a priority basis.

87. Mr. KONATE (Observer for Senegal) welcomed the High Commissioner's initiative in establishing an informal framework for ongoing dialogue and consultation between the High Commissioner and the heads of African Missions in Geneva. The positive trends in international relations and the successes won by the Secretary-General of the United Nations were giving refugees throughout the world new hope. Indeed, the refugee problem was closely related to the problem of international peace and security. However, and although it might seem paradoxical, the situation of refugees had deteriorated. It was therefore necessary for the international community to mobilize itself in support of the High Commissioner and help him to satisfy the expectations of millions of refugees.

88. He hoped that the Executive Committee would have an open and fruitful debate on the special situation in Africa, where there was some 12 million refugees, over half the world total. Since the African host countries were also confronted with problems of economic rehabilitation, it was up to the Executive Committee to find the best ways of striking a balance and indeed assuring complementarity between emergency aid and development assistance.

89. In his statement, the High Commissioner had rightly drawn attention to the linkage between the international protection of refugees and the defence of human rights, the violation of which was the main cause of refugee movements. The Executive Committee should take advantage of the opportunity offered by the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to point out that concern for human dignity was one of the bases of the High Commissioner's activities. Indeed, the refugee problem should be viewed from the ethical viewpoint, before being studied at the legal or ideological level. The international community could reach agreement on that moral basis in order better to relieve the distress of refugees.

90. The African countries had high hopes of the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa. He hoped that the High Commissioner would be able to find a solution suited to the needs of the refugees of Western Sahara, following that devised for the voluntary repatriation of the Afghan refugees.

91. In order to be effective, the activities of the international community and of the High Commissioner must be supported by public opinion. The Executive Committee ought not to lose sight of the role of information, in both host countries and donor countries. Proper recognition should be given to the great importance of the NGOs and their unique role as auxiliaries to Governments. They should therefore be encouraged in their lofty mission.

92. Mr. NGO HAC DEAM (Observer for Democratic Kampuchea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the very serious problems experienced by Viet Nam should be an incentive to it not to squander human and economic resources in a senseless war. He regretted that Viet Nam misused the word dialogue in order to sow confusion and conceal its bellicose intentions. The main question that arose was whether Viet Nam was prepared to withdraw its troops according to a specific timetable, under international supervision, and under a specific comprehensive agreement, rather than on the basis of a unilateral declaration.

93. Mr. QASIM AMAHED (Observer for Afghanistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, regretted that the representative of Pakistan and Mr. Tabibi had made remarks that were irresponsible and out of place.

94. While it was true that Afghan citizens were living abroad temporarily, the Afghan Government was not insensitive to their situation and had offered them the option of reconciliation. Every Afghan had a place in his country and the voluntary return of the refugees was one of the primary objectives of the Government.

95. Thus, some 12,000 returnees had already been admitted to camps in the border areas. More than 150,000 refugees had already returned to their country, contrary to the allegations made by Pakistan, which was preventing Afghans from returning home instead of helping them. The hypocrisy of its "humanitarian" concerns was therefore evident.

96. Allegations concerning the violation of Pakistan's air space by Afghanistan were unfounded. As far as the alleged bombings and raids into the territory of Pakistan were concerned, Afghanistan had proposed an international investigation, but Pakistan had not responded to that proposal.

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION (Agenda item 5) (A/AC.96/717)

97. Mr. ROBERTSON (Australia), Chairman, Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, introducing document A/AC.96/717, said that the discussions within the Sub-Committee had been of a very high quality and although a consensus had not been achieved on all the points, the efforts deployed had at least made it possible to identify the real difficulties.

98. Paragraph 35 of the report contained draft conclusions on international solidarity and the protection of refugees which the Sub-Committee recommended to the Executive Committee for adoption. Operative paragraph 4 of the draft appeared in brackets, but it reproduced in another form what was already stated in the third preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 3 and should therefore not give rise to any real problem.

99. Paragraph 42 of the report contained draft conclusions on stowaway asylum seekers; operative paragraph 1 appeared in brackets but those delegations for whom the text created difficulties had decided that they could accept it as it stood.

100. Paragraphs 43 and 44 resumed a discussion opened by the representative of Sweden.

101. Replying to the representative of Venezuela about the nature of the conclusions of the Executive Committee, he said that the question was too important for an immediate answer to be possible, but he requested that all delegations should give some thought to it.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.