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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 336th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 16 October 1981, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

WORLD FOOD DAY

1. The CHAIRMAN said that 16 October had been designated World Food Day and he gave the floor to the representative of FAO, who wished to transmit a message from his Organization to the members of the Executive Committee.
2. Mr. AKBIL (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that World Food Day had been established to draw attention to the continuing scourge of hunger and malnutrition - which hindered all development efforts, made for instability and reduced the possibility of peace - and to inform the world community of the policies required to overcome it.
3. Since its inception 36 years previously, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had always been in the forefront of the struggle against hunger in the world. It monitored the global food situation, proposed and supported the implementation of measures to avoid food shortfalls and contributed to the development of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Through numerous initiatives, it urged the formulation of national and international policies designed to permit all persons to grow or to purchase enough food for their needs and, in emergencies, provided assistance in co-operation with other organizations in the United Nations system, such as UNHCR.
4. Aware that no nation could be truly independent until all its citizens, including the rural poor, were properly fed, and that hunger could not be overcome until the masses in the rural areas were fully involved in the development process, FAO promoted their participation in agricultural development. The General Assembly of the United Nations had recognized the central importance of agriculture in national development and the numerous measures contained in the International Development Strategy to bring about rapid increases in agricultural production in developing countries and to achieve world food security were of the utmost importance. Indeed, if the measures formulated in the International Development Strategy and the policies proposed by FAO were implemented, the chances of solving the problem of hunger and malnutrition by the end of the century would be greatly improved. Unfortunately, the lack of political will meant that the obstacles hindering their implementation had not yet been removed.
5. On the occasion of World Food Day, FAO wished to stress that solving food problems, which implied agricultural and rural development, must remain the first priority.
6. The CHAIRMAN, before giving the floor to the representative of the World Food Programme, pointed out that, in 1980, WFP had provided refugees and displaced persons with food aid amounting to \$120 million and, since the beginning of 1981, had committed \$97 million for that purpose.

7. Mr. DHITAL (Chief, Emergency Unit, World Food Programme) said that the co-operation between WFP and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had grown greater over the years. In most of the operations for refugees undertaken jointly with UNHCR, WFP provided the food. However, when there were transport delays or when WFP did not have certain food items or could not buy them because they were too costly, UNHCR distributed them itself or provided WFP with funds to purchase them.
8. In 1980, under its short-term programme WFP had committed approximately \$120 million - over 62 per cent of its resources available for emergencies - to assistance for refugees and displaced persons. The major part, approximately 80 per cent, had been used to finance operations in Asia, particularly in Thailand, Kampuchea and Pakistan. Since January 1981, WFP had committed \$132 million for food aid, including \$97 million earmarked for operations to assist refugees and displaced persons, largely in Asia and Africa.
9. In any large-scale emergency relief operation, the food aid was co-ordinated by WFP. At present it was acting as co-ordinator in Pakistan and Somalia and working closely with UNHCR in Chad, Zaire, Zambia, the Sudan and Central America. The co-operation between WFP and UNHCR during the early stages of the Karamoja operation, in Uganda, had proved very useful. By 31 December 1980, WFP had distributed a total of 137,000 metric tons of food in the operation on the frontier between Thailand and Kampuchea. During the first eight months of 1981, it had already sent 42,000 metric tons of food to refugees in the region; that amount included 13,600 tons which had gone to UNHCR holding centres and had been financed by UNHCR.
10. Collaboration had also been established between WFP and UNHCR for a number of projects, mostly resettlement projects, under WFP's medium-term or long-term programmes, also called development programmes. In Southern China, for example, an emergency food aid operation, in which WFP had supplied food for 250,000 refugees from a neighbouring country, had been followed by four settlement programmes to which UNHCR had contributed a considerable amount of materials and funds. The programmes would last for approximately 18 months each and the total cost would be \$8.5 million.
11. In Africa, in collaboration with UNHCR, WFP participated in a number of projects which varied from one to three years in duration and in which it provided most of the food component distributed as external assistance. Among them were the projects concerning refugees in Somalia (\$30.8 million), refugees in the Sudan (\$17.1 million), Namibian refugees in Angola (\$7 million), Angolan refugees in Zaire (\$1.8 million) and Zimbabwean refugees in Botswana (\$2.7 million). WFP's total contribution to the resettlement of refugees in Africa stood at \$64 million. A number of other projects were also pending in Angola, Zaire, Djibouti, Chad and Zambia, and the total cost could reach approximately \$10 million.
12. Co-operation between UNHCR and WFP was not confined to operations in the field. The secretariats engaged in consultations and WFP was usually invited to all the important meetings organized by UNHCR. WFP's participation in the various phases of ICARA and other meetings on the situation of refugees in Pakistan, Somalia, Uganda and Kampuchea demonstrated WFP's determination to assist refugees.

UNHCR ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES (agenda item 7) (A/AC.96/594 and Corr.1 and 2 and 594/Add.1 and Corr.1 and 2; A/AC.96/595; A/AC.96/597)
REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS (agenda item 5)
(A/AC.96/600)

13. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director, Assistance Division) explained some of the problems confronting UNHCR within the framework of its assistance operations and outlined the measures that had already been taken or might be envisaged in order to solve them.
14. The problem of calculating the numbers of refugees involved a number of factors. In the first place, authorities in countries of asylum, whose responsibility it was to register refugees, found it almost impossible to draw up a register when they had to take in tens of thousands of refugees at once. Registration, however perfunctory, was extremely difficult in entry zones, which were usually situated in sparsely populated regions that were a long way from the capital and had limited administrative facilities.
15. Understandably, human nature also played its part, since some refugees sought to register fictitious persons as members of their family in order to obtain more assistance. Again, it was not easy to distinguish local inhabitants from refugees belonging to the same ethnic group and to differentiate within the same group of refugees those who were entitled to benefit from international assistance and those who were not. Finally, refugees who had been registered when they arrived in a camp sometimes left without notifying the people in charge.
16. Governments in countries where the problem of calculating the numbers of refugees posed a problem were fully aware of the need to find a satisfactory solution; otherwise, the figures concerning refugees would no longer be credible. UNHCR was not equipped to calculate the numbers of large groups of refugees. The Statute expressly stated that "the High Commissioner shall provide for the protection of refugees falling under the competence of his Office by obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories ...".
17. In some countries, for example Pakistan, the Government had taken the initiative of registering the refugees anew. In others, for example Somalia, the authorities had requested the assistance of the United Nations to carry out a new census of refugees: a committee comprising representatives of the Government, a representative of donor countries, a representative of the United Nations system and a representative of the voluntary agencies had been set up for that purpose.
18. In establishing the modalities of its activities on behalf of refugees in a given country, UNHCR could perhaps envisage, in agreement with the Government concerned, setting up a mechanism whereby, once the most urgent needs had been met, a systematic census of refugees could be carried out in accordance with methods to be worked out. The incorporation in assistance activities of an objective and, sufficiently reliable registration system could prove very useful.
19. The second problem that UNHCR would like to solve was that of unequal treatment of refugees. It had to be admitted that the treatment given to refugees varied from region to region and sometimes even within one and the same region.

20. There were several reasons why that was so. First of all, the criteria used in determining needs were very different from one region to another and perhaps changed too frequently. Secondly, the media showed more interest in some refugee situations than in others, something which had an effect on public opinion and, indirectly, on the attitude of donor countries. Thirdly, for reasons that were not always strictly humanitarian, Governments did not adopt the same attitude towards all refugee situations.
21. A number of measures could be taken to remedy that state of affairs. Within UNHCR the criteria applied in determining the volume of the assistance required could be harmonized. Indeed, regional criteria were in the process of being worked out.
22. To counteract the influence of the media, which concentrated on certain situations yet neglected others, the UNHCR Public Information Section tried to give an objective account of all refugee situations. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held in May 1981, had greatly helped to focus world attention on the plight of refugees who had previously been more or less ignored.
23. Finally, donor countries could considerably increase the non-earmarked portion of their contribution to be used in the UNHCR General Programmes.
24. The third problem lay in the continued rise in the proportion of resources assigned to relief and maintenance, a development that had an unfortunate effect on the search for durable solutions. Article 1 of Chapter I of UNHCR's Statute provided that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, acting under the authority of the General Assembly, assumed the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fell within the scope of the Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees; in other words, the search for and implementation of durable solutions constituted one of UNHCR's fundamental activities, as did international protection.
25. Unfortunately, it took a long time to find durable solutions. In the meantime, UNHCR had to provide emergency relief and ensure the maintenance of refugees.
26. In 1980, two-thirds of expenditure, \$310 million out of \$467 million, had had to be allocated to finance relief programmes. UNHCR was making every possible effort to improve the situation, but it was dependent on Governments in countries of first-asylum as far as local settlement was concerned and on other Governments for resettlement in third countries.
27. On the other hand, if UNHCR could obtain additional funds and assign them to projects for the integration of uprooted persons or to income-generating activities, the likelihood of reducing the proportion of UNHCR funds allocated for relief and maintenance would be improved within the space of one or two years; naturally, during that time the cost to the international community would be greater, because both the relief operations and the implementation of integration projects or income-generating activities for a particular group would have to be financed simultaneously.

However, in the long term, such a solution would allow the international community to make substantial savings and would enable refugees to return more rapidly to a normal life. In that connection, it was regrettable that the idea of a fund for durable solutions had not met with a better reception.

28. The last problem was that of determining where refugee aid ended and development aid began. The aim of UNHCR assistance was to bring refugees to a level of self-sufficiency comparable to that of the local population. However, in implementing integration projects in developing countries, whether countries of first asylum or resettlement, UNHCR found itself contributing to the financing of activities that could be considered as development aid: construction of access roads, hospitals or schools, drilling of wells, purchase of agricultural equipment, etc. Before agreeing to participate in the financing of such activities under its General Programmes, UNHCR ascertained whether they were indispensable for the objective involved and whether they would be unnecessary in the absence of any refugees.

29. On the other hand, economic and social consolidation of a refugee community in a region of the country that had granted lasting asylum was plainly a development activity and did not fall within the purview of UNHCR. Nevertheless, during the stage following UNHCR assistance activities and preceding the implementation of a development project, UNHCR should act as a catalyst in helping to start up the project. In his opinion, the representatives of Canada and Australia had made perceptive comments on that matter in the course of the general debate.

30. In implementing its assistance policy in conformity with the guidelines laid down by the High Commissioner, UNHCR must avoid two pitfalls: on the one hand, the tendency of the countries receiving assistance to try rashly to broaden the scope of the aid programmes, and on the other, the tendency of donor countries to subordinate the principles governing assistance to considerations of a purely political or economic nature.

31. The CHAIRMAN invited the Executive Committee to consider UNHCR's assistance activities on the basis of the report contained in document A/AC.96/594 and the statement by the Director of the Assistance Division. In that connection, reference could also be made to the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/600).

32. Mr. EKBLÖM (Finland) thanked the Director of the Assistance Division for his informative introductory statement; the difficulties referred to by the Director in connection with listing refugees in various parts of the world were among the basic issues raised by UNHCR assistance activities. Another important matter was the definition and delimitation of UNHCR's activities. In that respect, his delegation considered the information given by the High Commissioner in schedule B of document A/AC.96/594 and in his note on guidelines for UNHCR activities to be very useful. However, the definitions used should be further clarified and

precise limits showing some flexibility should be fixed on a case-by-case basis. Reference had also been made to the data and criteria to be used in adapting programmes to changing circumstances; in particular, it was often difficult to phase out UNHCR assistance if there were no clearly defined criteria. In an examination of UNHCR assistance activities for 1982, it should not be forgotten that programmes were not prepared or implemented in isolation. The proposals made by the High Commissioner in his report constituted an over-all balance, carefully negotiated with the recipient Governments. Therefore, care should be taken not to request too many changes in the individual programmes proposed in the document. His delegation was prepared to endorse the proposals contained in schedule A.

33. Lastly, his Government had decided to allocate, over and above contributions announced earlier, a cash contribution of 1 million Finnish marks towards UNHCR's General Programmes for 1981; the major part of that sum was earmarked for the assistance programme in Somalia.

34. Mr. WARREN (Observer for the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration) said it was some 30 years since UNHCR and ICM had been established and they had a common ancestor, the International Refugee Organization. Their statutory functions were distinct but complementary and they worked together closely and in harmony. Both organizations were temporary in character, but unfortunately world events had required them to pursue their endeavours. The Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration had been created at Brussels in 1951; the designation "Provisional" had been dropped from its title in 1954 and, following a resolution adopted in November 1980, the designation "European" had also been deleted. ICM at present carried out programmes in all parts of the world; it had recently extended its activities to the African continent and, in order to do so, it had reached understandings with the Governments in three African countries.

35. ICM was particularly active in the arrangements and the formalities, especially medical formalities, for the transport of migrants and for their reception in host countries. It conducted language and orientation programmes, assisted migrants other than refugees, transferred skilled persons to developing areas and had recently started to repatriate persons who had acquired professional skills abroad. To date, ICM had moved over 3 million persons to new countries and two-thirds were mainly refugees coming under the terms of reference of UNHCR. During 1980 and 1981, assistance had been given to half a million persons and the estimate for 1982 was 190,000 more, also mostly refugees covered by the UNHCR mandate.

36. As an example of its work, in September 1981, ICM had moved 29,400 persons, mostly refugees, and operated 27 charter flights; assistance and transport have been provided for 24,200 Indo-Chinese refugees as well as 1,827 Eastern European asylum seekers from Austria, 1,175 persons from the Soviet Union residing temporarily in Italy, 550 asylum seekers in the Federal Republic of Germany and 1,034 from the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (including 383 Kampuchean), 260 refugees in Sudan and Djibouti, 190 in Greece who had come from the Middle East, 72 persons repatriated from the United Kingdom to Zimbabwe, refugees from Afghanistan in Pakistan and 104 persons from the Soviet Union proceeding to Israel. It should be emphasized that those figures largely involved durable solutions. In conclusion, the High Commissioner could be assured that ICM would use its resources and abilities to support his efforts in the future and to strengthen its ties with UNHCR.

37. Mr. SALAH-BEY (Algeria) said that the introductory statement by the Director of the Assistance Division had underlined the difficulty of differentiating between protection and assistance. The Director had shown that, in speaking of assistance the problem of protection had to be borne in mind. His own view was that the definition of refugees, as contained in the 1951 Convention, was difficult to apply to the massive influxes of recent years, since it had basically been formulated for cases of individual persecution and, in the meantime, the causes had become more modern: decolonization, wars between States, internal tension, for example. Again, the High Commissioner's mandate had had to be adapted to new and complex situations.

38. The main problem at the present time was whether the international community would be able to continue to assist refugees. Most delegations had stated that their Governments would pursue their efforts and would even increase their contributions. Such an attitude was indeed encouraging, but it was to be feared that certain refugee situations might well be brought into question. It was difficult to distinguish between what might be termed traditional refugees and modern refugees and to separate the categories into which they should be placed, in particular, refugees as such and "displaced" persons. The difficulty was all the greater in that UNHCR had to follow legal principles which went beyond the terms of its Statute and the 1951 Convention.

39. The Director of the Assistance Division had underlined the distinction to be drawn between permanent solutions, within the meaning of article 1 of the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner, and durable solutions. The concept of permanent solutions related to earlier situations in which refugees went individually to other countries to settle permanently. Durable solutions were a different matter. The only genuine durable solution was voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, as compared with temporary solutions such as the provision of emergency assistance to refugees until such time as the causes of their flight disappeared.

40. Mr. EWERLOF (Sweden) expressed his appreciation of the effort made in the High Commissioner's report to give a more comprehensive presentation of programmes than in previous years. In future, the problems and the background to the proposed activities should be brought out even more clearly, as should the reasons for changes in the original programmes. It was gratifying to note that an increasing number of programmes were included in the regular budget, something that simplified the planning process for UNHCR and the recipient countries and also facilitated funding decisions for the donor countries. He feared, however, that the estimated expenditure within the regular budget might well be optimistic; a case in point was that of the Afghan refugees, who were still leaving their country in large numbers.

41. Efforts had been made to improve the distribution of funds among the regions, but there was still some imbalance. In 1982 Africa, with twice as many refugees and displaced persons as South-East Asia, would receive less than half the amount set aside for the latter region. Equitable distribution of resources could also give rise to problems within a continent. More particularly in the least-developed countries, it was very difficult to separate assistance to refugees from development aid such as roads, water supply and other infrastructures. There was an inevitable link between assistance to refugees and development aid, as had been emphasized by the representative

of the United Republic of Tanzania, and the matter should be given special consideration by the Policy, Planning and Research Unit. His country welcomed the regional approach mentioned in the report of the High Commissioner and, as a bilateral donor, would like to participate in a dialogue on the possibilities offered by such an approach for the Horn of Africa.

42. Small countries such as Sweden could not possibly play a leading role in resettlement. However, it applied liberal criteria and made a special effort to assist UNHCR to resettle difficult cases, particularly handicapped refugees. It also sought to use a speedy procedure in order to respond more quickly to urgent requests from the High Commissioner. The Swedish resettlement programme for the 1981-1982 financial year covered 1,500 persons in urgent need, mainly from Latin America, and it was envisaged that approximately 250 offers would be used for the reunification of families from South-East Asia.

43. His delegation wished to pay tribute to UNHCR's efforts to improve the exchange of experience in matters relating to integration. The Workshop on the Integration of Indo-Chinese Refugees, held in the autumn of 1980, had proved very useful and it was to be hoped that other initiatives of the same kind would be taken. Equally welcome was the recent establishment of the International Refugee Integration Resource Centre.

44. It was three years since Sweden had set up the Special Unit for Disaster Relief, which had participated in emergency operations in Zambia, Thailand, Kampuchea, Algeria, Somalia and Uganda, under the auspices of UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and UNDP. The services of the Unit were also available at the request of individual countries. It had produced good results and his Government was ready to put its experience at the disposal of any other Government considering a similar initiative. Finally, he underlined the importance of burden-sharing, particularly among countries providing financial resources. For its part, in the past financial year Sweden had contributed a total of KrS 92.5 million to UNHCR's regular budget and special programmes, a contribution would be maintained in the future.

45. Mr. MATIKO (United Republic of Tanzania) said it was apparent from the statement by the Director of the Assistance Division that two-thirds of UNHCR's resources for assistance were devoted to emergency relief and one-third to durable solutions. Out of the three types of durable solutions applied, only local settlement was tied in with development projects. Hence, such projects accounted for a small portion of over-all assistance activities, something that would reassure the countries which had expressed apprehension in regard to projects of that kind. His delegation had noted with surprise the trend in the allocation of funds for assistance to refugees in Africa. Table II and addendum 2 of document A/AC.96/594, together with table B of document A/AC.96/597, showed a steady decline in UNHCR expenditure in Africa during 1980 and 1981 and in the estimates for 1982, not only in absolute terms but also as a percentage of expenditure all over the world. In percentage terms, it had fallen from 34 per cent in 1980 to 32.3 per cent in 1981 and the projection for 1982 was 34.7 per cent. The situation was even worse for the General Programmes, where there was a decrease from 35.5 per cent in 1980 to 34.1 per cent in 1981 and 32.1 per cent for 1982, yet it was well known that half of the world refugee population was in Africa.

46. ICARA, held in Geneva in April 1981, had made the international community aware of the situation of African refugees. The Conference had been a success, but the logical outcome should be increased assistance to African refugees and it was puzzling to see that the reverse was true. He realized that some of the pledges made at ICARA would go to other United Nations bodies, more particularly UNICEF and WFP, while others would be used in some African countries on a bilateral basis, yet that did not explain the decrease in the 1982 UNHCR budget for Africa. The matter should be clarified for all African States, the Governments of other States and the voluntary agencies that had responded so positively during ICARA.

47. Mr. RWANYARARE (Uganda) drew attention to the important statement by the Director of the Assistance Division and the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/600) and said that his country intended to conduct a census on all refugees on its territory, so as to enable it to make its future requests for assistance commensurate with the problem. It would certainly need assistance from the UNHCR in such a difficult task.

48. His delegation noted with satisfaction the importance which the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters had attached to the evaluation component in project management, one that would certainly help to improve project implementation and to reduce costs. Uganda was particularly concerned because some projects, such as the water supply projects for refugee settlements in his country, had been on the books since 1970 but no progress seemed to have been made on them.

49. In respect of financing, his delegation endorsed the preparation of a manual on procurement procedures that would speed up disbursements in the field. Great flexibility was needed in that respect to resolve situations such as that in Uganda, where materials which were in short supply for some projects could be obtained for others. Administrative reorganization was also needed to bring services for refugees closer to those who needed them. A clear distinction must also be made between refugees and other displaced persons if an inordinate expansion in UNHCR assistance was to be avoided. Again, he was compelled to point out that, although the developing countries made modest financial contributions, they offered refugees a great deal in terms of land, infrastructure and other resources. The international community should therefore continue to allocate substantial amounts for refugee programmes implemented in the developing countries and donor countries should avoid tying their contributions to certain countries. In conclusion, he said that his delegation endorsed the proposals of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

50. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider section I of the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1980-1981 (A/AC.96/594).

51. Mr. ZOLLNER (Director, Assistance Division) recalled that, at its thirty-first session, the Executive Committee had requested the High Commissioner to continue or to undertake discussions with Governments with a view to speedy implementation,

in accordance with the usual policy of his Office, of permanent solutions, including voluntary repatriation and durable settlement. In implementation of the decision, discussions had been held through ambassadors who were permanent representatives of their countries at Geneva. Further, at the invitation of the Moroccan Government, a UNHCR mission had visited Rabat; a further mission to Algiers was also envisaged.

52. Mr. SALAH-BEY (Algeria) stressed the desirability of presenting a clearer picture of the assistance operations in the Maghreb countries. It should be indicated which refugees were receiving the assistance granted to the three countries and how the various programmes were divided up. At the thirty-first session of the Executive Committee, Algeria had already requested that, in the interests of clarity, the chapter on Algeria should be separate from the chapters on Tunisia and Morocco. The request had been made mainly for the reason that the three countries did take in individual refugees, but Algeria alone was confronted with a large-scale influx of refugees from Western Sahara. Such a major concentration of refugees should be set out in greater detail. As matters stood, the text had to be read very carefully to work out each country's share. Still greater attention was needed in respect of table V in the introduction to the document, which indicated assistance totalling \$1,673,500 for Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and was accompanied by a note stating that the proposed allocations for Morocco and Tunisia for 1982 were included in "Other countries in Africa". It would have been simpler to show that amount for Algeria and to introduce one or two new headings for Morocco and Tunisia. He therefore repeated his request that assistance operations in Algeria should be presented in a separate chapter. The request did not seem unreasonable, since it was consistent with the lay-out followed in the report as a whole.

53. With regard to the number of refugees from Western Sahara, an important consideration because it was one of the elements which enabled the total assistance granted to those persons to be appraised, he regretted that the report did not use the figure of 150,000 refugees, which had been transmitted by the Algerian Government and by the head of the Algerian delegation to the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and was based on the estimates made the previous year by the Algerian Red Crescent, through which the aid to the refugees was channelled. The figure of 55,000 refugees given in certain documents, such as UNHCR's report to the latest session of the Economic and Social Council, related to a situation that had existed several years earlier and had since not changed. Indeed, what was described as the large-scale influx of Sahrawi refugees had occurred in several phases as the situation had deteriorated in the homeland. The phenomenon was becoming one of the oldest in Africa, since it had been in existence for six years.

54. For all those reasons, Algeria considered that the Executive Committee should give special attention to the issue. It was aware that UNHCR's budget was not elastic and that there were many other refugee situations elsewhere; but his country had discharged its primary responsibility in accepting the refugees and the total aid it had furnished them was comparable to the total UNHCR General Programme for Africa. Admittedly, considerable official or private bilateral assistance had been made available and lightened the financial and material burden falling on Algeria, which wished to thank those who participated in the assistance programmes. It was a fact, however, that over-all international assistance ought to be increased substantially to achieve what was known as equitable burden-sharing.

55. Mr. SKALLI (Morocco) expressed surprise that the report continued to refer to the so-called refugees in the camps in the Tindouf region.

56. As far back as 1976, the Executive Committee had indicated the procedures to be followed in order to resolve the problem by inviting the High Commissioner to undertake discussions with the Algerian and Moroccan Governments for speedy implementation of permanent solutions, including voluntary repatriation and durable settlement. Since that time, at its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions and its 1980 session, the Executive Committee had launched further appeals for follow-up action on its October 1976 decision. However, the results achieved during the five years which had elapsed since the first decision could be said to be nil. Hence, it was justifiable for the Executive Committee to consider who was responsible for such a situation and draw the relevant conclusions. His delegation had every confidence in the objectivity of the members of the Committee.

57. Delegations would recall that, since the Committee had adopted the first decision, his delegation had at all times assured UNHCR that the Moroccan Government was ready to co-operate fully in implementing the best solutions for each category of person living in the camps in the Tindouf region. Its good will had been reflected in specific commitments, for at previous sessions of the Committee his delegation had stated that the Moroccan Government was willing to accept any person proved to be from Atlantic Sahara, that it agreed that the repatriation operation should be organized by the UNHCR in line with its usual procedures, that it would offer any guarantee desired by UNHCR to ensure that the people who had chosen to return lived in dignity and freedom and that it had undertaken to allow representatives of UNHCR to verify at any time that the people in question enjoyed, on a continuing basis, complete freedom and all the political, economic and social rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Kingdom. Those commitments had been renewed in the many initiatives undertaken by Morocco in an endeavour to start up the process of putting durable solutions into effect.

58. After the Executive Committee had adopted the latest decision, the Moroccan Government had once again given the High Commissioner an assurance of Morocco's desire for co-operation; it had informed him of its views on the kind of solutions which should be put into effect and had requested him to indicate what he specifically expected from Morocco in the way of assistance or commitments to enable UNHCR to discharge fully the mandate with which the Executive Committee had entrusted it. The High Commissioner had again shown his firm intention of discharging his mission to the full and his concern to emphasize durable solutions.

59. At the invitation of the Moroccan Government, a mission led by the Director of the UNHCR Assistance Division had therefore visited Rabat in July 1981 and had held thorough discussions with Moroccan senior officials. On that occasion, Morocco had once again given UNHCR a formal assurance that persons genuinely originating from the former Spanish Sahara who chose to return to their homes would be afforded all safeguards concerning their security and resettlement. In a humanitarian spirit, it had even declared its willingness to help in settling far away from the frontiers people not originating from the former Spanish Sahara, in conformity with the OAU Convention on refugees in Africa. Needless to say, the two operations could not be initiated before a census was conducted among the persons in the Tindouf camps and each person's origin was ascertained. The task was one which the Secretary-General of the United Nations had entrusted to UNHCR and was to have been carried out during the summer of 1977. The reasons why it had not been performed were known.

60. At the Rabat talks, Morocco had been anxious to comply with all requests made by the representatives of the UNHCR and had been gratified to see that its good will had met with a response from UNHCR. After the meetings, a record of the discussions had been signed by both parties. The record could have provided the material for the first part of the report, with the second part comprising an equally objective account of the attitude taken by the other Government. The Committee could then have arrived at an informed decision on a situation brought before it at the initiative of the Algerian authorities themselves.

61. The matter of durable solutions always appeared on the agenda and, every year, it was relegated to the background. UNHCR's increasing burden and its growing number of operations in respect of situations not specifically within its purview had alarmed many delegations, which had argued in favour of a return to orthodoxy through strict application of the definition of a refugee and advocated that other bodies should take over the responsibility for persons who were in need but did not come within UNHCR's mandate.

62. The economic refugees of the Sahel deserved every sympathy from the international community, but the quest for a solution to their problems should be entrusted to organizations promoting development. The few thousand genuine Sahrawi refugees, however, should be able to count on UNHCR assistance.

63. The Algerian representative had stated that 150,000 people were in the camps, a figure which might seem somewhat unlikely. It might well be asked why the Algerian authorities did not agree to allow the Office of the High Commissioner to conduct a census and identify the people in the Tindouf region, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations had requested. For his own part, he welcomed the fact that the report on assistance did not quote a figure. As for arrivals of families in the Tindouf camps, to which the Algerian representative had referred, it was now known that they were not from the former Spanish Sahara but from the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. There again, Morocco would like the Algerian authorities to allow the Office of the High Commissioner to look into the matter and to make public the result of its inquiries.

64. In conclusion, expressing satisfaction that UNHCR had had the richly deserved honour of being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the second time, he said that the honour bestowed on it should encourage it to make a still greater effort to ensure that its activities focused exclusively on cases of people who unquestionably fell within its purview and that they were not directed, even without its knowledge, towards other than humanitarian ends. Only on that basis could the Office of the High Commissioner continue to enjoy the confidence of the international community and its support.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.