

UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/AC.96/SR.363  
19 October 1983

ENGLISH

Original: FRENCH



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 363rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 17 October 1983, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:  
later:

Mr. EWERLÖF  
Mr. MEBAZAA

(Sweden)  
(Tunisia)

CONTENTS

UNHCR assistance activities (continued)

Administrative and financial matters

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GE.83-03474

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

UNHCR ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES (agenda item 9) (continued) (A/AC.96/620)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to resume its consideration of the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 (A/AC.96/620).

SECTION II - AMERICAS AND EUROPE

B. Europe (continued)

France

2. The chapter on France was approved.

Federal Republic of Germany

3. The chapter on the Federal Republic of Germany was approved.

Greece

4. The chapter on Greece was approved.

Italy

5. The chapter on Italy was approved.

Portugal

6. The chapter on Portugal was approved.

Spain

7. The chapter on Spain was approved.

Turkey

8. The chapter on Turkey was approved.

United Kingdom

9. The chapter on the United Kingdom was approved.

Yugoslavia

10. The chapter on Yugoslavia was approved.

Other countries in Europe

11. The chapter on other countries in Europe was approved.

12. Mr. HASELMAN (Chief, Regional Bureau for the Americas and Europe) said, with reference to the comments made by the representative of Sweden, that he wished to assure him that UNHCR was following closely developments in the situation in Central America. It was clear from the statements by the representatives of Honduras and Nicaragua that the Governments of those two countries agreed with UNHCR, a fact which was of particular importance for the Salvadorian and Guatemalan refugees. He thanked the Government of Sweden for the initiative it had taken in organizing a seminar on the integration of refugees in Europe. In reply to a question from the Venezuelan delegation, he said that, for the purpose of regional distribution, Mexico formed part of North America.

### SECTION III - EAST AND SOUTH ASIA AND OCEANIA

#### A. East and South Asia

##### China

13. The chapter on China was approved.

##### Hong Kong

14. Dame Anne WARBURTON (United Kingdom) said that Hong Kong was in a very difficult situation because it was a small and very overcrowded territory. That was why it had had to reduce its population growth from 1.2 per cent in 1981 to almost zero in 1982 and to introduce strict immigration controls. Nevertheless, 14,000 refugees and displaced persons had been accepted in the recent past for local settlement. Hong Kong had never refused asylum to any asylum-seeker, on the understanding that it was only on a temporary basis. However, the territory had reached the limits of its absorption capacity. During the current year, the number of arrivals in small boats had decreased considerably as compared with the previous year but, unfortunately, the departure rates for permanent resettlement elsewhere had fallen by two-thirds during the same period. Consequently, there were currently 800 more Vietnamese in Hong Kong than the previous year and a special effort on their behalf was needed. Whatever the consensus might be as to the appropriateness of resettlement, as the durable solution to the problem, the fact remained that a continuing resettlement programme from Hong Kong would be essential for some time to come. There were currently in Hong Kong 14,000 persons who had little chance of resettlement elsewhere. One quarter of them had been there for more than four years. Moreover, during the past year, the percentage of refugees from North Viet Nam had increased dramatically. They had accounted for 17 per cent of the total number of refugees in 1981, 22 per cent in 1982 and 45 per cent in the current year. Those people were ethnic Vietnamese who had few relatives outside Viet Nam, no priority for resettlement, and few skills to enable them to be accepted by another country. As they could not be integrated locally and as it was most unlikely that they would be resettled, their prospects were particularly bleak. She wished to pay tribute to UNHCR for all it had done in Hong Kong during the past 12 months, and welcomed the climate of excellent co-operation which existed there among all those concerned with the problem. As a last resort, she appealed for co-operation on the part of the Governments represented on the Executive Committee and stressed the need for them to give special attention to the comparatively small-scale but peculiarly intensive problem of Hong Kong.

15. The chapter on Hong Kong was approved.

Indonesia

16. The chapter on Indonesia was approved.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

17. The chapter on the Lao People's Democratic Republic was approved.

Malaysia

18. The chapter on Malaysia was approved.

Philippines

19. The chapter on the Philippines was approved.

Thailand

20. Mrs. LAOHAPHAN (Thailand) thanked UNHCR for its assistance and stressed the importance which her Government attached to resettlement as a durable solution, and particularly to voluntary repatriation. She sincerely hoped that no effort would be spared to carry out the programmes undertaken in that field so that those who were temporarily residing in her country would soon be able to return home.

21. The chapter on Thailand was approved.

Viet Nam

22. The chapter on Viet Nam was approved.

Other countries and areas in East and South Asia

23. The chapter on other countries and areas in East and South Asia was approved.

B. Oceania

24. The chapter on Oceania was approved.

IV - MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA

Cyprus

25. Mr. YIANGOU (Cyprus) said that, since he was taking the floor for the first time at the current session of the Executive Committee, he had first of all some general comments to make. In his delegation's view, the report on UNHCR assistance activities was evidence of the humanitarian task performed by the High Commissioner and his staff, to which millions of persons throughout the world owed their survival. Unfortunately, the use of force to resolve national or international disputes remained one of the principal sources of the refugee problem. Such refugees needed both moral and material assistance and his Government had not failed to meet its obligations in that area.

26. Referring to the refugee problem in his own country, he said that his Government was grateful for the services rendered by UNHCR during the years that had elapsed since the tragic events of 1974. Its assistance continued to be essential, particularly in the areas of housing and health, since his Government was unable to ensure alone the creation of conditions that would enable the refugees to lead a decent life.

27. In view of that situation, his delegation was surprised at the statement in the last sentence in paragraph 1031 of the report that "Discussions are being held with a view to phasing out UNHCR's co-ordinating rôle". He proposed, therefore, that that sentence should be deleted.

28. Mr. CANKOREL (Turkey) read out the first sentence of the same paragraph 1031, which made it clear that two communities were represented in Cyprus.

29. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director of Assistance) said that he had no objection to the deletion of the last sentence of paragraph 1031, as proposed by the representative of Cyprus.

30. The CHAIRMAN announced that the chapter concerning Cyprus was approved, with the proposed amendment.

#### Islamic Republic of Iran

31. Mr. ZAHIRNIA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said, with reference to paragraph 1043 of the report (A/AC.96/620) that his Government had no intention of integrating all the Afghan refugees, which would, in fact, be contrary to their aspirations. He therefore requested that paragraph 1043 should be deleted.

32. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director of Assistance) proposed that the paragraph should be reworded in such a way as to satisfy the Iranian representative rather than be deleted.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that account would be taken of the proposed amendment, whose wording would be agreed on by the Iranian delegation and the UNHCR secretariat, and he gave the floor once again to the Director of Assistance.

34. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director of Assistance) said that he had already informed the Executive Committee, in his introductory statement on the agenda item devoted to UNHCR assistance activities, that some budgetary adjustments would have to be proposed, particularly with regard to the local integration programmes in the Islamic Republic of Iran approved for 1983. As stated in the report on assistance activities (A/AC.96/620, para. 1045), the discussions currently being held between the Iranian authorities and UNHCR had already produced positive results, although it was not yet possible to finalize an agreement which would enable the programme to be implemented. It was therefore necessary to take account realistically, in the budgetary proposals for 1983, of the possibilities of implementation of the programme during the two and a half months which remained before the end of the year. He proposed that the allocation relating to the local integration of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as set out in paragraph 1045 of the report, should be reduced to \$2.5 million, so that the appropriations retained for 1983 could be effectively used during the year, in accordance with UNHCR's usual practice concerning the management of assistance programmes. The proposals for 1984 would of course be maintained and he sincerely hoped that the discussions would make it possible rapidly to implement that important programme.

35. Mr. ZAHIRNIA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said he approved Mr. Zollner's proposal and took the opportunity to request once again that assistance should be provided to Iraqi refugees, who numbered 100,000. He hoped that the programming mission announced by UNHCR for that purpose would materialize in the current year.

36. Mr. JOMARD (Observer for Iraq) said that there were no Iraqi refugees in Iran. There were Iranian nationals who had returned to their own country.

37. Mr. ZAHIRNIA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said he wished to draw the attention of the Observer for Iraq, who had just asserted that the Iraqi refugees were Iranian returnees, to a report covering the end of 1982 and early 1983, in which the International Committee of the Red Cross stated that it had provided assistance to 15,000 Iraqi refugees. He also recalled, in that regard, the statement made to the Security Council on 7 October 1980 by the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, in which he had said that Iraqis of Iranian origin, accused of being terrorists, had been expelled from the country. In any event, it did not appear that the country of origin was entitled to intervene in a question concerning a request for assistance made to UNHCR by the host country.

38. The CHAIRMAN said that the chapter on the Islamic Republic of Iran was approved, with the amendments made to paragraphs 1043 and 1045.

#### Lebanon

39. Mr. KHARMA (Lebanon), having thanked UNHCR for acting rapidly on behalf of the refugees following the tragic events which had recently occurred in his country, said that the immediate allocation of emergency funds, amounting to \$500,000, had made it possible to alleviate their suffering considerably.

40. The chapter on Lebanon was approved.

#### Pakistan

41. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director of Assistance) said that, in paragraph 1075 of the report on assistance activities, UNHCR informed the Executive Committee that a formal budgetary review had been scheduled to take place in August 1983 of the multipurpose assistance provided to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The discussions in question had continued until quite recently so as to take account, inter alia, of the pace of implementation of the programme involving the relocation of refugees to the Punjab and of the efforts being made to modify the programme in order to provide greater place for measures likely to promote self-sufficiency. Following the latest discussions, which had been held during the current session of the Executive Committee, he proposed that the allocation provided for 1983 under multipurpose assistance to Pakistan should be reduced to \$64,854,000. That adjustment both took account of the most recent developments and reflected adjustments resulting from changes in the exchange rate since the approval of the programme the previous year. The request for appropriations for 1984, i.e. \$62,796,000, was of more or less the same order as the amount of the revised allocation for 1983. It went without saying that, during 1984, UNHCR could, in agreement with the Pakistani authorities, propose any changes which might become necessary. A mission would visit Pakistan shortly to see to what extent further self-sufficiency activities could be implemented.

42. Mr. HUSSAIN (Observer for Pakistan) said he welcomed the essential role played by UNHCR, the way in which it had been able to deal with emergency situations and the constant attention it gave to refugees, including the three million Afghan refugees who accounted for nearly one-third of the refugees in the entire world. His delegation was in favour of the reduction in support activities to the benefit of activities calculated to promote the self-sufficiency of refugees and the implementation of durable solutions. That was why it had always been in favour of the pilot project carried out in collaboration with the World Bank. His Government was sparing no effort to ensure that that project, and others as well, achieved positive results. It should be realized, however, that such programmes would not generate income immediately and thus it was necessary to maintain a balance between support activities and development activities. Indeed, if the relief activities programme was reduced without a corresponding increase in income-generating activities, as a first step towards self-sufficiency, the suffering of the refugees might well become much worse.

43. Despite the increase in the assistance provided, the refugees were at the threshold of poverty. They currently numbered 2.9 million and the assistance had been calculated for a much smaller number. His Government sincerely hoped that the team announced by UNHCR would soon arrive; the authorities would provide it with all the information it needed to enable it to reach specific conclusions leading to an increase in assistance. The transport facilities necessary to carry food and equipment from the capital to the settlement areas were very costly. Two hundred lorries would be needed. Savings might be effected on transport costs if wheat and sugar were purchased from surplus Pakistani stocks; in addition, logistical problems created by deliveries to remote regions would be avoided.

44. In conclusion, he reiterated his gratitude to the High Commissioner and his staff and expressed the hope that all the Afghan refugees would be able to return home in due course.

45. Mr. KHERAD (Observer for Afghanistan) said it was not the first time that the Pakistani delegation had tried to mislead world public opinion by making a great fuss about so-called Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The position of his Government in that regard had been made clear on several occasions in various letters (A/35/154 of March 1980 and A/35/238 of May 1980 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations; S/13951 of May 1980 to the Security Council and A/36/77 of January 1981 to the Secretary-General). The figures mentioned by the representative of Pakistan had been deliberately exaggerated to obtain greater funds from international sources. Most of the people concerned were nomads who crossed the frontier at various times. To those should be added also seasonal workers who had left to find work in Pakistan before the Revolution. Others belonged to ethnic groups that were represented on both sides of the frontier. Still others had returned to Afghanistan, but continued to appear on the list of those receiving assistance.

46. Since the general amnesty decreed by his Government, refugees living outside Afghanistan as a result of false propaganda were able to return home, provided that their hands were not stained with the blood of their compatriots. Special legislative provisions had been enacted with a view to ensuring to the returnees the security, freedom and all other conditions that would enable them to participate in the country's economic and political life. The President of the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan had appealed to

Afghans living abroad (A/37/438) to return home where they would enjoy all their rights with regard to both their private lives and their property. In response to that appeal, some thousands of Afghans had returned. They would have been more numerous if some obstacles had not been artificially created by neighbouring countries, including Pakistan.

47. His Government hoped that those obstacles would be removed, so that all Afghans could return home; that would resolve the so-called refugee problem, contribute to détente and consolidate peace in the region. The problem should not be exploited for political purposes.

48. Mr. HUSSAIN (Observer for Pakistan) said he wished to make it clear, first of all, that United Nations organs were represented in the capital of Pakistan and in the capitals of the provinces in which the refugees lived. The 344 refugee camps were perfectly accessible; the situation in that regard was well known, and the host country had nothing to gain by increasing the numbers of the refugee population. Secondly, for several years, the nomads had no longer been on the move. Lastly, many refugees would willingly return home if they could do so in honour and dignity.

49. Mr. ZAHIRNIA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said he challenged the validity of the statements by the observer for Afghanistan. Neither the seasonal migration of workers nor nomadism could account for the departure of more than a quarter of the country's population.

50. Mr. KHERAD (Observer for Afghanistan) reaffirmed that Pakistan was placing obstacles in the way of the return of Afghans to their country.

51. The chapter on Pakistan was approved, with the change proposed by the Director of Assistance.

52. The chapter on Western Asia was approved.

53. Mr. KHARMA (Lebanon) said he would like the Director of Assistance to specify, with regard to refugees in Pakistan, what was the percentage of development aid to be devoted to self-sufficiency in 1983 and 1984.

#### SECTION V - OVER-ALL ALLOCATIONS

54. Paragraphs 1132 to 1142 of section V, on over-all allocations, were approved.

55. Mr. SANZE (Observer for Burundi) said he would like to make a few comments concerning assistance in general and assistance to Africa in particular. He wished, first of all, to pay tribute to the High Commissioner and his colleagues who were defending humanitarian ideals throughout the world. In Burundi, the situation was developing satisfactorily as a result of the contacts between UNHCR and its permanent delegation, on the one hand, and the Burundi authorities, on the other. The High Commissioner had paid an official visit to Burundi in 1982. Various missions had visited the country, some multidisciplinary and others as required by particular circumstances. His Government was continuing to act in favour of the 250,000 refugees on its territory. Some had already obtained Burundi nationality or had been integrated into the national society. Thousands of others were still living in precarious conditions and substantial assistance from UNHCR and the international community was still necessary for them.



56. He welcomed the preparations for the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II). The results of the first Conference had frequently been underestimated. While its material and financial results had not been commensurate with the enormous requirements of the five million refugees living on the African continent, it had had the great merit of making peoples throughout the world aware of the plight of those refugees. It would serve as a springboard for the second Conference. Mobilizing information agencies and making public opinion aware of the refugee problem in Africa were, in his Government's opinion, results which could not be quantified but which were none the less real.
57. The organization of ICARA II called for three comments. The hospitality generously provided by Africa to refugees had helped to lighten a burden which was incumbent on the entire world, but the continent's resources were not infinite. Solidarity at the global level had become an imperative. Assistance to refugees should not be regarded as a charitable contribution to the host countries; it was a common responsibility and the assistance provided was merely a supplementary contribution owed by the entire community, the bulk of the effort being made by the host countries.
58. Secondly, the persistence of the phenomenon of refugees had made it necessary to stabilize their living conditions. That was one of the objectives of ICARA II.
59. Thirdly, the success of ICARA II would determine the fate of five million refugees. If the Conference proved unable to ensure their over-all salvation, rather than their mere survival, a radical change might well occur. The crushing burden borne by Africa should be shared, not in terms of money but in terms of the number of refugees which each country in the developed world should accept into its territory. The States concerned would then be in a better position to evaluate the real cost represented by the thousands of extra mouths that had to be fed; they would be better able to assess the full extent of the needs currently being met by the African host countries alone, and to understand the exemplary generosity demonstrated by the continent. That would make it possible to avoid regarding the fate of the refugees as an abstract situation, requiring only ad hoc or sporadic assistance.
60. Mrs. RUESTA de FURTER (Venezuela) said she thought that the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 (A/AC.96/620) was an excellent one, but had a reservation to enter regarding the title of the document. The contents did not correspond entirely with the title; to describe as "assistance" some of the activities mentioned in the document might even be pejorative. In virtually all the chapters, it was also a question of protection. Even in the introduction, a paragraph was devoted to that aspect. Indeed, the paragraph in question seemed to be too brief; a chapter might perhaps have been needed. Consideration should, therefore, be given to the possibility of changing the title of the annual report in order to make it more accurate.
61. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director of Assistance), introducing the report on Resettlement of Refugees (A/AC.96/624), said that the role of UNHCR in resettlement operations depended entirely on the co-operation and policies of the States to which the refugees wished to emigrate. The High Commissioner was very grateful, therefore, for the valuable assistance he received from Governments, intergovernmental bodies such as ICM, and non-governmental organizations. The countries which enabled him to participate in the preparation of their annual resettlement programmes deserved special thanks.

62. UNHCR, which regarded resettlement as a durable solution where voluntary repatriation and local integration were not possible, noted with growing concern, however, that the places made available to refugees were becoming increasingly restricted to persons with family or other ties in a resettlement country. It therefore renewed its appeal for the admission of refugees without such ties, and expressed its gratitude to countries which had recently modified their regulations or procedures along those lines. In the past, when UNHCR had had very urgent requests for resettlement, a few countries had granted visas rapidly, but others had let it be known that their procedures excluded rapid decisions. An appeal should be made once again so that Governments would envisage special procedures in emergency cases, when it was a matter of guaranteeing the immediate safety of certain refugees - mostly from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. UNHCR would consider the matter with the delegations concerned, either at Geneva or, through its representatives in their own capitals.

63. It was encouraging to note that, during the past year, the number of countries which had accepted disabled refugees had increased, but the number of places available was certainly not equal to the requirements of the disabled, who numbered in the hundreds. It would be desirable to convert the "Ten or more" plan into one of "Twenty or more" in order to meet the needs of disabled refugees who were unable to obtain the necessary treatment in their current country of residence.

64. Without making a general review of the activities and problems of UNHCR, which was already to be found in the report (A/AC.96/624), he wished to refer to two regions. Firstly, in Europe, the resettlement activities of the international community met the requirements satisfactorily. For example, 8,196 persons had been able to leave Europe to resettle in Canada; that figure should be included in paragraph 27 of the report. Secondly, in South-East Asia, the 1979 Conference had been followed by a considerable resettlement effort; however, the number of Vietnamese "boat people" in the camps in that region had remained stable for two years, despite a net decline in the number of arrivals by boat in 1982 and 1983. UNHCR was grateful to the countries which maintained a constant resettlement rate and applied procedures that facilitated resettlement. It also welcomed the fact that the Vietnamese Orderly Departure Programme continued to make progress; in that regard, the delegations concerned had been able to have useful exchanges of views with the Vietnamese delegation several days previously. In general, however, the plight of refugees from South-East Asia continued to be of serious concern to UNHCR, which had just sent a supplementary list of refugees to the countries concerned to facilitate the identification of those who met family reunification or other criteria.

65. The fate of thousands of refugees in distress on the high seas had been studied by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection. Governments must be requested to facilitate the disembarkation and resettlement of such refugees; clearly their survival depended frequently on possibilities for their resettlement. In collaboration with the Governments concerned, UNHCR was seeking to develop a project which would make it possible to help such refugees as effectively as possible. It would also seek to strengthen co-operation by intensifying the activity of the International Refugee Integration Resource Centre (IRIRC) and by convening seminars where necessary; that was a solution which had proved very useful to the refugee cause in the past.

66. Mr. RITCHIE (Canada) said it was useful to have a report devoted solely to the resettlement of refugees. For many years, his Government had shared the general view that that solution was to be seen as the third in the order of priority, after voluntary repatriation and local integration. However, as a result of persistent refugee movements in South-East Asia, resettlement had made it the first option for that region; that was stressed in the report (A/AC.96/624) and in a recent letter from the High Commissioner to many Governments concerning the refugee situation in the region.

67. There was no single solution to deal with mass refugee influxes. It was more realistic to adopt an integrated approach, pursuing several options at the same time. In the past, resettlement as a durable solution had tended to be episodic and, in the post-war years, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Viet Nam came immediately to mind. The Indo-Chinese refugee crisis had led to the resettlement of more people in a relatively short time than in any other period in UNHCR history. However, that resettlement effort had declined, and official and non-official observers and international civil servants were engaged in a debate on the subject.

68. In his delegation's view, there were grounds for both concern and optimism with regard to resettlement. It was a matter for concern that the number of countries which resettled refugees and the number of places available had decreased. On the other hand, it was a welcome development that resettlement planning in the major resettlement countries was currently being done annually and on a global basis; thus, resettlement was being used in a methodical and purposeful manner to achieve specific objectives or to solve individual or local problems. Secondly, some major receiving countries were maintaining high levels despite the increased difficulties of economic and social integration. Thirdly, countries seemed to have a clearer idea of their respective roles, particularly with regard to interregional resettlement; that was one of the reasons why Canada had played a significant role on behalf of Indo-Chinese refugees.

69. In Africa and the Middle East, resettlement was a particularly appropriate means for aiding individual refugees for whom the solution of repatriation or local integration was not possible. Even if that option concerned only a few individuals, it complemented the others and facilitated the task of UNHCR protection officers. In some areas, resettlement might offer a solution for specific refugees, while UNHCR, Governments and voluntary agencies worked to create an atmosphere and a legal and practical infrastructure that would make possible local integration or voluntary repatriation. For its part, his Government had made use of resettlement as a means of helping persons detained within their own country for political reasons. In general, it was prepared to use that solution whenever it provided a means of protecting the most vulnerable, wherever they might be found.

70. During the past year, Canada had had detailed exchanges of information with UNHCR concerning the needs of the world's refugees. In its refugee policy and programme planning, it had benefited greatly from its bilateral contacts with UNHCR. His Government considered that, through the collation of world-wide experience in the International Refugee Integration Resource Centre (IRIRC) and the dissemination of that information through seminars and other means, the High Commissioner was helping resettlement countries to define optimal solutions. All in all, resettlement was an expensive but very valuable solution, which must be utilized selectively in an integrated approach to durable solutions.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS (agenda item 10) (A/AC.96/618 and Add.1, 620, 621 and 628; EA/COM.16/82-83; EC/SC.2/13, 14 and 15 and Add.1)

71. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, introduced the report of the Sub-Committee (A/AC.96/628). He said that the Sub-Committee had paid particular attention to the proposals submitted by members of the Executive Committee for strengthening UNHCR's management policy (EC/SC.2/15) and UNHCR's response to those proposals (EC/SC.2/15/Add.1 and EC/SC.2/13). The High Commissioner had addressed to the Sub-Committee an introductory statement which was reproduced in annex I to the report (A/AC.96/628). Members of the Sub-Committee had expressed their satisfaction with UNHCR's efforts in management matters and the response of the High Commissioner to their proposals, and had noted that progress had already been made in a number of areas. They had urged that those efforts be continued, particularly with reference to the greater delegation of authority, improved staffing policy and effective programme delivery.
72. The Sub-Committee had requested and received additional information on the geographical composition of UNHCR staff, recruitment policies, career development, promotion, staff rotation and training. It supported the introduction of a trainees scheme and reassignment scheme on an experimental basis. It had also taken note of recent efforts to improve the conditions of service in the field, which were described in document EC/SC.2/14, and urged greater efforts in that area.
73. The Sub-Committee had examined the sections of the report (A/AC.96/620) devoted to management, programme support and administration, as well as the ACABQ report on those questions (A/AC.96/621). It had expressed appreciation of the quality of information provided. It had expressed satisfaction at the intention to maintain zero growth in the staffing level for 1984. In addition, it had taken note of the implementation of the first phase of the reapportionment of UNHCR's administrative costs between the United Nations regular programme budget and UNHCR voluntary funds, subject to the approval of the General Assembly. The Sub-Committee had requested clarification as to why it was necessary to increase the staffing level in October 1983, and then to lower it in January 1984; the secretariat had provided additional information in that respect.
74. The Sub-Committee had taken note of document EC/SC.2/12, welcomed the progress made in project evaluation, and suggested the need to reinforce efforts in that field. With regard to programme delivery, the Sub-Committee had said that it was necessary to delineate further the responsibilities of UNHCR and its implementing partners. The additional training of UNHCR staff and the staff of implementing partners to improve the quality of project implementation had been stressed. Support had been expressed for the strengthening of the UNHCR Specialist Support Unit. The weaknesses in programme management and procurement practices identified by the United Nations Board of External Auditors had been discussed at length, and clarification had been sought and provided. The Sub-Committee had also considered the ACABQ report on the voluntary funds accounts for the year 1982. In conclusion, he said that the session of the Sub-Committee had again demonstrated its value.
75. Mr. HOMANN-HERIMBERG (Director of Administration and Management) said that during the past two years, particular attention had been given to the management of UNHCR since the rapid expansion of the Office in recent years had necessitated adjustments in the organizational structure and in its methods of work. The

Administrative Management Service had conducted an organizational review and the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters had made it possible to hold a valuable exchange of views. Recently, members of the Executive Committee had also provided guidelines on the strengthening of UNHCR's management policy. To fulfil its mandate, the Office had to adapt its management to the scope, diversity and geographical spread of its activities. To that end, its management policy had to take account of three fundamental aspects.

76. Firstly, it was essential to ensure the highest degree of efficiency and effectiveness, because in a climate of fiscal restraint scarce resources must be utilized with optimum effect. In view of UNHCR's temporary nature, it was essential to avoid an inflexible establishment. In that context, attempts had been made to establish priorities, an extremely difficult task in an organization whose work had a direct human impact. Nevertheless, it had proved possible to redeploy significant resources to meet additional needs. Members of the Executive Committee were aware that UNHCR intended to keep its total staffing static; in the Sub-Committee, he had given the assurance that, after a slight increase in 1983, a reduction in 1984 would make it possible to return to the zero growth level, which would then be maintained.

77. To work effectively with limited resources, a number of structural changes had already been made. Thus, in his statement to the Sub-Committee, the High Commissioner had mentioned that the Office was about to embark on a job classification exercise for all professional posts; that exercise would be a test of the organizational structure and division of responsibilities. The classification would highlight any overlapping responsibilities and facilitate a further realignment of functions. Among other modifications designed to make UNHCR less bureaucratic and more action-oriented, emphasis had been placed on increased decentralization. Field representatives would be provided with greater independence of action, while retaining cohesion in policy formulation and implementation, monitoring and accountability. The development of appropriate procedures and guidelines in that area was a time-consuming task; it was a continuous process in which the Administration and Management Division required the constant support of the substantive divisions; however, a good beginning had been made.

78. Secondly, good management required clarity and transparency. UNHCR's activities had to be clear to Governments, donor countries and asylum countries, and the flow of information needed to be improved. In particular, UNHCR should be more frank in informing the Executive Committee of its problems. In view of the fact that its staff was spread around the world, it also had to ensure that its internal procedures were understood by all the staff. The Office was also refining the criteria relating to the appointment, promotion and reassignment of its staff and paying attention to the fair and orderly rotation of staff. Thus, since the introduction of new procedures eight months previously, 32 staff members had been reassigned between headquarters and the field offices.

79. Thirdly, dynamic management required good performance and morale on the part of the staff. Efforts had been increased to establish an institutional framework for a dialogue between staff and management: the creation of an independent UNHCR Staff Association, the introduction of a mediator panel, and staff participation in the appointment, promotion and postings mechanism. Since nearly half of UNHCR's staff members had been with the Office for about four years only, adequate appraisal, training and career development were essential. The increased productivity which had to be demanded of the staff could be obtained through more strict performance evaluation and a strengthening of training. To achieve the latter objective, seminars

and workshops were conducted regularly at headquarters and in the field offices, and UNHCR had also broadened its contacts with academic institutions and with other agencies of the United Nations system.

80. In conclusion, he stressed the difficulty of managing an organization which had to resolve complex humanitarian problems with a staff drawn from diverse linguistic, cultural and national backgrounds. However, with the help of the Executive Committee, UNHCR had already done much along those lines and could do much more. The suffering of millions of refugees demanded it.

81. Mr. HAMRA (Sudan) said he was happy to note that the High Commissioner was endeavouring to improve the flow of budgetary and financial information, programme delivery and project evaluation. It was also encouraging that the High Commissioner had accepted the principles proposed by the members of the Executive Committee for the strengthening of UNHCR's management policy and that steps were being taken to implement them (EC/SC.2/15 and Add.1). However, in some areas, the action taken to date was inadequate, particularly with regard to the geographical distribution of posts in the Professional category. There were certain posts at the leadership level which must not continue to be the monopoly or privilege of certain groups of countries, especially since the refugee problem was currently a world-wide one and affected primarily the developing countries. Those countries had a large number of qualified and experienced experts, whose services should be used to break the existing imbalance in the staffing structure of UNHCR. His delegation hoped that a rectification plan would be implemented along those lines.

82. With regard to the system of rotation between headquarters and the field, it seemed that a fair system could be worked out. The argument that it was difficult to ensure rotation between staff at the senior level because of the relatively small number of posts available was not entirely convincing. There were quite a number of posts at the D level at headquarters and in the field and rotation could easily take place between those posts. The question thus deserved to be given further study.

83. To facilitate effective programme delivery, the Executive Committee had recommended, inter alia, that UNHCR should always have freedom of access to places where refugees were to be found, including areas where there were UNHCR-assisted projects. His delegation considered that to be an issue of paramount importance. His Government had always co-operated with UNHCR and with donor countries by enabling their representatives to travel freely to places where refugees were to be found, whether in spontaneous or organized settlements. It was to be hoped that other countries of asylum would offer the same opportunities. The High Commissioner's comment that UNHCR could not guarantee access to areas where refugees were settled because of the attitude of some Governments, was a matter of utmost concern. In such cases, the High Commissioner should report immediately to the Executive Committee, so that the necessary steps could be taken to remove those serious obstacles which hampered the High Commissioner in the performance of his duties.

84. It was also to be hoped that the High Commissioner would continue to implement the Executive Committee's proposals for the strengthening of UNHCR's management policy, and that the matter would be kept under constant review by the Executive Committee. It would also be desirable for the High Commissioner to submit written periodic reports on the subject.

85. His own delegation, having consulted other interested delegations, wished to submit to the Executive Committee the following draft decision:

"Draft decision on strengthening of UNHCR's management policy"

The Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner's Programme, meeting at its thirty-fourth session,

Recalling the proposals of the Executive Committee for strengthening UNHCR's management policy (EC/SC.2/15);

Acknowledging with appreciation the High Commissioner's note on strengthening the management of his Office, contained in document EC/SC.2/15/Add.1,

Requests the High Commissioner to persist in his efforts designed to give full effect to the proposals of the Executive Committee;

Decides to keep the matter under constant review, and requests UNHCR to submit written reports on the proposals contained in document EC/SC.2/15 at regular and informal sessions of the Executive Committee."

86. Mr. SATO (Japan) recalled that, in its statement in the general debate, his delegation had expressed its appreciation of the important role played by the Co-ordinator for South-East Asia and had expressed the hope that such a useful high-level post would be maintained, in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the programmes for durable solutions in the region. It assumed that the D.2 post appearing in table VI of the introduction to the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 (A/AC.96/620) under the heading "Executive Direction and Management" was reserved for the Co-ordinator for South-East Asia. It would therefore like some clarification as to whether that post was or was not to be abolished in 1984 since, from the statement by UNHCR, it would seem that it was to be discontinued.

87. Mr. ROSS (Canada) said he was pleased to note that the High Commissioner was endeavouring to implement the Executive Committee's proposals for the strengthening of UNHCR's management. The efforts made with regard to job classification and project evaluation offered UNHCR a means of performing its task more efficiently. It was therefore necessary to follow up the changes made in the management field over the past few years in order to be sure that they actually helped to strengthen UNHCR's activities on behalf of the refugees.

88. His delegation had already had an opportunity to stress during the general debate that it would be desirable to concentrate on longer-term objectives and that the initiatives which might be taken should be implemented in accordance with existing procedures and within the limits of available resources.

89. With regard to the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628), while it was of course desirable to try to improve the geographical composition of UNHCR's staff, the central element to be taken into

consideration in recruitment was the qualification or merit of the candidate. The Sub-Committee had rightly stressed the need for service in the field and the number of posts that could be an exception to the rule of rotation between headquarters and field offices should be very limited.

90. He agreed with the representative of Japan that it would be desirable to maintain the post of Co-ordinator for South-East Asia and he wondered whether there was indeed a question of abolishing the D.2 post included in table VI of the introduction to the report on UNHCR's assistance activities. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation of the positive efforts made by the High Commissioner in management matters and hoped that further progress would be made in that area.

91. Mr. Nebazaa (Tunisia) took the Chair.

92. Mr. SADLEIR (Australia) said he welcomed the fact that the Director of Administration and Management had been able to indicate progress in the administrative and financial field. Referring to the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, he said he was in favour of the draft decision that had just been submitted by the Sudanese delegation and endorsed the comments of the representatives of Japan and Canada with regard to the maintenance of the post of Co-ordinator for South-East Asia.

93. Mr. BELDRING (Netherlands) said that he, too, welcomed the fact that UNHCR had tried to implement the Executive Committee's proposals in the field of management policy. Progress had been made and UNHCR was continuing its efforts. He regretted, however, that the note by the High Commissioner (EC/SC.2/15/Add.1) contained too many references to other documents, in particular the UNHCR manual which had not yet been finalized. He would also welcome clarification of some of the comments made by the High Commissioner, particularly with regard to the question of the delegation of authority to the field offices, which was a matter of vital importance if the refugee problem was to be dealt with in a manner that was both flexible and efficient.

94. However, the main question was that of continuing the efforts undertaken. It had already been emphasized that UNHCR should be adapted to the new refugee situations and that the Executive Committee's proposals in the management field were designed to facilitate its task. The Executive Committee should therefore continue to be concerned with the management problems of UNHCR, which needed constant support and advice in order to implement the measures proposed in the framework of a permanent dialogue.

95. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that experience in the field was henceforth to be an essential condition for career advancement. It would, nevertheless, be preferable to require experience in the field for any promotion whatever, due regard being had, of course, for individual situations and for expert posts which were an exception to the rule of rotation between headquarters and the field offices. In that connection, he wondered whether some of the 25 expert posts mentioned could not be entrusted to non-specialists. His delegation would like the High Commissioner to examine that question and seek other ways of filling those posts. It might also be wondered whether, after a given period of service in the field, UNHCR staff members were entitled to be reassigned to headquarters. If UNHCR staff members were given some guarantees along those lines, they would probably not object to transfers to field offices. He also hoped that it would be possible to overcome the administrative difficulties which had prevented



the High Commissioner from drawing up a list of all the staff members currently employed by UNHCR, giving their years of service at headquarters and in the field, as his delegation had requested at the session of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

96. With regard to the new trainees scheme proposed in the report on UNHCR assistance activities (A/AC.96/620, paragraph 1154), his Government wished to point out that the current programme for junior professional officers, organized by several donor countries, also provided on-the-job training intended for future Government and UNHCR officials. Under that programme, the Netherlands supervised the training of nationals from developing countries likely to be recruited on a permanent basis by UNHCR after a few years of service as junior professional officers. Although the junior professional officers trained under the current programme could benefit from the proposed new programme, it might be feared that their chances of subsequently being assigned to posts in UNHCR would be even more limited. His Government could approve the new scheme only if it found that its misgivings in that regard were without foundation. It would therefore follow the two schemes closely and agreed with the proposal made by the delegation of the United States in the Sub-Committee, that the effectiveness of the new scheme should be evaluated.

97. With regard to the reassignment scheme (*ibid.*, para.1155), it seemed that, if the measures envisaged were applied, it would no longer be so urgent to find new assignments for staff members who had had to be evacuated or reassigned for various reasons. The problem in question might also be solved by detaching staff members from headquarters to the field on a temporary basis, i.e., without replacing them at headquarters during the period of their detachment. Measures such as the Revolving Fund for Field Staff Housing and Basic Amenities should also render possible more regular exchanges of staff between headquarters and the field offices.

98. In conclusion, he endorsed the comments of the representative of Sudan concerning the need for UNHCR to have unrestricted access to places where refugees were to be found. That was an essential principle which his Government had always supported.

99. Mr. IVRAKIS (Greece) said he welcomed the positive results obtained in strengthening UNHCR's management and, in particular, the greater transparency in respect to project information. UNHCR had submitted to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters documents which were at once comprehensive and concise, and thus highly praiseworthy. His delegation endorsed all the proposals aimed at improving the effectiveness of UNHCR's activities.

100. The principle of rotation between headquarters and the field offices seemed entirely wise and equitable. Senior officials should also acquire experience in the field. His delegation had already had an opportunity, in its statement during the general debate, to draw attention to the imbalance currently characterizing the distribution of UNHCR's staff. Before achieving the world-wide representation desired, an effort might in any event be made to improve that state of affairs.

101. Mr. BIELEER (Switzerland) said that, during the discussions which had been held in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, several delegations had expressed the view that the annual report on UNHCR assistance activities should be at once more transparent and more comprehensive, but not more voluminous. It would thus be necessary for UNHCR to continue to study the question of the presentation of documentation, with the assistance of the members of the Executive Committee who so desired, perhaps in an informal working group which would be convened by UNHCR after the meeting of the Executive Committee.

102. Mr. PURCELL (United States of America) expressed satisfaction at the work of the most recent session of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. It was essential, as the representative of Sudan had stressed, that UNHCR should be able to have free access to the areas where refugees were to be found and it would also be useful to have accurate estimates of the number of refugees. He also endorsed the comments of the representative of the Netherlands as a whole. Lastly, his delegation regarded as encouraging the initiatives taken by the High Commissioner in response to the Executive Committee's proposals on the strengthening of UNHCR's management.

103. Mr. ROSS (Canada) said he endorsed the proposal by the representative of Switzerland that an informal working group should meet to continue to consider the question of the presentation of documentation.

104. The CHAIRMAN, referring to schedule A in the introduction to the report on UNHCR assistance activities (A/AC.96/620) containing the summary of proposals requiring the formal approval of the Executive Committee, drew the attention of the members of the Executive Committee to the fact that the revised financial target for 1983 had been reduced from \$337,775,000 to \$322,975,000 because the allocation for 1983 for the Islamic Republic of Iran had been revised to \$3,585,000 and that for Pakistan to \$66,200,800. The financial target of \$358,460,000 for the 1984 General Programmes was maintained.

105. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Executive Committee wished to approve the proposals contained in schedule A in the introduction to the report (A/AC.96/620), with the modifications he had just mentioned.

106. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.