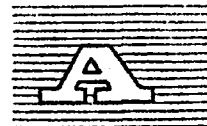


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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 364th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 October 1983, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. EWERLÖF

(Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

STATUS OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND OVER-ALL FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR 1983 AND 1984
(agenda item 11) (A/AC.96/622)

1. Mr. VOLPING (Director, External Affairs Division) said that the Executive Committee had received the Report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in which the specific questions relating to the agenda item under consideration had been dealt with in detail. He would therefore confine himself to presenting an up-to-date report on the financial situation for the current year and the forecast for the coming year.
2. Since his periodic letter of 26 September, several Governments had announced further contributions for 1983. There had also been some indications concerning additional contributions likely to materialize before the end of the year, due to which the full funding of the General Programmes for 1983 would be achieved. Several important Special Programmes, however, needed further resources. Those were the programmes of assistance to returnees to Ethiopia, where a further \$3.4 million were needed, the programme of Organized Voluntary Repatriation from Djibouti to Ethiopia, where an additional \$2.2 million were needed, and the programme for Orderly Departures from Viet Nam. It was earnestly to be hoped that Governments would in the near future, provide the resources required.
3. Two significant developments in UNHCR programme funding deserved special mention. First, the scope for reductions in over-all UNHCR expenditure had considerably narrowed in 1983, and it would be unrealistic to expect automatic annual reductions in the future: the level of expenditure required had stabilized. Secondly, programme budgeting and financial planning had improved, which meant that the rate of expenditure had increased. It was therefore of the greatest importance that the pledging of contributions should be followed up as soon as possible by actual payment, so that the continuity of programme financing was not disrupted and the current levels of programme delivery could be maintained.
4. For 1984, the funding requirements for the General Programmes previously approved by the Executive Committee amounted to \$668.5 million. To ensure a good start, UNHCR would need to have available some \$150 million in the first quarter of 1984. However, partly as a result of improved financial planning and programme expenditure and partly due to decreased contributions, the funds available for transfer from 1983 to 1984 would be considerably less than in previous years. Consequently, a higher level of contributions would be required in 1984. He therefore earnestly appealed to all Governments, whether regular donors to UNHCR or not, to make available contributions, in pledge and early payment, either at the UNHCR Pledging Conference in New York on 18 November 1983, or as additional contributions in 1983 or 1984.
5. UNHCR had demonstrated in recent years that its planning and costing of refugee assistance took into account both increases and reductions in needs. It was very much aware of the economic constraints under which Governments were currently operating. However, the needs remained considerable, and only with a significant increase in the level of contributions and rapid payment of pledges would UNHCR be able to ensure adequate continuity of delivery and performance in the programmes which the Executive Committee had approved.

6. Mr. ROSS (Canada), having stated his Government's support for UNHCR efforts to stabilize its financial situation and reduce expenditures and for the transfer of special programmes to general programmes, so as to ensure that programme expenditures were more effectively budgetted and controlled, in the best interests of efficient organizational management, said that his delegation trusted that the High Commissioner was carrying out the requisite forward planning which would enable his Office to adapt financially to emergency situations as and when they arose.

7. It was pleased to note the encouraging development that the rate of obligation of funds on the part of UNHCR was better in the past and supported the principle, expressed in paragraph 10 of the Report on the status of contributions (A/AC.96/622), of meeting adequately the needs of refugees in virtually every area of the world in the most cost-effective manner available.

8. Since the accounts extended only up to 30 June 1983, they did not mention his Government's recent grants amounting to \$10 million (Pakistan, \$5 million, Central America, \$3 million, Sudan, \$1 million and Thailand, \$1 million).

9. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Executive Committee wished to approve the Report on the status of contributions to UNHCR voluntary funds and the over-all financial requirements for 1983 and 1984 as at 30 June 1983 (A/AC.96/622).

10. It was so decided.

ACTION TAKEN ON DECISIONS BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (agenda item 5) (A/AC.96/626)

11. Mr. CHRAIBI (Morocco) said his delegation welcomed the inclusion of that item in the agenda, since it gave them members of the Executive Committee an opportunity to monitor the action taken in execution of their decisions, and thanked the High Commissioner for the relative report (A/AC.96/626).

12. The account given in that document of the action taken on the decision taken by the Committee at its thirty-first session concerning the persons in the camps of the Tindouf region (paras. 23 and 24) was somewhat bewildering, however. It was stated in paragraph 24, that discussions on the subject had continued at Geneva between the High Commissioner and the Governments concerned and that a UNHCR mission to Morocco had been undertaken.

13. The Permanent Mission of Morocco in Geneva had never met with UNHCR officials, at any level, while the mission to Rabat had occurred in July 1981 or, in other words, prior to the decision taken by the Committee in October 1981. However that might be, the Committee would undoubtedly have liked to be informed of the results of the mission to Morocco. It would then have become aware of his Government's desire to find a durable solution to the problem in accordance with the usual UNHCR procedures. His delegation had therefore requested that the record of the Rabat meetings should be circulated as an official document (A/AC.96/INF.167).

14. The text of paragraph 24 went on to say "As requested, progress was reported to the Executive Committee at its thirty-second session (A/AC.96/594, para. 3 refers)". However, the reference in the document mentioned was merely to the fact that discussions were continuing. He wondered why, if no progress had been made,

the report did not say so, rather than refer, in October 1983, to a document written a year earlier. That was certainly not in keeping with the purpose of including in the Committee's agenda an item on the action taken on its decisions. Referring to old documents in order to give the impression that something had been done to implement the Committee's decisions was just not good enough. He hoped it was the result of carelessness rather than something more serious. In any event, the High Commissioner should inform the Executive Committee, with regard to each of its decisions, of the efforts made and the results obtained and, if the desired result had not been achieved, he should say so frankly.

15. Mr. CANKOREL (Turkey), recalling that his delegation had suggested at the previous session, the inclusion of the agenda item under consideration, congratulated the High Commissioner on the preparation of an excellent document which provided a solid background for assessing the work of UNHCR to implement the decisions of the Executive Committee. The item itself could, of course, be considered in conjunction with other agenda items.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that it appeared to be the general feeling that it had been an excellent suggestion to request the High Commissioner to produce the document under consideration. He wondered, however, whether it was really necessary to have a separate agenda item on action taken on decisions by the Executive Committee. The lack of speakers seemed to indicate that it was difficult to make statements specifically on that question, as the ground had already been covered in the discussion of other items.

17. If he heard no objections, he would take it that the Executive Committee wished to approve the document in question (A/AC.96/626).

18. It was so decided.

CONSIDERATION OF PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (agenda item 12) (A/AC.96/632)

19. Mrs. RUESTA DE FURTER (Venezuela) said she wished to stress the fact that documentation, particularly in French, reached delegations very late, thus compounding the difficulties of the smaller permanent missions in making the enormous intellectual effort required to participate effectively in the various meetings. As for the draft provisional agenda (A/AC.96/632) - which she had only just received - she suggested the addition of an agenda item on the evaluation of the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II). She also recalled the proposal she had made that the word "assistance" be deleted from the title of the Report on UNHCR assistance activities (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1). That proposal should, perhaps, be taken into account also in connection with item 7 of the draft provisional agenda for the thirty-fifth session.

20. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director, Assistance Division) said that, in the course of informal discussions, a number of suggestions had been made regarding the Report (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1) which were currently being studied. He suggested that the question should be considered in a group by members of the Secretariat and of interested delegations before the next session of the Executive Committee. All the problems concerned could certainly be resolved.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that, for the moment, the title of agenda item 7 could be left as suggested by the Secretariat since the document the Executive Committee was considering was only the draft provisional agenda for its next session, all the items of which could be changed or added to at a later date.

22. If he heard no objections, he would take it that that was the wish of the Executive Committee.

23. It was so decided.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (agenda item 13)(A/AC.96/625 and Corr.1)

24. Mr. HAMRA (Sudan) said that he had some comments to make on the High Commissioner's Note on inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as working languages of the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/625 and Corr.1). It appeared from the Note that the budgetary implications of the inclusion of additional languages as working languages of the Executive Committee would have to be approved by the Fifth Committee, and that the estimated annual cost of publishing 1,000 pages of documentation in the three languages would be approximately \$US 326,940. The amount in question appeared to be a modest one as compared with administrative expenditure, especially as it would come from the United Nations Regular Programme Budget.

25. He recalled General Assembly resolution 35/219 on the use of Arabic in the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly and its decision to include Arabic among the official and working languages of those organs no later than 1 January 1983. On that basis, his delegation wished to submit a draft decision to the Executive Committee on the inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as official and working languages of the Executive Committee, with due regard for the information provided in the document submitted by the High Commissioner, which would also amend rule 28 of the rules of procedure of the Executive Committee.

26. The draft decision was sponsored by the delegations of Algeria, China, Colombia, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Madagascar, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Somalia, Tunisia, Spain, Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

27. The draft decision in question would read:

"Draft decision on the inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as working and official languages of the Executive Committee.

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

A. Recalling General Assembly resolution 35/219, in which it was decided to include Arabic among the official and working languages of the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly no later than 1 January 1983.

Noting the High Commissioner's Note on the inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as working languages of the Executive Committee,

1. Decides to include Arabic, Chinese and Spanish among the official and working languages of the Executive Committee; and

2. Requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to provide the necessary financial allocation for this purpose from the United Nations Regular Programme Budget.

B. The Executive Committee

Adopts the following amendment to the rules of procedure of the Executive Committee:

Replace rule 28 by the following text:

'Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish shall be both the official and the working languages of the Executive Committee'."

28. All the various relevant factors had been taken into account. The three languages in question were very important ones and representatives using them would, if the proposal were adopted, be able to participate more effectively in the work of the Executive Committee.
29. Ms. TU JUNG (China) said that her delegation supported the statement by the representative of the Sudan. The changes in the world refugee situation had made the task of UNHCR an increasingly heavy one while, at the same time, the membership of the Executive Committee had expanded from 31 to 41, most of the new members being refugee-asylum States in the third world. Since the rules of procedure had been formulated before many of the current members joined the Executive Committee, rule 28 was no longer in keeping with the contemporary situation.
30. The inclusion of Chinese, Arabic and Spanish as official languages would facilitate the work of the countries using them and enable them to show more concern and understanding for the work of UNHCR and contribute to its humanitarian cause. The recent years had shown that, if Chinese were not adopted as a working language, great inconveniences would be caused to her Government and delegation. In the circumstances, if Chinese were made a working language of the Executive Committee, her delegation would, in practice adopt a flexible attitude towards the implementation of that decision.
31. Mr. CHRAIBI (Morocco) and Mrs. RUESTA DE FURTER (Venezuela) expressed their support for the statement by the representative of the Sudan.
32. Mr. CAMPÁ DE BLANES (Observer for Spain) said that the object of including the three languages in question would be to make the documentation more accessible to a greater number of persons. It was not a frivolous suggestion, but would constitute an effective act for the benefit of refugees.
33. Mr. PURCELL (United States of America) said that while his delegation took the proposal very seriously, it had three basic concerns. It was clear from the High Commissioner's Note that the inclusion of the three languages in question could well lead to further delays in the production of documents. That was a serious problem, since it was already difficult to make an analysis of the documents in time. Secondly, the cost of the work in question for 1984 was already substantial, and his delegation doubted if that cost could be held. That could have significant implications for both the regular and voluntary budgets. Lastly, his delegation was unable to support any action that would result in an increase in the budget.
34. Mr. LAMBACH (Federal Republic of Germany) said that, while he sympathized with the delegations which spoke neither English nor French, a better foundation was required before taking such a decision. There was also the problem of delays; if it was already difficult to obtain a French text, it would be even more difficult to obtain a Spanish one. A step-by-step approach would be better than a formal

one, and the Executive Committee should work on a pragmatic basis. It needed to know more exactly how the Secretariat would be able to cope with the time factor and how many pages would need to be translated and printed. The costs would probably be higher than anticipated. The proposal meant yet another issue for submission to the Fifth Committee, which was already overloaded with demands. His delegation would, however, be prepared to accept a decision to study the item further and revert to it at the next session of the Executive Committee.

35. Mrs. RUESTA DE FURTER (Venezuela) said that, as the head of her delegation had commented in the general debate, documents not translated into all the official languages lost their impact, while multilateral services found themselves overloaded with extra work because the documentation was not in a language that they used.

36. Mr. SATO (Japan) endorsed the comments made by the representatives of the United States and Germany and said that delays in the production of documents was causing his delegation great concern. More time would be needed to study the proposal.

37. Mr. HAMRA (Sudan) said that the reasons advanced for opposition to his proposal were not convincing. It was alleged that there would be further delays in the publication of documents, but the Executive Committee would not be seriously incommoded by a delay of not more than two or three weeks. It was vital that the documents should be available in the languages in which Governments worked so as to enable their authorities to react appropriately and co-operate with UNHCR; that was all the more important since large numbers of refugees were to be found in countries which used the three languages in question.

38. As for the suggestion that the costs might be higher than anticipated, he could see no reason to question the figures put forward by the High Commissioner in his Note.

39. Mr. CURCIO (Italy) said he agreed with the statements by the representatives of the United States and Germany, the more so since most of the representatives on the Executive Committee were familiar with English and/or French. The delays, if the decision were adopted, might well be enormous.

40. Mr. GULAIID (Observer for Somalia) said he supported the proposal by the representative of the Sudan which would not, he thought, cause much inconvenience. The discussion currently taking place was an example of the built-in resistance of United Nations organs to any innovation. The delays already being experienced with respect to documentation were not entirely due to language problems, and the inclusion of the three languages in question would be of great value for the work of the Executive Committee.

41. Mr. ADAMS (United Kingdom) said he noted that the cost mentioned in paragraph 8 of the High Commissioner's document (A/AC.96/625) was based on 1,000 pages of documentation annually. Since the annual report on UNHCR assistance activities alone ran to over 600 pages, he wondered whether the number of pages that would actually have to be translated annually into the three proposed new working languages would not, in fact, be considerably higher.

42. Mr. VOLPING (Director, External Affairs Division) said that the figure of approximately 1,000 pages corresponded to the number of pages forwarded annually to the United Nations Languages Service to be processed in English and French, and the figure of \$326,940 reflected the cost of producing that volume of documentation in Arabic, Chinese and Spanish. There was also, however, a certain amount of documentation which, for one reason or another, could not be processed

by the United Nations Languages Service within the required time limits and that was translated within UNHCR, a French translator being employed for the purpose. Furthermore, all communications addressed throughout the year to the missions of the States members of the Executive Committee were also translated by UNHCR's own staff. If the proposal to include Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as working languages of the Executive Committee were adopted, UNHCR would undoubtedly require additional staff, at a cost which had not yet been estimated.

43. Another issue which would require attention was that of the cut-off date for submission of documents from the field, which was currently set at 30 June. The introduction of additional working languages might necessitate bringing that date forward to, say, 1 May or even 1 April, with the inevitable result that the material presented to the Executive Committee in the autumn would be less up-to-date.

44. It went without saying that, irrespective of the decision taken on the matter under consideration, UNHCR was always prepared to assist any member State by translating sections of any country chapter for the benefit of the civil servants of the country concerned. It was in close consultation with the three language groups concerned with respect to information material, some of which was already appearing in Arabic and Spanish; such material would be issued for the first time in Chinese during the current month.

45. The CHAIRMAN said that, since the Executive Committee's budget had to be financed from the United Nations Regular Programme Budget, he was not sure whether it was entitled to use language such as "Decides to include Arabic, Chinese and Spanish among the ... working languages ..." or, indeed, to adopt a consequent amendment to its rules of procedure.

46. Mr. CAMPÁ DE BLANES (Observer for Spain) said that, while concern regarding translation costs was, of course, perfectly understandable, the benefit to be derived from the adoption of the additional working languages had yet to be calculated. In his view, that benefit would be more significant than the costs involved.

47. As for the point just made by the Chairman, there appeared to be no reason why the Executive Committee should not proceed immediately to amend rule 28 of its own rules of procedure. The actual inclusion of additional official and working languages would have to be approved by the Fifth Committee, and might therefore be delayed until the following year.

48. The CHAIRMAN, noting that there appeared to be no consensus on the question under consideration, suggested that the draft decision submitted orally by the representative of the Sudan on behalf of a number of other members of the Executive Committee should be attached to the Executive Committee's report, together with the comments made in the course of the discussions and a statement to the effect that the Executive Committee agreed to examine the question further, particularly in the light of the full financial implications of such a decision.

49. Mr. HAMBRA (Sudan) said that the Chairman's suggestion implied that additional information would be supplied by the Secretariat, and wondered why that information had not been included in the High Commissioner's Note (A/AC.96/625).

50. Mr. VOLFING (Director, External Affairs Division) said that the Secretariat had supplied an answer to a formal question that had been put to it by the Executive Committee at its previous session. It would have been improper for the UNHCR secretariat to comment upon the working patterns of the United Nations Languages Service.

51. The CHAIRMAN said that consultations on the topic would be taking place in the coming months. He proposed that the Executive Committee should suspend its consideration of the topic and revert to it when the full information requested from the Secretariat during the discussion had become available.
52. It was so agreed.
53. Mr. EL AHMADI (Sudan) said he wished to take advantage of agenda item 13, to refer to the alleged arrival of 25,000 Sudanese refugees in the southern and eastern parts of Ethiopia and inform the Committee that his delegation had officially requested UNHCR to send a high-level mission to verify the presence of those refugees in the area.
54. As was well known, the tribes in that region paid little attention to borders and were intermingled on both sides of them. His Government hoped that such a fact-finding mission would be sent to report on the situation.
55. Mr. DAWIT (Observer for Ethiopia) said that, as his delegation had pointed out, a joint mission including UNHCR representatives had already visited the area on 6 October 1983 and had seen the refugees in question. His Government was perfectly willing, however, for a further delegation to go to the area and ascertain that the refugees in question were, indeed, still there.

The meeting rose at 5.00 p.m.