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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirtieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 311TH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Friday, 12 October 1979, at 10 a.m.

Chairman

Mr. HESSEL

(France)

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UNHCR assistance activities (continued)

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

UNHCR ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES (Agenda item 6) (continued) (A/AC.96/564, Corr.1 and Add.1, A/AC.96/568 and 570)

1. Mr. AL-MOJBARRAK (Observer for the Islamic Conference), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, said that his organization which grouped the foreign ministers of over forty Islamic countries in Africa and Asia, representing 100 million people, wished to work in close co-operation with the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee in order to find humanitarian solutions to refugee problems without racial or religious discrimination. The Islamic Solidarity Fund was working to aid refugees and displaced persons and was concerned at the increasing number of refugees, particularly in developing countries, which had the greatest need of stability. The Palestinian refugees, who had been homeless for over thirty years, must be returned to their country and recover the rights recognized by the United Nations and the international community.
2. He paid a tribute to the achievements of the Arusha Conference and commended UNHCR for its tireless efforts. His organization would be happy to continue its discussions with the Office of the High Commissioner on any matter to alleviate the suffering of refugees and displaced persons.

Section I - Africa

3. Mr. NDIAYE (Observer for Senegal) said that the number of refugees in Senegal whose status had not been determined exceeded 100,000. Those refugees came mainly from neighbouring countries and were seeking either a livelihood or protection. Senegal was now attempting to determine their legal status.
4. A reception centre with housing and social facilities had been built for the refugees in urban areas. To provide a livelihood for the refugees in rural areas a fishing project had been launched, and an agricultural project was in course of study, for which it was hoped that UNHCR assistance would be forthcoming. In addition a study was under way for improving reception facilities and transport. All those projects involved expenditure and accounted for the increase in the budgetary allocation proposal for Senegal for 1980. Expenditure had already exceeded the allocation for 1979, and the proposed new projects would increase the shortfall if the allocation was not raised. He hoped that that situation, which would be explained in writing by his Government, would be taken into account by the Executive Committee.
5. He pointed out the great disparity between the allocations of financial and other assistance to different countries with similar problems.

6. Mr. EL-BESHIR (Sudan) agreed that assistance to African refugees was disproportionate to their number, which was greater than in any other continent, probably because they received less publicity.

7. In the past year there had been a continual increase in the number of refugees in the Sudan. Ten thousand had come from Ethiopia in February; in the same month 450 had come from Chad; in June, 900 further refugees from Ethiopia had crossed the Sudanese border; and from April to June 1979 35,000 refugees had entered the country from Uganda. The great majority of those refugees were rural people and many were women and children. In addition there was infiltration by small groups, including urban refugees, many remaining undetected because they entered the country without reporting to the authorities.

8. There had been a great improvement in the pace of implementation of refugee projects in the Sudan; some had even been implemented ahead of schedule. The Government was taking steps to strengthen the administration responsible for refugees. However, there were many problems, such as the impossibility of getting relief supplies to remote parts of the country during the rainy season and the bureaucratic complications which delayed emergency assistance. No response had been received to requests for help for the refugees from Chad and the most recent influx of refugees from Ethiopia. He hoped that procedures would be simplified so as to ensure speedy delivery of relief commodities.

9. In 1979 regrettably hostile attitudes had developed towards refugees, especially in urban areas, because of shortages in food supplies, housing, job opportunities and public transport to which the refugees had contributed, but of which they were by no means the real cause. To defuse that explosive situation, it had been agreed with UNHCR that, in towns, refugees should be grouped in urban settlements established in a separate quarter with adequate housing and other services. That would relieve the pressure on services originally planned for local people only and, at the same time, ensure that refugees could earn their living by continuing to work in their present jobs. The regular programme for 1980 provided funds for the settlement of 6,000 refugees in Port Sudan, out of the total refugee population of 50,000. In Gedaref, the refugee quarter would accommodate a similar number, out of a refugee population of 40,000. That programme was clearly quite inadequate. The growing tensions in the three towns of Khartoum Province and in Kassala had led to the adoption of a policy under which jobless refugees and deserters from rural settlements would be evicted and transferred to existing settlements outside the towns where they could find jobs. However, students, skilled workers, transit refugees and those with genuine reasons to stay were to be allowed to remain in the towns. It was of vital importance to enlarge the suburban settlements in Port Sudan and Gedaref for the refugees to be moved from Khartoum and Kassala and he would like an assurance from the High Commissioner that adequate funds to meet those compelling demands would be made available from the Reserve Fund.

10. To maintain its generous policy towards refugees, the Sudan needed support. He thanked the High Commissioner, his staff, governments and voluntary organizations for their valuable assistance to refugees in the Sudan.

11. Mr. BIREKE KAGGWA (Uganda) pointed out that although the proposed budget made no allocation for rural settlements, resettlement, repatriation, counselling or assistance to displaced refugees in Uganda, and very little provision for supplementary aid, that did not mean there was no more need for financial assistance to refugee programmes in Uganda. The reason was that aid for refugees was being dealt with together with aid to Ugandan nationals displaced by the recent war, and would be financed from contributions to the High Commissioner's special appeal for humanitarian assistance in Uganda.

12. His delegation, however, had reservations about that approach and believed that the refugees in question were in fact the direct concern of UNHCR and that their needs ought to be considered in the normal way and provided for under the General Programme. Moreover the refugee programme would require considerably longer-term financial assistance since it would have to include the reconstruction of essential infrastructure damaged or destroyed during the war. The UNHCR mission dispatched to Uganda in June 1979 had visited the settlements and reported on the situation, which was also adequately covered in document A/AC.96/564. He urged the Executive Committee to ensure that the programme for refugees in Uganda was considered under the General Programme, and to allocate the necessary funds.

13. Mr. MATIKO (United Republic of Tanzania) thanked the High Commissioner, the Lutheran World Federation, the Tanzania Christian Refugee Service, the World Food Programme and friendly governments for their generous assistance to refugees in Tanzania.

14. With respect to the proposed budget allocations for Tanzania, the Ulyankulu settlement, as reported in paragraphs 234 and 241 of document A/AC.96/564, was to have been handed over to the Government in June 1980. However, unavoidable circumstances had delayed that transfer for nearly two months and the budget would consequently have to be increased. Moreover, post-primary school vocational training facilities were needed in the big refugee settlements in order to prepare refugee primary school leavers for a better future. His delegation intended to discuss that matter with UNHCR, interested governments and voluntary agencies.

15. Some UNHCR staff members had expressed the fear that, if the level of assistance to refugee settlements was raised, those settlements might be turned into privileged islands in the midst of poverty. That would not be the case in Tanzania, where the policy was, not only to give priority to developing rural areas in order to raise the standards of living, but also to integrate the refugees with other Tanzanian people. The standards of building should therefore meet the long-term objectives for all villages in Tanzania.

16. Mr. SONDLLO (Observer for the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, thanked the High Commissioner, governments and non-governmental organizations for their assistance, which had gone a long way to alleviate the situation of the refugees with which PAC was concerned. Special thanks were due to the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway, Nigeria and the Federal Republic of Germany and to the Government and people of Tanzania, who were making daily sacrifices in the spirit of African brotherhood. He also thanked the non-governmental organizations which were helping the transit centre at Bagamoyo, where students who had fled from South Africa were being housed, and where it was planned to teach them skills to enable them to offer their services to the liberation struggle.

17. Mr. CHALIB (Observer for Somalia) said that the assistance given to refugees in his country was inadequate. The refugee situation in Somalia was fluid and might change sooner than expected. The Executive Committee and the High Commissioner should therefore follow the situation very closely and review it as and when the need arose.

18. Mr. KALONJI (Zaire) said that Zaire's geographical situation, surrounded as it was by nine other States, made it a country of asylum for refugees. The tradition of hospitality in Africa, where a refugee was considered as a guest and not an intruder, helped to alleviate the misery and frustration inherent in their situation. However, that did not mean that they were not an economic and social burden upon their host countries. In Africa those countries were poor, many of them among the poorest in the world, and the price paid per capita of the population for each refugee was far greater than the crumbs contributed by the developed countries to alleviate the suffering of the refugees. The price could not always be expressed in purely quantitative terms. It was difficult to share land, schools, hospitals, etc. with the newcomers, who created a serious employment problem. However, it should not be forgotten that they also contributed to the development of the host country, but only after considerable investment and sacrifice on the part of the latter.

19. Communications and transport in Africa were difficult and it was hard to estimate the exact number of refugees. However, there were refugees in Zaire from Angola and many from southern Africa, particularly Zimbabwe and Namibia. An agreement had been reached with UNHCR concerning the granting of travel documents to Namibians, with the right to return to Zaire. Document A/AC.96/564 gave the total number of refugees in Zaire as 653,000, but at the end of May 1979 there had in fact been 752,906 refugees representing twelve nationalities in the country. They could be divided into two categories: those who had arrived between 1960 and 1978 and who were almost completely integrated in the country's active life, suffering no discrimination in the employment market, and those who had arrived after 1978, who were in urgent need of food, medicine, seed, agricultural tools, etc. Zaire was doing all it could to help them, but was encountering difficulties as a result of the international economic crisis.

20. The assistance provided by UNHCR was deeply appreciated. However, the assistance to Zairian refugees returning from Angola was scheduled to come to an end in December 1979, which would leave them stranded without food for at least 3 months, since harvesting, particularly in the Shaba region, took place in March

and April. The programme should therefore be continued until after the harvest. UNHCR should also take into account in its planning the drought in the Bas Zaire region where many Zairian and Angolan refugees from Angola and from the province of Cabinda were living. His delegation was concerned by the massive reduction in budgetary allocations for Zaire in 1980, which represented only one third of expenditures in 1979 and half of the allocations in 1978, whereas the number of refugees in Zaire had not shown a marked decrease.

21. His delegation strongly supported the establishment of a fund for durable solutions, but felt that the High Commissioner should be able to administer the fund, thereby obviating the need to create a special body outside the UNHCR secretariat. He also supported the proposed establishment of an ad hoc consultative committee to help the High Commissioner solve refugee problems.

22. In conclusion, he thanked the High Commissioner for his effective contribution to Zaire during difficult times, as well as the friendly governments which had facilitated the operation, particularly those of the European Economic Community, the United States and Switzerland. The Director of the Administration and Management Division had rightly stressed the need to maintain the independent nature of the international civil service. His delegation fully endorsed that view as being the only way to guarantee the impartiality needed for dealing with refugees. However, the principle could only attain its full value if the organization was truly international. In that connexion, he referred, as others had before him, to the flagrant imbalance in the allocations to the various regions of the world, to the detriment of Africa.

23. Mr. MUSUKWA (Observer for Zambia) said that his delegation was satisfied with the report on UNHCR assistance activities (A/AC.96/564), but hoped that the future would see a more equitable allocation of budget funds to African refugees. Since the report's publication, the number of Zimbabwean refugees in Zambia had increased to over 60,000 and, if the budget was to be realistic, it should take that fact into account. The report alluded to the problems encountered by some urban refugees in Zambia in obtaining work permits for employment. He informed the Committee that there were only 220 urban refugees in Zambia and the majority of them were employed, despite the acute unemployment problem facing Zambians.

24. In connexion with the multi-purpose assistance programme for southern African refugees in Zambia, he drew attention to the fact that the majority of the refugees from Zimbabwe and Namibia were young boys and girls from the age of four upwards. Educational facilities for those young people were urgently needed, and he was pleased to note that an education and agricultural centre was to be built in Solwezi District for Zimbabwean refugees and that the Education and Health Centre at Nyango was being completed. As a result of the raids by Rhodesian rebel forces, refugee camps had had to be moved, and even some of the new sites had been bombed. That had seriously disrupted the planning of educational facilities in the camps, which was why it had not yet been possible to utilize all the funds made available in 1979. The raids had also left a number of refugees permanently disabled and it was unfortunate that the 1980 budget made no provision for assisting handicapped persons in need of rehabilitation. He hoped that the Committee would consider that point.

25. In conclusion, he expressed his Government's sincere appreciation for the co-operation received from UNHCR through its representative in Zambia, and he thanked the many countries, United Nations agencies, ICRC, the Lutheran World Federation and Africare, which had given invaluable assistance to refugees in Zambia.

Section II - Americas

26. Mr. HERRERA CACERES (Observer for Honduras) said that, although his country was not yet a party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, it acted in the spirit of those instruments, which were reflected in its Constitution under which asylum was offered to all those subjected to political persecution. Over 50,000 Nicaraguans had taken refuge in Honduras and, despite its economic limitations, Honduras had helped them. Their gratitude was sufficient thanks and he wished to express his country's gratitude to all those who had helped Honduras to provide for the Nicaraguan refugees, particularly UNHCR, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, OAS, ICRC, WFP and other institutions. His country had always believed that humanitarian questions could not be the subject of bargaining, and therefore the right of asylum should be applied without discrimination. Consequently, Honduras had categorically stated that it would continue to fulfil its humanitarian and social obligations. He was confident that the international community would continue to support Honduras in that task.

27. Mr. MURILLO (Nicaragua) thanked the Director of the Assistance Division for his appeal in favour of Nicaragua, and invited him to help in the resettlement of returning Nicaraguan refugees through the programme established for that purpose. The programme included an allocation of \$5 million for rehabilitation of the agricultural sector, \$3 million for health assistance and protection against epidemics, \$3 million for housing repairs and construction and \$1.5 million to make the educational system operational again. He expressed his thanks to the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, particularly those of Austria, Belgium and Switzerland, which had assisted his country. His Government would have liked to be able to do without such assistance so that other regions could have benefited from it, but its financial situation was such that it could not resettle its refugees without help. He hoped that the richer countries, through UNHCR, would help Nicaragua to solve its pressing problem.

28. Mr. ABEID (Algeria) said that the situation in Nicaragua was of considerable interest to his delegation, and he thanked the High Commissioner for his appeal on behalf of that country. He hoped that the specialized agencies and donor countries which had provided assistance for Nicaraguan refugees would continue to do so.

29. Mr. OSORIO (Colombia) said that, without the valuable collaboration and assistance of UNHCR, the Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social, the national organization established to assist and welcome refugees arriving in his country, would be unable to carry out its work. He expressed his delegation's thanks for the effective work carried out by UNHCR in his region and in Colombia itself.

30. Mr. MARTINEZ (Argentina) expressed his Government's gratitude for the co-operation Argentina had received from UNHCR in dealing with its refugees from Europe and Latin America. At the Geneva Meeting in July, Argentina had offered to take in 1,000 South-East Asian families, who had begun to arrive in their country of final settlement. He pointed out that, because of the date on which it had been published, the proposed budget for 1980 made no provision for the new group of refugees, who would number some 5,000, until they became self-supporting. Since Argentina was a developing country, it could not be expected to meet all the expenses for those South-East Asian refugees. He was certain that UNHCR would take that into account in the revision of the programme budget.

Section III - Asia

31. Mr. SULTAN (Observer for Bangladesh) expressed his Government's deep appreciation to UNHCR for its assistance in caring for and repatriating a quarter of a million Burmese refugees, who had crossed into Bangladesh in 1978 creating a serious problem and an unbearable burden for his country. Bangladesh and Burma had reached an agreement on how to deal with the problem and UNHCR had mobilized the international community to assist Bangladesh. UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, WHO and voluntary agencies, such as the League of Red Cross Societies, had provided food, shelter, clothing, health care, water and transport and, with the full co-operation of the Burmese Government and the help of UNHCR, the problem had been almost entirely solved and it was hoped that the remaining refugees would soon be repatriated. He also drew attention to the problem of the non-Bengali refugees who had been in his country for many years. With the help of UNHCR, his Government had begun to repatriate them and he hoped that, with the assistance of the international community, that problem could also be satisfactorily dealt with.

32. Mr. CLARK (United States of America) said that, although his delegation was deeply concerned about refugees wherever they might be, the situation in South-East Asia had a special urgency which could not be ignored. The suffering of the Indo-Chinese refugees and the inability of most of them to return home or resettle in neighbouring countries required a renewed commitment from the rest of the world to provide assistance and resettlement opportunities. Thanks to the High Commissioner's offices in co-ordinating contributions and programmes of member countries and the devoted work of the voluntary agencies and ICEM, the international community had managed to meet the challenge of the South-East Asian refugee crisis during the past year. As a result of the initiatives of the July Meeting, the immediate situation in South-East Asia, with the notable exception of Kampuchea, had fortunately become somewhat less desperate and unstable.

33. However, the underlying problems remained volatile. First, despite the recent decrease in new arrivals and the increase in departures for resettlement countries, the total number of refugees in South-East Asia remained dangerously high, placing a continuous strain on the resources of countries of first asylum. In the past, that had led to erosion of the principle of first asylum and loss of lives of refugees turned back across land borders or pushed back out to sea. It was encouraging that the principle of first asylum generally seemed to be respected, although his delegation deplored the fact that some refugees had still been pushed back. Furthermore, there was no guarantee that the arrival rate would remain at a manageable level, and it was essential therefore to assure first asylum countries of the international community's commitment to them, and to work with the Vietnamese on a programme of orderly departure.

34. Secondly, the plight of land refugees from Laos and Kampuchea was increasingly desperate. The outflow from Laos had continued at a rate of several thousand per month for a number of years. In Kampuchea, the situation was even more devastating, from the point of view of both the internal conditions and the potential impact of the refugee flow into Thailand. Recent news reports indicated that several thousand refugees were streaming across that border. Inside Kampuchea, the crisis was intensifying as renewed military operations further uprooted the economically deprived and starving civilian population. Steps must be taken immediately to alleviate that monstrous human tragedy and prevent further famine, disease and flight. The existence of an entire people was at stake. It was encouraging to note that the authorities in Kampuchea had granted ICRC and UNICEF permission to open a liaison office at Phnom Penh for an international relief effort. In an initial emergency response to the needs identified by those two organizations, the United States was committing \$5 million for the purchase of 10,000 metric tons of food commodities and \$2 million in cash. It was studying the ICRC/UNICEF appeal to determine its additional contribution.

35. The third area of concern was the safety and well-being of refugees who fled by boat and whose escape was made even more perilous by the constant threat of attack by pirates. His country was prepared to work with others, and, in particular, those in the region, to find ways of protecting refugees from that threat. He also noted that some governments were unwilling to guarantee the resettlement of refugees who had been rescued by ships registered under their flags. The resulting delays in the disembarkation of refugees and the losses to ships' owners discouraged such rescue operations. He called for increased efforts to assist ships' masters and owners facing that dilemma, for to deny rescue at sea was to deny the value of human life.

36. One of the most significant achievements of the Geneva Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held in July 1979 had been the expansion of resettlement opportunities to meet the increased flow of refugees from Indo-China. The United States had doubled its resettlement rate from 7,000 to 14,000 refugees per month and would take in a total of 168,000 Indo-Chinese in the next 12 months; it had already settled 250,000 Indo-Chinese refugees since 1975. In addition, it was increasing its financial contribution to UNHCR for the care and maintenance of Indo-Chinese refugees in camps in South-East Asia. It had recently contributed \$34 million for that purpose and expected to provide 30 per cent of the costs of the Indo-Chinese refugee programme in 1980.

37. Other significant developments that had taken place at the Geneva Meeting were the offer by the Government of the Philippines of a site for a processing centre for 50,000 refugees and the offer by the Government of Indonesia to establish a processing centre for 10,000 refugees on Galang Island. It was to be hoped that refugees could begin to move into those centres in the near future, thus further relieving pressures on first-asylum countries. His country intended to contribute about 30 per cent of the construction costs of those refugee processing centres.

38. One of his country's major goals continued to be that of ensuring respect for the principles of the granting of first asylum and of non-refoulement in the countries of South-East Asia. In order to achieve that goal, refugee populations would have to be reduced significantly and all members of the international community would have to work together to maintain high rates of resettlement and support the establishment of refugee processing centres. They must also support efforts by UNHCR to expand the programme of orderly departure from Viet Nam. The achievement of that goal depended on the presence in Viet Nam of adequate UNHCR staff, including appropriate numbers of nationals of receiving countries, to process visa applications. The United States hoped that the problems of that programme would soon be solved and that orderly departures would completely replace clandestine and assisted departures by boat. In the final analysis, however, the nations of exodus must accept their responsibility to provide tolerable conditions for their people within their own borders.

39. Mr. PHILATHIVONG (Observer for the Lao People's Democratic Republic) reminded the Executive Committee that his country continued to need assistance from UNHCR and the international community to deal with refugees and displaced persons.

40. Mr. ANGKANARAK (Thailand) said that the UNHCR programme for assistance to his country in 1979 and 1980 was a reasonable one that would help it to meet its changing needs, particularly in dealing with the new influx of refugees from Kampuchea that had occurred on 10 and 11 October 1979, when 30,000 more Kampuchean civilians had crossed into his country as a result of renewed fighting in their own country. His Government was providing immediate relief and temporary shelter for those Kampuchean, 85 per cent of whom were ill and starving. His Government was most grateful to the governments, international humanitarian organizations and private voluntary agencies which had been quick to assist it in the humanitarian efforts it was making to care for those people.

41. Mr. INAN (Turkey) expressed sympathy and support for the efforts being made by the Government of Thailand.

42. Mr. LE HUU VAN (Observer for Viet Nam) thanked UNHCR for the assistance it had provided in recent years to enable his country to resettle the many persons who had been displaced prior to 1975 as a result of the war and requested it to complete the various projects which were being carried out for the resettlement of those displaced persons.

43. Most of the Kampuchean refugees for whom his country had been caring had returned to their country after 7 January 1979, but there were still 35,000 and not 30,000, as indicated in paragraph 515 of document A/AC.96/564, for whom his Government had to continue to provide assistance. It hoped that UNHCR would continue to contribute to that assistance programme.

44. In addition, 1,050,000 inhabitants of his country's six southern provinces had been displaced as a result of recent events. His Government had undertaken to resettle them in their former places of residence and had requested assistance from UNHCR for that programme. His Government was co-operating closely with UNHCR and other countries with a view to the speedy implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding referred to in paragraph 528 of document A/AC.95/564.

45. Mr. KONISHI (Japan), referring to paragraphs 541 to 544 of document A/AC.96/564, said that, in addition to its large financial contribution to UNHCR, his Government was making every effort to facilitate the granting of temporary asylum to and the resettlement of refugees in Japan. On 3 April and 13 July 1979, Japan had amended its regulations relating to those matters and had accepted 2,899 asylum-seekers, about 1,700 of whom would remain in Japan, which would soon establish a foundation to promote the resettlement of refugees by offering language courses, vocational training and placement services. It was not easy for his country, which had little territory, a dense population and a difficult language, to accept large numbers of refugees, but it would continue its efforts to that end.

46. Mr. HILL (Canada) said that, in early 1979, his country had decided to establish an annual refugee resettlement plan to identify the numbers, and countries of origin, of the refugees which it would resettle in any given year. That new approach should enable UNHCR, Canadian government agencies and the voluntary sector to provide the necessary resources for assistance to the refugees to be taken in, thus easing the burden of resettlement.

47. In response to the worsening situation of the Indo-Chinese refugees earlier in the year, his Government had decided to increase the number of resettlement places for refugees from that area in 1979 and 1980 and to accept an average of 3,000 refugees per month. He commended UNHCR and ICEM for the assistance they had provided to his country, which, in 1979, would resettle some 23,000 refugees: 20,000 from Indo-China and 3,000 from Eastern Europe and Latin America.

48. In paragraph 388 of document A/AC.96/564, the High Commissioner had drawn attention to the Canadian "Refugee Sponsorship Programme", under which groups of private citizens or established organizations could increase the number of refugees accepted by Canada by undertaking to provide material assistance and counselling for refugee families for a period of one year. His country had also enacted legislation that enabled it to broaden the basis of its refugee selection programme to include, for example, self-exiled persons from Eastern Europe and political detainees in Latin America.

Section IV - Europe

49. Mr. KRIZEK (Austria), referring to paragraphs 557 to 561 of document A/AC.96/564, said that, in a spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing, his country had accepted hundreds of refugees from outside Europe for permanent resettlement in the past few years. Its ability to provide final shelter for refugees from other parts of the world was, however, obviously subject to its moral responsibility for European refugees. From January to September 1979, it had received 3,200 requests for asylum, many more than in previous years. Of the 4,200 asylum-seekers now staying in Austria, 3,750 were of European origin. Since most Eastern European asylum-seekers wished to be granted permission to resettle in other countries, the European countries of first asylum depended on the proper functioning of the resettlement machinery established by UNHCR, ICEM and voluntary agencies. It strongly urged the major resettlement countries to speed up departures from first-asylum countries, not only to enable refugees to reach their new homelands, but also to make space available for newcomers to camps in first-asylum countries.

50. Referring in particular to paragraph 559 of document A/AC.96/564, he said that the Board of the Austrian United Nations Refugee Fund had been working very effectively in the past few years. In 1979, it had dealt with 239 cases, for 152 of which permanent solutions had been found. Countries of first asylum assumed not only humanitarian responsibilities, but also enormous financial burdens. In 1979, Austria would need nearly \$9.5 million to deal with refugee problems.

51. Mr. POUYOUROS (Observer for Cyprus) said that, since the Executive Committee's twenty-ninth session, there had unfortunately been no improvement in the situation of the Cypriot refugees and displaced persons, who constituted one-third of the country's total population. Moreover, an area of about 40 per cent of the national territory of Cyprus representing 70 per cent of its total productive capacity was still under alien occupation.

52. In the past five years, the people and Government of Cyprus had made great efforts to survive and had succeeded in solving some of their most immediate problems, but the Government had not been able to meet all the basic needs of the refugees and displaced persons, who had to be given priority over all other population sectors. A large share of the national budget and of foreign assistance would, for years to come, have to be used for the relief of refugees. Although it was generally accepted that his Government had wisely managed the economic and humanitarian assistance it had received, there was no doubt that further assistance would be needed in 1980. Having consulted UNHCR, his Government therefore once again appealed to potential donor countries for assistance amounting to \$87.4 million, which would be used for housing, education and health.

53. Mr. TOPERI (Turkey) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the impartial and objective way in which UNHCR performed its delicate task of providing humanitarian assistance without arousing controversy. As in the previous year, the Greek Cypriot Observer had exploited the refugee problem in Cyprus, overdramatizing and distorting it, in order to propagate his Government's political version of the situation in the island. Obviously its purpose was, not to solve the refugee problem, but to make political capital out of the humanitarian concern of the international community on the subject.

54. Mr. GOUNARIS (Greece), speaking on a point of order, said that he had very reluctantly been compelled to raise a point of order because his delegation firmly believed that Governments members of the United Nations and their representatives should be addressed in a proper manner, as laid down by the United Nations General Assembly. Failure to do so would appear to be an insult, not only to the country concerned, but to the whole United Nations system. The representative who had had the floor before him had not addressed the representative of the Republic of Cyprus properly, but had used a terminology of his own fancy. He therefore appealed to the Chairman to call the speaker to order.

55. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Committee had been considering continents with immense refugee problems without such difficulties arising. He hoped that common sense would continue to prevail in discussing Europe as well. In giving the floor again to the representative of Turkey he requested him to refer to the representative of Cyprus as the representative and not in any other fashion.
56. Mr. TOPERI (Turkey) said that exploiting the problem for political ends not only undermined the prospects of solving it but seriously jeopardized the work of the Committee. His country's views on the subject had been expressed repeatedly on past occasions, so he would simply refer members of the Committee to the record.
57. Mr. CIARRAPICO (Italy) said his delegation noted with satisfaction that the High Commissioner had adequate funds and staff to deal with the increasing influx of refugees into Italy, and his Government had agreed in principle to the appointment of a resettlement counsellor to the Trieste office.
58. Of the 2,487 asylum-seekers who had entered Italy from Europe, Africa and Latin America during 1978, only 1,370 had been resettled elsewhere, leaving 40 per cent still awaiting final resettlement. That was a heavy burden for the social structure in Italy to bear in view of the difficult economic situation of the country. His delegation therefore appealed to countries of final settlement to simplify and ease their admission procedures in order to speed up immigration.
59. Italy pledged itself to continue to adopt a liberal approach to the refugee problem, as exemplified by the granting of voting rights to the HCR representative within the Eligibility Commission.
60. Mr. TOADER (Observer for Romania) thanked the High Commissioner and the Director of Assistance, on behalf of his Government, for their successful implementation of the first part of the Romanian programme.
61. Mr. TOPERI (Turkey) conveyed his Government's appreciation for the assistance and co-operation given by UNHCR and the Catholic Migration Committee.
62. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider section V and VI of the report. As there were no comments, he drew its attention to document A/AC.96/564/Add.1, which provided additional information on certain countries and included others that had not been dealt with in the main report.
63. Mr. MARKER (Observer for Pakistan) expressed his Government's deep appreciation for the promptness and efficiency with which the High Commissioner and his Office had provided relief to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and also thanked all the other organizations which were concerned in providing assistance. He thanked the representatives of Iran and Turkey for the support they had expressed in the course of the Committee's deliberations. Motivated by the humanitarian considerations embodied in the code of Islam, his Government would continue to give the refugees asylum until such time as they could return to their homes in safety.

64. The number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan was currently estimated to be over 200,000 and the influx was still continuing. The onset of winter increased the hardships they had to bear and added to the burden of assistance. His Government was doing all it could within its limited resources and hoped that the High Commissioner would give sympathetic consideration to its request for further funding as and when it became necessary.

65. Mr. SAID-VAZIRI (Iran) said that the massive influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan had placed an immense burden on the Government. The sums earmarked for assistance, as indicated in document A/AC.96/564/Add.1, were barely adequate, and a large proportion of them would in any case be absorbed by administrative expenses.

66. With regard to the three North African countries in section I of the main report, he would like to make it clear that his delegation shared the concern expressed by the representative of Algeria about the sums earmarked for assistance to the Sahrawis in Algeria in 1980.

67. The CHAIRMAN said that consideration of the question of assistance itself had been concluded. He drew the Committee's attention to two texts requiring the approval of the Committee: Schedule A - Summary of proposals requiring the formal approval of the Executive Committee - on page xxvii of Introduction to the main report, and paragraph 5 of the addendum, which contained the table of revised needs within the General Programmes.

68. Mrs. SELAMI-MESLEM (Algeria) said that her delegation strongly supported the proposals in principle, but in speaking previously on section I of document A/AC.96/564 in relation to the proposals, she had made a number of requests and did not know whether UNHCR intended to follow them up.

69. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of Algeria that all requests made during the Committee's deliberations would be noted in the report. What was required at the moment was approval of the programme as a whole and of its general objectives, and that would not be incompatible with the specific requests made by delegations.

70. Mr. MATIKO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation supported the summary of proposals as a whole. However, in relation to (c), he recalled that the Director of Administration had said on the previous day, with respect to staff recruitment, that attention should be paid solely to competence. In the view of his delegation, that was not compatible with the terms of the General Assembly resolution on equitable geographical distribution of staff in the Office of the Secretary-General, to which, it understood, UNHCR directly appertained. Moreover, it appeared from paragraphs 15-20 in document A/AC.96/570 that developing countries would not be in a position to contribute staff at, for instance, the junior professional level, under the procedures envisaged. Consequently, the developing countries would not get proper consideration in the staffing of the Office. In that connexion, his delegation commended the actions taken by the Netherlands in financing junior professional officer posts to be filled by appointees from developing countries.

71. The CHAIRMAN said that UNHCR was not subject to the rules laid down in the General Assembly resolution in question.

72. Mr. OWOAJE (Nigeria) agreed with the views expressed by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on the composition of the staff, and hoped that the imbalance would shortly be rectified.

73. Mrs. SELLAMI-MESLEM (Algeria) associated her delegation with those of the United Republic of Tanzania and Nigeria on the matter of staff composition. Africans had a special understanding of the problems on their own continent and were therefore particularly well-equipped to deal with them within UNHCR.

74. With regard to Schedule A, her delegation would not enter any reservations provided that the necessary changes were made in section I in respect of the three North African countries. When a country had more than 50,000 refugees, it was only natural that special mention should be made of it. First, she hoped that a corrigendum would be issued before the end of the session indicating that Algeria had a number of African refugees, mainly students, some European refugees and a small group of Latin-American refugees, but that by far the largest group consisted of Sahrawis, as the UNHCR representative himself had recognized. Secondly, the Sahrawi refugees should be included in the General Programme. Her request to that effect had been supported by many of the members of the Executive Committee.

75. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the representative of Algeria should discuss with the secretariat the best way to incorporate the points she had raised into the decisions.

76. Mr. SEFAKO (Lesotho), referring to point (f) in Schedule A, pointed out that Lesotho had not been taken into consideration in the carry-over of funds to 1980, especially for ongoing projects, and asked for an assurance that the omission would be rectified.

77. He thanked the HCR secretariat for providing him with the information he had requested on the structure of the Office.

78. With respect to the references made to non-refugee situations in the course of the discussions, he hoped that the Office's involvement in such situations would not impair its capacity to deal with the problems that came more properly within its competence.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.