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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Fortieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 440th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Friday, 6 October 1989, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. DANNENBRING (Federal Republic
of Germany)

General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mrs. RUESTA (Venezuela) paid tribute to the excellent statement made by Mr. Jamal, outgoing Chairman of the Committee. He had presented an extremely useful balance sheet of UNHCR's work at the beginning of the meeting and her delegation would like his statement to be published in full, if possible as a working document.
2. Venezuela had always supported United Nations action on behalf of refugees, as was obvious from its active participation in the Committee's work since its establishment, its accession to a number of legal instruments that constituted a tangible expression of international solidarity and its contribution, albeit modest, to UNHCR's general programmes.
3. Its support should not waver at a time when UNHCR faced new constraints. For that reason, the head of the Government of Venezuela had agreed to the opening of a UNHCR regional office in Caracas, as a means of supporting UNHCR's international protection activities on behalf of refugees and displaced persons throughout the world.
4. Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that there was little hope of finding durable solutions to the situation of refugees, as long as aggression, war and the economic gap between the rich and poor countries persisted in the world. It was nevertheless gratifying that the issue was on the agenda of the Sub-Committee of the Whole for International Protection and of the Executive Committee.
5. As for the political causes of the situation, the emerging climate of international understanding was conducive to humanitarian solutions; however, less progress had been made in respect of its economic causes. Unequal distribution of wealth among countries would inevitably increase the number of refugees throughout the world. While the Committee could not deal with problems that were not within its competence, the refugee problem had to be situated within its political and economic context, particularly in respect of the donor countries. Furthermore, while the burden of accepting refugees was shouldered by the host countries, other countries were under a moral obligation to share that responsibility.
6. Iran had continued to receive a large number of refugees in 1989. The repatriation of Afghans, which had been expected to follow the withdrawal of Soviet forces had encountered political complications. While continuing its efforts aimed at bringing about a political solution, the Islamic Republic of Iran was maintaining its humanitarian aid to millions of individuals. The international contribution was minimal compared with needs and Iran's contribution.
7. In the absence of any prospect of large-scale repatriation in the near future, long-term development projects had been drawn up, as had always been recommended by the Executive Committee. One example was the joint IFAD-UNHCR project for the rehabilitation of the South Khorasan range lands which had been exhausted as a result of over-farming by refugees. Implementation of the project had been delayed owing to lack of financial resources.

8. In spite of UNHCR's commendable work in the field, in Tehran and in Geneva, the slow progress being made was also attributable to the cumbersome nature of the bureaucratic apparatus. UNHCR should adopt more flexible procedures so as to be able to provide better and more rapid assistance.
9. His delegation was gratified that a separate agenda item had been devoted to the issue of refugee women and children, as every effort should be made to strengthen the protection of that particularly vulnerable group of refugees.
10. Mr. CHAVANIA (Nicaragua) recalled the difficulties faced by the countries of Central America, which had been affected by the cut-back in UNHCR's 1989 budget, and thanked the High Commissioner for having appealed for international solidarity the previous day. His delegation was gratified by the additional contributions announced by some members of the Committee with a view to reducing the deficit, and expressed the hope that those who had indicated their intention of following that example would do so as soon as possible.
11. The process of negotiation and reconciliation under way in Central America had led to the Tela peace agreements. As a result, in May the countries of the region had been able to submit to the International Conference on Central American Refugees, in Guatemala, proposals for a durable solution. In that connection, the resolution in support of the Conference, adopted by the Executive Committee the previous year, should be reaffirmed at the current session; the delegations from the region would shortly submit a text to that effect for consideration by the Committee.
12. The repatriation movement that had begun from Nicaragua towards El Salvador and Guatemala was continuing. It had been facilitated by the action of the tripartite commission of the three Governments and UNHCR, but the countries concerned required international assistance that went beyond short-term repatriation measures. While emergency aid was essential in the short run, it could not achieve lasting solutions.
13. He understood the concern expressed by a number of delegations regarding UNHCR's mandate, the need to establish an order of priority in the programmes and to review their content. Lasting solutions were, in any event, linked to structural development aid. In order to mitigate the financial crisis, UNHCR could appeal to other bodies within the United Nations system, as in the case of the Conference on Central American Refugees.
14. In view of the common desire to tackle the root of the problem, no effort should be spared to strike the necessary balance between needs and resources, as peace itself was at stake. He suggested that UNHCR should prepare a plan of action to collect funds, with more ambitious objectives than meeting immediate needs, and with the continuing support of a body or unit set up for that purpose.
15. Mr. CHAALAL (Algeria) observed that refugee movements, whether they involved repatriation following the end of regional conflicts or the exodus caused by new emergency situations, imposed new burdens and required fresh efforts to bolster the resources of UNHCR.

16. His delegation was satisfied by UNHCR's activities over the previous year. The International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees, held in Geneva, and the International Conference on Central American Refugees, held in Guatemala, had identified ways and means of tackling the problems affecting those two regions, while respecting human rights and dignity.

17. However, there were grounds for serious concern over the situation in Africa, where for many years the largest number of refugees and displaced persons had been recorded. The repatriation of the Namibians, under the auspices of the United Nations, and in particular of UNHCR, was gratifying, as was the voluntary repatriation of other peoples such as Ethiopians, Chadians, Ugandans and Burundis. However, millions of individuals remained in exile and were suffering hardship. Their presence was an additional burden borne by countries whose economies were already in a precarious condition. Algeria was making great sacrifices on behalf of the Sahrawis pending the referendum on self-determination, which was to be conducted in the Western Sahara.

18. The Organization of African Unity had set up appropriate bodies and machinery, such as the Bureau for Refugees, the Commission of Fifteen and the Refugees Contingency Fund, although resources were inadequate in comparison with requirements. International assistance should therefore be continued and even expanded. The decisions taken by the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa should also be implemented as a matter of urgency in order to stem the exodus of the populations of Southern Africa.

19. His delegation was deeply concerned by the gaps in the protection of refugees, identified in the High Commissioner's report, as well as by the large number of cases of rejection, discrimination or infringements of the security of individuals, which were incompatible with respect for human dignity and international legal instruments in force.

20. In view of the difficulties faced by UNHCR in its humanitarian work, renewed efforts were necessary on the part of donor countries to provide it with the necessary additional resources. At the same time, the economic and structural aspects of the refugee picture should be examined and all new responsibilities of solving the problem explored.

21. Mr. HAMDANE (Lebanon) said that the refugee problem had always been connected with security in the world and that the improvement of international relations would allow many regional conflicts to be settled. Lebanon was one of many examples of such conflicts, which gave rise to major migrations of populations both within the country as well as to other countries. His delegation hoped that action by the Tripartite Arab Commission would be successful and that young Lebanese would no longer have to seek refuge in other countries. He expressed thanks to UNHCR, and in particular the High Commissioner, the donor countries and the host countries, since they had all helped to relieve the suffering of the Lebanese people.

22. UNHCR's burden had increased steadily ever since its establishment, and it was inevitable in the circumstances that it should have encountered two snags - one administrative and the other financial. However, as the needs of people who were suffering in exile required rapid action and the adoption of

specific measures which were difficult to reconcile with unavoidable bureaucratic constraints, a measure of flexibility was needed. His delegation was nevertheless highly appreciative of the work accomplished by UNHCR officials both at headquarters and in the field. Furthermore, it considered that social assistance was one of the key components of measures on behalf of refugees and hoped that it would supplement other forms of assistance.

23. As had been observed by other delegations, the best means of solving the refugee problem was to adopt, as quickly as possible, the necessary preventive measures by observing the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations, which had been adopted by the international community at the end of the Second World War in order to maintain peace and security and to ensure respect for human rights.

24. The solution to the problem was perhaps simpler than it seemed. It lay in respect for the rights of others and implied a desire on the part of countries to participate in the construction of a peaceful world, and to renounce war and the manufacture of weapons.

25. Unfortunately, as long as the gap between rich and poor remained, such a solution was hard to conceive. Without peace, however, there was no likelihood of the refugee problem disappearing. Accordingly, it was the duty of the international community, and above all of the rich countries, to provide the unfortunate persons concerned with assistance, to try to mitigate their suffering and to provide UNHCR with the resources it required.

26. The criteria adopted for granting refugee status should also be respected. On no account should refugees be discriminated against on grounds of race, beliefs, religion or country of origin. UNHCR should take action wherever it was necessary to do so, both in the developing and the developed countries. Straightforward and universally applicable procedures should therefore be agreed upon to enable it to assist refugees wherever they might be and regardless of local circumstances.

27. He was gratified by UNHCR's efforts and the results it had achieved. However, if it was to pursue its activities it required the unstinting support of the international community, without which nothing was possible.

28. Mr. RASAPUTRAM (Observer for Sri Lanka) said that his delegation had listened with much interest to the High Commissioner's statement, and in particular to his remarks on the need to seek durable solutions by reconciling the humanitarian objectives of UNHCR and the legitimate interests of States. It was, moreover, in that perspective, that two years previously the Sri Lankan authorities had entered into an agreement with UNHCR for the implementation of a Special Programme in their country. The time had come to review the progress made.

29. The UNHCR programme which had initially been designed to facilitate the resettlement of Sri Lankan returnees from southern India and to assist internally displaced persons within the country had been extended to benefit all returnees, whatever their origin.

30. UNHCR had at the outset provided basic logistic support (reception, registration, immunization and transport of returnees and distribution of basic household utensils). The expanded programme, however, included the

construction of housing units for 13,000 families and the provision of 2,000 rupees per family, in addition to the contribution of the Government of Sri Lanka to the returnees.

31. A number of observations were in order regarding the security conditions in which the programme had been implemented. Following the presidential and parliamentary elections, the President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Premadasa, had appealed to all militant groups to settle differences through a process of compromise, consultation and consensus. The Government had already had a series of talks with representatives of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Furthermore, India and Sri Lanka had recently issued a joint communiqué on the cessation of military operations and the withdrawal of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force. Those positive developments would undoubtedly help to restore normal conditions in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

32. It should also be mentioned that, at the invitation of the Government of Sri Lanka, almost all the country's political parties had met together in a collective effort to restore peace and had appealed to the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, a group still outside the mainstream of national political life, to rejoin the democratic process.

33. The broad political initiatives taken by the Government of Sri Lanka to restore peace and normalcy were bound to have a positive impact on the reintegration of all displaced persons and returnees.

34. The Government and people of Sri Lanka deeply appreciated the assistance they had received from the High Commissioner and the staff of UNHCR over the previous two years. They also appreciated the generous contributions made by the donor community to finance the programme carried out in Sri Lanka.

35. In the future, greater attention would have to be focused on the restoration of infrastructure in the affected areas in order to strengthen the reintegration process. As the High Commissioner had noted, there was an urgent need for assistance not just to the areas which bore the burden of receiving externally displaced persons, but also to those where the returnees resettled. In the view of the Government of Sri Lanka, it was necessary in particular to reorganize agriculture and rehabilitate irrigation works and agrarian service centres, to repair farm buildings, animal husbandry centres and co-operatives and to provide them with equipment and, finally, to restore essential community services (health and social services, schools, water supply, etc.) and to improve roads, railways and telecommunications.

36. His Government looked forward to UNHCR's continuing participation, in so far as possible, in the rehabilitation programme in Sri Lanka, since that would undoubtedly facilitate the efforts it was making to restore peace in the island.

37. Mrs. DOS SANTOS (Observer for Angola) observed that among the significant events that had occurred since the Executive Committee's thirty-ninth session, the repatriation of Namibian refugees was of particular importance as it represented both a historic milestone in the history of Africa and of the world as well as an important stage in the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978).

38. The Government of the People's Republic of Angola, in which the largest number of Namibian refugees had sought asylum, had undertaken, together with UNHCR and SWAPO, the repatriation of all those who wished to return to their country.

39. In order to cope with that enormous task, a tripartite committee had been established and the programme of work drawn up in advance had been carried out within the time-limits laid down. Some 35,000 Namibians had thus been able to return to their country. Her delegation wished to express its sincere thanks to all those countries and organizations that had generously helped to finance that repatriation operation.

40. In keeping with the principle that repatriation was the most suitable solution for refugees, on 20 September 1989 the Government of Angola had, in agreement with Zaire, begun to repatriate Zairian refugees who had expressed the desire to return to their country of origin. Simultaneously, thousands of Angolan refugees in Zaire had returned to Angola to resettle in their home provinces.

41. As regards legal protection, a bill governing the status of refugees within the territory of the People's Republic of Angola had just been drawn up; it would be submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration and adopted shortly.

42. While the problems posed by refugees in Angola had become somewhat less acute during 1989 owing to a considerable reduction in their numbers, the resettlement of displaced persons and Angolan returnees remained foremost among the concerns of the Party and Government of Angola.

43. At the Conference held in Luanda on 22 September 1989, the Angolan authorities had requested emergency aid from the international community to meet the needs of some 640,000 displaced persons and to provide assistance to some 1.5 million individuals affected by displacement in both urban and rural areas, so as to offset the considerable agricultural and livestock losses suffered as a result of the drought experienced by regions in the centre and south of the country and to provide assistance to 58,200 persons affected by floods in the Bengo and Kwanza Norte provinces, as well as to the 600,000 returnees expected during the current year or at the beginning of the following year on account of the implementation of the peace plan drawn up by the Government of Angola with a view to national reconciliation.

44. Since the adoption of the amnesty law, several thousand Angolans who had been abroad, essentially in Zaire and Zambia, but also in other European or American countries, or who had taken to the bush, had returned home. Some of them were professionals whom it was fairly easy to reintegrate into Angolan society; however, the majority, who were peasants, would find on their return that their villages had been destroyed in the war and their fields abandoned. In order to reintegrate them into society the Government of Angola would have to make considerable efforts of which, in spite of its good will, it would be incapable without outside help. Her delegation therefore reiterated its appeal to donor countries and international organizations for assistance, and in particular for agricultural implements, essential goods, seeds and construction materials which would be distributed to the returnees to enable them to build their houses themselves.

45. The 600,000 persons (i.e. some 100,000 families) who would return to Angola to begin a new life would initially be totally destitute. The success of the operation as a whole would depend on the support given to the first returnees. Since many of them had been granted refugee status in other countries, the Angolan Government was counting on UNHCR support to carry out its proposed reintegration programmes.
46. Her Government was actively involved in the search for solutions to guarantee an equitable and lasting peace in the region - examples being the agreement signed in New York on 22 December 1988 which had established the conditions necessary for the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) on the independence of Namibia, and the Luanda and Gbadolite summits, held on 16 May and 26 June 1989 respectively in order to seek appropriate means of ensuring effective implementation of the internal peace plan of the People's Republic of Angola.
47. She was convinced that the international community would understand the difficulties faced by her country in meeting the pressing needs of millions of Angolans and would demonstrate its solidarity by providing emergency aid.
48. Mr. VARGA (Observer for Hungary) said that he had listened with keen interest to the statements by the representatives of Sweden, Japan, Canada, Austria, Israel, Finland and the Federal Republic of Germany, who had expressed their appreciation of the action taken by Hungary on behalf of refugees. Generally speaking, the statements made in the general debate reflected the determination of countries and their desire to overcome current difficulties and find solutions to refugee problems.
49. The accession of Hungary to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the 1967 Protocol had been an extremely important and timely political act, since from the second half of 1987 a growing number of persons seeking asylum had begun to enter Hungary from Romania. By the end of September, the number of refugees, most of whom were of Hungarian origin, had reached more than 20,000. The Government of Hungary had come to grips with the problem and rapidly provided the refugees with all necessary humanitarian assistance.
50. Hungary's accession to the Convention had been an act of far-reaching significance because, on the one hand, it had brought much closer the desired goal of the universality of the principles set out in international instruments relating to refugee law and, on the other it had underlined the importance attached by Hungary to co-operation with the international community and UNHCR in order to protect refugees, provide them with assistance and help them to resettle. Hungary shared the view of other States parties to the Convention that it was more urgent than ever to implement United Nations General Assembly resolution 41/70, in which Members of the United Nations were reminded of their obligation to eliminate the causes and factors that led to the emergence of refugee problems and that, it would seem, consisted essentially of violations of human rights. Genuine international co-operation to that end was highly desirable and even necessary.
51. In the context of the ongoing process to establish political democracy and create a constitutional pluralist State governed by the rule of law, Hungary, which was fully aware of the close relationship between violations of

human rights and refugee problems, attached the utmost importance to eradicating all forms of discrimination against minorities, and in particular ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and intended to devote itself to the achievement of that goal.

52. He expressed satisfaction that the documents prepared by UNHCR indicated its appreciation of the manner in which the Hungarian authorities were dealing with the problems posed by the arrival in Hungary of tens of thousands of asylum-seekers. An important agreement had recently been signed by the High Commissioner and the Hungarian Secretary of State for Internal Affairs concerning the implementation of an assistance programme covering, in particular, the establishment of the necessary infrastructure at three reception centres, the provision of medical facilities, contributions to the Government's housing scheme and the cost of reproducing educational material. Those various contributions were aimed at supporting the Hungarian Government which was facing a rather critical economic and financial situation. Another important agreement on the opening of a UNHCR branch office in Budapest had been signed the previous day, and should enable UNHCR and Hungary to develop closer bonds and to co-operate more actively.

53. By becoming the 106th State party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, Hungary had joined the ranks of those States that were striving in an exemplary manner to comply with and promote the basic humanitarian standards and principles which should guide the international community in settling refugees' problems.

54. Mr. MUKWEWA (Observer for Zimbabwe) said he was convinced that, in spite of the financial hurricane that was threatening many refugee programmes, the Chairman of the Executive Committee at its fortieth session would prove a capable helmsman and steer it clear of any obstacles. His personal experience of diplomacy and the interest he shared with his country in the problems of refugees would be valuable assets to UNHCR's programme.

55. His delegation deplored the steadily increasing number of refugees throughout the world, particularly in Africa, Indonesia, Central America and the Middle East. It was saddening to think of those 12 million persons condemned to the misery of exile without the faintest idea as to when it would end and with no indication that they would ever be able to go back to their homeland. They led an uncertain life and could count only on the generosity of the international community. When refugees returned home, they occasionally lived with the nagging doubt that the dynamics that had initially made them seek refuge abroad might recur.

56. His delegation congratulated the High Commissioner and the staff of UNHCR for their outstanding work in bringing assistance and comfort to refugees and keeping alight the candle of hope. Thanks were also due to the donor community whose generous contributions allowed UNHCR to continue its work.

57. The proposed restructuring at UNHCR headquarters would be most welcome if it enabled the organization to channel more funds to refugees and into the repatriation process. The primary objective of restructuring should be the achievement of efficiency in financial management and the rational use of available resources to meet the basic needs of refugees. The proposed budget

was minimal, since \$US 414 million for 12 million beneficiaries amounted to barely \$34.5 per refugee per year (including administrative and operational costs). Consequently, the restructuring and any other measures taken by the High Commissioner to reduce costs would be welcome provided it did not compromise the efficiency of UNHCR or its ability promptly to respond to crisis situations. UNHCR's task was far from an easy one, as it was required simultaneously to solve the financial puzzle and to provide assistance to an increasing number of refugees (over 700,000) from dwindling financial resources.

58. He noted with satisfaction that UNHCR's voluntary repatriation efforts had enabled 350,000 refugees to return to their homes. However, those efforts must be continued and intensified, as the number of returnees was small in comparison with the number of new refugees. His Government was gratified that over 41,000 Namibian refugees had returned to Namibia where they would be able to participate in the forthcoming elections to be held in accordance with Security Council resolution 435 leading to Namibia's independence.

59. With regard to UNHCR's current financial difficulties, his Government was concerned by the apparent desire to tackle the consequences rather than the root causes of the problem. If so many people throughout the world felt the need to seek refuge abroad, it was because the socio-political system in their home country was unsatisfactory. Although such was perhaps not the function of the Executive Committee, the international community should do its utmost to eliminate those root causes if it wished to reduce the number of refugees and be able to devote the funds currently being used to care for and maintain refugees to promoting development.

60. In southern Africa, it was apartheid and the policy of destabilization pursued by the Government of South Africa that were the root cause of the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

61. Without wishing to minimize the efforts being made by the donor countries, host countries and the international community as a whole to assist refugees and repair the damage already done, his Government favoured damage prevention, all the more so because it was perhaps the solution to UNHCR's current financial difficulties.

62. Mr. MARKIDES (Observer for Cyprus) observed that the improvement in the international climate had not been matched by the solution of the problem of refugees, which was becoming increasingly more widespread geographically and more extensive in terms of numbers. Moreover, the usual causes of the problem, such as wars, disturbances, natural calamities, and failure to respect human rights, were compounded by the great difference between the standards of living of the rich and poor countries, which filled the ranks of asylum-seekers with people who left their country solely to seek a better future.

63. The international community must act immediately in tackling the problem, in particular through co-operation, so as to find just and viable solutions to the problems that had created refugees and displaced persons. However, it would be even more effective if the international community were to prevent the emergence or escalation of situations which, if allowed to deteriorate, would lead to new waves of refugees, by ensuring observance of various

international human rights instruments, and in particular, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community should also improve the lot of refugees and find durable solutions. Small or poor countries, geographically close to regions beset by trouble should not be left to deal with the problem alone. The international community should also strengthen the capabilities of UNHCR and the other international organizations dealing with refugees and displaced persons. However, this in no way precluded close, open and constant scrutiny of those organizations, of their role and of their budgets.

64. It should also be borne in mind that the problem of refugees, involved human beings and, in the last analysis, the future of mankind. For that reason, a number of possible solutions had to be taken into consideration. For example, refugees could be offered resettlement in a third country with the prospect that, when they fulfilled the normal criteria they could be naturalized in that country; they could be integrated into their country of asylum, thus enabling them to cease to be refugees; or they could be repatriated to their country of origin on condition that they gave their consent and the necessary guarantees of their safety were provided.

65. Cyprus was a small country with limited resources and had an enormous refugee problem of its own. However, that had not prevented it from responding, within its limits, to the numerous appeals made for durable solutions to refugee problems in all parts of the world. It would continue to extend assistance and hospitality to the thousands of refugees from neighbouring friendly countries as long as such assistance and hospitality were necessary.

66. Lastly, he observed that if lack of money was the only problem, and if the desire to help those in need and the determination to attack the roots of the problem were not wanting, the members of the Executive Committee could still cherish the hope that had inspired them at the previous session.

67. Mr. KAMARA (Observer for Mauritania) informed the Executive Committee that in 1989, Mauritania, with a population of only 2 million, had received over 200,000 persons, more than a quarter of whom were bona fide refugees. Guided by Islamic traditions of solidarity and mutual assistance, the Mauritanian people had come to grips with those problems. He thanked those friendly countries that had assisted Mauritania in that task and the non-governmental organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had done remarkable work. UNHCR was currently making a praiseworthy effort to familiarize itself with the situation and subsequently to take action by setting up a suitable programme.

68. His delegation endorsed the remarks made by other delegations regarding the close link that should exist between refugee assistance and development aid. It also subscribed to the views expressed by the representatives of Belgium and France. It was convinced that priority should be given to direct assistance for refugees, and while recognizing that UNHCR activities should be confined to protection, considered that the importance of development aid should not be overlooked, since it could enable refugees to become self-sufficient. Such an approach implied tripartite action by Governments, UNDP and UNHCR.

69. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that, notwithstanding its financial difficulties, UNHCR would be able to participate in the efforts being made by the Government of Mauritania to resettle the refugees it had received.

70. Mr. NGO (Observer for Democratic Kampuchea) said that as a result of aggression and continuing foreign occupation, there were approximately 1 million Kampuchean refugees in other countries, as well as 250,000 displaced persons along the border with Thailand and hundreds of thousands of other displaced persons within their own country. In addition, over 1 million persons had died under the occupation. The coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and the Kampuchean people wished once again to express their sincere thanks to Thailand and to all those countries that had provided Cambodians with refuge and assistance, as well as to all the international and non-governmental organizations that had gone to their help.

71. He expressed deep regret that, despite the unflagging efforts of the international community, the countries members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and France, at the recent international conference on Cambodia, had failed to produce a solution as Viet Nam had categorically refused to accept the five-point peace plan of Mr. Norodom Sihanouk, which was the only plan capable of providing a just, equitable and lasting solution to the problem.

72. In its desire to obtain Western aid, Viet Nam had resorted to the subterfuge of "total and unilateral withdrawal". However, as Mr. Norodom Sihanouk had observed in his message to the forty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, read by Mr. Son Sann, "by refusing to place the total withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces in Cambodia under the effective control of the United Nations and by opposing the formation of a provisional quadripartite government of Cambodia capable of allowing the Cambodian people freely and democratically to choose their leaders, Viet Nam has simply demonstrated that it has no intention of putting an end to its colonial occupation of Cambodia, and to its policy of annexing Cambodia within the Indo-Chinese federation In fact, after 27 September 1989 there were still tens of thousands of armed Vietnamese, disguised as 'Cambodian' officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers and militiamen in the army and militia of the régime of Mr. Hun Sen and Mr. Heng Samrin, in addition to a million Vietnamese settlers occupying our land and exploiting our natural resources".

73. The settlement of Vietnamese colonists in Cambodia since 1979, in violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, prevented the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons in their own country. It was essential, within the framework of a global political solution, that all Vietnamese settlers should leave Cambodia under the supervision of international United Nations monitoring machinery and, naturally, with the co-operation of the provisional quadripartite government of national reconciliation under Mr. Norodom Sihanouk.

74. The Phnom Penh régime, which was a mere invention of the occupying Power and which had been imposed on the Cambodian people by force, was unlawful. His delegation deeply regretted that UNHCR had decided to sign an Aide-Mémoire on the problem of repatriation with a régime described as a de facto Government in UNHCR's report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1989/64).

In view of present circumstances it was hard to see how UNHCR could guarantee or ensure the safety of returnees while Cambodia was still occupied and ravaged by fighting. His delegation fully shared the view expressed by the Thai delegation concerning the establishment of "reception centres" in Cambodia. It was clearly necessary to exercise extreme caution as long as Cambodia was occupied, namely, as long as the cause of the problem remained. The successive resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, which had emphasized the inalienable right of the Kampuchean people to return safely to their homeland, had also emphasized that no effective solution to humanitarian problems could be achieved without a comprehensive political settlement of the Kampuchean conflict.

75. His delegation was convinced that all peace-loving and justice-loving countries would not fail to pursue their efforts to achieve a genuine, comprehensive, equitable and lasting solution to what was known as the "Kampuchea" problem, in order to bring to an end the immeasurable suffering endured by the Cambodian people and to allow the 300,000 Cambodian refugees and displaced persons, who had been waiting outside their country for almost 11 years, to return to their homeland voluntarily, safely and with dignity.

76. Mr. BIDANDISSALI (Observer for Uganda) commended UNHCR on the way it had handled the repatriation of Namibian exiles as called for under Security Council resolution 435 (1978), and on having obtained a complete amnesty for all Namibian exiles, thereby making implementation of the settlement plan possible. The voluntary repatriation of Namibian exiles in time to participate in free and fair elections leading to Namibia's independence was in point of fact the cornerstone of the settlement plan. His delegation appealed to the international community to continue to support the Namibian people by contributing generously to the rehabilitation and reintegration of Namibian returnees and displaced persons, so as to enable an independent Namibia to play its full role within the community of nations.

77. His delegation also hoped that the racist South African régime would eventually yield so that Azania could be free. In order to put into effect the conclusions and recommendations of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, held in Oslo in August 1988, it was essential to set up a special unit within UNHCR to exert constant pressure on the racist régime, until apartheid was completely dismantled.

78. His delegation noted with satisfaction the initiatives taken by the High Commissioner to rationalize his Office so as to be able better to discharge its protection and assistance functions. The Executive Committee should support UNHCR's efforts to tackle the financial crisis and ensure that the basic needs of refugees continued to be met, particularly in third world countries which had received the vast majority of refugees but which were least able to meet the material needs, not only of refugees, but also of their own citizens.

79. For example, Uganda, which in 1989 had played a vital role, in co-operation with UNHCR, in arranging emergency care for and the settlement of approximately 60,000 new Sudanese refugees, had barely recovered from the

effects of decades of civil strife and destruction, aggravated by the sudden collapse of the market for coffee, a crop that provided 95 per cent of its foreign exchange.

80. Programmes aimed at achieving durable solutions and providing refugee care called for heavy expenditure, which should be shared by all countries. For their part, countries of asylum provided land, education, employment and protection and generally shared their lives with refugees, and would be compelled to continue to bear the greater part of the burden if the international community failed to provide UNHCR with generous financial support.

81. While every effort must be made to find a solution to UNHCR's budgetary crisis, the Executive Committee should continue its search for permanent solutions to the refugee problem in the form of voluntary repatriation and local integration. His delegation was pleased to note the High Commissioner's reference to the successful conclusion of the repatriation of 320,000 Ugandan refugees from Sudan, and was grateful to him and his staff for their commendable performance. The repatriation of those refugees and of more than 200,000 others that had returned from other countries unassisted had been made possible by the politically and ethnically broad-based Government that had come to power in 1986 and pursued a policy of reconciliation and reconstruction. In addition, following the offer of amnesty and a Presidential pardon to all persons who had been trying to wage war against the State in the northern and north-eastern parts of Uganda, the rebels had surrendered in such large numbers that the war had virtually ended and peace prevailed throughout the country. The returnees and former rebels had resettled without reprisal or discrimination. Uganda had entered a period of renewal in its history, in which the words reconstruction and human rights had become an integral part of the national vocabulary, so much so that it could be hoped that never again would a Ugandan be a refugee.

82. In the wake of Uganda's recent experience that had shown voluntary repatriation to be a durable solution to the problem of refugees, his delegation emphasized that such a solution was not possible without the consent and co-operation of the country of origin and of the refugees themselves. The international community should take action against those countries which refused to take back their citizens when the conditions that had forced them to flee changed.

83. Mr. SHARMA (Observer for India) said that his delegation too was concerned by the increase in the number of refugees in the world, by the magnitude of exoduses and by the suffering of millions of refugees and displaced persons. Accordingly, it supported the efforts being made by UNHCR in its search for lasting solutions to the refugee problem and ways of increasing international protection and assistance to refugees, both in terms of their care and repatriation. It hoped that the necessary attention would be focused on the tentative conclusions suggested for further study and consideration by the round table held in San Remo in August 1989.

84. Although the number of persons who claimed to be refugees or asylum-seekers but were in fact seeking better standards of living was on the increase, most refugees were the result of human rights violations and conflicts. Consequently, humanitarian considerations should be directly

related to the search for durable solutions to refugee problems. In many cases, the restoration of acceptable human rights standards in the refugees' country of origin was a vital prerequisite for the successful resolution of the problem. It was in that spirit that the Commission on Human Rights had repeatedly urged all Governments to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant international instruments. In the final analysis, the solution to the problem of refugees was linked to the challenge of promoting and upholding standards of human and governmental behaviour worthy of the ideals of the United Nations.

85. India, which had a long-standing tradition of protecting and assisting refugees, believed that the repatriation of refugees should be on a voluntary basis. Since July 1983 it had provided asylum to more than 130,000 Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. Following the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, more than 40,000 refugees had voluntarily returned to their country. On their return to Sri Lanka, after having spent four years in India, they had received rehabilitation assistance from UNHCR.

86. Moreover, India continued to give refuge to nearly 67,000 refugees from Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh had affirmed its commitment to take back all the refugees and had informed India that it was doing its utmost to create conditions conducive to their return, the refugees unfortunately remained unconvinced that they could return home in satisfactory conditions. Consequently, it was up to Bangladesh to try to get them to return voluntarily and at an early date.

87. India was in favour of a political settlement to the Afghan problem in accordance with the Geneva Agreements. It supported United Nations efforts to provide humanitarian and economic assistance to the Afghan refugees and had pledged a total of 100 million rupees as financial assistance for their rehabilitation; 50 million of that amount was to be channelled through the Office of the Co-ordinator for Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan, and 50 million would be made available on a bilateral basis.

88. The United Nations was to be commended on its work in facilitating the repatriation of Namibian refugees. Notwithstanding the numerous obstacles encountered, the task of transporting and resettling the refugees had been carried out with speed and efficiency, thereby enabling voters to register as a further step towards freedom.

89. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that the current session of the Executive Committee would look beyond administrative and programming problems, important though they were, to the principles and ideals that must inspire a major humanitarian organization in the modern world. UNHCR had an important mandate to fulfil and the deliberations of the Executive Committee should assist it in that task.

90. Mr. UPINDI (Observer for Malawi) recalled that the previous year, at the last session, he had informed the Executive Committee that his country was hosting over half a million refugees and that there was hope of their number diminishing, either by voluntary repatriation or by a slowdown in the influx of refugees. A tripartite commission had been set up to facilitate the

repatriation of those who desired to return to Mozambique, and in December 1988 an agreement had been signed between UNHCR, Malawi and Mozambique setting up machinery to help those Mozambicans who opted for repatriation.

91. Unfortunately the influx of refugees from Mozambique had continued during 1989 and there were at present 750,000 refugees in Malawi, i.e. approximately 8 per cent of the country's population. Although, their presence obviously had a social and economic impact on the host country, Malawi was receiving generous assistance through UNHCR and hoped it would continue. The Government of Malawi was profoundly grateful to all bilateral and multilateral donors as well as to the non-governmental organizations concerned.

92. The Government of Malawi continued to provide protection for all Mozambican refugees and Parliament had just passed legislation in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, providing the legal framework for the protection of all refugees. In view of positive developments in southern Africa, Malawi hoped that the Mozambicans would shortly be able to return to their homeland.

93. Mr. GROZDANOV (Observer for Bulgaria) regretted that the present respectable humanitarian forum had been used by the representative of the Republic of Turkey to politicize the debate and make unfounded allegations against Bulgaria. It was not the first time that Turkey had declared before an international forum that Bulgaria was pursuing a policy of assimilation against a so-called "Turkish minority". Throughout the period following the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, after five centuries of Ottoman rule, all bilateral treaties between Bulgaria and Turkey had always referred to "Bulgarian Muslims" in Bulgaria and to a "Bulgarian minority" in Turkey, but never to any Turkish minority in Bulgaria. He wondered what was the situation of that Bulgarian minority in Turkey, because, as far as he knew, Turkey had spared no effort to assimilate it.

94. The allegation that Bulgaria was forcibly driving out Bulgarian citizens from their country had no basis in fact. In accordance with a number of new laws recently adopted by the National Assembly of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, which were in full compliance with its international commitments, many Bulgarian citizens had freely travelled to Turkey on Bulgarian passports, as many foreign observers had seen for themselves. The new laws had been adopted as part of a process of democratization of Bulgarian society and to bring legislation into line with the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting 1986 of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

95. However, in defiance of its international commitments, Turkey had practically closed its border to Bulgarian citizens in August 1989. It was true that many Bulgarian Muslims had been lured by Turkish propaganda which had been promising them open borders, material wealth and the like. However, the facts were different: on their arrival in Turkey they had faced unemployment, injustice and poverty. Realizing their mistake, over a thousand had begun to return to Bulgaria every day, in spite of the numerous obstacles placed in their path by the Turkish authorities who, for political reasons, had tried to make out that they were refugees, whereas in fact they were hostages. The situation was a source of deep concern for Bulgaria.

96. As for the issue of dialogue, he recalled that the basis for such a dialogue existed: it was the Protocol which had been signed by Bulgaria and Turkey in Belgrade in 1988 and which the Government of Turkey unfortunately considered as "stillborn". Barely three months previously, the Turkish Prime Minister had refused to participate in a meeting that was to have taken place on 25 and 26 July 1989 with the President of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, thereby providing further evidence of Turkey's unwillingness to take part in a constructive dialogue with Bulgaria. That also explained why the offers of co-operation and goodwill by other countries had not yielded any results.

97. Bulgaria's position was well known: it was in favour of a direct bilateral dialogue on an equitable basis and without any preconditions, at any time and at any level, aimed at finding mutually acceptable solutions, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bulgaria had recalled before the United Nations General Assembly.

98. Mr. AMOO-GOTTFRIED (Observer for Ghana) said that although the figures for voluntary repatriations (350,000 refugees) and resettlements in third countries (over 100,000) were by no means insignificant, the overall situation of refugees remained far from satisfactory. Throughout the world the refugee problem was continually growing, and currently, on account of insufficient and irregular financial flows, UNHCR's ability to discharge its mandate was seriously hampered. His delegation therefore appealed to the international community to rise to the occasion and to extend generous financial support to UNHCR's programmes, and in particular to those meant for the third world where the vast majority of refugees were to be found. The current refugee situation had been a matter of particular concern at the recent summit of the non-aligned countries held in Yugoslavia in September, where the participating heads of States or Government had stressed the need to seek durable solutions and to provide international organizations dealing with refugee problems with the necessary financial resources to carry out their mandate to alleviate the plight of all refugees and lessen the burden of the host countries.

99. His delegation shared the view expressed by previous speakers that a fresh approach to the refugee problem had become necessary in view of the new dimension it had recently assumed. While the solutions proposed by UNHCR and the international community might still be valid, there was an urgent need for innovation, taking into account prevailing economic and political circumstances. Ghana was also in favour of strengthening measures that would tackle the causes of refugee flows and eliminate them. It also recognized that the ultimate solution to the refugee problem was the elimination of the conditions that gave rise to it. In that respect, he observed that countries of origin were not always solely responsible for the situation that created refugees. The major causes could, above all, be traced to prevailing global political and economic policies, such as colonialism, racism, external aggression, etc. Ghana was convinced that only concerted international action directed against the political and economic injustices in the world would eventually eliminate the causes of refugee flows.

100. One area in which international solidarity and concerted action had achieved positive results was Namibia. In that connection, Ghana expressed its sincere appreciation to UNHCR for the efficient manner in which it had organized the repatriation of Namibian exiles, in accordance with

Security Council resolution 435 (1978). It particularly appreciated the High Commissioner's success in securing a blanket amnesty for all Namibian exiles, thereby making implementation of the resettlement plan possible. His delegation appealed to the international community to continue to support the peoples of Namibia by making generous material contributions to the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees and displaced persons in order to enable independent Namibia to take its rightful place in the world community.

101. At its thirty-eighth session, the Executive Committee had endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Oslo Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, and his delegation believed that the effective follow-up of those conclusions and recommendations called for the creation of a special unit within the Division of Human Resources and Support Services. In that connection, his delegation congratulated the High Commissioner on the initiatives he had taken to reorganize and streamline his office so that it could better discharge its protection and assistance duties. It particularly appreciated the appointment of an experienced and well-respected international civil servant from Africa to head the new Division. Ghana recommended that the Special Committee set up to assist the Executive Committee in the formulation of refugee programmes should comprise donor countries and host countries.

102. In conclusion, his delegation recalled that UNHCR had received its mandate from the General Assembly and that accordingly it should be supported by all members of the United Nations and not hampered in the performance of the difficult tasks that lay ahead.

103. Mr. SENE (Observer for Senegal) said that UNHCR's most praiseworthy achievements during the previous year included the repatriation of over 41,000 Namibian exiles and the return of 300,000 Ugandan refugees and 55,000 Burundis who had left their country in 1988. Refugees were also returning home in Central America and in Asia. A total of approximately 350,000 refugees had returned to their country of origin during the previous 12 months. Yet in spite of those remarkable achievements, there was little reason to rejoice as long as the root causes of so tragic a phenomenon as the forced displacement of populations had not been eliminated. The High Commissioner's report showed that emergency assistance had been provided to 700,000 new refugees throughout the world and that during the previous two years approximately 1.5 million new refugees had been added to the list.

104. Document A/AC.96/724(Part I)/Add.1 indicated that, following the incidents in Mauritania and Senegal in mid-August 1989, there were estimated to be 43,000 Mauritanian refugees in need of assistance (p. 5, para. 2). It also indicated that in August 1989 the Government of Senegal, with the assistance of UNHCR, had begun a census, and that a UNHCR technical mission had begun a detailed review of the programmes and needs in late 1989, on the basis of which requirements for the remainder of 1989 would be reassessed (p. 5, para. 4). In document A/AC.96/724(Part V)/Add.1 the High Commissioner also mentioned the decision of the Mauritanian Government to grant refugee status to 22,000 Senegalese living in 34 sites (para. 2). Senegal was not aware of the existence of any Senegalese refugees anywhere.

105. As a State, Senegal wished to place on record that it attached the greatest importance to one of the basic provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, namely, that everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. It was none the less true that until the results of the mediation efforts under way were known, Senegal placed its trust in UNHCR and in the international organizations that were providing it with assistance, each in its own field. It also thanked bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations, including ICRC, which had provided assistance in the region from the moment the refugees began to arrive.

106. In view of UNHCR's trying financial circumstances, his delegation felt that an appeal should be made to the political will of the international community to marshal resources to meet the needs and expectations of the millions of refugees throughout the world. It was to be hoped that the traditional donors who had made observations and proposed ways of ensuring the rational and stringent management of UNHCR would agree to support it wholeheartedly. The additional contributions already announced were a promising sign.

107. However, in order to meet the challenge of providing assistance and protection to refugees, it was also necessary to devise a new approach to humanitarian diplomacy, based on international solidarity and close co-operation between United Nations bodies in the search for lasting solutions and in keeping with the requirements of development and respect for human rights. Greater attention must be paid to prevention through more highly organized international co-operation and those countries in which human rights violations occurred should be assisted in restoring humanitarian standards.

108. Mr. de AZAMBUJA (Brazil) noted that the improvement in the international political climate had not been accompanied either by a decline in the number of refugees or by an improvement in their lot. It was well known that in general, the existence of refugees was the result of certain political acts, and that at the present time it was essentially the consequence of ideological battles being waged in a number of strategic areas. In the view of his delegation, UNHCR had been entrusted with a truly impossible task: it had to cope with a tragedy of enormous proportions, yet the means at its disposal were inadequate to repair all the damage caused by the cold war. Furthermore, the scant resources it received were given reluctantly and in dribs and drabs. A body of the political and humanitarian standing of the Executive Committee should not become a mere accounts department. In attempting to deal with so serious and important a problem without the necessary means, and on the basis of a short-sighted policy, it ran the risk of losing credibility. His delegation did not deny the need to avoid excessive expenditure and to rationalize procedure, but in its view the role of the Executive Committee was not that of an auditors' committee.

109. As a whole, the situation in South America was not too dramatic as far as the refugee problem was concerned: the region had been fortunate and had exercised prudence. Countries such as Brazil and its neighbours, which had been host countries for centuries, could receive large numbers of people and be donors were they not crushed by the excessive burden of their external debt; however, they had to content themselves with providing assistance here and there in the hope that they did not make the situation worse.

110. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the success of the Namibian Repatriation Operation, for not only did it mark the beginning of the implementation of the United Nations Plan for the independence of Namibia, but also allowed 41,000 Namibian exiles to participate fully in the independence process. Brazil already had an effective diplomatic presence in Namibia and supported the role played by UNHCR in implementing Security Council resolution 435 (1978).

111. The International Conference on Central American Refugees, held in Guatemala in May 1989, had produced positive results with which Brazil was extremely satisfied, and he hoped that they would be put into effect by the implementation of the Concerted Plan of Action adopted by the Conference. Brazil had taken careful note of the report of the first preparatory meeting of the follow-up committee, held in San José, Costa Rica in September, and would continue to follow its activities.

112. Mr. CHIRILA (Observer for Romania) replied to the remarks of the Observer for Hungary, who had spoken of asylum-seekers, and even refugees of allegedly Romanian origin. That was surprising since the Romanians who were on Hungarian territory were not refugees and could not be considered as such. They could return to their country without let or hindrance. Their status was governed by the relevant bilateral Romanian-Hungarian Convention, which was applied by Romania. Those who, for humanitarian reasons, had requested to leave in order to settle in Hungary (family reunification, etc.) had been authorized to do so by the Romanian authorities. The matter was covered by bilateral agreements between the two countries, which Romania respected in full.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.