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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 354th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 10 October 1983, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. EWERLÖF

(Sweden)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. GHIBA (Japan) said he deplored the fact that mass exoduses of people had come to be regarded as routine phenomena, the only saving grace being that the international community had responded thereto in a spirit of solidarity and had endeavoured to protect the refugees. After almost a decade, it appeared that mass outflows of refugees had decreased greatly, despite the recurrence of incidents causing human suffering. It was therefore time to reconsider the basic elements of refugee problems and to find a durable solution.
2. His Government had recently reaffirmed its commitment to contribute actively to the solution of refugee problems, including humanitarian assistance to refugees. Its financial support for UNHCR in 1983 would total \$US 47 million.
3. In South-East Asia, there were still some 200,000 refugees in camps; the hope of resettling them in another country was diminishing and the possibility of repatriation was not even in sight. That had been one of the major concerns of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers at their conference in June 1983, when they had appealed to the international community for a favourable consideration of resettlement offers to provide those refugees with a durable solution.
4. In August 1983, his Government had welcomed an initiative to convene a meeting of representatives of four Pacific countries, namely the United States, Australia, Canada and Japan, to seek a substantive solution to the problem. The unanimous feeling had been that efforts should be made to promote repatriation as well as resettlement. The Japanese Government had offered to contribute nearly half of UNHCR's assistance requirements for Indo-Chinese refugees in 1983 and had contributed to the Bataan Refugee Processing Center in the Philippines, as part of the effort to promote resettlement by alleviating the burden on the resettlement countries.
5. While his delegation considered that voluntary repatriation was the most desirable solution for both Cambodian and Laotian refugees, there had also been continuing measures to accept refugees for resettlement in Japan. It regretted that no durable solution had been found for the Vietnamese refugees other than resettlement in third countries. At the previous session of the Executive Committee, his delegation had suggested the concept of an "Orderly Repatriation Programme" which, it hoped, would meet with wider support and a response from the Vietnamese Government.
6. The Government of Japan would continue to support the Orderly Departure Programme, under which more than 30,000 Vietnamese had left their country and which constituted an outlet for legal exit, but had reservations regarding the way in which the Programme was administered.
7. With regard to the three million refugees of Afghan origin in Pakistan, his Government confirmed that it would continue to assist them and paid tribute to the Government and people of Pakistan for the humanitarian efforts they were making.
8. It was an obligation of the international community to extend assistance to the five million refugees and displaced persons in Africa, and his Government was prepared to play its part in assisting developing countries to shoulder the heavy burden caused by mass movements of people. His delegation recognized the role of

the first International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA I) in promoting awareness in the international community and hoped that ICARA II, which was scheduled for July 1984, would be able to identify prescriptions for durable solutions, including repatriation and local integration. His Government had contributed \$US 20 million to ICARA I, followed by \$US 3 million in 1982 and \$US 4.1 million in 1983.

9. His delegation felt that UNHCR's role regarding the new aspect of its assistance activities, namely "refugee aid and development", should be that of a catalyst.

10. As for the domestic aspect of the efforts made to find a solution to the problem of the asylum-seekers disembarking in Japan, his Government had established the International Refugee Assistance Centre to facilitate local settlement and self-support. It was close to a decision to raise the resettlement target from 3,000 to 5,000 persons.

11. His delegation supported the principles contained in the recommendations made by the Administrative Management Service and submitted in February 1983 regarding the delegation of authority, decentralization of power and open access to information and would observe closely the follow-up undertaken by UNHCR to implement them. It welcomed the reduction in the proposed budget requirements for 1984, reflecting the subsiding numerical trend in the world refugee situation, and wished to underscore the necessity of adjusting the scale of administrative management and services through the redeployment and reorganization of existing resources.

12. It was to be hoped that the members of the international community would reinforce their concerted efforts to avert continuing outflows of refugees, which resulted in enormous burdens on other States. His Government called upon the refugee-producing countries, therefore, to remove the so-called "root causes" and stem those outflows and also create viable surroundings for possible voluntary repatriation.

13. Japan would continue to work towards the realization of durable solutions and hoped that the current session of the Executive Committee would give concrete impetus to that objective.

14. Mr. BEESLEY (Canada) said that, while there had been no new major refugee crises in the past year, a stalemate seemed to have occurred with respect to the current status of each of the refugee crises of the previous four to five years, and lasting solutions seemed no closer, although it was apparent from the High Commissioner's statement that UNHCR was making a concentrated effort to find such solutions. His Government intended to continue its support for the High Commissioner and to that end, make sustained efforts to address the root causes of refugee situations, and engage in joint action with other Governments in the face of particular situations. Support for the High Commissioner's objectives required creative and flexible use of the capacity for refugee settlement, and continued financial support of UNHCR and the other organizations concerned.

15. Looking back over the last few sessions of the Executive Committee, he observed that, from 1978 to 1980, the focus had been on the major crises of the South-East Asian refugees, Afghanistan, Central America and Africa. In 1981 and 1982 however, attention had shifted to the effectiveness of the High Commissioner's Office which was going through a rapid and painful period

of growth and transition. It was generally recognized that UNHCR had implemented fundamental changes in areas as diverse as organizational structure, management, the flow of information and field operations. Those changes, and the more active relationship between UNHCR and its Executive Committee, had been most welcome and there were some indications that they had already led to positive results. It was his Government's view that the time had come to focus attention on the enormous task which still remained, through the encouragement of repatriation, facilitation of local integration in countries of asylum, resettlement in third countries and ensuring that traditional development assistance lessened the impact of refugee situations.

16. In recent years it had become clear that refugee protection was the sine qua non of all the endeavours to assist refugees. The Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection had been dealing with the difficult issues of the impact of unfounded claims to refugee status, the rescue of asylum-seekers at sea and the prevention of military attacks on refugee camps, a problem that should have been taken up by other organs of the United Nations system. However, it would be unthinkable that the Executive Committee should let that tragic problem go unaddressed; work on the subject must continue.

17. It was clear from the Note on international protection (A/AC.96/623) that UNHCR continued to emphasize the promotion of various legal instruments for the protection of refugees in two ways: by encouraging broader adherence to the existing instruments and by promoting the development of new measures to fill gaps in the international legal regime. His delegation wished to pay tribute, in that regard, to the creative role played by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law. While the emphasis on legal remedies to protection problems was correct, however, it was no longer enough. The future challenge to those concerned with refugee protection would be to identify and protect the genuine refugees among the millions of people motivated by economic conditions to seek their fortune elsewhere.

18. That issue, which was a global phenomenon, posed an administrative and legal challenge of immense complexity for refugee protection in the years to come. UNHCR would have to be even more active in providing new, flexible and imaginative protection techniques for refugees at the field level.

19. The High Commissioner had given invaluable support to Canada's annual refugee intake planning exercise and was providing similar advice to other Governments. It was to be hoped that that would lead to a more active co-ordination role by UNHCR which would ensure that scarce resettlement opportunities were put to optimum use. In that connection, a valuable contribution had been made by Canada's churches and non-governmental organizations in sponsoring the admission of refugees to the country; in 1982, 4,000 extra refugees, over and above the Government quota had been resettled in Canada thanks to such private efforts.

20. His delegation subscribed to the idea that refugees who had been integrated or repatriated should have the opportunity to build upon the assistance given to them once the role of UNHCR had ceased. The linkages between relief and development were thus important to prevent the recurrence of refugee movements and to alleviate the burden imposed on local populations by additional refugees. It was, however, an illusion to think that the international community could buy its way out of refugee problems; only the concerted political will of concerned Governments would lead to lasting solutions.

21. In addressing refugee problems, it was important that UNHCR should select the right level of assistance and the right technological inputs and find an appropriate balance between the refugees and the local community. His delegation fully supported UNHCR's efforts at improving programme delivery and limiting implementation setbacks. Voluntary repatriation to Ethiopia and Uganda and successful local integration projects in Sudan, Tanzania and Zaire had been tangible examples of constructive development.
22. In 1984, the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) would provide an opportunity to include refugees in the context of the broader development efforts of the African States. The development of political understandings could lead to the prevention of further mass exoduses, and his delegation was hopeful that the conference would produce examples of the integration of relief assistance and development aid which could be reproduced in other parts of the world.
23. In Latin America, attempts to enable refugees to return to a normal life through integration into agricultural settlements and urban areas were encouraging, despite the problem of protecting them. Assistance activities should be aimed at providing them with the means to reduce their dependence on relief.
24. His Government supported the initiatives undertaken by Pakistan, UNHCR, the World Bank and ILO to generate economic activity within the Afghan refugee population. In South-East Asia, resettlement remained a key component in solving the Indochinese refugee problem and, to date, Canada had resettled 85,000 refugees.
25. In all the major crises and the wide range of smaller refugee situations, the Executive Committee had to concentrate its attention on the effectiveness of the techniques and methods employed in the search for solutions. Effective programme delivery did not rest on the expression of good intentions alone, and his Government supported UNHCR measures aimed at rationalizing and improving personnel policies; the need for progressive and enlightened personnel practices could not be over-stressed.
26. His Government believed that it was time to shift the main focus of the Executive Committee's attention away from the internal organization and operations of the Office of the High Commissioner to the major refugee situations that had persisted for so long; it should lend energetic support to the efforts of the High Commissioner to find solutions to those problems.
27. Mr. ONKELINX (Belgium) said that the refugee situation throughout the world was a source of serious concern to his country. While the decline in the number of crises creating refugees and therefore in the over-all financial resources required by the High Commissioner was gratifying, the clear deterioration in the refugee situation in various parts of the world was alarming. The role of UNHCR in the protection of refugees was more important than ever: that protection could best be achieved by universal adherence to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, as well as respect by the States for the obligations contained in those instruments.
28. The High Commissioner had rightly said that it was essential to examine the fundamental aspects of refugee situations, particularly the causes of the problem and the need for Governments to refrain from causing refugee movements. There were several reasons why the refugee situation had deteriorated. Repeated mass

exoduses in the previous decade had coincided with the onset of the world economic crisis and points of tension had proliferated. In the light of the economic crisis, public opinion tended to include refugees in the general category of foreigners, without taking their particular situation into account. Moreover, the proliferation of clearly unfounded applications for asylum, so detrimental to the cause of refugees, was dismaying and could lead to what had been called "deterrent practices" by countries having to cope with large numbers of applications for asylum.

29. It was regrettable that it had not yet proved possible to draft an agreement to condemn military attacks on refugee camps with a balance between the humanitarian nature that such camps should retain and the obligation to refrain from belligerent acts against them. Firm and objective rules should be established to prohibit any military activity based on refugee camps or settlement areas as well as any military action against them. The political and humanitarian aspects of those problems could not be separated, and his delegation would readily endorse any appeal by the Executive Committee to the General Assembly on that issue.

30. The worsening situation with regard to the protection of refugees increased the difficulty of finding durable solutions: that was all the more regrettable at a time when a qualitative change in forms of assistance to refugees might have been hoped for. Emphasis should gradually have shifted from emergency operations towards lasting solutions. The note by the meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development (A/AC.96/627) should be taken as a starting point by the Executive Committee for more systematic action involving Governments and interested international organizations. A consolidated document on co-ordination among the international institutions and non-governmental organizations, particularly in the field of integration in the country of asylum, would be most useful.

31. The forthcoming second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) would also be an occasion for emphasizing the search for durable solutions to refugee flows in Africa. That was particularly important in that the proportion of the funds earmarked for that purpose was declining, while the number of refugees was continuing to increase. A regional and subregional approach was particularly valuable, in that it could take account of the specific nature of problems which were not necessarily the same throughout the world, as the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs had recently stressed at the General Assembly. He had also pointed out that the conference could represent an opportunity for all concerned to review their activities in order to incorporate the integration of refugees and their economic participation within the general development plan of the countries of reception. He had also affirmed his delegation's intention of taking an active part in ICARA II and its follow-up.

32. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by the High Commissioner to improve co-operation with members of the Executive Committee, especially the provision of more precise and systematic information to Governments. Meanwhile, the reports of the United Nations Board of Auditors and of ACABQ indicated that UNHCR's management and planning could be improved still further; they would, no doubt, receive all due attention from the High Commissioner.

33. There were some 35,000 refugees living in Belgium, to whom his Government was devoting increasing resources, in addition to its contributions to UNHCR. In view of those expenditures and the extent of unemployment in the country, his Government had been unable to set up new programmes for refugees, but it had in no way limited

its traditional policy of granting asylum and refugee status. However, the 1,120 applications for asylum that had been approved in 1982 represented only slightly more than one-third of the total applications, which indicated the disturbing rise in the number of abusive and unjustified applications.

34. In addition to its direct contributions to UNHCR, his Government also contributed to the assistance provided by the European Communities and to various non-governmental organizations for special projects in the food and medical fields in Africa and Asia. It would continue to provide support for UNHCR, as a driving force in international solidarity, in its efforts to alleviate one of the most pressing aspects of human distress.

35. Mr. SADLEIR (Australia) said that his delegation agreed that the Office of the High Commissioner should try to develop a longer-term view, while serving as a catalyst and humanitarian intermediary in the quest for a lasting solution to refugee problems. It also agreed that there was a need to seek a balance in sharing the burden of refugee problems. The High Commissioner had laid down a challenge for the Executive Committee by pointing out that, while in 1970, some 63 per cent of the programme had been geared to durable solutions, by 1981 that proportion had dropped to 26 per cent. That alarming figure was indicative of a losing struggle even allowing for the enormous increase in the number of refugees, and it was up to both UNHCR and the member States to reverse the situation in the shortest possible time.

36. His country's newly elected Government had reaffirmed Australia's commitment to its obligations in refugee matters and the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs had recently stated that its strategies in that connection were the following: to place greater stress on political solutions in the countries of origin; to seek solutions such as voluntary repatriation and local integration, in addition to resettlement; to pursue policies designed to reserve available refugee resettlement places for genuine refugees; to encourage countries of first refuge to give sanctuary to refugees; and to ensure broad international co-operation in refugee resettlement.

37. While his country's commitment to the resettlement of refugees was not conditional on buoyant economic conditions, resettlement programmes had to be community-based since they depended on the understanding of the people of the receiving countries. In view of the diversity of backgrounds from which the Australian people derived, continuing public support for resettlement would depend on even more broadly-based programmes than in the past. Accordingly, his Government was increasing the volume of refugees from parts of the world such as Central and South America and the Middle East, and would give attention where necessary to other areas of turbulence. It would, nevertheless, continue to give priority to resettlement from the region of which it formed part, and about half the refugees it intended to take during the current financial year would thus come from Indo-China.

38. His Government was concerned at the drop in resettlement by certain countries with a long history of humanitarian response to refugee situations and hoped that its own efforts to take refugees from distant regions would lend fresh impetus to burden-sharing by the international community as a whole. In that connection, his delegation was gratified to learn of Japan's increased intake of Indochinese refugees.

39. In his Government's view, the most serious root cause of mass flows of refugees was the violation of human rights, and refugee problems would remain until such time as people were convinced that they could live happy and useful lives in their countries of origin. In that connection, his country's Foreign Minister, in a recent statement before the General Assembly, had urged the need to revitalize United Nations activity in defence of human rights, and had emphasized that the prime responsibility for ensuring that human rights were not the first casualty of economic and political difficulty lay with Governments.

40. In reconsidering traditional approaches, it was clear that it was necessary to strive more than ever to solve the abject plight of refugees, in addition to providing them with assistance and protection in their places of refuge. In that connection, despite some criticism of UNHCR's performance with regard to durable solutions in the past, his delegation was pleased to note that there was evidence of decisive leadership by the High Commissioner and supported UNHCR's role especially with regard to dialogue and as a humanitarian intermediary.

41. The climate in the part of the world to which his country belonged was becoming increasingly favourable to durable solutions, and the concern and generosity of South-East Asian receiving States had made for a new and regional approach to the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees. An important stabilizing element was the willingness of the Government of Viet Nam to apply orderly departure procedures. Furthermore, at a recent meeting of donor and resettlement countries at Honolulu, the general view had emerged that the Indo-Chinese refugee issue was entering upon a new phase in which possibilities for responses other than resettlement were developing. When his country's Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs had subsequently reviewed matters with the South-East Asian Governments, the consensus had been that resettlement was not the only answer and that there was an urgent need for dialogue with source countries, notably Viet Nam, on matters such as the continued moratorium on disorderly departures, expansion of the orderly departure programme and, most important of all voluntary repatriation.

42. It had become quite evident that voluntary repatriation could be the best and most humane solution and that every effort should be made to create the conditions in which refugees could feel confident about returning to their homelands. As a second option, self-sufficiency in place could be seen either as an intermediate step towards voluntary repatriation or as a solution in itself. If neither of those possibilities was available, resettlement in third countries was an appropriate response. Moreover, regulated opportunities for emigration could offer a desirable alternative to disorderly departures.

43. There was need for public support and a demonstrated commitment of decision-makers to the further development of machinery to deal with refugee problems and, in that connection, he wished to pay tribute to the Intergovernmental Committee on Migration, which provided an irreplaceable global network and the basic infrastructural support for the processing and movement of refugees.

44. His Government had actively supported the work undertaken with a view to creating the basis for durable solutions and, for that very reason, it doubted the wisdom of the proposed abolition of the post of Regional Co-ordinator for South-East Asia. A high-level capacity should be maintained in the region, if only on a temporary basis to promote the search for durable solutions.

45. His Government, which was a major contributor to UNHCR assistance programmes and had rendered considerable assistance in connection with Afghanistan and Africa, shared the concern that had been expressed regarding the refugee problem in Africa and regarded the review of the situation that was to take place at ICARA II as both necessary and timely.
46. The High Commissioner was to be commended for the efforts he was making to safeguard the physical security of refugees, but the existing international legal principles and practice would have to be developed to meet the changing needs. In that connection, his delegation appealed to the countries that had not already done so to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. It would also like to see wider participation in the Executive Committee of all the countries concerned with refugee problems and assistance, with particular reference to developing countries of first refuge, which should be placed in a position to represent their interests in that forum.
47. In view of the all too evident gaps in the legal regime for international protection, his Government favoured further examination of the concept of temporary refuge and the development of principles designed to inhibit or prevent attacks on refugee camps and settlements. It also wished to express its support for organizations such as the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, to which it hoped to make a financial contribution in 1984.
48. His delegation also welcomed the report of the Meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development (A/AC.96/627) and was pleased to note the High Commissioner's readiness to discuss later in the session the issues raised in that report. In view of the limited time available to the Executive Committee, however, steps should be taken to ensure that those issues received attention during the coming year.
49. Non-governmental organizations also made an invaluable contribution to refugee assistance, in which connection he wished to draw attention to a recent proposal, made on behalf of the Refugee Council of Australia, for the formation at Geneva of an institution to be known as "Refcare" - a proposal which the Refugee Council of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies was to study and pursue.
50. Lastly, the Executive Committee's work on UNHCR management policy and structure had attracted a helpful response from the High Commissioner which augured well for future co-operation on the subject between his Office and the Committee.
51. Mr. ARNOLD (Federal Republic of Germany) said he hoped that, at its current session, the Executive Committee would continue to rely on its ability to arrive at a consensus and would be guided by a humanitarian spirit that took account of UNHCR's non-political mandate.
52. His Government would continue to play an active role in refugee matters and to adopt a broad approach to assistance in that connection; its financial contributions for the current year were likely to exceed those for 1982. However, while its commitment to contribute to UNHCR assistance programmes would be maintained, domestic economic pressures could not be overlooked when considering further measures in the area of durable solutions. The European economic situation

also called for careful handling of financial assistance to multilateral organizations, and the standards by which his country was bound also applied to its partners. In that connection, his Government strongly supported the European Economic Community's continued contribution to UNHCR assistance programmes.

53. The over-all number of refugees and levels of financing required to meet their needs had remained fairly stable in 1982 and early 1983 but, as was apparent from the documents before the Executive Committee, the problems had not become any easier. Physical protection continued to be important and his Government remained committed to the anti-piracy programme in the Gulf of Siam which, though limited, was a step in the right direction. It had always taken the view that military attacks on refugee camps should be dealt with on a broader basis and regarded the Schnyder report as timely in its approach. However, whether or not the General Assembly adopted a declaration on the subject, it was incumbent on the Executive Committee to meet its own humanitarian responsibilities. The paper that had been prepared might not come up to all expectations but, provided that it conveyed the appropriate message, it was worthy of adoption and the remaining difficulties should be ironed out.

54. As for the restructuring of UNHCR administration and management policy, the proposals put forward in document E/SC.2/15 - which had been accepted by the High Commissioner - could provide the guidelines for consideration of the subject at future sessions. His delegation understood that implementation of the proposals was already under way and would continue. It remained convinced that any delegation of authority within UNHCR should be accompanied by a careful selection of people who were able to live up to the high standards of responsibility required.

55. In connection with the various trends towards durable solutions, as revealed by the refugee assistance programmes submitted by the High Commissioner, and with the report on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/637), he noted that some of the durable solutions involved development aid measures. In that connection, his delegation considered a carefully-thought-out approach to be essential. His Government was among those that had dealt with the local integration of refugees by providing finance from development aid funds, partly through trust funds granted to UNHCR and the International Labour Office. It also intended to make a generous contribution to the first World Bank project concerning refugees. It was on that basis that it took the view that UNHCR had a definite role to play in introducing durable solutions that would involve development aid. It was, however, only a pilot function and the understandable hesitation on the part of development institutions should not constitute an insurmountable obstacle whenever development aid was deemed necessary. It would be better therefore if, before any decisions were taken, the report on refugee aid and development were discussed at the next informal meeting of the Executive Committee, and if the High Commissioner set down in writing his views on the matter, with due regard for the fact that the General Assembly had stressed the need for close interagency co-operation in responding to large-scale refugee movements.

56. Lastly, it was essential that UNHCR should monitor more closely the implementation of agreements that specified the responsibilities of its operational partners. In that connection, he was pleased to note, from document E/SC.2/15/Add.1, that the High Commissioner had underlined their obligations with regard to financial reporting and accounting and the preparation of evaluation reports, which were extremely important at a time of limited resources.

57. Mr. PICTET (Switzerland) said that the crisis of confidence facing the United Nations and threatening multilateral co-operation as a whole enhanced the importance of the few obviously effective organs such as UNHCR: it was necessary to continue to demonstrate that if the United Nations was not in a position to keep the peace and remove the causes of international disputes, it could at least alleviate the human suffering resulting from them. It was therefore more important than ever to respect the humanitarian, impartial and apolitical nature of UNHCR.

58. The High Commissioner's report (A/AC.96/620) contained some positive elements, particularly the overall stabilization, for the third consecutive year, of the total number of refugees and the decline in their numbers in Europe and South-East Asia, resulting in a lighter financial burden on UNHCR and the contributing countries. However, sources of instability continued to proliferate and to give rise to population movements having disastrous human effects: it was dismaying that, despite recent initiatives, no progress had yet been made towards averting such tragedies by better collaboration among the States. The persistence of injustice, gross violations of human rights, segregationist policies and armed conflicts prevented the earlier refugee flows from being reabsorbed, and thus, in the absence of durable solutions, camps under UNHCR responsibility continued to exist in almost all the continents.

59. Precisely because of the impartial nature of its activities, UNHCR was often one of the few international organizations represented in the field and in contact with all the parties concerned - the refugees and the authorities of the countries of origin and of reception. It was therefore in an exceptional position to encourage Governments to assist refugees to return voluntarily to their homes. In order to carry out its work of protection or assistance, it must obviously have free access at all times to the refugee camps for which it was responsible. Its work in the field of assistance, however, depended on the effective accomplishment of its central function of protection. His country intended, therefore, strongly to support UNHCR in its work so as to ensure respect for the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol: respect by States for their international obligations was the necessary precondition for improving the situation of refugees throughout the world. By tirelessly defending the inalienable rights of refugees as set forth in the Convention, UNHCR was only fulfilling its humanitarian mandate, even if there were some parties which sought to use its action for political purposes that were entirely alien to it.

60. UNHCR had to carry out its work of protection in particularly difficult conditions. The countries of reception, including some countries of resettlement, were encountering increasing difficulties which should not, however, be emphasized to the extent of overlooking the primary responsibility of the countries which were at the origin of refugee movements. Those difficulties would be the more easily overcome if there were a better understanding of UNHCR's mission, and a general conviction that the efforts were broadly shared by the international community. In his country, as in others, public opinion was a very important factor in that connection, and he wished to stress his delegation's interest in the programme to combat piracy in the China Sea, and in the work on the subject of attacks against refugee camps, particularly Mr. Schnyder's report (EC/SCP/23). On the basis of that report, the Executive Committee should define a set of principles to protect refugees against such attacks and prevent their recurrence.

61. As for assistance programmes, it was noteworthy that UNHCR had recently been able to devote a larger part of its budget to durable solutions. The recent meeting of experts had made it possible to draw up some principles for the implementation of durable solutions, as well as the links between refugee aid and development. In that connection, his Government was particularly interested in the pilot local integration project currently being implemented in Pakistan. It intended to make a substantial contribution to the financing of that project and hoped that many other Governments would follow suit. The voluntary repatriation of refugees, while still at too modest a level, was encouraging and it was to be hoped that similar operations could soon be undertaken in other parts of the world.

62. UNHCR depended on the collaboration of the other organizations of the United Nations system, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration and the non-governmental organizations, especially when it was not operational. It should therefore ensure that those partners were closely linked with all the stages of its programmes and that the distribution of tasks was clearly defined at the outset of every operation.

63. The report of the United Nations Administrative Management Service indicated that UNHCR should be sufficiently flexible in its structure to adapt to constantly changing situations, while respecting certain basic principles to ensure its efficiency. That report had provided a basis for the High Commissioner's comments to the Executive Committee and for the members of the Executive Committee who had put forward what they considered to be the essential administration and management points. The High Commissioner had rightly stressed that the proposals made by the members of the Executive Committee called for continuing action.

64. Lastly, the number of requests for asylum in Switzerland had risen considerably. Swiss law guaranteed to asylum-seekers the right to be heard by the competent Federal authority, and the review of the law on asylum, currently under way, would make it possible to accelerate that procedure, particularly with regard to clearly unfounded cases, without restricting the rights of the applicants. His Government continued to believe that the granting of asylum was more than a simple tradition and was, in fact, the expression of the Swiss concept of liberty. At the international level, his Government had, in 1982 and again in 1983, increased its financial contributions not only to UNHCR's regular budget but also to various special programmes: UNHCR could continue to rely on the active support of Switzerland for its humanitarian work throughout the world.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.