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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 361st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 14 October 1983, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. EWERLOF (Sweden)

CONTENTS

Conclusions of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development (continued)

UNHCR's role in promoting durable solutions (continued)

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

CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON REFUGEE AID AND DEVELOPMENT (agenda item 7)
(continued) (A/AC.96/627)

UNHCR'S ROLE IN PROMOTING DURABLE SOLUTIONS (agenda item 8) (continued)
(A/AC.96/620)

1. Mr. CANKOREL (Turkey) said that the report on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/627) was a very interesting document. The ideas put forward were numerous and the topic could not be exhausted in the time available to the Executive Committee. He would, therefore, restrict himself to offering some general views.
2. The initiative of linking refugee aid to development was a timely one, since the situation had undergone a fundamental change in the past decade and the refugee burden was falling increasingly upon the developing countries. That burden was not to be seen only in terms of the number of refugees harboured, but also of the sometimes extremely limited resources of the host country. It was to the credit of some developing countries, themselves struggling to take off economically, to grant asylum to refugees. It was understandable that they should be anxious that "their policy and practice of accepting refugees should not jeopardize their own national development" (A/AC.96/627, annex III, para. 16).
3. The gaps in the existing international arrangements would have to be filled so as to link effectively, at the practical level, refugee aid and development. Discussions on the subject had related, on the one hand, to the question whether some developmental components of those UNHCR programmes specifically geared towards self-sufficiency fell within its mandate, and on the other, to seeking inter-agency co-operation, either to secure an orderly phase-out of some UNHCR assistance programmes, or to initiate complementary action benefiting both the local population and the refugees. Both those approaches to the problem had proved unsatisfactory and, in any case, had not reached its roots.
4. It was important to understand that local integration implied the attainment of self-sufficiency and that, in low income countries where employment possibilities were rare, it was not an automatic development. For such a durable solution to be achieved, UNHCR would have to be given the necessary resources and flexibility to take action.
5. As for the frequently advocated inter-agency co-operation, it came up against the obstacle of the diversity of structures, stemming from the diversity of objectives.
6. Two examples demonstrated the need to act rapidly and comprehensively in certain circumstances. In the first place, an influx of refugees into certain regions of a low-income country resulted in the upset of the economic structure and ecosystem of the areas, and inhibited the already limited development potential. The burden represented by the refugees could well erode the humanitarian spirit. In such a case, remedial action was needed but the question remained as to who was to take the initiative. In the second place, the self-sufficiency actively pursued by UNHCR could create difficulties in a country where the standard of living of the local population was below the poverty threshold. It was then difficult to decide what criteria were to be applied for refugee self-sufficiency. If the criterion was the standard of living of the

local population, the refugees could hardly be considered as self-sufficient in the true sense of the term; if not, international standards might well make them a privileged group in the area. In either case, it was to be feared that no international organization, other than UNHCR, would take the initiative to redress the situation.

7. Co-operative arrangements for voluntary repatriation were recommended. When such repatriation took place to a country in which the economy was fragile, it had to be buttressed by supportive measures. However, UNHCR had only limited means of action in respect of both time and place. International action in that area should be reconsidered, and UNHCR should be given the means it needed to carry out such repatriation in a durable way.

8. Local integration was also dealt with in the report under consideration, within the framework of larger co-operative arrangements. While his delegation supported the suggestions made in that respect, it felt that the report was not sufficiently explicit with regard to complementary action to be initiated concerning the establishment of rural settlements which might become pools of development for the areas concerned. As the High Commissioner had said in his opening statement to the meeting of experts "The issue here is how to establish the link between humanitarian assistance to refugees and development aid to refugee-affected areas where nationals and refugees are residing ..." (A/AC.96/627, annex II, p. 2). It was not sufficient that rural settlements should be integrated into the development of the region; it was also necessary to create new outlets with a further-reaching effect which would ensure the long-term viability of the integration. That could be achieved only by complementary investments and, in his delegation's view, that, too, was an area which lent itself to novel co-operative arrangements.

9. Lastly, the group of experts on refugee aid and development had tackled a hitherto unexplored area: that of large-scale influxes of refugees into low-income countries where there was no durable solution in sight. The question that arose was whether UNHCR should limit itself to financing care and maintenance programmes benefiting only the refugees or should envisage some more imaginative and further-reaching formulas which would also benefit the local population. The pilot project undertaken by UNHCR and the World Bank in Pakistan was the first of its kind and should not remain an isolated initiative. UNHCR had a role of catalyst to play in that respect.

10. To conclude, he wished to emphasize two prerequisites for the success of the initiative of establishing a link between refugee aid and development. Such projects should be over and above the regular development programme of the country in question. It should be a question not of a reallocation of development resources in low-income countries but of international assistance contributed to offset the economic consequences of the refugees' presence. Secondly, all the donor Governments concerned with refugee problems should, as the experts had stressed in their report (A/AC.96/627, annex I, para. 39), ensure effective co-ordination between those bodies in their own administrations that deal with refugee assistance and development aid. It was of paramount importance that the endeavours of the Executive Committee to link those two concepts of assistance should be translated into reality by a parallel effort in the donor countries.

11. Mr. ROSS (Australia) said he would limit his current statement to the item on refugee aid and development. As things currently stood, the refugee was perceived differently than had previously been the case. The contemporary refugee was a poor person, living in wellnigh absolute poverty, and was very often a woman who had fled her poverty-stricken community for a neighbouring country in which the inhabitants eked out a precarious living from the soil. She was usually accompanied by her children and sometimes by a parent or her husband.
12. That human aspect of the refugee situation should not be forgotten when endeavours were being made to find a solution. The needs of the refugee were inseparable from that of the community in which he or she lived, whether it was a question of voluntary repatriation or of local integration. It was clear from Mrs. Goodwillie's paper entitled "Refugees in the Developing World: A Challenge to the International Community" (A/AC.96/627, annex III) that half of the world's refugees were in two countries of South-East Asia and a third were in Africa, 80 per cent of that third being in the poorest countries of the continent. That was the geographical context in which the problem of refugee aid and development arose.
13. In the 1981 Report of the World Bank dealing with People in Absolute Poverty, it was proposed that development assistance should be directed towards narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and that dramatically different approaches were needed to meet the basic needs of those in a state of absolute poverty. However, "poverty-oriented programmes" were the most demanding in terms of human resources and few of those that had been undertaken had proved successful.
14. His delegation considered that the report under consideration should be given the widest possible distribution and that all interested parties should be given the opportunity to study it and comment upon it. There were three points that required careful consideration: the need for the High Commissioner to study the implications of poverty-oriented programming in the design of self-sufficiency projects, when refugees had to be integrated into very poor communities; the need for community-based planning in the communities to which refugees were to be repatriated, rather than assistance to the returnees on an individual basis; and the criteria for selecting local integration areas so as to lessen the likelihood of further movement and to increase the possibility of achieving a durable solution.
15. It had been suggested that more funds should be made available for development, in addition to those allocated for humanitarian relief. However, in poverty-oriented programmes of which self-sufficiency was the objective, there were more important inputs than money and a refugee who arrived with empty hands was, nevertheless, bringing within himself the most important resource.
16. Mr. KHARMA (Lebanon) said it was very urgent that the Executive Committee should link refugee aid and development and to take practical steps offering better prospects for the application of assistance programmes to development. It was essentially a matter of deciding by what machinery the problem could be resolved: how to ensure refugee self-sufficiency, while allowing UNHCR gradually to withdraw its assistance to deal with other situations. That question was of concern not to the developed countries, in which poor refugees could find work, but to the underprivileged countries, whose inhabitants lived in a state of near destitution

and sometimes undernourishment and which were seriously affected by large-scale influxes of refugees. In his opening statement, the High Commissioner had said that, in recent years, between 23 per cent and 27 per cent of the budget had been devoted to development assistance and that a larger percentage would be allocated for that purpose in the future. The size of that increase would obviously depend on the contributions made. Development assistance was the only possible way whereby UNHCR could prevent its budget from being eaten away over the years by the accumulation of aid activities. If no particular provision was made to meet the case of large-scale influxes of refugees, the persons concerned might well find themselves in a state of complete dependence, aid being supplied to them year after year without any durable solution of the problem being found.

17. Voluntary repatriation had been successful in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, large-scale influxes of refugees had a financial and social impact on the countries of asylum, that were often among the least developed. The question that arose was whether the time had come for the High Commissioner to be given a mandate to maintain and develop development assistance. His own delegation regarded that formula as being a basic component of the High Commissioner's work. UNHCR could not withdraw its assistance until the refugees for which it had been responsible had become self-sufficient. If such a mandate were not given to the High Commissioner, it was by no means clear to whom it would be given. UNDP did not appear to be designed for such activities, and its operating cycle was hardly conducive thereto. The previous year, at an informal meeting, the High Commissioner had referred to the difficulties he encountered in persuading the other agencies of the United Nations system to give him extra time and to co-operate actively with him to implement development projects connected with assistance of refugees. The experience of the World Bank and UNHCR in Pakistan had proved positive and it might, perhaps, be possible to generalize it.

18. Research had still to be done on refugee aid and development. The High Commissioner should submit an in-depth report on the question. As for the necessary resources, it would be for the Governments to resolve that question.

19. Mr. HARE (Canada) said that the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development held in Mont Pèlerin (Switzerland) from 29-31 August 1983 (A/AC.96/627) had broken new ground in the search for durable solutions to the refugee problem. It was a document that could constitute a useful basis for the activities of governments and multilateral institutions. It placed the stress on the integration of refugee aid into the wider efforts undertaken to improve the economic and social well-being of the least developed countries. The proposed approach implied a change in attitude towards refugees: they were not only people who required humanitarian assistance; they were also persons with skills and abilities which they had exercised in their countries of origin and which could contribute to both their own economic well-being and that of the country of refuge.

20. Needless to say, for refugees and returnees to become productively integrated into society, appropriate planning and co-ordination would be required among the host countries, international organizations and donor agencies. A blurring of the traditional distinction between humanitarian aid and development assistance would thus be needed.

21. On the other hand, his delegation had some major difficulties with certain aspects of the report, including the concept of "additionality", as set out in paragraphs 24 and 25. It also felt constrained to mention the danger that UNHCR might become involved in activities outside its mandate.

22. The report of the meeting of experts would be studied in depth at Ottawa. However, it was desirable to advance in the directions outlined by the meeting, as the High Commissioner had suggested in his opening statement. The Director of Assistance had also stressed the fact that talks with the World Bank, ILO, UNDP and other organizations had made it clear that UNHCR was already moving in the right direction. That momentum had to be maintained. His delegation shared the idea expressed by several delegations in the General Debate, as the High Commissioner had mentioned, that the Executive Committee should, in the not too distant future, devote an informal meeting to the report of the meeting of experts, once it had been thoroughly studied. In the meantime, however, it would like a limited number of governmental development experts and representatives of multilateral agencies to come together to discuss how the international community could respond, in practical operational terms, to the general direction proposed in the report (A/AC.96/627).

23. Mrs. SJÖLANDER (Sweden) said that durable solutions were both more difficult and more pressing than ever before. Ideally, every new refugee programme should be complete with provisions for a durable solution but in real life, unfortunately, large-scale emergency situations absorbed the bulk of the resources. A few years previously, the High Commissioner had had to deal with several such emergencies at the same time. He had since then, however, expressed the hope that he would be able henceforth to devote more time and resources to the promotion of durable solutions.

24. The best of those solutions was voluntary repatriation. A survey carried out among African refugees by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies had revealed that, in their vast majority, they opted for that solution. In the view of her delegation, however, a prerequisite for that solution was that the causes of the outflow of refugees had been removed and could not re-emerge. In that connection, the meeting of experts had recommended that an international presence be maintained, as long as was necessary, in the areas to which refugees returned. To that should be added a law or decree of amnesty in favour of the returnees. The Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR, Ethiopia and Djibouti might serve as a model for future repatriation programmes. The meeting of experts had also recognized the need for assistance to returnees and her delegation agreed that repatriation programmes should include measures to promote self-sufficiency among the returnees.

25. The economic conditions prevailing in many developing countries rendered difficult the local integration of refugees; what often happened was that "interim solutions" were applied, with no real durable solution in sight. The report (A/AC.96/627) clarified that question in a way which would facilitate its future consideration. As a way of helping to resolve it, her delegation suggested that the High Commissioner should ask the organizations of the United Nations system, other agencies and the non-governmental organizations to comment on the conclusions of the report, preferably before the next informal meeting of the Executive Committee. The High Commissioner's own views on the subject were equally important, and should be submitted prior to that meeting.

26. In the context of the preparations for the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II), the report (A/AC.96/627) and the debates it would cause would undoubtedly arouse great interest in the African continent. Generally speaking, her delegation attached great importance to the

follow-up of the conclusions of the meeting of experts and thus hoped that they would be seriously considered in the capitals before they were taken up again in greater detail by the Executive Committee. The Committee might possibly set up an ad hoc working group for the purpose, which would meet at Geneva.

27. Mr. NOMURA (Japan), speaking first with regard to item 7, said that the increase of care and maintenance requirements in UNHCR's assistance activities and the need to alleviate the continuing burden imposed by large-scale influxes of refugees on developing countries were very disturbing. In that connection, his delegation hoped that, in the course of its session, the Executive Committee would be able to give some guidelines for a clear formulation of the relationship of refugee aid to development. The project being carried out in Pakistan, by co-operation between UNHCR and the World Bank, might serve as a model in that respect. On the other hand, UNHCR should not exceed its mandate and should restrict itself to the role of catalyst, with due respect for local views.

28. His delegation hoped that ICARA II, which was scheduled for July 1984, would make it possible to review the general situation of refugees in Africa and identify some durable solutions, in co-operation with other international organizations such as UNDP. ICARA I had already produced a wider knowledge of the problems of those refugees. For its part, his Government was ready to examine the future role it could play in their favour on the basis of the projects currently under consideration.

29. Durable solutions, which formed the subject of agenda item 8, called for a vigorous discussion in concrete terms. There was no doubt that voluntary repatriation was the most desirable of such solutions. In that connection, the repatriation of Laotian refugees had been an encouraging sign, though on a small scale. The momentum had been continuous until it had been temporarily interrupted in the spring of 1983 and it was desirable that UNHCR should make further efforts to relaunch it. As for Kampuchean refugees, the Foreign Minister of his country had made a practical proposal at the meeting of foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries, held in June 1982. Unfortunately, there were still no clear prospects of a solution for those refugees, but his Government was ready to implement its own proposal, and requested UNHCR to make further efforts in that regard. His delegation also suggested that UNHCR should give some attention to regional solutions, with respect to resettlement, of the kind that had already been partly implemented in Malaysia, where refugees from the region had been accepted on the basis of certain common links, such as religion.

30. Mr. LUNA (Colombia) said his delegation supported the proposals put forward in the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/627). The report had the merit of dealing with the economic roots of refugee problems in the third world. It reflected the interest shown by the countries of the North in the solution of those problems, an interest which was a manifestation of the generosity of their peoples. The conclusions of the report of the meeting of experts should be followed up, maintaining the three major approaches which emerged therefrom: firstly, refugee aid directed towards self-sufficiency, with projects devised along those lines by Governments with the help of UNHCR; secondly, close co-operation between UNHCR, UNDP and international and non-governmental organizations for development assistance and refugee aid; and, thirdly, joint development in favour of the local people and refugees, with a contribution of the latter to the development of the host countries, in exchange for the asylum granted them.

31. Having expressed the hope that the agencies concerned would be consulted on the subject of the conclusions in the report of the meeting of experts, he suggested that a list should be drawn up of the developing countries which had major refugee-integration problems to solve, so that they could be given the benefit of particular solicitude by the international community, in the same way that the list of the least developed countries had been drawn up in accordance with precise criteria. Lastly, he thought that the Executive Committee should, at its current session, reach an adequate decision concerning the relationships between refugee aid and development.

32. Mr. PICTET (Switzerland) said that the meeting of experts on the subject of refugee aid and development, held at Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, had been well worth convening and that the Swedish delegation had been perfectly right to propose a follow-up of suggestions from non-governmental organizations. As the Director of Assistance had recalled, a number of projects for integrating refugees into the economic life of the countries of asylum had already been launched. The project for the creation of employment and protection of the environment undertaken in Pakistan was a recent example thereof. The critical stage of passing from the working out of principles to the implementation of projects had thus been begun. In that context, the conclusions of the experts, who had met at Mont Pèlerin, were very timely.

33. More systematic passage to the implementation of specific projects would require greater co-ordination of the United Nations system. The Government members of the competent agencies of the system should encourage that development. At the level of the Governments themselves, the departments responsible for aid to refugees, on the one hand, and development assistance on the other should work closely together, whether in the countries of asylum or in the donor countries. Lastly, in the field, it was necessary to mobilize the resources of all the parties concerned: refugees, executing agencies and the local population.

34. The report (A/AC.96/627) emphasized that concerted action by all the organizations responsible for elaborating and executing projects would promote the over-all development of the areas in which refugees were settled and would be of benefit to the local population. With a view to such activities, UNHCR should play a leading role and should resolve the co-ordination problems which would arise. In that role, it should be able to count on the assistance of the UNDP resident co-ordinators. On the other hand, the asylum and resettlement countries should prepare development projects more systematically and submit them to United Nations organs such as UNHCR and UNDP and to possible donor countries. For their part, the donor countries should establish appropriate budgetary structures to finance projects of that kind.

35. After the Mont Pèlerin meeting and the current discussion, the next stage could be a meeting of the representatives of all the competent United Nations bodies to examine ways of preparing, managing and executing combined projects for the benefit of refugees. The conclusions of such a meeting would assist the national administrations of the countries of asylum and the donor countries to apply durable solutions more effectively.

36. Mr. HELDRING (Netherlands) said that, in the General Debate, his delegation had already dealt at length with the questions of refugee aid and development and durable solutions. His Government considered that the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/627) constituted a useful analysis although it found the recommendations in the document rather hesitant. Consequently, he felt he should express some essential ideas on the subject.

37. In the first place, refugee aid should not have the effect of giving the refugees a privileged position vis-à-vis the local population. In its work, UNHCR should not aim at a level of self-sufficiency above that of the local population. Moreover, it should not go beyond its mandate and try to play the part of a development agency. In addition, the integration of the refugees should be co-ordinated with the development plans of the host country. When a refugee influx occurred, UNHCR should participate in the planning of the development efforts of the host countries at an early stage, in co-ordination with the authorities and with the donor organizations. In that process, it should act as the refugees' advocate. Incidentally, that type of participation had already been requested by the General Assembly in 1967 and in 1971. The role currently being played by UNHCR in Pakistan, where it was co-operating closely with the World Bank, could serve as an example in that regard.

38. As for the paper by Mrs. Goodwillie annexed to the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/627, annex III), it emphasized that, although the complexity of the relationship between refugees and development was beginning to be realized, the dimensions and the multiple effects on policy and programmes were still poorly understood. It added that the lack of information was a major obstacle to better understanding and that, to ensure that the machinery for enlarged assistance should be effective in practice, it was necessary to carry out research and a more thorough analysis. The participants in the meeting of experts had also emphasized that the lack of accessible information was a major constraint to effective action in that field (*ibid.*, annex I, para. 41).

39. It was thus necessary to continue consideration of the question after the current session as, for instance, the representative of Canada and the High Commissioner had both suggested. It would also be useful if the international organizations dealing with refugee aid and development assistance could take part in that work and it might even be possible to organize a meeting on the subject, as the representative of Sweden had proposed. However that might be, UNHCR should not be requested to carry out work which did not come within its mandate.

40. Miss RUBOW (Denmark) said that the participants in the meeting of experts had emphasized the close relationship that existed between refugee aid and development. They had also stressed the fact that, when voluntary repatriation was not possible, the only remaining solution was local settlement. In such a case, arrangements should be made for long-term planning and significant resources, especially when the host countries were low-income countries.

41. The role of UNHCR was undoubtedly one of assisting refugees and finding durable solutions. There would not, however, be any durable solutions as long as the comprehensive refugee aid programmes failed to include development assistance projects. It was thus necessary to find an appropriate balance between the refugee aid programmes, which were undertaken by the High Commissioner, and the programmes of other United Nations bodies dealing with development assistance, so as to avoid duplication. There could be no question of turning UNHCR into a development assistance agency, but it should co-ordinate all the forms of assistance to refugees

which were supplied by all the international organizations. The United Nations Development Programme, for instance, which was represented in the field in most developing countries, had a large range of skills which could usefully be employed.

42. The voluntary agencies also had a part to play in the process. Since, in some cases, the integration of refugees into the country of asylum could take several years, very significant resources would have to be earmarked and the NGOs could help to mobilize them. It was nevertheless true that the bulk of the funds would have to be supplied by the international community and, in the current economic situation, it could hardly be expected that much in the way of new resources would be obtained. The question should thus be tackled in a realistic spirit, particularly in the context of the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa.

43. Lastly, her delegation endorsed the idea of establishing a working group to make a thorough study of the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development, the conclusions of which would be submitted to the Executive Committee at a later session.

44. Mr. ONKELINX (Belgium) said that, although everybody agreed that it was necessary to find durable solutions to the refugee problem, there was undoubtedly an institutional blockage at the governmental level, as the experts on refugee aid and development had emphasized in their report. The representative of the Netherlands had rightly pointed out that the lack of information was a major obstacle to an improved understanding. What was needed most of all, however, was a change of attitude on the part of the planning authorities. The hope expressed along those lines by the High Commissioner would have to be put into effect at all levels and in all the assistance organizations, such as UNDP, the World Bank, FAO, WFP and WHO, and the question would have to be tackled in a way that was at once better structured and more comprehensive.

45. As for the decision which the Executive Committee had to take at its current session, one possibility would be to collect together all the suggestions that had been made and to submit them for consideration not to an informal meeting of the Executive Committee, which seemed a bit limited, but to a wider meeting in which experts and governmental planners would participate.

46. It was clear that the question went beyond the mandate, the budget and the potential of the High Commissioner's Office. A possible solution might be to submit it to the General Assembly of the United Nations, in either 1983 or 1984, so that it could adopt a resolution specifically addressed to all the assistance agencies.

47. In the same way as, some time previously, a list of the least developed countries had been drawn up, on the basis of precise criteria, so that those countries could be given particular assistance, it would be possible to draw up, once again on the basis of specific criteria, a list of developing countries which had to absorb a large number of refugees and which, consequently, needed particular assistance from the international community. Finally, he hoped that the Executive Committee would take an adequate and courageous decision.

48. Mr. ADAMS (United Kingdom) said that the subject of refugee aid and development was a delicate one and, although it was desirable that quick progress should be made in finding durable and practical solutions to the refugee problem, it was also necessary to be careful.

49. As for the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/627), he noted that, although the participants included a United Kingdom expert, he had served in an independent capacity. Consequently, his Government reserved the right to consider the report in detail before making known its views.

50. The High Commissioner's proposal that a meeting of the Executive Committee be organized to follow up that question was a welcome one. His delegation would wish to hear, at that meeting, the views of the High Commissioner himself who, in the meantime, would have been able to consult other development agencies of the United Nations system.

51. In any case, there could be no question of pushing the High Commissioner into new areas of responsibility. He had a humanitarian mandate which must not be jeopardized by increasing his responsibilities. In the General Debate, his delegation had already had occasion to mention the notion of "additionality". It hoped that UNHCR would be able to carry out a study on that aspect and address the question whether the measures proposed by the meeting of experts would work in practice and, if so, how they would work.

52. The question of additional funding was a very important one. New projects, such as the pilot project being carried out by the World Bank in Pakistan - to which his Government had contributed, still needed funds. Since it appeared difficult to mobilize additional resources, consideration might be given to redistributing existing resources with more flexibility so as to meet new needs. It was of paramount importance to assist the refugees and the countries of asylum to the best of the international community's ability.

53. While his delegation was not against innovation, it thought that any new departure should be most carefully thought through. In view of the fact that UNHCR's first priority was to attend to the immediate needs of the refugees, it was desirable that it should have an increasing involvement in projects to assist both refugees and host countries, provided that it remained a catalyst for such operations.

54. Mr. PAINTER (United Nations Development Programme) said that UNDP shared the concern of the Executive Committee regarding the long-term needs of the refugees, which sometimes represented a tragic problem for a number of developing countries. The Director of Assistance had noted, when introducing agenda items 7 and 8, that UNHCR and UNDP were already actively considering ways in which to co-operate in effective programmes of action, not only by working out general guidelines and procedures but also by reviewing some possibilities of practical action. They would also undoubtedly take account of the possibilities of support, at the country level, available from the field offices of UNDP.

55. Nothing in the UNDP mandate or procedures prevented it from becoming involved in other projects or components of projects which were refugee-related but of a development nature, but its participation in specific projects would, of course, have to be approved by the Governments concerned. It was also for the Governments to decide whether funds would be drawn from the Indicative Planning Figures, at a time

when the Programme's resources were badly stretched, or whether an attempt would be made to obtain additional resources specifically for that purpose. UNDP was awaiting with interest the outcome of the Executive Committee's review of those items and stood ready to take part in any consultations likely to result in concrete action.

56. Mr. NEIDNER (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) said that the voluntary agencies unreservedly supported the idea of finding durable solutions to the refugee problem and recalled that they had suggested that a meeting of experts be convened to examine the link between refugee aid and development assistance. The High Commissioner should continue to play his central role in the search for durable solutions and should ensure that there was no break between the moment that UNHCR assistance ceased and that when the programmes of the other agencies began.

57. The International Council of Voluntary Agencies had already had occasion to note that, in the context of the preparations for the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II), the problems of humanitarian aid and development assistance had been tackled by all the persons concerned. It had also referred to the principle of "additionality", which deserved emphasis. The countries of asylum should not be obliged to encumber their own resources in order to harbour the refugees. The High Commissioner had, for his part, commented that some of the poorest persons in the world were being constrained to knock on the doors of some of the poorest countries. The voluntary agencies were ready to participate, at all stages, in the search for durable solutions and thought that it would be desirable to study in greater depth the conclusions of the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development.

58. Mr. CHATENAY (World Bank) said that the Bank intended to participate in all the consultations that were to be organized by UNHCR in order to study in greater depth the conclusions of the meeting of experts. One of the two co-chairmen of the meeting, Mr. Burke Knapp, had been a Vice-President of the World Bank for several years. In view of his experience of financial assistance, he had undoubtedly been able to make a useful contribution to the meeting.

59. UNHCR and the Bank were continuing to collaborate in the pilot project for assistance to refugees in Pakistan and were contemplating other similar projects in the future. It should also be mentioned that, when the Bank convened consortia or advisory groups on assistance to developing countries of asylum, it always invited UNHCR to take part. The consortium organized by the Bank for the pilot project in Pakistan and the advisory group on Somalia were two relevant examples. The Bank always endeavoured to co-operate with the High Commissioner when it was a question of assisting developing countries which harboured refugees.

60. Mr. FUGAZZOLA (Italy) said that, in the General Debate, he had mentioned that his delegation welcomed the results of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development. The next stage was for that independent report to be officially considered by Governments and by the international development agencies. It would be useful, therefore, if the international organizations and development agencies were to meet to decide on the steps to be taken in that area, possibly associating Governments with their work, as the representative of Switzerland had suggested.

61. Nevertheless, care should be shown, since the donor countries were still the same ones, funds were limited, and UNHCR resources should not be used for activities such as agricultural development, education or the strengthening of infrastructures.
62. Mr. DAVEREDE (Argentina) said he was in favour of the search for durable solutions, the best of them being voluntary repatriation which was only possible, however, if conditions in the country of origin had changed in such a way as to enable the refugees to return home. The High Commissioner was powerless in that respect and it was incumbent upon the States to act. The increase in the number of returnees, as notified in the report on UNHCR assistance activities, was welcome news. The High Commissioner should continue to give them assistance, while respecting the sovereignty of States, but such assistance should be limited to the resources needed to ensure the self-sufficiency of the returnees.
63. His delegation had given careful consideration to the report of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development, which it regarded as an excellent foundation for the coming work. It endorsed the ideas of hearing the views of other international agencies concerning the report and also that of organizing a meeting to analyse the matter in depth. While UNHCR could not be turned into a development agency, its competence and its experience should enable it to contribute to development activities that were calculated to promote the assimilation of refugees and to reduce the burden shouldered by the countries of asylum, which was often too heavy for their economic possibilities.
64. His delegation welcomed the progress made with the project being executed in Pakistan in co-operation with the World Bank, and thought that solutions of that type should be borne in mind by the participants in the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II), since it was precisely in the area of mobilizing resources that ICARA I had produced the poorest results.
65. Mr. MATIKO (Tanzania) said he thought that the High Commissioner should be given enough resources to undertake development projects aimed at promoting local integration as a durable solution. Many delegations recognized that the pursuit of durable solutions was within the mandate of UNHCR, but some others feared an excessive involvement on its part in the implementation of development projects aimed at promoting the local integration of refugees, while at the same time agreeing that UNHCR could not cut off the supply of aid if the economic and social infrastructure of the country of asylum was inadequate. It was because of that contradiction that a group of experts had been appointed to study the issue.
66. The report submitted by the group of experts (A/AC.96/627, annex I) contained some interesting recommendations which deserved further study and analysis in other organs. The concept of durable solutions as contained in the report was not different from that which was generally accepted by the members of the Executive Committee. However, the definition of such solutions given in paragraph 4 of the report appeared to imply more active involvement by UNHCR in the planning and financing of development programmes aimed at promoting durable solutions. It was stated in paragraphs 23 and 31 of the report that UNHCR should take the initiative in preparing development programmes designed to promote the integration of refugees in the country of asylum or voluntary repatriation of greater numbers of refugees to the country of origin. Paragraph 26 contained some interesting points which deserved further study, but it would be necessary to define who was to represent the international

community when it came to ensuring that development projects for refugees met the international community's needs and priorities. He found the concept of burden-sharing, as set forth in paragraph 37 of the report, a very stimulating one which was worthy of careful consideration by the international community, particularly in the context of ICARA II.

67. Mr. GRIFFITHS (Australia) recalling that the basic mandate of UNHCR was to find durable solutions for refugee problems, said he welcomed the fact that the Executive Committee had decided to focus its attention, in its work, on durable solutions and on the role that UNHCR could play in bringing them about, the more so since, as was stated in the report on UNHCR assistance activities, 83 per cent of the resources allocated to general programmes had been devoted to the promotion of durable solutions in 1970, whereas the percentage had fallen to 26 per cent by 1981. During the past year, some progress had been made towards achieving durable solutions, notably in Africa, where considerable numbers of refugees had been locally integrated in the country of asylum or had been voluntarily repatriated. Nevertheless, the refugee problems of Africa were far from being solved and his Government, which had already participated in programmes designed to implement durable solutions for refugees in Africa, would return to the problem again with all the necessary attention in the context of the forthcoming ICARA II. In South-East Asia, more than one million Indo-Chinese refugees had been resettled since 1975. His own country had received 80,000 of them. It had to be stated, however, that, although progress had been made, the members of the Executive Committee should not lose sight of the fact that, for the vast majority of the world's refugees, no durable solution had yet been achieved, and in many cases, no solution of any kind. It was thus essential to consider practical measures that could be taken to remedy that state of affairs.

68. To that end, it was a prerequisite to have accurate information on the nature and dimensions of the problem. His Government welcomed the attention given to the question of durable solutions in the assistance document, both in the general introductory sections and in the country chapters. It also welcomed the system of categorization used for the first time in those chapters which made it possible readily to determine the proportion of UNHCR assistance activities devoted to durable solutions. It would also be useful if UNHCR were to publish a separate document on durable solutions, which would give a realistic and up-to-date picture of UNHCR's achievements in fostering durable solutions and identify areas of concern and the solutions proposed to remedy them.

69. His Government was concerned at the lack of progress in the voluntary repatriation of Indo-Chinese refugees, whether Laos, Kampucheans or Vietnamese. It nevertheless welcomed the fact that the High Commissioner had stressed that form of durable solution during his recent visit to Thailand. Economic difficulties in the countries of origin could certainly constitute an obstacle to repatriation, but solutions existed. Through the Fund for Durable Solutions, his Government had contributed to village self-sufficiency projects in Laos, aimed at facilitating reintegration into the Laotian economy and society, and it considered that the Fund was a useful model which could inspire voluntary repatriation programmes elsewhere. Well-meaning but misinformed groups, which were opposed to the return of refugees to their country of origin in any circumstances, criticized UNHCR participation in repatriation programmes. It was all too easy for them to talk about "refoulement", when in fact the programmes concerned had been carefully negotiated over a period of months or years and contained the most stringent guarantees for the well-being of the refugees concerned. However, to avoid any misunderstanding, the execution of repatriation programmes should take place under international supervision.

70. Many speakers had pointed out that, in parallel with the efforts made by the High Commissioner, the States should mobilize their political will to tackle the root causes of the problem. It would be useful to consider what could be done when the perceived national interest of a country did not appear to be fully compatible with the High Commissioner's aim of a durable solution or strategy for a particular refugee group. In the first place, national policies should be continually re-examined to determine to what extent and in what ways the humanitarian interests of the displaced people could be separated and isolated from conflicts or antagonisms in which they might be unwittingly involved. A second possibility would be to examine the composition, needs and aspirations of a displaced group, as soon as a refugee problem arose. The aim would be to identify priority groups - old people, women and children - for which an early durable solution might be the least controversial in political terms. In that connection, he had in mind the groups of refugee children who could have been repatriated through international assistance, if the necessary steps had been taken promptly. The third possibility for action was to be found in the role that the High Commissioner could play as a humanitarian intermediary and instrument of dialogue. That was a delicate role, in view of the non-political character of the High Commissioner's office, but his delegation considered that assisting refugees to return home voluntarily was an act that was neither more political nor less humanitarian than addressing comments to Governments concerning the resettlement of refugees, their local integration or, indeed, their legal protection, as the High Commissioner was required to do under the Convention.

71. His delegation hoped that the agenda of the Executive Committee would henceforth regularly include an item on durable solutions, so that UNHCR could report each year to the Committee on the progress made in that area. The dialogue had, however, to be a two-way process, and the High Commissioner should have the confidence to speak fully and frankly to the Executive Committee concerning what he expected from the international community in terms of negotiations to achieve lasting solutions. His Government had committed itself to contribute to the process of political solutions to ease the plight of refugees, and would be placing more stress on humanitarian issues in formulating and pursuing its foreign policy objectives. It relied, in parallel, on closer co-operation with UNHCR.

72. Lastly, he made a general appeal to all those who were parties to difficult bilateral or regional political relationships to treat separately the interests of people who were displaced by such antagonisms. Contemporary polemical exchanges seemed increasingly to focus on the displaced people themselves who thus, inevitably, became the subject of disputes which further complicated the solution of their problems.

73. Mr. SKALLI (Morocco) said he welcomed the fact that durable solutions formed the subject of an item of the Executive Committee's agenda, in view of the considerable importance of the question. He noted with satisfaction that, during the past two years, the High Commissioner had achieved some good results in that area. To ensure the continuation of that progress, he suggested that an administrative unit of UNHCR should be given the task of seeking and promoting durable solutions. The work might form part of the specific duties of the Policy, Planning and Research Unit. The prerogatives of the Assistance Division would not be reduced thereby but rather its capabilities would be strengthened.

74. Mr. TAFFAR (Algeria) said he would examine the possible durable solutions, one after another. In the event of large-scale influxes of refugees, local integration was difficult for the country of asylum, especially if it was a developing country, by reason of the absorption problems it raised. It was also difficult for the

refugees, who often regarded their exile as a temporary one and were waiting for the right conditions to return home. Resettlement in a third country met the requirement of equitable burden-sharing within the international community and certainly encouraged respect for the principle of non-refoulement. There again, however, the limits to that solution were obvious in the case of large-scale arrivals of refugees; it also presented the same drawback as local integration with respect to the preservation of the ethnic and cultural identity of the group and, in some cases, might well lead to the break-up of families.

75. Voluntary repatriation was, of course, the ideal solution and was recognized by the Executive Committee as being the optimum. It was applicable, however, only when the causes of the population movement had disappeared. It had obviously to be stressed, also, that repatriation should be freely chosen by the refugees themselves. If a refugee problem resulted from a colonial or foreign occupation, the return was obviously impossible until a political solution occurred which put an end to that occupation. UNHCR was well placed to use its good offices to search for durable solutions, as it had successfully done in the context of the Tripartite Agreement with Djibouti and Ethiopia. In the event of a colonial or foreign occupation, where the success of the High Commissioner's efforts depended on a political solution to the problem, UNHCR should concentrate on alleviating the sufferings of the refugees who were hoping to be able to return home and then, once they had been repatriated, it should give them the appropriate assistance.

The meeting rose at 12.56 p.m.