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OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Second International Conference on Assistance
to Refugees in AfricaReport of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The First International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa was held on 9 and 10 April 1981 at Geneva. Its objectives, as stated in General Assembly resolution 35/42 of 25 November 1980, were to focus public attention on the plight of refugees in Africa, to mobilize additional resources for refugee programmes in Africa, and to assist host countries to cope with the burden of large numbers of refugees by strengthening affected services and facilities. The Conference succeeded in drawing the attention of the international community to the refugee problem and resources were mobilized which helped substantially to alleviate the plight of refugees and to resolve a number of refugee situations. However, the First Conference did not produce the additional resources required by the host countries to strengthen their infrastructure.

2. At its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly, having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the Conference (A/37/522) and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1/ adopted resolution 37/197 of 18 December 1982, which read in part as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"5. Requests the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to convene at Geneva in 1984 a second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa:

"(a) To review thoroughly the results of the Conference held in 1981 as well as the state of progress of the projects submitted to it;

"(b) To consider the continuing need for assistance with a view to providing, as necessary, additional assistance to refugees and returnees in Africa for the implementation of programmes for their relief, rehabilitation and resettlement;

"(c) To consider the impact imposed on the national economies of the African countries concerned and to provide them with the assistance required to strengthen their social and economic infrastructure so as to enable them to cope with the burden of dealing with large numbers of refugees and returnees;

"...

"12. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution."

3. In his report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session (A/38/526), the Secretary-General summarized the preparations made for convening the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and, in section IV C of that report, proposed various arrangements for the Conference.

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4. Following its consideration of the Secretary-General's report, the General Assembly, at its thirty-eighth session, adopted resolution 38/120 of 16 December 1983, entitled "Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa", which read in part as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Takes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (A/38/526);

"2. Approves the proposed Conference arrangements contained in paragraph 17 of the report of the Secretary-General;

"3. Requests the Secretary-General to invite all States to participate in the Conference at the ministerial level and to invite also the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in the Conference at a high level;"

II. PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE CONFERENCE

5. In the six months prior to the Conference, preparations were focused primarily on the completion of the required documentation and by mobilizing the necessary support for the objectives of the Conference.

6. Two principal documents were prepared for the Conference. Document A/CONF.125/1 provided a summary of needs and document A/CONF.125/2 gave background information on each affected country, a detailed description of needs and project outlines. The projects covering paragraph 5(b) of General Assembly resolution 37/197 were prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in consultation with the host Governments concerned. These proposals called for additional assistance in the amount of \$US 10.9 million to supplement UNHCR regular programmes for 1984. With regard to projects relating to paragraph 5(c) of the same resolution, a joint technical team, consisting of personnel from the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was set up to assist African host countries in preparing their submissions for refugee-related infrastructural assistance. A total of 128 projects, amounting to approximately \$US 362 million, were proposed and included in the official documentation. In the course of the Conference, the delegations of Chad, Benin, the Central African Republic and Cameroon sent communications indicating their need for international assistance to help deal with refugee problems in their respective countries (see para. 19).

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7. As part of the general effort of mobilizing support for the Conference, a Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the Secretary-General, OAU, UNHCR and UNDP, held several meetings with the regional groups in New York and Geneva, as well as with representatives of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. In addition, members of the Steering Committee also visited the capitals of various traditional and potential donor countries in the Far East, the Middle East, Europe and North America.

8. The effort to mobilize international support for the Conference was greatly facilitated by an active public relations programme. The programme focused on the urgent refugee situation in Africa, the critical needs of the refugees and the burden which the situation has imposed on the affected countries. A concerted United Nations programme of information and publicity was undertaken, with UNHCR as the lead agency.

9. In addition to printed materials, including press kits, effective use was made of visual aids, such as special photo exhibits, posters and films, produced by major television stations. Seminars were held in Africa for journalists from leading African and non-African media, and included travel to major refugee and returnee areas of Africa. A gala concert by international artists was organized at Geneva to publicize the purposes of the Conference; the programme was broadcast by several television stations. Feature articles and radio programmes were produced and placed in the media both inside and outside Africa.

10. Co-operation with non-governmental organizations was intensified as one of the most efficient means of reaching the general public. Workshops on the Conference, organized by international or national non-governmental organizations in co-operation with UNHCR, took place in many countries. Considerable information material on the refugee situation was produced by non-governmental organizations.

III. PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

11. In accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 38/120, the Secretary-General invited all States and also the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in the Conference.

12. The Conference met at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 9 to 11 July 1984.

13. The following 107 States participated in the Conference:

Afghanistan
Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belgium
Benin
Botswana
Brazil
Burundi
Cameroon
Canada
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Cyprus
Democratic Kampuchea
Democratic Yemen
Denmark
Djibouti
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Germany, Federal Republic of
Ghana
Greece
Guinea
Haiti
Holy See
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait

Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia
Luxembourg
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Morocco
Mozambique
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Peru
Philippines
Portugal
Qatar
Republic of Korea
Rwanda
San Marino
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe

In addition, the following five States attended the Conference as observers:

Cuba
El Salvador
Guatemala
Mexico
Uruguay

14. Furthermore, some 145 governmental and non-governmental organizations attended the Conference as observers.

A. Election of officers

15. On the proposal of the representative of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Leo Tindemans, Minister for External Relations of Belgium, was elected by acclamation as President of the Conference.

16. On the proposal of the representative of Senegal, the Conference also elected by acclamation the following persons as Vice-Presidents:

Mr. Ibrahim GAMBARI, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria;
Mr. Ali Kaiser MORSHED, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations Office at Geneva;
Mr. Paulo NOGUEIRA BATISTA, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

B. Agenda

17. The agenda, as adopted by the Conference, read as follows:

1. Opening of the Conference by the Secretary-General.
2. Election of the President.
3. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Election of the Vice-Presidents;
 - (c) Organization of work.
4. Refugee situation in Africa:
 - (a) Consideration of requests for international assistance to deal with the current refugee situation (A/CONF.125/1, A/CONF.125/2);
 - (b) Consideration of a draft declaration or plan of action relating to refugees in Africa.

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C. Documentation

18. The Conference had before it the following documents:

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|
| (a) | A/CONF.125/1 | Summary of needs |
| (b) | A/CONF.125/2 | Detailed description of needs, project outlines
and background information on the refugee
situation |
| (c) | A/CONF.125/3 | Provisional agenda |
| (d) | A/CONF.125/L.1 | Draft Declaration and Programme of Action |
| (e) | A/CONF.125/INF.1 and
Add.1 and 2 | List of participants |

19. In addition, the following communications were received during the Conference:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| (a) | A/CONF.125/COM/1 | Communication from Chad |
| (b) | A/CONF.125/COM/2 | Communication from Benin |
| (c) | A/CONF.125/COM/3 | Communication from the Central African Republic |
| (d) | A/CONF.125/COM/4 | Communication from Cameroon |
| (e) | A/CONF.125/COM/5
(and Corr. 1) | Communication from Chad |
| (f) | A/CONF.125/COM/6 | Communication from Israel |

D. Organization of work

20. In connection with the organization of its work, the Conference decided,
inter alia:

(a) That participants should confine themselves to one intervention covering all the points they wished to make;

(b) That statements by States would be limited to 15 minutes and statements by organizations to 10 minutes;

(c) That, in accordance with the precedents established in connection with conferences of a similar nature, the Conference would be governed mutatis mutandis by the rules of procedure for United Nations pledging conference and that, as provided in rule 22 of those rules, any procedural matter not covered by them would be settled in accordance with the rules applicable to committees of the General Assembly;

(d) That, given the humanitarian character of the Conference and the limited time at its disposal, should any representative feel obliged to reply to the remarks of a speaker, the Secretariat would distribute the text of the reply if a sufficient number of copies were provided.

E. Opening of the Conference by the Secretary-General

21. Opening the Conference, the Secretary-General said that participants in the Conference would no doubt have in mind the unique circumstances of the African refugee problem. No other refugee situation had demanded that people beset with so many problems, and having so little themselves, should share the little they had with so many.

22. He stated that the Second Conference was being held at a time of great economic crisis throughout the African continent - far more serious than at the time when the First Conference had taken place.

23. The Secretary-General said that he had, on several occasions, publicly expressed his utmost preoccupation with the economic and social conditions prevailing on the African continent. Earlier this year he had felt it was his duty to launch an initiative in order to increase international awareness of the situation, to explain the need to mobilize additional resources in support of strengthened domestic policies and to seek ways and means to improve - through concerted action - the effectiveness of efforts of the international community. It was his sincere hope that this would lead, as a matter of urgency, to a framework for action on African problems, including the refugee situation. Under present circumstances, the Secretary-General said, the African refugee situation was for many African countries a major component of their critical economic situation.

24. He stated that for some four million refugees, who either lived in camps, dependent on international charity, or eked out a precarious existence at large among rural or urban populations, the situation remained one of desperation. They saw little prospect of redressing the indignity, alienation and hopelessness of their lives. The convening of the Conference was, therefore, very timely.

25. Neither the interests of the refugees, nor those of the host countries and the international community, would be served by a continuation of the status quo, he continued. There was need for determined efforts which must go beyond the provision of emergency assistance. While the Conference must not neglect the ongoing traditional needs of refugees and returnees, he hoped that it would give a strong impetus to the search for durable solutions to African refugee problems. This approach involved the creation of conditions and opportunities under which refugees might be able to return to their homes or to be settled in the country of asylum. He stated that in either case special emphasis would have to be placed on infrastructural needs related to their rehabilitation and settlement.

26. The Secretary-General said that, following consultations with the affected countries, 14 of them had requested international assistance for the implementation of various projects which they considered critical in establishing the basis for

durable solutions. The report before the Conference gave details of the projects as well as background information on the refugee situation in each of the countries. Since the publication of that report, two other countries, Cameroon and Chad, had submitted requests for international assistance, to help them cope with the refugee situation within their borders. A major task of the Conference would be to consider ways and means by which the international community could best respond to the request for the financing of these projects.

27. Voluntary repatriation, the Secretary-General emphasized, was an optimum solution which went to the heart of the refugee dilemma. It would require compassion and statesmanship on the part of the countries concerned. He hoped that individual countries, wherever possible, would use their good offices to promote the establishment of conditions for the safe return of refugees.

28. The Secretary-General stated that the majority of the refugees were those who, unfortunately, could not yet return home. In such situations, he said, the continued understanding, co-operation and generosity of the countries of asylum and the donor community would be vital. The best solutions for these refugees were those which would enable them to become useful and self-sustaining members of the communities in which they found themselves, and so add dignity and purpose to their lives. He said that it was encouraging to note that there was already growing acceptance of the need for long-term efforts of this kind.

29. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the Governments and peoples of all those countries in Africa which had shown such great humanity and generosity to the refugees.

30. While appreciating the generosity which various donor States and organizations had displayed towards the African refugee situation throughout the years, the Secretary-General said that the situation facing host countries was so critical and the needs so urgent, that he again had to appeal to donors to give every consideration and sympathy to the additional requests which had been placed before the Conference. Mention must also be made, he said, of the contribution which was being made by the voluntary agencies. The Secretary-General also paid tribute to the Acting Secretary-General of OAU, UNHCR and the Administrator of UNDP for the excellent co-operation and support which he had received from them in the preparations leading up to the Conference.

31. In conclusion, the Secretary-General expressed the hope that the Conference would provide a forum for a frank and open exchange of views between the parties represented, so that the best solutions for existing problems could be found. The problems to be addressed by the Conference were formidable and there were no easy solutions. At the same time, it was imperative that effective action be ensured without any delay, given the urgency of the situation.

F. Opening statements

1. Statement by the President of the Conference

32. In his statement, the President of the Conference said that no refugee, wherever he might be, enjoyed an enviable fate. Uprooted, often without influence on his own future, torn between the hope to return, which left him in perpetual transit, and the will to integrate in his new society in order to be self-reliant, a stranger with no other protection, albeit precious, than that afforded by the High Commissioner, the refugee remained a fragile human being whose chances of success were severely jeopardized even if his material needs were being taken care of.

33. Today, the horizon of millions of women, men and children were confined to a daily struggle for survival and the future of several generations was threatened. The refugees were, at the same time, the painful expression as well as the symptoms of the international crisis which had had its ominous effects on Africa, more than on any other continent.

34. In the majority of cases, the countries receiving refugees or returnees had gone further than one could expect and even to the limit of their sacrifices. They were confronted by almost insurmountable difficulties, as the impact of the displaced populations, whose unforeseen arrival had continued for years, weighed heavily on their often precarious infrastructures, as well as on their limited human and material resources. This situation could become explosive if not remedied in time, the President said.

35. The Conference should be the translation into reality of the new concept which consisted in linking refugee aid and development aid. To launch this new approach would lay the basis for a new form of co-operation for development, the President continued. An absolute priority had to be given by the world community to two objectives: the fight against hunger in the world and the future of those refugees who, against their will, had been chased away from the places where they had their roots.

2. Statement by the representative of the current Chairman
of the Organization of African Unity

36. The current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity was represented by Mr. Fikre-Selassie Wogderess, Secretary-General of the Provisional Military Administrative Council of Socialist Ethiopia. Mr. Wogderess read a statement on behalf of the current Chairman which expressed the hope that the Second Conference should provide the opportunity to fulfil expectations to secure a lasting solution to those African refugee problems which had not been resolved by the First Conference. Countries of asylum as well as countries of return of refugees had been adversely affected by the global economic recession, thereby impairing their capacity to continue to give the required assistance to refugees. It was imperative that the economic infrastructure of those countries be strengthened to enable them to shoulder effectively the humanitarian task of caring for refugees.

As a result of the lessons gained from the First Conference, African countries were this time presenting modest and relevant projects of a developmental nature prepared in co-operation with the United Nations technical team.

37. People outside Africa might be asking what Africa itself was doing about the refugee problem, he said. The number of refugees now being hosted within the continent itself was testimony of Africa's great concern for its people. All Africa had asked, and continued to ask, was for the international community to assist it so that refugees could be provided with better care.

38. Since the First Conference, increased emphasis had been placed on the need to address the root causes of the refugee problem. At its nineteenth ordinary session, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU had requested the Secretary-General of OAU to carry out an in-depth study relating to the root causes of refugees in Africa and to report to the next session.

39. In southern Africa, colonialism, racism and apartheid were the major factors for refugee exodus, he said. In independent Africa, internal political differences, inter-state conflicts, interference in the internal affairs of States and other man-made and natural disasters, especially in areas close to common borders, had been among the major causes for refugee situations. As the basic causes were varied, so must be the search for their solutions, he said.

40. In the continued search for lasting solutions, consultations had been held at Heads of State and Government and ministerial levels on the possible voluntary repatriation to countries of origin. Repatriation was the optimal and most durable solution to the refugee problem.

41. There was general agreement that the forestalling of future refugee incidences was one of the implicit goals of the Conference, the representative of the current Chairman of OAU continued. The many more millions of internally displaced and drought-affected population, especially in the border areas of African States, also had to be provided with lasting relief and rehabilitation assistance. Such concrete and effective measures could obviate or, at the very least, reduce the potential compulsion for crossing borders to qualify as refugees and thereby secure life-saving assistance.

3. Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

42. In his statement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said that the present Conference was not just another three-day international conference. It was rather a part, and an important part, of an ongoing and expanding process. That process had three objectives: first, to provide relief assistance for refugees and returnees in Africa; second, to help those refugees and returnees to find new lives for themselves and their families; third, to help the countries that harboured the refugees or returnees.

43. It was encouraging to be able to assist large numbers of refugees, to see their immediate daily needs being met and to see them safe from the disruption and

persecution that they fled, he said. It was even more encouraging, in many places, to see refugees building new lives for themselves and for their families, he continued. It was discouraging, however, to see refugees live in camps for too long or to see new refugee crises still erupting. The High Commissioner said he had also witnessed the large scale repatriation of refugees. This was most heartening and a principal objective of his Office. That was why the Conference was for aid to returnees as well as refugees.

44. In accordance with the theme of the conference, "Time for solutions", more than 55 per cent of UNHCR projected programming expenditures in Africa of some \$160 million for the year 1984, would be towards durable solutions. He expected that this percentage would increase further next year against total requirements of a similar magnitude.

45. The burden on the countries of asylum had become so great that it must be addressed urgently. The refugees weighed heavily on a very fragile infrastructure. Even when they returned home voluntarily, they often returned to lands that had been desolated since their departure and needed new or renewed infrastructural support. Unless a new approach took place, in parallel with the more traditional steps, there was a risk of perpetuating the refugee problems rather than resolving them, the High Commissioner stated.

4. Statement by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

46. The Administrator of UNDP said that the roots of the refugee problems were multi-faceted. The problem was part of a larger one which had been looming over Africa for the last few years. The crisis that had engulfed the continent had had its causes in the problems of the transformation of the African economies after independence; in the tragic and far-reaching consequences of apartheid; in the problems caused by natural disasters, particularly the catastrophic drought that had afflicted most of the continent for so many years; in the problems which had been generated by the deterioration of terms of trade. These were but a few of the causes of Africa's crisis. It was a tragic fact that the millions of refugees in Africa were concentrated in countries which also had a very low per capita income; that fact alone had compounded the problem, he said.

47. The General Assembly had recognized that, in order to help refugees move from their present condition of life into full participation in the development process, it was necessary to build up the physical, social and economic infrastructures in the countries of settlement. It was crucial that all development projects to assist countries of settlement benefit not only refugees and returnees, but also nationals in neighbouring communities.

48. UNDP, which, together with UNHCR and UNDP's other partner organizations, had assisted in the identification and formulation of the project outlines, could draw on a great wealth of information and capability to help ensure technically and managerially successful projects. UNDP would also, if requested, assist in monitoring and co-ordinating the development projects submitted to the Conference under paragraph 5 (c) of resolution 37/197.

49. The Administrator assured the Conference that he would continue to give utmost priority to the implementation of the Declaration to be adopted by the Conference. UNDP would fulfil whatever role that the Conference might wish it to undertake concerning economic and social development projects.

G. General debate

50. In the course of the debate the representatives of the following States took the floor: United States of America, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Egypt, Norway, Yugoslavia, Sudan, Somalia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Cameroon, India, Jamaica, Switzerland, Austria, United Kingdom, Portugal, China, Oman, New Zealand, Italy, Zaire, Finland, Burundi, Nigeria, Australia, France, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Benin, Ethiopia, Turkey, Holy See, Israel, Indonesia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Botswana, Niger, Chad, Greece, Democratic Kampuchea, Pakistan, Zambia, Algeria, Thailand, Singapore, Uganda, Brazil, Chile, Central African Republic, Gabon, United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia, Malaysia, Djibouti, Senegal, Argentina, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco and Republic of Korea.

51. The delegations of Kenya and Mozambique did not take the floor but had their statements circulated to the Conference. The delegation of Afghanistan submitted in writing the text of a statement in exercise of the right of reply.

52. The representatives of the following entities of the United Nations system also addressed the Conference: Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, Economic Commission for Africa, World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, United Nations Council for Namibia and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

53. The Conference also heard statements from the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations: Fund of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, European Economic Community, Commonwealth Secretariat, League of Arab States, International Committee of the Red Cross and All Africa Conference of Churches.

54. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania spoke on behalf of the liberation movements.

55. In the course of their statements several Governments announced support in cash, in kind or in principle towards the projects presented to the Conference. Contributions amounting to \$US 18,531,828 were pledged to help cover the High Commissioner's programme for Africa, including projects submitted in response to paragraph 5 (b) of resolution 37/197. As regards development-related projects submitted in response to paragraph 5 (c), statements were made expressing interest in, and commitments towards, about one-third of the 128 projects. In addition, some \$US 6,241,000 were committed at the Conference without specification as to their allocation between paragraph 5 (b) and paragraph 5 (c) programmes. Details of all three types of contributions are being processed and will be made available shortly.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

56. At the concluding meeting, the President introduced the draft Declaration and Programme of Action of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (A/CONF.125/L.1), which, he said, was the result of extended consultations among regional groups. The Conference adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action by acclamation (see annex).

57. Statements were made by the representatives of Senegal, Burundi, Bangladesh and Sweden.

58. The representative of the United States of America stated that joining the consensus on the Declaration did not imply acceptance by the United States of every provision contained in the various documents and instruments referred to in the Declaration, in particular the reference to the elimination of Zionism in the OAU Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The delegation of Israel submitted a communication on the same point and requested that it be circulated as a document of the Conference (A/CONF.125/COM/6).

V. CONCLUDING STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

59. The President of the Conference made the following concluding statement:

"I should like to sum up three days of debate. A difficult task because the issues are so complex that a brief concluding statement cannot cover them in a comprehensive and just manner, but a task facilitated by the constructive, positive and humanitarian spirit which has marked the speeches during the last three days. As your President, I am deeply grateful for that. I should like to express my thanks to all the participants and, in particular, to the three Vice-Presidents of the Conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his representative, the current Chairman and the Acting Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the Secretary of the Conference and all their collaborators, as well as all the members of the Secretariat, each of whom contributed in his or her own manner to this historic Conference.

"The most noble testimony of this spirit is the Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the Conference by consensus. With this Declaration, participants in this Conference have committed themselves to work together in close solidarity and in the spirit of burden-sharing on a strategy for solving the problems of refugees in Africa. The theme for the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa - "Time for solutions" - has been endorsed unanimously. The Conference has accepted that the refugee problem in Africa is a matter of global responsibility. On the one hand, African Governments have clearly reaffirmed their commitment to do everything within their power to promote lasting solutions to the problem. On the other hand, financial donor Governments have undertaken to join hands with African countries in the support of such lasting solutions and in meeting the

infrastructural burden of receiving refugees and returnees. International development organizations have indicated their readiness to co-operate fully in this process.

"The Conference has stressed the vital importance of the complementarity between refugee aid and development aid. The commitment to translate this relationship into practice is a major achievement of this Conference. Emergency aid, care and maintenance are essential and must be continued. The High Commissioner's efforts to promote durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, the optimum solution which goes to the heart of the refugee dilemma, and programmes for local settlements have a proven record; these efforts must also continue. But to ensure lasting solutions, there is need to integrate refugee projects into the development process. The Conference has clearly endorsed this principle.

"I would like to give you my understanding as to the practical results of this Conference with regard to projects that have been put before it. Regarding projects submitted in response to paragraph 5 (b) of General Assembly resolution 37/197, funds have been pledged to help cover the High Commissioner's programme for Africa, with emphasis on durable solutions. As regards projects submitted in response to paragraph 5 (c), at this Conference interest has been expressed in, and commitments made towards, about one third of the 128 infrastructural projects presented for its consideration. In addition, some funds have been committed at the Conference without present specification as to their allocation between paragraph 5 (b) and paragraph 5 (c) programmes. Moreover, many statements offered further support for the project period of three years.

"The First International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa focused the world's attention on the serious refugee problems in Africa and addressed itself to the immediate problem of survival, but it did not put enough emphasis on long term considerations. The edifice of the First Conference was spectacular but fragile. At the present Conference, we have laid a more solid foundation for the building of a future for Africa's refugees. We now have a Programme of Action which attempts to tackle the African refugee problem in its totality - in its political, humanitarian, social, economic and developmental dimensions.

"Refugees have been the subject of this Conference. Although on the minds of all of us, they were not present. Many speakers reminded the Conference that refugees know better than anybody else what their needs and aspirations are. That should be taken into account in our strategy for the future. The presence of numerous non-governmental organizations - during this Conference and in direct, daily contact with refugees - will help to remind us of this important point.

"We have achieved a great deal during these three short days. We have made major breakthroughs but we cannot afford to be too complacent; a lot more remains to be done. The problems are formidable and represent, indeed, only one aspect of the general crisis threatening Africa. But if we are as

determined and united in the follow-up to this Conference as we have been in the preparations for and during the Conference, then I am convinced that the process we have now started with success will be successfully completed. The longest journey always begins with a first step. To abandon the journey after the first step that we have taken here would be to abandon the refugees and peoples in Africa. To see the process through to its end will ultimately complete their journey towards a life in dignity, prosperity and peace.

"Once again, the international community has shown that, when humanitarian issues are on the agenda, divergencies which may exist give way to a convergence of views, because the only concern that guides us is to aid our fellow human beings. We came here from all parts of the world, from different backgrounds, with different ideologies. But we put aside our differences and we reached important agreement on major issues. This is no small achievement in today's world."

VI. INITIAL ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

60. Within the provisions of General Assembly resolution 37/197 and the Declaration and Programme of Action, assistance is required for two types of programmes:

(a) Necessary emergency relief, care and maintenance, as well as appropriate support for voluntary repatriation of refugees or their settlement in countries of asylum;

(b) Technical and capital assistance to strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of countries of asylum or countries which welcome back refugees to enable them to cope with the additional burdens imposed on their economies by the refugee presence.

Within the United Nations system UNHCR is the focal point for all assistance falling under subparagraph (a) above and UNDP the focal point for all activities falling under subparagraph (b).

61. The High Commissioner and the Administrator of UNDP have made the appropriate arrangements within their respective organizations to process efficiently and effectively any contributions received in accordance with the Declaration and Programme of Action and the expressed wishes of donors. These efforts will be carried out in full co-ordination with all relevant organizations of the United Nations system.

62. Governments that wish to channel their contributions through the United Nations system may do so by addressing them to the office of the Secretary-General for allocation to the appropriate organization, or by sending them directly to UNHCR or UNDP as the case may be. In this regard, Governments may wish to indicate specific projects or areas to which their contributions should be directed.

63. In view of the special role of OAU in this matter and the responsibilities which will devolve on UNHCR and UNDP in the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action, the Secretary-General has asked these organizations to continue to assist him, as necessary, in monitoring the various refugee situations in Africa as well as the response of the international community to the needs of the refugees. This co-operation will be effected through the Steering Committee, set up for the Second Conference, which includes representatives of the three organizations.

64. In order to facilitate a further report on this matter to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session, all States have been requested to provide the Secretary-General with any information on action which their Governments have taken or propose to take in response to refugee needs described in the various projects and programmes presented to the Second Conference.

65. It should be recalled that 14 African States presented formal requests for assistance which were subsequently incorporated in the official document of the Conference (A/CONF.125/2). During the Conference five other States announced that they, too, required assistance to cope with refugee situations in their respective countries; these States are Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and Djibouti.

66. To ensure a uniform approach in processing such requests, it has been decided that a United Nations technical team would visit each country to consult with the authorities on the needs of the refugees and on the preparation of submissions. The technical team is expected to complete its work by the end of October 1984. Its report will be sent to all States and pertinent international organizations; if completed in time, a summary of needs will be presented to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-seventh Session, Supplements Nos. 12 and 12A (A/37/12 and Add.1).

ANNEX

Declaration and Programme of Action of the Second International
Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa

I. DECLARATION

A. Global responsibility

1. The task of caring for refugees and finding solutions to their problems is a matter of international concern in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments, in particular the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees a/ and its 1967 Protocol. b/ The Conference recognizes that the condition of refugees is a global responsibility of the international community and emphasizes the need for equitable burden-sharing by all its members, taking into consideration particularly the case of the least developed countries.

B. Continental responsibility

2. In dealing with the refugee situation in Africa, special account must be taken of the regional situation and of the regionally relevant legal instruments, such as the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), conventions as well as principles mentioned in resolutions adopted under the auspices of OAU.

C. 1969 OAU Convention

3. The 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa constitutes a basic instrument for the plight of refugees in that continent; according to article VIII, paragraph 2, the OAU Convention shall be the effective regional complement in Africa of the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. Accession to the OAU Convention by African States that have not yet done so, respect for the principles contained therein and the most rigorous care in their daily implementation must remain the foundation for protecting and assisting refugees in Africa. The principle enshrined in the 1969 Convention that "the granting of asylum is a peaceful and humanitarian act and shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act by any member State" must continue to guide the approach of States to the refugee problem in Africa.

a/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545, p. 150.

b/ Ibid., vol. 606, No. 8791, p. 267.

D. Arusha Conference

4. The recommendations of the 1979 Arusha Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, c/ endorsed by the OAU Council of Ministers through its resolution CM/Res.727 (XXXIII) d/ and reaffirmed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolutions 34/61 of 29 November 1979 and 35/41 A of 25 November 1980, remain fundamental for action on behalf of refugees in Africa. The recommendations deal with the causes for asylum seeking in Africa and the situation of rural and urban refugees, their employment, education and training, and arrangements for refugee counselling services.

5. The Arusha Conference also adopted a number of recommendations relating to the legal situation of refugees, notably as regards asylum, the definition of the refugee concept and the determination of refugee status, illegal entry and expulsion, rights and obligations of refugees and voluntary repatriation. The standards defined in these recommendations, together with those figuring in the 1969 OAU Convention, represent an important component for the protection of and assistance to refugees in the African continent. The Organization of African Unity and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are urged, in accordance with a decision of that Conference, to continue monitoring the implementation of the relevant recommendations and report thereon through the appropriate channels.

E. Meeting between the OAU secretariat and voluntary agencies

6. The 92 recommendations adopted in March 1983 at the meeting between the OAU secretariat and voluntary agencies dealt with the following issues: Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, protection, voluntary repatriation, awareness-building and public information, co-operation in refugee assistance at the national, regional and international levels, root causes of refugee situations, education, counselling, settlement and resettlement, and role of voluntary agencies during emergencies, which should constitute a realistic approach to the refugee problem in Africa.

F. OAU Charter on Human and People's Rights

7. Respect for human and people's rights and benefit from economic and social progress and development in conformity with Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations must be a corner-stone in the protection of and assistance to refugees. The Conference takes full note of the adoption by the OAU Heads of State and Government of the Charter on Human and People's Rights, the entry into force of which will constitute a positive contribution in reducing the number of refugees in Africa.

c/ REF/AR/CONF/Rpt. I, para. 23.

d/ See A/34/552, annex I.

G. Approaches to solutions

8. International co-operation to avert new flows of refugees must be strengthened. Everything possible must be done to prevent the causes of refugee flows and to reduce and resolve the problem of refugees in Africa. States must refrain from taking measures that would create or aggravate refugee problems. Essential conditions should be established to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, which has been recognized as the best means of promoting permanent and durable solutions. This could be done by the promulgation of amnesty laws and respect for the principle of non-refoulement. Where voluntary return is not immediately feasible or possible, conditions should be created within the country of asylum for a temporary settlement or the integration of refugees into the community and their full participation in its social and economic life. For solutions to last, assistance to refugees and returnees must aim at their participation, productivity and durable self-reliance; it should be development-oriented as soon as possible and, in least developed countries, it should take into account the needs of the local people as well.

II. PROGRAMME OF ACTION

A. Voluntary repatriation

1. Voluntary repatriation remains, when conditions allow, the ideal solution to a refugee problem. Governments are responsible for creating the necessary legal and practical conditions conducive to the return of refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is, by its mandate, required to facilitate the return of refugees and safeguard its voluntary nature; it should take all measures deemed appropriate and feasible to promote such voluntary return. Whenever appropriate, tripartite commissions composed of representatives of the country of origin, the country of asylum and UNHCR should be established; in this process, care must be taken to respect the voluntary nature of the repatriation process and the entirely non-political character of the work of UNHCR.
2. For the ultimate aim of successful reintegration of returnees into their society, rehabilitation assistance will often be required well beyond the initial period during which UNHCR can provide it. In such cases, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant development organizations and non-governmental organizations should be involved as soon as possible in the planning and implementation of further rehabilitation assistance which may benefit not only returnees but also their compatriots in the areas concerned.

B. Local settlement

3. Where voluntary repatriation is not immediately feasible or possible, conditions should be created within the country of asylum so that the refugees can temporarily settle or integrate into the community, i.e., participate on an equal footing in its social and economic life and contribute to its development. For this purpose, settlement programmes should be development-oriented and, wherever possible, be linked to existing or planned economic and social development schemes for the area or region.
4. When large numbers of refugees need land or other work opportunities, there is a need for development-oriented projects which would generate work opportunities and - where local integration of the refugees is feasible - long-term livelihoods for refugees and local people in a comparable situation, through activities which create assets of a continuing economic value with a good rate of return, so that they contribute to the overall development of the area.

C. Infrastructural assistance

5. As a result of the adverse impact on the national economies of the African countries concerned, most of which belong to the group of the least developed countries, there is need to provide these countries with the required assistance to strengthen their social and economic infrastructure so as to enable them to cope with the burden of dealing with large numbers of refugees and returnees. This assistance, to achieve the desired objective, should be additional to, and not at the expense of, concerned countries' other development programmes.

/...

D. The process

6. The international community, through the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, will endeavour to provide assistance at three levels:

(a) The necessary relief and care and maintenance must be provided to refugees in the face of an emergency; it must be adjusted to the immediate needs of refugees, be directly linked to those needs and be commensurate with reliable estimates of their numbers.

(b) Long-term solutions, through voluntary repatriation of refugees or their settlement in countries of asylum, must be continued and, as necessary, expanded; additional resources should be made available for expanded durable solutions efforts.

(c) Technical and capital assistance to countries that offer asylum to refugees and to countries that welcome back returnees should be recognized as an important new element of international assistance; such assistance should be additional to ongoing development programmes. The Conference expresses the hope that the commitments as undertaken at the Conference will be fulfilled as soon as possible.

E. Structures for assistance to refugees, including returnees, and for co-ordination of such aid and development assistance

7. The complementarity between refugee-related aid and development assistance should be reflected in the structures addressing these issues.

8. In aid to refugees, both for relief, care and maintenance and towards durable solutions through local settlement and voluntary repatriation, UNHCR should remain the focal point and should closely co-operate with other relevant bodies within and outside the United Nations system.

9. Closer co-ordination between refugee and returnee services and development services within the administrative framework of countries receiving refugees or returnees would contribute to the development-orientation of refugee projects from the earliest possible stage.

10. Likewise, closer co-operation between the refugee and development services in the financial donor countries would be conducive to addressing the refugee problem in its development context.

11. Governing councils of development agencies should seriously consider the refugee and returnee element in their programme planning with a view to alleviating the plight of refugees and returnees. Among such agencies UNDP, in view of its central co-ordinating role within the United Nations system for development and its close linkages with donor communities, could be asked to take as soon as possible a leading part in the co-ordination, implementation and monitoring of refugee-related infrastructural projects of a developmental nature in close association with its

partners and other donors; the expertise of non-governmental organizations, in the assessment, planning and execution of projects should also be utilized.

F. Follow-up of the Second International Conference
on Assistance to Refugees in Africa

12. The Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa is another important step of a long-term process on the road towards lasting solutions to the problems of refugees and returnees in Africa. Further fact-finding missions, accurate data collection activities and feasibility studies may be necessary in many cases in furthering this process.

13. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in consultation and close co-operation with the Organization of African Unity, is requested to monitor through the existing channels the follow-up of the Conference and to recommend the appropriate action needed for this purpose.

14. Governments are requested to keep the Secretary-General of the United Nations informed of any action taken or being taken relating to the projects submitted to the Conference, through UNHCR in the case of projects submitted or which may be submitted in response to paragraph 5 (b) of General Assembly resolution 37/197 and through the office of the Secretary-General and/or UNDP in the case of projects submitted in response to paragraph 5 (c) of that resolution.

15. The Secretary-General is requested to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session a first report on the results of the Conference as well as action taken or planned to follow up on the process initiated at the Conference.
