



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERALA/43/743/Add.1
15 November 1988
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/SPANISHForty-third session
Agenda item 12

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Human rights and mass exodusesReport of the Secretary-GeneralAddendum

1. Since the publication of the main report contained in document A/43/743, pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 42/144 of 7 December 1987 and paragraph 5 of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1988/70, of 10 March 1988, replies to the note verbale sent by the Secretary-General on 30 August 1988 have been received from the Governments of the United States of America and Mexico.

2. The United States agreed with most of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees (A/40/385, annex). The United States had long been a haven for refugees from persecution in other countries and had taken the lead in assisting countries of first refuge to care for refugees within their borders. It therefore particularly supported the recommendation that States should co-operate with one another to prevent future massive flows of refugees and that they should respect the right of refugees to return to their homelands in safety. It noted, however, that the conclusions and recommendations used the term "refugees" in a broader sense than its technical meaning in international law.

3. The United States concurred with the recommendation that the complex problems causing massive flows of refugees must be resolved in order to avert such flows in future and to encourage refugees to return to their country of origin. In that regard, the United States noted that, in the case of Afghanistan, the Soviet authorities had escalated the conflict through their bombing attacks against the Resistance, the latest of which had reportedly occurred in the months of October and November 1988 and had prevented the 5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and

the Islamic Republic of Iran from returning to their homeland. The presence of millions of mines in the countryside and the lack of detailed Soviet maps of existing minefields also constituted major impediments to the return of the refugees.

4. The United States agreed that States should promote the rights of their populations and should not deny people such rights on account of their nationality, ethnicity, race, religion or language, thus directly or indirectly forcing them to leave their country. It did not, however, equate economic, social and cultural rights with civil and political rights. The former were not "rights" but rather societal goals to be progressively achieved according to the free choices of democratic societies. The latter were rights protecting the individual against encroachment by the State and should be implemented and safeguarded immediately.

5. In conclusion, the United States expressed its belief that greater respect for human rights would cause the flow of refugees to diminish, and deemed it appropriate to recall, on the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the words of Secretary of State George C. Marshall, speaking before the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, on 23 September 1948:

"Systematic and deliberate denials of human rights lie at the root of most of our troubles and threaten the work of the United Nations ... Governments which systematically disregard the rights of their own people are not likely to respect the right of other nations and other people and are likely to seek their objectives by coercion and force in the international field."

6. The Government of Mexico once again reaffirms that respecting and protecting human life is the highest value associated with asylum. The granting of asylum is a sovereign decision that should not be interpreted as an unfriendly act towards the asylum-seeker's country of origin.

7. Pursuant to accepted international norms and in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Government of Mexico has taken care of the Guatemalans who have settled as refugees in Mexican territory. In that connection, criteria and mechanisms have been established to facilitate the return of those refugees to their homeland, with the guarantee that their right to live in their own territory will be strictly observed.

8. It is the intention of the Government of Mexico that, through the implementation of productive programmes, the Guatemalan refugees should gradually attain self-sufficiency, thus keeping them from becoming indefinitely dependent on international assistance.

9. Mexico recognises that there is, on occasion, opposition to local integration as a permanent solution, because frequently the countries of refuge are developing countries with very limited material resources, so that it is difficult for them to take on the additional economic burden imposed by a massive and ill-timed flow of people from outside its borders.

10. Nevertheless, the Government of Mexico has not changed its policy of ~~non-refoulement~~, non-return and non-deportation of persons entering the country to save their lives, since its intention is to continue protecting the lives and physical integrity of refugees who turn to it for help.
11. In view of the foregoing, it must be borne in mind that the adverse economic situation of most developing countries, combined with the political and social instability that prevails in some of them, is the root cause of the massive migrations into the countries of asylum.
12. Accordingly, the Government of Mexico considers that a solution to the refugee problem must rest on the international community's recognition of the need to establish a new international economic order that will make it possible to reduce the gap between developed and developing countries.
13. In addition, the Government of Mexico is involved in regional co-operation efforts to create the conditions for a negotiated solution to the Central American conflict, the main cause of the large flows of refugees taking place in the area.
14. Mexico's support for and adherence to the conclusions and recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees must be viewed in this context.
