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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 July 2000, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Sotirov (Vice-President)..... (Bulgaria)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (A/54/855-E/2000/44, A/55/82-E/2000/61, A/55/90-E/2000/81; E/2000/CRP.3, 4 and 5; E/2000/NGO/1)

Panel discussion on internally displaced persons

1. **Ms. McAskie** (Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that the time had come to “rehumanize” the issue of internal displacement. A number of oversimplifications in the general perception of the problem must be corrected, including the notion that internally displaced persons were not eligible for international assistance. That was wrong; they were eligible, as were all victims of humanitarian crises. The question therefore was not one of eligibility but rather one of the adequacy of the national and international response to the scope and complexity of the needs of the displaced. While support for internally displaced persons was primarily the responsibility of national Governments, it was indispensable for international agencies to have in place a cooperative and principled humanitarian response to the needs of internally displaced persons with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. However, she was concerned about the policy gap between the humanitarian community and the community at large. She therefore welcomed the opportunity for a policy exchange with the Governments of affected countries and donors. The United Nations country teams needed added dynamism and stronger support from agency headquarters, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and all the partners in order to develop and implement common operational strategies with the recognized authorities of their country.

2. **Ms. Mesa** (Humanitarian Coordinator in Angola) said that during the past two decades, more than 20 per cent of the population of Angola had been displaced because of the conflict. There were some 3.8 million internally displaced persons, 300,000 of whom were located in areas inaccessible to relief organizations. Over 500,000 of the confirmed internally displaced persons were living in camps and transit centres, while the populations hosting internally displaced persons were themselves becoming seriously affected, as newcomers competed for limited resources. Since January 2000, additional displacements had taken

place, although return movements of over 30,000 people had also been reported.

3. On a positive note, the Angolan Government had established an ad hoc Technical Working Group comprised of technical ministries, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and donors, which had drafted a Plan for Emergency Action, with a budget of \$55 million. The Plan would serve as the framework for humanitarian operations for the next six months and would maximize the impact of limited resources available by avoiding duplication and ensuring that programmes were targeted in line with government priorities.

4. The country’s socio-economic structure had been seriously damaged by the continuous conflict during the past 20 years. Access to health, water and education had deteriorated. A poverty reduction strategy had begun to be prepared as a result of recent negotiations between the Government and international financial institutions. The United Nations agencies were committed to assisting the Government in its efforts to combat poverty.

5. The Government’s efforts to establish a set of minimum operational standards for resettlement and return, specifying both preconditions and targets, were an extremely important step forward. Since most of the displaced persons were women and children, programmes addressing their specific needs had to be identified. Given the fact that agriculture remained the sole source of income, it was imperative to make available land suitable for agricultural production. Moreover, since it was highly unlikely that the majority of the displaced persons living in Luanda would return to their areas of origin, specific sustainable programmes would have to be developed to address their needs.

6. Mine clearance should become the central feature of the humanitarian and poverty reduction programme. However, security remained a major concern, since it limited access to those in need and constituted a serious constraint to initiating more durable solutions to the problems of internally displaced persons and the war-affected population in general. In the past few weeks, the humanitarian community in Angola had been the object of a number of threats. She appealed to the international community to provide effective assistance to the people of Angola.

7. **Mr. Mogwanja** (Humanitarian Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that out of a total population of 50 million, there were currently 1.6 million internally displaced persons in 10 out of the country's 11 provinces. However, only 50 per cent of the identified internally displaced persons lived in easily accessible areas. While the funding situation had considerably improved in 2000, it still remained at only 20 per cent of planned activities. Out of the total number of accessible internally displaced persons, only about 250,000 received substantial and systematic assistance. One-time food distributions targeted at over 500,000 internally displaced persons had been carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) in late June 2000.

8. The United Nations country team and a number of non-governmental organizations and donor agencies had launched a series of initiatives under the Emergency Humanitarian Intervention mechanism to assist 300,000 of the most war-affected persons. The scope of interventions in that regard would be limited to emergency food assistance and distribution of essential non-food items; distribution of seeds and tools for affected communities with access to land; medical assistance; emergency water projects; and control of epidemics.

9. The Democratic Republic of the Congo had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the region and the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) study had estimated that at least 1.6 million people had died since January 1999 as a result of the ongoing conflict. Unfortunately, even as the epidemiological situation worsened, specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which were active in the health sector, received little or no funding for their operations in the country. However, a countrywide vaccination campaign had been launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO in the current month to cover displaced communities as well as the rest of the population.

10. Food insecurity had reached alarming proportions. Accordingly, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had launched countrywide food security and nutrition projects that were reaching out to an increasingly larger number of internally displaced persons.

11. Widespread insecurity prevented adequate humanitarian responses from reaching all the displaced and affected communities. The approach with respect to return, reintegration and rehabilitation had been changed. It was no longer assumed that assisting internally displaced persons to return home was the best option. Therefore, aid would now be offered to displaced communities wherever they were found.

12. Despite the continuing efforts by the United Nations to strengthen the Lusaka peace process, there was still considerable insecurity. He called for additional security offices and equipment to ensure the security of humanitarian staff. Moreover, firm measures should be taken to address the issue of violence by armed groups against civilian non-combatants. The application of the humanitarian principle needed to be expanded to cover all accessible internally displaced persons.

13. **Mr. Borsotti** (Humanitarian Coordinator in Georgia) said that half of the 280,000 internally displaced had been living in collective centres for over seven years. In view of the political situation stemming from the unresolved conflict over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the people affected were in limbo. Indeed, the economic and social situation of internally displaced persons in Georgia could best be described as precarious. Following a dialogue between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), OCHA and the World Bank on the one hand, and the Government on the other hand, agreement had been reached on a New Approach to providing assistance to internally displaced persons which would, inter alia, recognize the inviolable right of all persons to return to their homes in secure conditions and to be treated in the same way as Georgian citizens. The United Nations and the World Bank had been invited to participate in the work of the commission established to that end by a presidential decree. The goal of the New Approach was to substantially improve the living conditions of internally displaced persons and hence the overall situation in Georgia. Accordingly, a pilot fund had been established for the rapid financing of innovative projects that contributed to the self-reliance of internally displaced persons. Seed money for the fund had been provided by the World Bank, UNDP, UNHCR and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

14. The earlier view in Georgia, when its economic and social situation was in turmoil, was that the rights and longer-term needs of internally displaced persons were issues to be dealt with through development projects in the areas of conflict following the return of internally displaced persons. In the interim, the focus of assistance should be relief. Internally displaced persons were vulnerable by virtue of their displacement experience, and as such should have access to a wide range of services subsidized by the Government, regardless of objective measures of vulnerability. However, following the economic upturn in late 1997 and early 1998, a divergence of opinion had arisen among donors as to whether to shift the emphasis to transitional assistance — and hence focus on issues such as microcredit — or continue to provide relief assistance. It had been assumed that if needs were addressed in situ, the will to return would be reduced. The consequence of such contradictions, and of conflict resolution efforts that placed the return of internally displaced persons at the centre of the debate, had been an increase in tensions that undermined the resolution process itself.

15. The lessons learned in Georgia included the fact that a rapid shift to development-oriented assistance was vital if the international community was to mitigate the social and economic marginalization that threatened the displaced. While displaced persons had unique needs, assistance that was too narrowly focused on them might risk extending the social and economic marginalization that had threatened them in the first place. Therefore, early development-oriented programmes should seek to address the social needs of the population as a whole.

16. Funding for longer-term assistance was a major obstacle. Indeed, funding was available for only 10 per cent of the actual needs of the internally displaced. In order for both relief and development assistance to be successful, proactive coordination was vital. Therefore, the early establishment of a combined resident and humanitarian coordinator post, with backstopping from an OCHA field presence, was crucial. The most important lesson, however, was that for early engagement of transitional and development assistance to be possible, vigorous, high-level humanitarian diplomacy was a must. It would ensure, among other things, that the right to return was neither sacrificed nor forgotten.

17. **Mr. Grossrieder** (Director-General, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that internal displacement was a reflection of a wider crisis affecting the entire civilian population. Issues related to internal displacement could therefore not be considered in isolation from those involving the civilian population as a whole. The international community had an important role to play in supporting the national authorities' efforts to better discharge their responsibilities towards civilians under their jurisdiction. ICRC had taken a holistic approach to the issue, which was based on needs rather than on the categories of people to be protected.

18. The shortage of financial and human resources together with the climate of insecurity in conflict situations were among the obstacles that humanitarian organizations faced. A third serious obstacle was the fact that parties to the conflict sometimes restricted access to displaced persons.

19. Problems surrounding internal displacement were of such a scale and of such complexity that all organizations concerned must work together so as to maximize the overall impact of humanitarian action. That was why ICRC actively participated in the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Recently, it had held a meeting with UNHCR at which agreement had been reached on a *modus operandi* based on the area of specialization of each respective organization. He referred to the vast network constituted by the national Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In that regard, the Sevilla Agreement of 1997 had defined the respective roles of the Movement's components in different situations. However, despite all those efforts, many needs remained unmet. ICRC considered that other organizations, especially those involved in socio-economic development, were best equipped to deal with long-term displacement.

20. **Ms. Ogata** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the human cost of internal displacement was staggering; nonetheless, assistance to internally displaced persons was usually selective, uneven and inadequate. That was partly owing to the complexity of the causes of displacement. An internal conflict, for example, sometimes raised uncertainties about the status of the displaced, made access difficult and posed serious threats to relief workers. It could be difficult to separate the sufferers into the categories of refugees, internally displaced persons, affected

civilians or migrants, or to formulate in advance a model of assistance to be followed.

21. The mandate of her Office (UNHCR) to address the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons was explicitly stated in General Assembly resolution 48/116. UNHCR involvement was usually triggered by a government request, confirmed by the Secretary-General. The Governments of Angola, Colombia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslav republics, for example, had all requested UNHCR assistance with problems of internal displacement.

22. Yet, though the status of internally displaced persons might differ from that of refugees, their fate was often similar. A comprehensive approach was needed. Currently, UNHCR was helping some 5 million internally displaced persons around the globe. In providing assistance, it tried to put its legal protection principles into operation and to ensure, by intervening if necessary with the local authorities, that people were not forcibly moved, that women and children were protected from sexual assault, that children were not recruited to serve the military, in other words, that the real protection needs were met.

23. It had been asked whether UNHCR intervention did not keep internally displaced persons from seeking asylum. That was true only in the sense that UNHCR assistance might make the situation bearable, so that they did not desire to seek asylum. Her Office firmly upheld their right to do so, however.

24. No United Nations agency had the capacity to deal single-handedly with the problems of internal displacements. Broad collaboration was essential and a more rapid allocation of responsibilities was needed; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was striving to improve the coordination process. Obviously, humanitarian action could only buy time; it could not bring about peace and reconstruction. For that, the cooperation of Governments was needed to provide access and guarantee the security of humanitarian workers. Additional resources would be required if UNHCR was to expand its work with internally displaced persons, as it wished to do in Angola and Eritrea.

25. **Ms. Bellamy** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, despite a scarcity of accurate information, it was estimated that

50 per cent of the world's internally displaced people were children. Those 13 million children were among the most at risk in the world. They were uprooted, often separated from their families, lacked access to health, education and other essential services and were particularly vulnerable to recruitment, sexual violence and other forms of exploitation. Women and children together made up 80 per cent of the internally displaced, and women headed most displaced households, yet programming was chiefly focused on men.

26. The traumatic impact of displacement could hardly be overemphasized and could have severe effects on children's development long after displacement had ended. As the presentation on Angola had demonstrated, displacement could result in long-term poverty for both the displaced and their host communities.

27. A particularly acute problem resulting from displacement due to internal conflict was the recruitment of children as soldiers or to serve armed forces as cooks, porters, messengers, mine-clearers or indeed as virtual sex slaves.

28. Although it lacked accurate information on the exact numbers and needs of displaced children and the diversity of their situations, the international community did have the benefit of the extremely valuable normative framework, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, annex), compiled by the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons.

29. Programme response could be improved by taking into account the long-term needs of children, not only during displacement but also during resettlement. Key among those needs was education, especially girls' education. Education should be viewed as a priority humanitarian action that contributed enormously to rehabilitation and ultimately to development.

30. In addition, the social fabric of society had to be restored. Programmes should therefore support community structures and allow displaced persons to participate in decision-making on matters affecting them. Other urgent needs to be addressed were protection of children from abuse and exploitation and the special requirements of displaced women.

31. Improving the effectiveness of United Nations response also required improved coordination and

more accurate, more timely and better analysed data. Ultimately, however, the plight of displaced children would be adequately addressed only when all parties recognized and promoted the normative standards enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and other human rights instruments.

32. **Mr. Deng** (Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons) said that he brought to the question of internally displaced persons a certain personal motivation and moral compulsion deriving from the fact that his own continent, his own country and his own region of Sudan were particularly hard hit by the problem of displacement. The horrifying statistics on numbers of the displaced, over one fifth of the world's population by some estimates, became even more disturbing when one looked into the faces of the severely deprived and physically threatened.

33. The problem of internally displaced persons was highly complex and sensitive and cut across the whole international system, encompassing both human rights violations and humanitarian aid. Because the problem was internal, it affected the sovereign rights of nations and necessitated winning the cooperation of Governments by finding common ground and respecting their concerns. That had been the rationale for creating the post of Representative of the Secretary-General rather than a rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights.

34. The concept of sovereignty he tried to present was one not of barricades but of responsibility, not a Government's right to hold the world at bay but its duty to seek the welfare of its people and to call for help when necessary.

35. Frankly, if there were serious problems within a country affecting large numbers of people, the assumption was that the Government did not have the means to provide protection and assistance. If the Government refused help, it was hard to imagine in today's world that other Governments would stand by and do nothing. Therefore, the best safeguard for sovereignty was for Governments to welcome international cooperation in dealing with the problems in their own countries.

36. When the Commission on Human Rights had appealed for help on internally displaced persons, three options had been considered: creating a new agency,

assigning institutional responsibility to one existing agency or framing a collaborative approach. Since the political will was lacking for a new agency and the task was felt to be too big for any one existing agency, the collaborative solution had been chosen. His own function was, first of all, to carry on a dialogue with Governments. He had been on 18 missions, stressing respect for sovereign rights but also a positive concept of sovereignty as responsibility. So far no Government had told him to mind his own business. If nothing were to come of his visits, however, he would have raised false hopes. His other function was therefore to be an advocate and to raise the awareness of national institutions, the United Nations system, donors and non-governmental organizations of the need for action.

37. **Mr. Isakadze** (Observer for Georgia) said that Georgia was experiencing the upheavals that accompanied a radical transformation of economic and political structures. Inadequate public finance not only delayed programmes to further economic transition, but made it difficult to assist people displaced by the conflict over Abkhazia. Seven years after some 300,000 persons had been forced to flee their homes, most were still living in temporary places of residence in deplorable conditions.

38. Improvement of their living conditions and their eventual return to Abkhazian soil was a number one priority of the Georgian Government. The President had repeatedly stressed the willingness of the Georgian side to negotiate with the Abkhazian side to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Georgian and Abkhazian peoples should be able to resume living side by side as they had for centuries.

39. All of Georgian society greatly appreciated the contribution of the United Nations and other friends of Georgia, in particular the United States of America, to the peaceful settlement of the Abkhazian conflict. On the other hand, it remembered the role of the Russian Federation in instigating the conflict and found the current Russian peacekeepers ineffective as mediators.

40. Nevertheless, in the hope that the conflict would soon be a thing of the past, the Government of Georgia had welcomed the New Approach to assistance to internally displaced persons devised by the Resident Coordinator in Georgia. The New Approach identified three priorities: a dramatic improvement in the living conditions of the displaced persons; development of social infrastructure for education and health in their

temporary places of residence; and promotion of economic activities to enhance their self-reliance until they were in a position to return to their permanent places of residence.

41. The Georgian Government had already formed a commission to work on the New Approach and was dedicated to ensuring its success. It hoped that the innovative programme would gain the support of the United Nations and the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United States, the World Bank and other donor organizations.

42. Georgia was experiencing hard times, but with the assistance of the world community and the political will of the Georgian Government to create a stable country with territorial integrity and based on democratic values worthy of a fully fledged member of the Council of Europe, it had hopes for a better future.

43. **Ms. Carné de Trécesson** (France) said that her delegation wished to assure the agencies involved of her country's wholehearted financial, humanitarian and political support. She would like the Humanitarian Coordinators to explain briefly how they handled coordination between the various United Nations agencies, bilateral aid institutions, non-governmental organizations and other actors in the field, what recent improvements in coordination they had seen and what further measures they would like to see.

44. **Mr. Musenga** (Rwanda) said that, sadly, he would like the international community to bear in mind the painful lessons learned in Rwanda about what not to do, and he urged the members of the panel to read the reports. The fact that the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda in 1994 had been allowed to cross the border and to use people in the neighbouring country as human shields was one of the origins of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The problem would remain until the international community learned that it was a mistake to treat symptoms rather than causes.

45. **Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone) said that his country was currently experiencing a serious displacement problem. Perhaps the representatives of the operational agencies working in Sierra Leone could explain who coordinated their humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. He would be interested to hear from ICRC about its level of involvement in Sierra Leone and what mechanisms it employed. Similarly, he would

appreciate information from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on her Office's level of involvement in Sierra Leone and on assistance being given to those who had fled Sierra Leone and had settled in Guinea and Gambia.

46. **Mr. Banaga** (Sudan) pointed out that most internally displaced persons did not report themselves. In Khartoum, for example, it was estimated that about 90 per cent of displaced persons had not been so identified. Some United Nations agencies were addressing only the problems of the 10 per cent in official camps, but Operation Lifeline Sudan was trying to reach the remainder.

47. A very serious problem was the unauthorized settlement of most internally displaced persons on unsuitable land, which resulted in degradation of soil, water and infrastructure. The cost of repairing the disastrous environmental damage was far beyond the capacity of Sudan, and probably that of any developing country.

48. The efforts of the international community on behalf of internally displaced persons were oriented towards relief, but there was an urgent need to integrate relief and development assistance to enable the displaced to begin to live in dignity. The fundamental cause of displacement was lack of development. It was illogical, for example, to spend more on transporting food aid than it would cost to provide the agricultural inputs to enable people to grow their own food.

49. **Mr. Akasaka** (Japan) said that the problem of displaced civilians was a question of peace as well as development. Protection and assistance of the displaced population was primarily the responsibility of the Governments having those persons within their territory. UNHCR assistance activities for internally displaced persons had largely been in response to the requests of the Governments concerned. Nonetheless, in cases where a Government could not, for political, economic or other reasons, make a request or give its consent, the international community should use the United Nations forum to find a way to help.

50. The international response to internal displacement could not follow any general rules, as every case of displacement had its own historical and political background. Rules should be sought, not deductively, but inductively.

51. In the field, whichever United Nations agency or organization had the most expertise and was best placed in terms of experience and competence should be designated as accountable. It had been suggested that the protection aspect of the response of humanitarian agencies to internally displaced persons had been weak. The distinction between assistance and protection was often blurred, but a coherent response should be sought to fill such gaps.

52. At the Headquarters level, he welcomed the efforts made towards greater coordination. He welcomed the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's decision to designate the Emergency Relief Coordinator as responsible for promoting enhanced accountability in international relief efforts. A coherent response by all actors could in some cases require the involvement of peacekeeping operations and special representatives. As stated by previous speakers, political solutions were ultimately required to eradicate the root causes of displacement.

53. Meanwhile, his country appreciated Mr. Deng's efforts to tackle the problem through dialogue with Governments, and was willing to provide financial support for some of his visits.

54. **Mr. Hamad** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said he was well aware that food, shelter and health services were all essential. However, only one panellist, Ms. Bellamy, had referred to the important area of education, although the Humanitarian Coordinator in Angola had referred to the importance of dealing with illiteracy. The issue had otherwise been ignored, perhaps because it was less spectacular than other issues; however, he would ask all the panellists, with the exception of Ms. Bellamy, to what extent those around them were aware of the need for educational services for displaced persons.

55. **Dr. Leus** (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that WHO viewed the predicament of internally displaced persons as a dynamic and progressive loss of health, caused by psychological and economic insecurity first of all, and then by increasing physical suffering. Health relief could and should complement those person's own coping strategies while durable solutions were being sought. For WHO, public health principles were the basis for cooperation with member countries and with its partners in IASC.

56. From the health perspective, the best option was always to avoid human displacement, and WHO saw its work for sustainable development as its key contribution to that prevention. Placing health and education high on the political agenda could help to maintain stability and thereby reduce the likelihood of displacement.

57. Displacement not only exposed the affected populations to increased risk of illness and death but also strained local health systems, resulting in poor health outcomes for the local populations as well. In countries in crisis, polio eradication and malaria control were daunting challenges, not to mention the difficulties with HIV/AIDS and its link to internal displacement, which was of paramount concern.

58. In IASC discussions, WHO and UNICEF had emphasized that polio transmission in the world was one of the most reliable indicators of human distress, and they therefore targeted their joint efforts in areas where there were problems of access, and where there was continuing polio transmission.

59. Only a dialogue between national and international actors could improve understanding of health issues in displaced population groups. If vital needs such as food, water and soap were not satisfied, health services alone could do nothing. At the same time, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, together with malaria, were common in such groups and were difficult to tackle. Reproductive health and safer pregnancies had become a primary concern, as well as mental health issues. The major causes of mortality among internally displaced persons could be prevented by low-cost public health priority interventions such as measles immunization. Community participation was essential, and vulnerability should be addressed first of all by areas, and only subsequently by targeting or cataloguing specific groups. Care should be taken not to create additional inequities.

60. Finally, advocating and negotiating for secure humanitarian access were integral parts of public health promotion. Protection, access and informed response were all critical for the survival of internally displaced persons. Humanitarian action had to be based on country expertise and human rights principles, as well as on good public health practice.

61. **Ms. McAskie** (Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that in appeals for internally displaced persons, it was often easier to attract funding for food items. She

asked Governments to also consider funding critical non-food items, including those relating to health.

62. **Mr. Malungo** (Angola) said he supported the involvement of UNHCR in assistance to internally displaced persons and expressed the hope that the donor countries would fund those programmes, as UNHCR was one of the few agencies working in the north of the country.

63. The humanitarian programme was Government-led and was supported by the United Nations system. As Minister, he had contact with the Humanitarian Coordinator on a daily basis. At present, food was a protection issue in Angola, particularly for children under five and pregnant women, the most vulnerable groups. Assistance was also needed for mine clearance operations, which were vital for the resettlement of thousands of internally displaced persons.

64. **Ms. Mesa** (Humanitarian Coordinator in Angola) said that there were different levels of coordination, namely, overall coordination, led by the Government; sectoral coordination at a much more technical level; and the internal coordination of the United Nations system. In the case of Angola, efforts had been made to expand coordination to include other United Nations agencies, including the International Organization for Migration and ICRC. Also, in the case of Angola, a steering group had recently been established, including representatives of UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR but open to all United Nations agencies, to work together with the Humanitarian Coordinator.

65. Efforts were being made to keep in daily contact with the Government, and also to make the group for humanitarian coordination, which included donors and non-governmental organizations, more effective and results-oriented.

66. **Mr. Borsotti** (Humanitarian Coordinator in Georgia) said that coordination, at least in the case of Georgia, was mainly a sharing of information and identifying jointly the needs that required the intervention of the international community. Transparency of that process was important. In Georgia, as compared to other countries, there was only a limited number of participating actors. The existence of common ground between developmental assistance and humanitarian assistance under the aegis of the resident and humanitarian coordinators was a key factor, and the Government, which had the leading role in coordinating aid, supported that approach.

67. **Mr. Mogwanja** (Humanitarian Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), in response to the question from France, said that the United Nations agencies in Congo were well coordinated in their action to assist internally displaced persons.

68. At the national level, the heads of agencies met regularly to discuss political issues relating to humanitarian actions. Those meetings were also attended by representatives of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Also at the national level, there was a weekly meeting of officials from those agencies and from non-governmental organizations, including the ICRC, to discuss operational questions. The Congolese Government had also established a crisis committee which was activated when the situation required it. The committee was chaired by the Minister for Public Health, and was composed of United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other ministries and government bodies.

69. At the provincial level, and particularly in the west of the country, there were additional coordination structures, involving those agencies present in the provinces, non-governmental organizations and ICRC. A recent issue had been the thousands of injured and displaced persons as a result of looting in Kisangani by the armies of Uganda and Rwanda. Immediately after the end of hostilities, the United Nations agencies had begun a programme of action to help the population. ICRC also had a programme, and there was a coordination meeting every day for all of the humanitarian actors, chaired by the local representative of ICRC.

70. **Ms. McAskie** (Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that at the time of the United Nations reform, the current Secretary-General had designated the Coordinator as the focal point at the Headquarters level for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. That responsibility was being translated into action in the field through the humanitarian coordinators, who reported to the Coordinator and were responsible for ensuring that those agencies best placed to provide assistance to displaced persons were able to exercise their responsibilities. The Office of the Coordinator and the humanitarian coordinators also offered the agencies assistance in the key area of fund-raising.

71. There was also a network of focal points throughout the agencies, which was to be strengthened to ensure that all the relevant issues were fully addressed, including identifying unmet needs and engaging with the international community in addressing them.

72. **Mr. Grossrieder** (Director-General, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that ICRC had a staff of about 20 expatriates and 150 national collaborators, together with a budget of approximately \$20 million. In general, the mandate of ICRC in Sierra Leone was to cover the needs of about 300,000 displaced persons in the fields of protection, food and non-food assistance, health, orthopaedic rehabilitation, and water and sanitation programmes. A surgical hospital was also operated, and a few weeks previously, the distribution of seeds to about 240,000 people had been completed.

73. **Ms. Ogata** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that there were some 400,000 refugees from Sierra Leone in Guinea, 70,000 in Liberia, and about 10,000 in Gambia, making a total of 480,000 refugees. It was estimated that approximately \$45 million was required to cover their needs.

74. There were over one million internally displaced persons in Sierra Leone, of whom about 150,000 lived in Freetown, the capital. Her office did not give direct assistance to those groups in Sierra Leone, but had offered them one-time assistance, mainly consisting of non-food items, to the Liberian refugees in the capital, or in Bo, the second largest city.

75. When refugees returned to Sierra Leone from the neighbouring countries, the displaced persons living in refugee-returning areas would also be assisted. Some internally displaced persons lived in camps, while others lived in camp-like situations, where social services were provided similar to those offered in refugee camps. Many other groups were scattered in areas of conflict, and it was impossible to provide the same level of social services.

76. The services provided also varied widely depending on where the displaced persons were. In the camps in Khartoum, Sudan, for example, the Khartoum Ministry of Housing concentrated on providing educational facilities and water for them.

77. **Mr. Deng** (Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons) explained

that the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement had been developed pursuant to a mandate given by the Commission on Human Rights in 1992 and reinforced in resolutions of both the Commission and the General Assembly. After exhaustive analysis of existing international humanitarian law and human rights instruments, the drafters of the Principles had determined that while existing law provided substantial coverage for the internally displaced, there were significant areas in which it failed to provide an adequate basis for their protection and assistance. They had therefore decided to establish a normative framework building on, and conforming to, earlier legislation in a manner that would facilitate activities carried out on behalf of the internally displaced.

78. The response to the Principles had been overwhelming, and they had been enthusiastically accepted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Commission on Human Rights, various regional organizations and national Governments, among others.

79. **Mr. Ileka** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) outlined the situation which had persisted in his country over the previous two years, in which close to 2 million persons, including innocent civilians, had lost their lives. External aggressors currently occupied vast portions of the national territory, forcing thousands of former inhabitants to flee to inhospitable regions.

80. He called on the international community to provide an appropriate and logical response to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He wondered what provisions could be made to ease the plight of its internally displaced population, to end the presence of foreign forces on Congolese territory, and to bring the countries of the subregion together to find an effective solution to the crisis. He fervently urged the international community to lend its support, particularly within the context of an international conference for peace in the Great Lakes region.

81. **Mr. McGill** (Canada) highlighted the concepts discussed by previous speakers, particularly the importance of a needs-driven approach to humanitarian assistance. He drew particular attention to safe and unimpeded access and the safety of humanitarian personnel.

82. Canada was keenly interested in the normative framework developed by the Representative of the Secretary-General and asked how effective the Guiding

Principles had been in discussions with the governments of countries with internally displaced persons.

83. **Mr. Banaga** (Sudan) thanked the High Commissioner for Refugees for providing a clear understanding on the situation of internally displaced persons in the Sudan. He referred in particular to the issue of sovereignty, raised by the Representative of the Secretary-General, and stated that new understanding might enable his Government to change its position on sovereignty in the interest of progress. He believed that cultural and traditional values were involved in the question of displacement and that it was quite meaningful to expand dialogue on the subject in order to highlight good practice and to draw lessons from such discussions.

84. **Mr. Knoope** (Observer for the Netherlands) commented on the sensitivity of the topic of internally displaced persons, the responsibility of States and the lack of resources, and said he wondered how the international community could strengthen the position of the humanitarian coordinators in the field.

85. **Ms. Taft** (United States) said that in all cases the internally displaced were vulnerable and uprooted persons whose Governments were either unable or unwilling to help. She believed that almost every Government was willing to accept international assistance when it was beyond its capacity to help its people. Donors therefore needed to look at new ways of organizing their resources in order to reinforce the integrated strategies they hoped to achieve. She cited the case of Georgia, which had been able to establish self-sustainable funds, and she wondered whether other innovative and flexible funding mechanisms could be devised for development assistance to Governments.

86. She also believed that consideration should be given to the management, monitoring and decision-making process in recipient countries, as donor confidence in funding mechanisms would generate greater response to appeals.

87. **Mr. Alfeld** (Observer for South Africa) commended the work of the Representative of the Secretary-General, particularly with respect to the development of normative and collaborative institutional frameworks, which had been ably underpinned by the activities of the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs with the support of other agencies. He was keenly interested in hearing

more from UNHCR on the need for fine-tuning and speeding up the allocation of responsibilities and functions.

88. The comments of the Representative of the Secretary-General on State responsibility and the limits of sovereignty were of particular relevance to South Africa, which had benefited from the international assistance, scrutiny and intervention that had led to the downfall of the apartheid system. Other interesting aspects of the discussion included the call to humanize the question of internal displacement, the need for flexibility and pragmatism, linkages between development actors and long-term perspectives.

89. South Africa supported the work of the global database on internally displaced persons and the call for sustained and increased commitment to issues affecting displaced persons, especially the analysis of the root causes of displacement.

90. **Mr. Nkurunziza** (Observer for Burundi), speaking in response to the comments made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said that his Government did not wish to be implicated in the situation of conflict on Congolese territory. He wished to clarify that allegations of Burundian involvement were unfounded.

91. **Mr. Musenga** (Rwanda), refuting the claims made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said categorically that the people and Government of Rwanda were interested in promoting peace.

92. **Mr. Abdalla** (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), commenting on the background to the development of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, said that he was perplexed that the international legal experts had found grey areas within existing legislation. In his opinion, the collection of international instruments on human rights was rather comprehensive. As citizens of their respective countries, internally displaced persons were subject to the jurisdiction of domestic legislation. He believed the issue of sovereignty was at stake, and he failed to understand the need for international protection. The international community was welcome to assist and support Governments in providing for the needs of internally displaced persons, but their protection remained the prerogative of Governments.

93. Furthermore, he said there was no record that the decision providing the basis for the preparation of the Guiding Principles had been brought before the General Assembly for intergovernmental review and approval. Agencies were no substitute for the General Assembly, and their authority could not be equated to that of the Assembly.

94. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Observer for Egypt), while commending the work of the Representative of the Secretary-General in raising awareness on the issue and his advocacy role in support of internally displaced persons, said he would have preferred that the Guiding Principles had been discussed with Governments of Member States. The Principles must command the consensus of the international community in order to attract the legitimacy it deserved.

95. The international community should acknowledge that instances in which Governments used sovereignty as a shield for dishonourable means were exceptions rather than the rule. Humanitarian assistance should be based solely on grounds that preserved impartiality and should not be linked to political and other issues.

96. **Ms. Mesa** (Humanitarian Coordinator in Angola) said that the issues raised by the delegations of the Netherlands and the United States of America were extremely pertinent. In the context of the current mid-term review for Angola, there was a strategy for ensuring that food aid would be available at the current levels until March or April of the following year, and an appeal for tools and seeds for planting in the current year. However, that appeal was still underfunded, and almost 95 per cent of funding was for food aid. The appeal for donors to contribute to the new scheme therefore continued. Pilot projects for specific regions of the country were being discussed with the Government. Community participation would play a very important role in those projects. Equally important, with the extension of civil administration to several new localities in Angola, some agencies would be supporting the new administrators to provide social services in those communities. Finally, in the case of Luanda, several mechanisms for microcredit had been proposed and discussions were under way with the World Bank in connection with joint interventions with the World Bank and other donors in support of the Government of Angola.

97. **Mr. Grossrieder** (Director-General, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) recalled that

armed conflict was the main cause of displacement of people. The Government concerned did not have access to or control over the whole population. International humanitarian law required government consent, and also the consent of all the parties to the conflict, in order to ensure the safety of the victims and humanitarian workers. In that context, ICRC, in its role of neutral intermediary, could play an important role in connection with displaced persons under the control of other groups, rebels, or even private economic actors with whom ICRC, for the purpose of helping all the victims, wanted to develop contacts and relationships.

98. **Mr. Deng** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons) said that there was clearly considerable concern in certain areas regarding the normative framework. In response to the Canadian representative, he said that he had visited various countries where the Guiding Principles had been used as a basis for dialogue, including Colombia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. The Principles were available in almost every office, and had been translated into the local languages. They were being used not only to guide Governments and agencies, but also to inform the displaced persons themselves about their rights.

99. In answer to the point made by the Libyan representative, he said that he had responded to requests for the compilation of the normative framework. The Commission and the General Assembly had welcomed the fact that the agencies and representatives were using the Guiding Principles in their dialogues with Governments, and had asked to be informed as to the Governments' reactions to them. He might not yet have been successful in personally informing all delegations, but annotations had just been produced that pointed out that the three main legal sources of the Guiding Principles were humanitarian law, human rights law and, by analogy, refugee law. He would be happy to receive any substantive comments on the provisions, which would be further revised. All of that information would be made available to the Libyan representative.

100. In response to the representative of Egypt, he said that it might indeed be useful to obtain the views of Governments with regard to intervention. However, former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had often told him, with regard to concerns about sovereignty, that the issue was not so much fear of intervention as it was lack of interest on the part of certain major countries.

The common ground might be greater than they suspected.

101. Political solutions were important because even in crisis situations there was an opportunity to address the structural problems in a particular country and the underlying causes of the conflict therein. A country could build common ground for all nationals to have a sense of belonging as citizens on equal footing.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.