

United Nations  
**GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

*Official Records \**



THIRD COMMITTEE  
46th meeting  
held on  
Monday, 14 November 1977  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

---

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 46th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PEDERSEN (Denmark)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 87: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

(b) QUESTION OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

---

\* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be incorporated in a copy of the record and should be sent *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550.

Corrections will be issued shortly after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL  
A/C.3/32/SR.46  
16 November 1977

ORIGINAL: ENGLI

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 87: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES  
(continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

(b) QUESTION OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)  
(A/32/3, chap. III, sect. L, A/32/12 and Add.1, A/C.3/32/L.26 and L.27)

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the texts of two draft resolutions had been submitted (A/C.3/32/L.26 and L.27).

2. Mr. FAURIS (France) said that he wished to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the devotion and efficiency with which he had carried out his complicated and urgent task within the means at his disposal. That task had become even greater during the past year. He accordingly approved of the extension of the mandate of UNHCR for a further period of five years.

3. France had acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. His Government had provided assistance for refugees and, in particular, those from Indo-China and Latin America. He had taken particular note of the broad scope of UNHCR's programme of emergency assistance to Lebanon. He considered that the problems connected with the break-up and reunion of families and with the provision of identity cards for refugees were particularly difficult.

4. In conclusion, he wished to express his Government's appreciation of the work which Prince Saddrudin Aga Khan had done to help displaced persons throughout the world during his period of office.

5. Ms. BEAGLE (New Zealand) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner for the skilful, humane and non-partisan way in which he had discharged his mandate over the years. In its approach to the problem of refugees, New Zealand had been motivated by those same considerations and had always done its utmost to meet the needs of the refugees. Despite the admirable work of the High Commissioner and his staff, Governments must increase their own efforts to find lasting solutions to the problems involved.

6. She welcomed the High Commissioner's comprehensive report (A/32/12 and Add.1) but noted that, despite the considerable expansion of the activities of the High Commissioner's Office which had acted in a number of extremely sensitive political situations, the progress made had been more than offset by large new influxes of refugees. With more than two million refugees coming within the competence of UNHCR and spread over more than 70 countries, the proportions of the refugee problem were formidable.

7. Her delegation was particularly concerned about the numerous and serious infringements of the basic human rights of refugees and of their specific rights, infringements which in some countries had followed a distinct pattern. It

/...

(Ms. Beagle, New Zealand)

appeared that man's inhumanity to man knew no bounds. She therefore commended strongly the High Commissioner's efforts to counter those breaches of humanitarian law. In intensifying its activities in the field of international protection, the High Commissioner's Office fostered a deeper understanding of the requirements of displaced persons and of the imperative need to prevent the emergence of refugee situations. Its public information activities could not fail to enhance awareness of the daunting problems involved.

8. The close co-ordination of UNHCR activities with other organs of the United Nations system and with non-governmental organizations was also encouraging. The High Commissioner served an important role by highlighting a whole range of economic, social, political and human rights problems and by co-operating with other bodies in solving them. Her country was particularly conscious of the invaluable work of the non-governmental organizations on whose experience the ability to assimilate refugees greatly depended.

9. Her Government in close co-operation with the Inter-Church Committee on Immigration, was carrying out the largest single refugee resettlement programme that it had ever undertaken. Over 400 refugees from Indo-China, drawn from boat camps in Thailand and Malaysia, were being given a home in New Zealand. If the exercise was successful, a further 50 families would be admitted. Every effort was being made to ensure their smoothest possible integration through the provision of a whole range of resettlement services. A similar programme involving more than 200 Chilean refugees had been in effect since 1974.

10. In addition, despite severe economic difficulties, her Government expected to be able to sustain its regular contributions. It had also donated to the UNHCR Programme of Emergency Assistance for Refugees from Southern Africa. New Zealand co-operated with the High Commissioner in individual cases involving handicapped refugees and refugees from Eastern Europe. Its co-sponsorship of draft resolutions A/C.3/32/L.26 and L.27 was a measure of its continuing confidence in and support for that work.

11. She expressed her delegation's appreciation to the High Commissioner for his work in developing the Office into one of the principal tools for the promotion of the humanitarian aims of the United Nations. Her delegation hoped that the Office's humanitarian and non-political approach would be maintained under the High Commissioner's successor, who could be assured of New Zealand's continued support.

12. Mrs. CHATER (Tunisia) said that it was clear from the High Commissioner's report (A/32/12) that the refugee problem was still of major, and even increasing, importance. She welcomed the special emphasis devoted by UNHCR to the reunification of families and to solving the economic and social problems involved in resettling refugees. Short-term aid, however, could not be an end in itself. A solution had to be found to the long-term refugee problem throughout the world. It was to be hoped that the time would come when the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees would no longer be necessary. That was not yet the case, however. The plight of refugees must not be permitted to degenerate into a permanent situation in which refugees would remain a marginal group in society.

/...

(Mrs. Chater, Tunisia)

13 Her delegation was pleased to note that the number of countries which had acceded to the international instruments on the status and protection of refugees was increasing. Tunisia was party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the 1967 Protocol thereto. Tunisia had also acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and to the 1956 Convention on the Recovery Abroad of Maintenance.

14. She noted with great regret Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan's decision to resign as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and wished to thank him for the humane and effective work which he had accomplished for refugees over the past 12 years.

15. Mr. SAIGNAVONGS (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he had taken particular note of the world-wide efforts made by UNHCR in the field of international protection and material assistance for refugees, as well as of the difficulties with which the High Commissioner had been faced in carrying out his task. His own country in particular had received very substantial assistance. Over 700,000 people had been forced to leave their villages during the recent war because of bombing. Following the return of peace, the Government, assisted by UNHCR, had organized the return or resettlement of many of those refugees. UNHCR had allocated \$6 million in 1975-1976 for transportation and initial installation requirements and for the purchase of agricultural, building and medical equipment for the refugees. The programme had worked satisfactorily although there had been some administrative delays. In UNHCR's budget for 1977 \$2.1 million had been allocated for continued assistance to Laos, that would assist 50,000 people to return to their original villages and would provide 2,000 tons of rice. During the first seven months of 1977, about 106,000 people had returned to their villages, with the consequence that local authorities had been placed in a difficult situation with regard to food supplies, as the rice harvest had barely reached 75 per cent of normal. His country needed 4,000 additional tons of rice if its people were to survive for the next six to nine months. He wished in particular to thank the Government of the Netherlands for its substantial contribution to assistance funds for Laos.

16. He expressed concern for the 64,000 refugees who had fled abroad from Laos, mainly from rural regions.

17. He had noted with regret that Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan was giving up his post. Acknowledging the great assistance which UNHCR had afforded his country, he offered the High Commissioner his best wishes for success in the future.

18. Mr. MEZVINSKY (United States of America) said that the report (A/32/12) had mirrored the outstanding performance of UNHCR in coping with a vast array of refugee problems on a global basis and in a highly effective manner. Unfortunately the conditions which had created refugee problems throughout the world were no less harsh than when the Committee had last met; in some instances they had become more severe. Thousands of additional people had been uprooted and engulfed by human misery and unknown numbers had lost their lives in courageous efforts to reach safety. Strenuous efforts must be made to wipe out the conditions which caused fellow human beings to make the terrible choice to flee their homeland for an

(Mr. Mezvinsky, United States)

uncertain and often perilous future. The elements which created such conditions must be exposed and brought to public attention. In the meantime the Office of the High Commissioner provided the framework for dealing compassionately and practically with the victims of those conditions.

19. He had been pleased to note that UNHCR was continuing to place major emphasis on the international protection of refugees. It was distressing, however, to learn that during the period under review there had been a number of instances of forcible repatriation of refugees. His Government regarded the international protection of refugees as the most important function of the High Commissioner.

20. He had noted that UNHCR had budgeted \$22.6 million during the past year for the care, maintenance, resettlement and repatriation of such refugees. His Government had been, and continued to be, especially concerned over the plight of the refugees from South-East Asia. The existence of the so-called "boat cases" had presented a special challenge to the international community and there was a vital need for ships' masters to rescue those boat people on the high seas. The need to grant them safe places to land was equally evident. The High Commissioner had undertaken to provide for the temporary care and maintenance of boat cases wherever they might be. His Government had already accepted more than 150,000 Indo-Chinese refugees as immigrants and had recently mounted a new programme to enable a further 15,000 Indo-Chinese refugees to come to the United States.

21. The High Commissioner had assisted some 1.2 million refugees in Africa in 1976 and had budgeted \$20.7 million on their behalf. That assistance had played a significant role in more than a dozen major areas of asylum. Among the great variety of assistance projects in Africa, he wished particularly to single out for praise the major agricultural integration projects for refugees carried out by the High Commissioner in special settlement areas in a number of different countries. Those projects had placed refugees on a self-supporting basis while contributing to the social, political and economic well-being of the country of asylum concerned. Educational assistance projects for refugees were also deserving of special note.

22. The High Commissioner had also been concerned with refugees from Eastern Europe into Western European countries and had a modest programme for their benefit. The United States had accepted several thousand of those refugees each year for permanent resettlement and, in addition, had an ongoing programme in asylum areas of Western Europe to provide care and maintenance, as well as resettlement assistance to such refugees. There was a special need to do everything possible to effect the reunification of split families.

23. His Government wished to pay a tribute to Prince Saâdrudin Aga Khan for the sterling record which he had built as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees during the past 12 years.

24. Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria) said that his Government had traditionally given close and sympathetic attention to the activities of UNHCR since it had been founded in 1950. He was concerned to note from UNHCR's report that the number of refugees

/...

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

in the world had increased during the past year while the number of Member States adhering to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol had not risen significantly. The fact that many Member States had been willing to observe the provisions of those instruments was certainly attributable to the untiring efforts of UNHCR. His Government hoped that efforts to have those treaties ratified by the largest possible number of countries would continue. In the meantime, it was deplorable that such international treaties should be violated frequently and that the basic rights of refugees provided for in those instruments should continue to be infringed. His delegation was particularly concerned by cases of abduction of refugees and cases of persecution of refugees on their return to their countries of origin. His Government hoped that the Committee would join UNHCR's strong appeal for scrupulous observance of the basic rights of refugees as laid down by those instruments.

25. On the question of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, he wished to refer to a recent treaty of extradition between Austria and Hungary in which special note of the refugee problem had been taken. According to that treaty, extradition would not apply to people enjoying asylum, refugees would thus benefit from the same principle of non-extradition as nationals of the contracting parties. He believed that the treaty might serve as an example in cases where the equal treatment of refugees and nationals in the field of extradition was sought.

26. He regretted that the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Territorial Asylum, held in Geneva, had not proceeded as smoothly as the Committee had hoped and had not produced the expected results. He agreed with those who believed that the matter required further study and the time might come when the Conference should be reconvened, once all requirements for success had been met.

27. His Government had enacted new legislation on passports consistent with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and he hoped that that legislation would bring about a further improvement in the situation of refugees. He expressed the hope that a greater number of countries would agree to be bound by that Convention, as equal treatment for a greater number of refugees would thereby be guaranteed. It was his Government's policy to ensure that all social security arrangements would henceforth provide specific coverage for refugees within the meaning of the Protocol of 1967. Refugees from all over the world were accepted into Austria and measures were taken to provide both new and old refugees with housing, counselling and assistance in integrating them into Austrian social, economic and cultural life.

28. Austria would raise its contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East by 48.6 per cent during the forthcoming fiscal year and would also contribute \$46,000 to UNHCR, subject to parliamentary approval.

29. Mr. FARTASH (Iran) said that his delegation noted with profound sadness the continuing plight of the refugees. That feeling was mitigated to some extent, however, by its awareness of the intelligence and untiring devotion of the High

/...

(Mr. Fartash, Iran)

Commissioner, who despite the limits of his mandate had succeeded in working miracles in a very delicate field. Recognizing the great contribution made by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan to the success of the Office and to encouraging Governments to co-operate, his delegation noted with deep regret that the High Commissioner would be relinquishing his post. His successor would inherit an extremely onerous and complex task.

30. He noted from the report (A/32/12 and Add.1) that new problems arising during the past year had called for increased efforts on the part of UNHCR and its activities had expanded accordingly. It was encouraging, however, to note the international solidarity reflected in the large number of Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that had made contributions.

31. With regard to international protection, the basic human rights of refugees continued to be violated. As the report indicated, it was very important to encourage States to become parties to the relevant international instruments if the protection functions of UNHCR were to be properly discharged. Among the various activities relating to international protection, those aimed at facilitating the assimilation and naturalization of refugees were of special importance.

32. He noted that the assistance activities of UNHCR involved an expenditure of more than \$90 million and that 350,000 refugees had been assisted. Those figures reflected the scope and complexity of the problems involved. His delegation greatly welcomed the High Commissioner's programmes of social orientation, education and training of refugees, aimed at integrating the refugees and assisting the recipient country in cases where it faced economic difficulties. In that respect, special mention should be made of countries like Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland which, despite their limited resources, generously provided asylum to a continuing influx of refugees.

33. His delegation wished to associate itself with the High Commissioner's repeated appeals, first, to Governments to adopt a more humane attitude toward refugees and to do their utmost to protect and integrate the refugees; secondly, to certain countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States -- traditionally countries of immigration -- to admit more refugees, and thirdly, to Governments to increase their contributions. In that respect, the Nordic countries and certain others deserved special mention for their generosity. His own country, for its part, had decided in 1977 to quadruple its contribution.

34. Mrs. BERTRAND de BROMLEY (Honduras) said that the departure of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan would be an immense loss that would be difficult to replace. Despite the formidable problems involved, and the constantly expanding scope of his activities, he had faced his task with objectivity and humanitarianism. She congratulated the High Commissioner on his lucid report and wished him every success for the future. She hoped that the transition could be effected without interrupting the activities of the Office.

/...

(Mrs. Bertrand de Bromley, Honduras)

35. Her delegation wished to join the sponsors of draft resolutions A/C.3/32/L.26 and L.27.

36. Mr. BJØRNEBYE (Norway) paid a tribute to the way in which the High Commissioner and his staff had year after year managed to shoulder an increasing burden of responsibilities that really belonged to the entire international community.

37. It was clear from the report (A/32/12 and Add.1) that, in spite of the impressive work of the High Commissioner and his staff, the number of refugees and displaced persons continued to grow. Even more disturbing, the report revealed numerous and serious infringements of the specific rights of refugees as well as of their basic human rights, infringements which in some countries even seemed to follow a distinct pattern. The need was thus more urgent than ever to improve the machinery of international protection and increase material assistance. Only genuine global solidarity could produce the necessary growth of governmental contributions and prompt more countries to accede to and implement the relevant international instruments. His Government fully supported the High Commissioner's efforts to improve the legal protection of refugees and to find pragmatic solutions to urgent problems. It appealed strongly to all Member States to give the High Commissioner their fullest support.

38. Introducing draft resolution A/C.3/32/L.26 on behalf of the sponsors, he noted that it essentially followed the lines of previous resolutions. The seriousness of certain developments had, however, necessitated somewhat more explicit language than usual on certain points. Reviewing the preambular paragraphs, he noted that the infringements of the basic human rights of refugees had been the subject of a separate paragraph. With regard to the fifth preambular paragraph, he said that, in order to give maximum efficiency to national measures and obligations, Member States should promote regional co-operation and harmonization of their legal procedures concerning aliens. Such harmonization had been initiated among the Nordic countries, under the auspices of the Nordic Council. Referring to the sixth preambular paragraph, he noted that the proposed unprecedented increase in expenditure was based on the most pressing needs determined by a careful scrutiny of the programmes. At present 8 to 10 Member States accounted for approximately 90 per cent of the contributions. The expected increase should not and could not be met by the traditional main donors alone. His delegation fully supported the High Commissioner's appeal for more balance in the level of support on a global basis.

39. Financial contributions were, however, not the only way of contributing to actual needs. Of the greatest importance was assistance such as that given by several countries in Africa that received the refugees fleeing from the minority régimes in southern Africa. Receiving refugees for permanent residence was still another way of meeting actual needs.

40. The operative part of the draft resolution followed those general lines and more explicitly spelled out some of the concerns of the sponsors. He noted that, in view of the importance of interagency co-operation, the need for co-ordinated

/...



(Mr. Bjørnebye, Norway)

action was now incorporated in the operative part, forming paragraph 3. With regard to paragraph 5, he paid a tribute once again to the African countries for setting an example: the OAU Convention of 1969 Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa went beyond the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees by providing specifically that no person would be compelled to return to or remain in a territory where his life, physical integrity or liberty would be threatened. It also provided that the granting of asylum would not be regarded as an unfriendly act.

41. There had been positive developments in Europe also, as seen in the extradition treaty between Austria and Hungary whereby extradition would not be applied in the case of persons enjoying asylum; and in the case of Portugal, which had opted for the global clause in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. He hoped other Governments would follow their examples.

42. The appeal in paragraph 6 of the draft resolution was the obvious consequence of the pressing need for wider financial support and a more even shouldering of the common responsibilities. He wished to give special emphasis to that appeal to Governments to contribute generously.

43. All those considerations also applied to draft resolution A/C.3/32/L.27. The Office of the High Commissioner must be continued in order to maintain and develop concerted international action.

44. On behalf of the sponsors, he expressed the hope that the two draft resolutions would be adopted unanimously, as in the case of similar resolutions in the past. That would be the best way of paying a tribute to the High Commissioner, whose devotion and leadership had been largely responsible for the present image of the Office and its activities. The task before the Committee was to enable the successor and his devoted staff to continue the good work.

45. The CHAIRMAN announced that Liberia and Guinea-Bissau had joined the sponsors of draft resolutions A/C.3/32/L.26 and L.27, and that Morocco had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.3/32/L.26.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.