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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 371st MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 10 October 1984, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. MEBAZAA

(Tunisia)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. LI Luye (China) said that, although some progress had been made during the past year in the resettlement and voluntary repatriation of refugees, the exodus of Indo-Chinese and Afghan refugees to neighbouring countries had continued. The prospects for a durable solution for the 160,000 Indo-Chinese refugees in South East Asia and for the nearly 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan remained as remote as ever. At the same time, frequent military attacks had been made on refugee camps, and there had been no easing of the crippling burden borne by the host countries of the third world.
2. As yet, none of the root causes of the outflows of refugees had been eliminated. In Afghanistan and Kampuchea, for example, foreign military aggression and occupation continued as before. In South Africa, the authorities were still practising apartheid, and Israel was pressing on with its policy of expansion. Humanitarian assistance to refugees and the elimination of the root causes were both indispensable, but the latter was fundamental. In 1983, there had been an outflow of 60,000 refugees from Viet Nam; if the root cause of the exodus was not eliminated, there could be a second or third outflow in 1984 and in the coming years.
3. The resettlement of 80,000 refugees from the South East Asian region during the past year had undoubtedly been a step forward, but more than 160,000 Indo-Chinese refugees were still awaiting a durable solution. What was their future? In the absence of suitable conditions for large-scale voluntary repatriation at the present time, resettlement was the only practical long-term solution. It was a matter of extreme urgency to resettle persons who were unable to integrate into the country of asylum, as well as those who had no particular skills and no relatives in the country of resettlement. He hoped that the developed countries would see their way to providing more opportunities of resettlement for those refugees. Pakistan and Thailand had received the largest inflows of refugees in Asia, with the consequence that a disproportionate burden had been placed on their economies and societies. It was clearly impossible for them to overcome their difficulties by their own efforts and his delegation hoped that the international community would provide them with the necessary refugee assistance and development aid.
4. ICARA II had called for international burden-sharing and, more particularly, a combination of refugee assistance and development aid, but it had been noted that a number of countries had not yet made any positive commitments, while commitments actually made had not yet been fulfilled. At the same time, the economic situation in Africa was critical and most of the refugee-receiving countries of that drought-stricken continent were in dire economic straits. His delegation hoped that the developed countries, keeping the stability of the world political and economic situation in mind, would provide more humanitarian assistance and development aid to the refugee-asylum countries and refugee-receiving countries of Africa.
5. In the light of repeated military attacks on refugee camps in some regions of the world, even involving the use of bombers and artillery, his delegation concurred with the Executive Committee's decision to prepare a draft document on the subject. The document should unequivocally condemn the attacking States. It should prohibit attacks against refugee camps wherever they were located and on whatever pretext and should stipulate that the sovereignty of the host country

should be strictly respected so as to safeguard its security. The document should contain general principles suitable for wide application and should not differentiate between camps. It was also essential that full consultations should be held, and that the views of host States of refugee camps should be given particular importance, in order to obtain a document acceptable to all parties.

6. As a result of the joint efforts of his Government and the UNHCR over the past few years, production was developing steadily in certain settlements for Indo-Chinese refugees, thus raising their living standards and increasing their self-sufficiency. However, since about half of the 270,000 refugees were still unable to support themselves, his Government was compelled to allocate large amounts of financial resources and relief supplies. Many refugee settlements were still confronting practical difficulties, such as providing drinking water, education for children and medical care. The Chinese Government looked forward to continued co-operation from the international community and UNHCR in assisting the refugees in China and it would work together with other members of the international community and contribute to alleviating the sufferings of refugees in various parts of the world.

7. Mr. THABANE (Lesotho) emphasized that no solution could be found to the refugee problem without first identifying its root cause. In southern Africa, the cause of refugee flows was the institutionalization of apartheid policies which adversely affected all aspects of life, resulting in a spill over into all the neighbouring countries which were hosting the victims of those inhuman policies. A cosmetic institutional change had recently been made in South Africa which tended to suggest that only 4 million out of the 24 million inhabitants of that country mattered, the remaining 20 million being declared citizens of Bantustans or Homelands created and administered on ethnic lines. The refugee population in Lesotho, and indeed in all of southern Africa, was made up of people who were not prepared to accept that state of affairs. The recent moves by the South African Government intensify the problem for Lesotho and other southern African States as more refugees would inevitably leave South Africa.

8. His small country was a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees and had at all times been prepared to live by the letter and spirit of that humanitarian document, in the conviction that by giving asylum to victims of apartheid, it was acting in harmony and in concert with the rest of civilized mankind. At ICARA II, the representative of Lesotho had referred to the adoption of a "Refugees Act" and a "Human Rights Act" as policy tools for the protection of refugees and respect for their rights. Lesotho would continue to receive and give succour to those who had fled their countries in search of freedom and happiness. It should be borne in mind that Lesotho did not recruit refugees; they were driven to seek refuge in Lesotho and other neighbouring countries by the system of apartheid. Therefore, while relief measures to refugees were appreciated, their impact could only be temporary. The real solution was to be found in the international community persuading the South African Government to dismantle the whole apparatus of apartheid.

9. Mr. VIDAS (Yugoslavia) said that his country, with its firm belief in the need for co-operation in order to solve international problems, including refugee problems, fully supported the humanitarian and non-political orientation of UNHCR activities. It was particularly important that the burden-sharing principle should be fully implemented in the near future, particularly since the bulk of the refugee population was located in the developing countries of Africa,

Asia and Latin America, most of which were already facing insurmountable problems caused by the current world economic crisis and whose economic development had been brought to a halt. His delegation considered that the international community should regard those countries as donor countries.

10. His delegation welcomed, in particular, the efforts made by UNHCR to promote co-operation with other United Nations agencies and to co-ordinate activities. It would welcome a more frequent participation by the development agencies, such as UNDP and the World Bank, in projects beneficial both to refugees and local communities. It also commended UNHCR efforts to reduce expenditures on care and maintenance in favour of measures directed towards durable solutions. The allocation of an increasing percentage of resources to Africa was clearly sound.

11. The situation of countries of first asylum or transit countries could be greatly improved by facilitating and simplifying admission procedures and increasing the admission quotas in resettlement countries. There was no need to dwell on the negative effects on the personality of the refugee of long periods in camps or similar institutions, awaiting resettlement, and on the additional financial burdens and other problems imposed on the country of first asylum or transit.

12. Thus far, 96 countries had acceded to either the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, or both instruments. The security and protection of refugees could be achieved by the strict prohibition and forceful condemnation of attacks on refugee camps and settlements and the adoption of measures to prevent such attacks. Those attacks were not only a violation of the basic principles of international humanitarian law, but also constituted acts of aggression against sovereign States, placing in jeopardy the safety and lives of refugees.

13. His delegation considered ICARA II to have been a very important step on the long road towards finding durable solutions to the problems of refugees and returnees in Africa, recognizing as it did that the problems involved a global responsibility and emphasizing the enormous importance of the complementarity of refugee and development assistance.

14. Yugoslavia itself had done a great deal to protect the person and dignity of refugees on its territory, to ensure the material and social security of refugees and their families, to provide health care, education and employment and to create the necessary conditions for their integration in the living and working environment. Special attention had been paid to handicapped refugees and those with no means of support; they received monthly welfare benefits and enjoyed full health care, the level of such benefits being the same as for Yugoslav citizens. In co-operation with UNHCR, handicapped refugees were placed in appropriate institutions, and the resources allocated for those purposes had been doubled over the past five years.

15. Mr. REPSDORPH (Denmark) noted that while the refugee situation had stabilized during the past year, there appeared to be a stalemate in regard to the major refugee crises which had developed in recent years. Lasting solutions seemed no closer than a year ago. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner on the need for efforts to be taken to identify and remove the conditions giving rise to refugee flows. Failure to address the root causes could in time seriously impede the High Commissioner's ability to discharge his functions in an effective manner.

16. In his opening statement and his Note on International Protection, the High Commissioner had drawn attention to the erosion - in many parts of the world - of the fundamental concept of asylum, and had mentioned the problems

related to the so-called "jet-age asylum seekers", who were arriving by air or by sea in increasingly large numbers in countries far distant from their homelands. The problems resulting from the dimensions of that new phenomenon were being exploited by xenophobic tendencies in the public opinion. Considerable problems were being created by the increasing numbers of refugees who moved from their present country of asylum to more distant places, often by irregular means, not only because of lack of protection but also because of unsatisfactory living conditions or the seeming impossibility of finding a durable solution in the foreseeable future. The seminar planned for 1985 on Protection Issues in Europe would provide a welcome opportunity to address those problems. It was necessary to make sure that refugee status was reserved for people seeking asylum for compelling humanitarian reasons.

17. His country was seriously concerned about the increasingly restrictive policies pursued by some Governments with regard to the admission and treatment of asylum seekers, including various measures of so-called "human deterrence" and about the increasingly strict interpretation by many countries of relevant refugee status criteria. Some practices grossly violated the legal standards and humanitarian principles established for the protection of refugees and were also contrary to the principle of international burden-sharing, since flows of asylum seekers were diverted to neighbouring countries which lived up to their obligations.

18. The non-refoulement principle was a cornerstone in the international protection of refugees, and it was most disquieting that several instances of violations of that principle had been reported, including cases where refoulement measures had been taken in the context of more general agreements between countries of asylum and origin aimed at normalizing bilateral relations. Since many of those instances had occurred in Africa, they also constituted serious violations of the principles contained in the Declaration unanimously accepted by ICARA II. Repatriation should always be voluntary and to ensure that it was so UNHCR must be involved in all repatriation operations.

19. It was a matter of regret that the Executive Committee had so far been unable to reach agreement on the formulation of a set of conclusions with regard to the grave problem of military attacks on refugee camps and settlements. The discussion in the Sub-Committee on International Protection had shown, however that there was unanimous support for the view that attacks on genuine refugee camps and settlements were in grave violation of existing and fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and should accordingly be expressly condemned by the international community. There had also been unanimous support for the view that UNHCR should be granted access to all the refugee camps and settlements with which it was concerned.

20. The physical safety of asylum seekers at sea who often fell prey to brutal attacks by pirates was also at stake. Although there had been a significant reduction in the number of pirate attacks they had increased in brutality. His Government, which had contributed regularly to the Anti-Piracy Programme concluded with the Royal Thai Government, was concerned about the Programme's apparent lack of efficiency, and hoped that it would improve over the next year, drawing on the recommendations of the expert assessment team. His delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's remarks concerning the renewed commitment of the Thai authorities to do their utmost to combat the evil practice of piracy and to bring to justice those who preyed on helpless refugees.

21. The situation with regard to rescue of asylum seekers in distress at sea was equally alarming. At a time when more and more ships were reported to be ignoring boat people in distress, the Nansen Committee had taken a wise decision in awarding the Nansen medal to the captain and two crew members of the "Rose City", thereby paying a tribute to all the sailors who had contributed to the rescue of boat people. The decision also served as a timely reminder to ship owners and masters of their obligation to rescue refugees in distress at sea. His Government had been instrumental in the elaboration of the RASRO scheme and was gratified to note that it had now received the active support of 11 countries. It hoped that the remaining countries concerned would soon pledge their support and that the scheme would soon be implemented on a trial basis.

22. ICARA II had been an important stepping-stone in the search for new approaches to durable solutions. It was encouraging that so many countries had been able to agree on the new integrated approach of linking refugee aid with development assistance. To implement the principles agreed upon during the Conference, donor countries should, whenever possible, seek to incorporate refugee aid in their bilateral assistance programmes and host countries should give priority to the integration of refugees within their own national development programmes. In pursuance of the commitments made by his country at the ICARA conference, steps had been taken to assign 12 million Danish kroner (\$US 1.1 million) to UNHCR programmes in Africa in 1984. The possibility of Danish support for one or more refugee-related, infrastructure projects submitted by Tanzania had also been raised in Dar-es-Salaam.

23. On the general question of refugee aid and development, his delegation agreed that UNHCR, while being the focal point for durable solutions, should not assume the role of a development agency. UNHCR should rather act as a catalyst and co-ordinator of when developmental initiatives were needed. The High Commissioner should try to ensure that refugees were included in development plans, in order to promote their integration into the development of the regions where they were living. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the agreement concluded recently between UNHCR and UNDP on development activities affecting refugees and the co-operation which had developed between UNHCR and other organizations, whether intergovernmental or non-governmental.

24. Voluntary repatriation remained the preferred solution, and UNHCR was to be commended for its efforts to promote voluntary repatriation, especially in areas like South-East Asia where such solutions met with serious obstacles.

25. His delegation was gratified to note that there would be no increase in the number of posts at UNHCR Headquarters during 1985 and recognized the need for a small increase in the number of field posts. All were aware of the need for more staff to promote durable solutions, but the protection function of UNHCR would be best served by the physical presence of UNHCR officials in troubled areas. His delegation was aware of the volume of work involved in the professional job classification exercise and noted that ACABQ had positively recommended the result of the exercise. His delegation accordingly supported the recommendations in tables 7 and 12 of document A/AC.96/639/Add.1. It was not, however, able at that stage to accept in principle the proposed upgrading referred to in paragraph 27 of that document.

26. His delegation was pleased to announce that final parliamentary approval of an additional amount of approximately \$1.1 million was expected to be given shortly for programmes in Pakistan and South-East Asia, thus bringing the total amount Denmark had so far contributed to UNHCR in 1984 to \$8 million.

27. His delegation was seriously concerned by the estimated increase in UNHCR financial requirements of \$60 million in 1985, partly due to the substantial fall in carry-over - as a result of a commendable improvement in programme delivery, and to the sharp rise in the value of the dollar. The situation required that UNHCR would have to proceed with the greatest caution and prudence and that the international community should be ready to make an extra effort.

28. Mr. MAHALLATI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that UNHCR had earned the reputation of being an apolitical organization performing a valuable humanitarian service. Its positive achievements were due to the dedication of its staff as well as to the generous contributions of the international community. However, it should be borne in mind that UNHCR's credibility could be destroyed if contributions and services were allowed to serve the political interests of their donors. UNHCR should assist all refugees, irrespective of their nationality, who were victims of vicious attacks, invasions, and the expansionist policies of super-Powers and oppression.

29. In spite of the assistance provided by the international community, the refugee situation in general continued to deteriorate and had become particularly distressing and alarming in Africa. The situation of refugees in Latin America and Asia was no better. The best way to eliminate the problem of refugees would be to fight its political causes. The international community should establish instruments to halt such acts of aggression as those directed by the racist regime of South Africa against neighbouring countries and its own people and the inhuman conduct and crimes of the Zionist regime against the Palestinian people and refugees. Moreover, an effective political leverage was needed against the aggression of the Soviet Union which had resulted in a flow of Afghan refugees. Although UNHCR could not serve such a purpose, it had played an important role by providing temporary assistance to refugees.

30. UNHCR's services were needed increasingly; at the same time, its allocations and funds were insufficient. The goal of improving its financial situation could not be achieved unless international public opinion was educated to realize that assistance to UNHCR was an international moral obligation which should be fulfilled, irrespective of any political orientation or economic considerations.

31. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran had only recently begun to receive assistance from UNHCR, positive results had already been noted. The efforts made by the people of Iran, while themselves faced with an imposed war, to accommodate a steady influx of Afghan refugees, had enabled them to appreciate the humanitarian sentiments motivating UNHCR assistance.

32. Dame Anne WARBURTON (United Kingdom) said that her country was deeply concerned about the problems facing refugees throughout the world and looked to UNHCR to take a leading role in finding practical and durable solutions to the complex and large-scale refugee problems. Her delegation agreed that voluntary repatriation could be the best durable solution in the right circumstances.

33. Countries of repatriation sometimes needed development assistance. Her delegation recognized that refugee-oriented development projects were an essential ingredient in promoting durable solutions. It welcomed UNHCR's role as a catalyst both in providing emergency relief and in initiating long-term aid for refugees and for their host countries. Refugee-oriented development aid should not, however, be at the expense of normal aid programmes. The needs of the local population should be considered and any projects for refugees should be integrated into the existing development schemes of the host country. Her delegation hoped that countries of first asylum would endeavour to give priority to refugee-oriented programmes in their own development plans. With one exception, on which it needed further clarification, it had no difficulty with the proposed draft principles on refugee aid and development.

34. ICARA II had realized its broad aims of enlisting international sympathy and support for African refugees and their host countries and had marked the beginning of a process. In the meantime, in the United Kingdom, terms of reference had been drafted under which voluntary agencies might apply for funding from the £5 million British pledge and several British NGOs had begun to study refugee-related projects which would qualify for United Kingdom funding. Projects financed under ICARA II would have to be carefully monitored in order to maintain the search for durable solutions. While her delegation did not see a need for new permanent administrative machinery for the follow-up to the Conference, it agreed that the Steering Committee should be maintained and considered that UNDP might co-ordinate development action in the field.

35. No general statement on refugee matters in 1984 would be complete without a reference to the largest concentration of refugees in the world - the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. The exodus, tragically, was continuing and one-fifth of the Afghan population had fled their country. It was deplorable that the continued physical presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan was preventing the repatriation of millions of Afghans who wanted to return home. UNHCR was providing vital assistance to those people and the United Kingdom had contributed £21.6 million to Afghan refugees since January 1980. Her delegation was pleased to announce that the United Kingdom would make a further contribution of £2.8 million to assist Afghan refugees in Pakistan, £2 million of which would be assigned to UNICEF.

36. In respect of the protection of refugees, numerous cases of inadequate protection by the responsible States had been noted during the last year. The practice of refoulement continued, although its prevention had always been the corner-stone of UNHCR's mandate. Her delegation agreed with the High Commissioner that the physical protection of refugees was primarily the responsibility of the Government giving refuge or asylum. Armed attacks against civilian refugee camps and settlements should be condemned wherever they occurred. Moreover, countries of asylum should ensure that refugees were moved away from borders and away from any combatants in the area. In addition, UNHCR and any other humanitarian organizations should normally have access to refugee camps and settlements.

37. Her delegation was heartened to learn that the RASRO scheme might soon become operative; it reaffirmed its support for the Anti-Piracy Programme and the Orderly Departure Programme.

38. The problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong was also particularly acute. Hong Kong was one of the most crowded places on earth and had had to accommodate perhaps half a million new immigrants since 1978. Also, in the same period, over 100,000 refugees had arrived from Viet Nam. Over 90,000 of them had found homes

in third countries, owing to the joint efforts of UNHCR and the major resettlement countries, but 13,000 remained in crowded transit centres. Her country had settled some 19,000 Vietnamese during the past few years and urged countries with large resettlement programmes to include a take-off from Hong Kong.

39. Turning to administrative matters, she said that while her delegation favoured strengthening field operations, it had hoped that fully compensatory savings would be made at Headquarters. It was also somewhat astonished at the upward regrading of so many professional posts.

40. The United Kingdom had always given staunch support to UNHCR and had contributed generously both to the regular budget and special appeals. However, the forecast that UNICEF would require an additional \$US 60 million from voluntary contributions in 1985 had been noted with concern in view of the great pressure on the United Kingdom budget. The High Commissioner should ensure that every possible economy was made and new sources of revenue explored. Innovations, such as the introduction of additional languages, for example, might have to be postponed. At a time when resources were under great pressure, the needs of the world's refugees should come first.

41. Mr. KHARMA (Lebanon) noted that there was a lack of universality in the approach and implementation of the principles of international protection. The fundamental instruments of humanitarian refugee law were the object of reservations, subjective interpretations, partial application or total rejection by many. Restrictive trends and practices in granting asylum and the inhumane attacks on the refugees were the outcome of the heterogeneous legal situation. The international community was therefore called upon to review the situation, update its legal instruments and give them universal acceptance and application.

42. The prevention of military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements had become a major problem and the Executive Committee had the obligation, by virtue of its mandate, to formulate a solution that was both rapid and effective.

43. He commended UNHCR on the increasing percentage of funds allocated to refugee-related development aid. The major achievement of ICARA II was undoubtedly the fact that the principle of refugee-related development aid had been generally accepted by the international community. Its success would depend on an early and sufficient flow of financial resources and effective implementation of development programmes based on parallel assistance to refugees and host countries.

44. In concluding, he wished to express the deep gratitude of the people and Government of Lebanon for the valuable assistance extended by UNHCR since 1976.

45. Mr. TAYAL (United Nations Council for Namibia) said that the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa had had a profoundly disruptive effect on the lives of the Namibian people. Arbitrary arrests and detentions without trial, abductions of villagers by the South African Defence Force and the general discriminatory treatment of the black population had contributed to a large-scale refugee problem which called for increased action by the international community.

46. Since the end of 1981 there had been a massive exodus of Namibians - villagers, and schoolchildren fleeing forcible conscription into South Africa's territorial army - into the neighbouring countries of Angola, Botswana and Zambia. The number of Namibian exiles had grown to approximately 80,000 people and was still increasing.

47. The displaced people were also confronted with serious problems, particularly of accommodation, water supply, education and health. In Angola and Zambia, more than 26,000 Namibian children were crowded into tents which deteriorated rapidly and did not afford protection from the heat and cold.
48. SWAPO had taken steps to alleviate the plight of the Namibian refugees by establishing self-help construction teams and by providing trained medical personnel and public health inspectors. However, its efforts required the support of the international community through increased contributions of clothing, medical supplies, bedding, and road graders to permit year round delivery of supplies to refugees. The most pressing needs were durable housing and an adequate water supply.
49. The Council for Namibia appreciated the significant assistance by UNHCR to Namibians who had been compelled to seek asylum in the neighbouring countries and welcomed the plans to continue that assistance. In view of the urgent requirements of the Namibian refugees, the Council strongly recommended that it should be increased.
50. The major part of the assistance provided by the Council for Namibia was aimed at the future development of that country in accordance with its mandate to prepare the people of Namibia for independence. Some humanitarian assistance was also being provided by the Council, in close consultation with UNHCR.
51. The voluntary contributions made by Member States to the United Nations Fund for Namibia were used to provide scholarships for refugee Namibians, to conduct the specialized training programmes - the Nationhood Programme - in selected priority areas and to train middle level administrators for a future independent Namibia.
52. However, the Council for Namibia lacked the resources and technical capacity to provide for the recurrent humanitarian needs of the Namibian refugees and it counted on the international community, in co-operation with UNHCR, to work with SWAPO with a view to achieving that end. In conclusion, he wished to assure the Committee that the Council would continue to play a constructive role in assuring the protection of the rights and interests of the people of Namibia.
53. Mr. OULD-ROUIS (Algeria) noted that the record level of UNHCR assistance activities in the 1980s and the urgency of refugee protection questions had led the Executive Committee to study ways and means of discharging its mandate more effectively. A number of considerations justified that decision.
54. In the first place, UNHCR was no longer the body that had been set up to assist a restricted category of refugees, but had become a vast system for rendering aid and protection to refugees. Second, whereas by definition refugee status was temporary, the refugee phenomenon was permanent. Pending a global approach that would endeavour to deal with the root causes of the exodus of populations, the international community sought to limit the consequences by mitigating human suffering and fairly sharing the burden that fell to the countries of asylum.

55. Despite the relative stabilization of the main refugee situations, existing needs in terms of assistance were still very considerable. In the absence of any major new emergency situation which would have called for a more substantial commitment on the part of the international community, the level of aid to refugees should be raised, particularly since many countries of asylum with serious economic problems were shouldering the burden with difficulty. At a time when asylum was sometimes granted parsimoniously, and often on a temporary basis, by States that did not hesitate to have recourse to refoulement, it was essential to help those States which, notwithstanding their poverty, still abided by the principles governing the granting of asylum, in keeping with their hospitable traditions. It was the developing countries that offered asylum to the majority of refugees. It was apparent, therefore, that the international community's degree of commitment to refugees was a key element in the quest for a solution to their problems.

56. The question of international protection of refugees, and specifically of their physical safety, was becoming increasingly acute. Regrettably, the Executive Committee had still not reached agreement on a draft principle prohibiting, and unequivocally condemning, such acts. The international community's passive attitude could only serve to encourage the recurrence of such acts.

57. In recent years, UNHCR had developed a new approach to the phenomenon of refugee outflows, which was directed towards integrating the refugee into a dynamic development process. In his delegation's view, that approach should be organized along two main lines; the first aimed at improving the modalities of UNHCR action and the second at rendering assistance directed at the development and infrastructure of developing countries, bearing in mind the effect on their economies of a large number of refugees. At a time when the resources of co-operation institutions were virtually drying up, it was gratifying to note that UNHCR continued to have considerable funds at its disposal. The optimization and efficient utilization of resources via equitable assistance could only serve the cause of refugees.

58. His delegation appreciated UNHCR's efforts to improve its performance in order to respond to emergency situations and to develop self-sufficiency projects. An increase in self-sufficiency activities was an alternative in cases where a durable solution was still not feasible. His delegation could only encourage UNHCR in its renewed efforts to promote durable solutions. The possibilities for resettlement seemed limited, many Governments being reluctant to admit refugees. However, voluntary repatriation had become a viable option in certain areas and successful repatriation operations had been effected in Africa and Latin America. The High Commissioner had spoken of the need for any repatriation exercise to be primarily voluntary and of the need for a clear and unequivocal agreement between the host country and country of origin. There was no question but that repatriation, if organized jointly with the country of asylum and the country of origin, and in co-operation with the UNHCR, would undoubtedly enable the resettlement exercise to be backed up by logistical and material support. The High Commissioner had also stated that refugees should be enabled to return to their place of origin. In some cases, there were deep-seated reasons that prevented the realization of such aspirations. The implementation of the decisions of the bodies empowered to rule on the merits of the case was therefore

a prerequisite for repatriation. In that connection, his delegation was convinced that if the conflict in the Western Sahara was settled at the political level, and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Organization of African Unity implemented, the Saharan refugees who had taken refuge in Algeria could return to their own country.

59. In practical terms, the advantage of the concept of assistance to refugees and development aid was that it allowed the refugee to be integrated in the development process of the country of asylum; it appeared to be suited to certain situations of massive population outflows to deprived or low-income areas, reducing the impact of the presence of refugees on the economies of asylum countries while improving their infrastructure. The initial stage of an experiment conducted under UNHCR auspices, through a World Bank pilot project in Pakistan, seemed conclusive and might well be attempted in other areas. The concept had been one of the major themes of ICARA II.

60. His delegation was gratified to note that the international community had reacted positively to the Conference. The unanimous commitment of participants to the objectives of ICARA II would undoubtedly make it possible to mobilize resources in order to execute the projects that had been proposed. His delegation trusted that the results of the Conference would match the hopes placed in it by the African continent and the international community as a whole. It was, of course, too early to take stock of those results but the final outcome would depend on Africa's ability to create the right conditions for durable solutions. The world, too, had a responsibility to provide the necessary additional resources for the implementation of development projects in refugee-settlement areas in accordance with the principle of equitable burden-sharing.

61. Financial and human resources were critical for the achievement of UNHCR's objectives. His delegation wished to pay a well deserved tribute to the staff of UNHCR for the work it accomplished often in very difficult circumstances. His delegation took a constructive view of the job classification proposals although further information was obviously needed as well as a general over-view of the proposals concerning the classification of posts charged against voluntary funds and against the United Nations regular budget.

62. A further landmark in the long-standing co-operation between his Government and UNHCR had been the recent agreement concerning a permanent UNHCR office in Algiers, the logical conclusion of the co-operation initiated in 1962 when UNHCR had assisted in repatriating Algerians who had been expatriated during the war of national independence.

63. Algeria had always responded favourable to requests for asylum. Also, in compliance with the principle of non-refoulement, it had admitted the victims of the drought in the Sahel region whose numbers had risen in 1972-1973 to 75,000. About 15,000 had settled in certain regions of Algeria. Algeria had also given substantial assistance to a further influx of persons displaced recently from the Sahel countries, as well as rendering bilateral and multilateral aid to countries afflicted by drought.

64. The movement of Sahrawis to Algeria was, however, still the largest influx of refugees his country had known, and their number had continued to increase since 1975. They received assistance from the Algerian Red Cross, which was

also responsible for channelling bilateral and multilateral aid. UNHCR, for its part, had provided emergency assistance since 1976 under special programmes. Since 1980, when the assistance to Sahrawi refugees had been included under UNHCR general programmes, it had been possible to increase that aid and promote refugee self-sufficiency projects. While such assistance provided considerable support, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, it could not be regarded as sufficient for the needs of the refugees as a whole. Algeria expended over 500 million dinars annually on Sahrawi refugees, and would increase that amount by 20 per cent for 1985.

65. With the opening of the permanent UNHCR office in Algeria it would undoubtedly be possible to develop further the co-operation between UNHCR and Algeria in the cause of the refugees. It was in that spirit that he had the honour, on behalf of his Government, to invite the High Commissioner to visit Algeria.

66. Mr. RAISCH (Austria) said that, while there had been no dramatic large-scale developments in the refugee situation since the Committee's preceding session, a number of trends might be discerned, particularly in the field of international protection, which had or would have important consequences for UNHCR's work and for the refugee policy of States. In the face of the manifest erosion of the fundamental concept of asylum, of instances of refusal of asylum and of refoulement, of threats to the physical safety of refugees, of piracy and of armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements, the question was whether the Committee could remain silent in the hope that the situation would improve. Could it be satisfied that UNHCR alone could solve the problems and safeguard the interests of all those involved? If certain instances of disregard of the most fundamental principles of the international protection of refugees proved to be a manifestation of a general trend, it was time for the international community, including the Committee, to analyse and discuss the main causes and remedies.

67. Burgeoning xenophobia, the growing tendency to regard refugees as a burden, the increasing difficulty in finding public support for a generous refugee policy and the disappearing distinction between refugees and asylum seekers, on the one hand, and illegal immigrants, on the other, were all symptoms that provided the background for disturbing developments in the field of refugee protection. If it were indeed correct that the basic principles of refugee protection were being dangerously eroded, his delegation firmly believed that action should immediately be taken. It proposed accordingly, that the High Commissioner should appoint an independent and experienced person to analyse the existing situation in respect of international protection and to determine the extent to which the fundamental principles had been eroded and to propose possible remedies. The analysis could provide the basis for an in-depth discussion at the Executive Committee's next session on the steps to be taken to remedy the situation.

68. In the meantime, his delegation trusted that the High Commissioner would intensify his contact with Governments and the competent authorities particularly in those areas where there was most room for improvement. It also trusted that the High Commissioner would further strengthen his public information service in the field of international protection.

69. It was particularly regrettable that the Executive Committee had been unable to reach a consensus on a text expressly condemning attacks on refugees and setting forth the principles governing the measures to be taken by Governments and international organizations to prevent such attacks as well as strengthening the hand of the High Commissioner who should have access to refugee camps and settlements in order to take the necessary preventive measures in co-operation with the Government concerned. His delegation appealed to the Executive Committee to continue its efforts to reach a consensus on such a text and it recognized that all parties would have to be willing to make certain concessions. If a consensus was not possible because of political and legal considerations, the Executive Committee should seek other means of promoting urgent practical measures to prevent further attacks.

70. There were, however, a number of positive developments, and his delegation welcomed UNHCR's efforts to assist asylum countries in developing the self-sufficiency of refugees as soon as possible after their arrival, to develop the infrastructure in refugee areas and to integrate refugees so far as possible in their development process regardless of the possibilities of providing durable solutions. Durable solutions, particularly voluntary repatriation, must remain of the highest priority and it was therefore encouraging to note the increased share of the over-all budget allocated to durable solutions.

71. His country's experience in financing and implementing one of the 128 ICARA projects confirmed its expectations that ICARA II would promote improved integration of refugees into the ongoing development process and lead to a better understanding of the potential role of refugees in the development of their country of asylum.

72. His delegation welcomed the continuing efforts to increase the efficiency of UNHCR. It recognized that although the results of the job classification would have financial implications, the additional cost would amount to less than one thousandth of the voluntary funds budget. In taking a decision, the Committee should bear in mind that the classification of posts could substantially facilitate the administration and management of UNHCR and strengthen its organization and efficiency, particularly in the field. His delegation trusted that the classification procedure adopted would be sufficiently flexible to enable UNHCR to adjust to any future changes. It also welcomed the efforts of the High Commissioner to strengthen his field organization inter alia by appointing a Director for Field Affairs.

73. Although the recent increase in the number of refugees arriving in Austria was still far below the level of the large-scale influx of 1980 and 1981, it was a trend that gave rise to serious concern. His Government would none the less continue, with the help of the international community, to fulfil its responsibility as a country of first asylum.

74. Mr. TURKMEN (Turkey) said that, inevitably, every State accorded a different order of priority to certain refugee questions. There were, however, some issues of primary importance which concerned the international community as a whole and which called for a spirit of solidarity and compassion in order to carry out joint action and find solutions.

75. Regrettably, the world refugee situation hardly warranted optimism. Although the over-all situation seemed to be stabilizing, the continuing refugee movements and political, social and economic conditions in several regions of the world could suddenly create new and significant flows. Moreover, with so many people seeking asylum, there was a hardening of attitude in several host countries. International instruments relating to refugees were being interpreted and implemented in different ways. Relations with UNHCR varied from one State to another. In addition, there were the adverse consequences of the world economic crisis and the emergence of virulent xenophobia in some countries. Furthermore, the abuses committed in connection with the applications for and granting of refugee status did not simplify the efforts made to find solutions to the problems of refugees.

76. Despite the universally recognized principle of equitable burden-sharing, some countries were opposed to the resettlement of refugees. Also, the lack of information regarding the assistance and protection rendered seemed attributable to the fact that there were no permanent UNHCR offices in certain countries, including European countries. On the other hand, it was gratifying to note that in many countries where there was a UNHCR presence, there had been effective co-operation which augured well for future projects.

77. ICARA II had constituted an important stage in the search for a durable solution to the problems raised by more than 4 million refugees in Africa. His delegation expressed its appreciation to the High Commissioner, who was doing his utmost to relieve their suffering, and hoped that attainment of the aims of the Conference would serve as an example for other impoverished regions of the world. It was clear that an awareness of the importance of equitable burden-sharing, to which the Conference had drawn attention, would enable the international community to assume its responsibilities and at the same time lead to the provision of additional resources. It must not be forgotten that most of the host countries, whether of first asylum or not, were already facing enormous economic difficulties.

78. His delegation noted the successful work in Pakistan in the field of refugee aid and development, during the previous and current years. It was also extremely satisfied with recent developments in co-operation between the High Commissioner and Iran and hoped that the refugee problem in that country would be resolved.

79. With regard to the protection of refugees, States must adopt the necessary provisions to bring their regulations into line with the relevant international principles and instruments. However, events showed that it was not enough merely to adopt appropriate regulations since, even in some countries where they already existed, restrictive trends were emerging which led to unjustified discrimination against asylum-seekers. Furthermore, his delegation noted with satisfaction that States which for certain reasons had difficulty in adopting the necessary legal provisions, in practice took a liberal attitude with regard to admitting refugees and strictly observed the principle of non-refoulement.

80. The refugee problem required a humanitarian approach on the part of Governments to enable them in certain cases to overcome administrative difficulties. The same concern had led to the conclusion adopted by the Committee in 1979 in respect of

refugees without a country of asylum. Furthermore, some countries that refused asylum to genuine refugees, did not hesitate to grant asylum to so-called refugees who were fleeing from judicial prosecution for ordinary offences or whose sole aim was to carry out political activities directed against their country of origin.

81. Military attacks against refugee camps and acts of piracy against refugees at sea continued to be serious problems. His delegation hoped that those responsible for those attacks would be alerted to the need to respect the security of refugees and refrain from aggressive actions against defenceless people.

82. In the case of asylum seekers in distress at sea, it was alarming to note a sharp reduction in the number of rescues. The award of the Nansen Medal for 1984 to the Captain and two crew members of the "Rose City" who had saved 84 refugees stressed the humanitarian obligation of rescue at sea.

83. His delegation reaffirmed that voluntary repatriation was the most desirable solution, and was confident that UNHCR would continue to do its best to promote it.

84. His delegation approved the measures taken to give greater transparency to the management of UNHCR and considered the work by the Sub-Committee to have been very useful. With regard to recruitment, his delegation continued to believe that the efforts made to achieve an equitable geographical distribution of staff should be continued and that the situation of women required special attention. It was following with interest the job classification exercise and considered that reclassification and establishment of new posts according to need appeared to be timely. However, the administrative measures envisaged could be adopted in their entirety only if there were no financial constraints.

85. His delegation was most satisfied with the quality of co-operation between Turkey and UNHCR, whose office in that country was doing very useful work. Despite various difficulties, arising from a number of special circumstances, Turkey had always abided by the principle of non-refoulement and had opposed the restrictive tendencies which were unfortunately affecting the situation of refugees in several parts of the world. His Government was aware of its humanitarian obligations and, in spite of its economic difficulties, had unhesitatingly admitted more than 4,000 Afghan refugees who were today integrated in an exemplary fashion in Turkish society. His Government was resolved to continue applying the relevant international principles within the purview of its responsibilities and to maintain its excellent relations with UNHCR.

86. Mr. EL HAFDHI (Tunisia) said that the desire shown to promote durable solutions for various groups of refugees had sparked off a process which must be continued and strengthened. The best solution continued to be the repatriation of refugees, provided that repatriation was voluntary. The other alternative, which enjoyed wide support, was the settlement in the country of asylum. The notes by the High Commissioner on "Refugee aid and development" and "ICARA II" were sufficiently clear with regard to the favourable reception given to that new perception of the refugee problem by the international community as a whole.

87. ICARA II had established a link between refugee aid and development. Indeed, the Programme of Action adopted by ICARA II provided that 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. His delegation hoped that the commitments made would enable the projects selected to be implemented as scheduled. In order to ensure the necessary follow-up, his delegation hoped that the experiment of ICARA II would be repeated and extended to other areas in the world where the refugee problem was sizeable enough to require a large-scale effort at stabilization.

88. His delegation was pleased to note that the efforts made to promote durable solutions under the general programmes had not affected the operational capacity of the Office or the quality of other assistance activities. It had fully appreciated the diversity and global nature of the services rendered to various groups of refugees, particularly with regard to ensuring self-sufficiency of refugees and employment. His delegation hoped that UNHCR would continue its activities in that field and explore all possibilities with a view to consolidating them. In that connection, it would be desirable if the Voluntary Contributions Fund was entirely earmarked for assistance activities.

89. The vital question of international protection should continue to be the Committee's major concern. His delegation was extremely uneasy at the escalation in violations of the right of asylum and of the principle of non-refoulement in various areas of the world. It hoped that, in addition to the principles it was requested to formulate, the Committee would devote the necessary time to considering the question of armed attacks against refugee camps and settlements. The issue, which was becoming increasingly urgent, should not be postponed once again, for "lack of time" or for any other reason. The Committee was required to reach a consensus on the draft statement of principles on the prohibition of military and armed attacks against refugee camps and settlements. If that was not achieved, it should at least adopt the draft conclusions which the High Commissioner had submitted and which were clearly based on public international law and humanitarian law. Unresolved issues could be deferred for subsequent consideration after more intensive consultations. It would then be possible for the Committee to advance more rapidly towards the solutions desired by all.

90. Mr. HUSSAIN (Observer for Pakistan) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner and his staff for their dedication to the cause of refugees.

91. The major burden of the world refugee population was still being borne by developing countries of first asylum. Those countries were already confronted with a wide variety of socio-economic problems and their principal concern had been to bolster the low standards of life of their people. In that situation, the role of UNHCR and the international community in assisting those countries had become all the more important.

92. Pakistan continued to provide shelter to the largest single case-load of refugees in the world. They now numbered close to three million and constituted nearly one third of the world's total refugee population. The influx still continued and it was obvious that the presence of such a large number of refugees

had placed an enormous burden on Pakistan's physical and financial resources. The refugees had been forced by circumstances beyond their control to seek refuge in Pakistan. His Government had accepted the responsibility of providing them with shelter, care and relief assistance as its humanitarian and Islamic duty.

93. In addition to extremely valuable assistance and support provided by UNHCR, Pakistan had been receiving generous assistance from other United Nations agencies, friendly countries and a number of voluntary organizations. He expressed his country's appreciation of that spirit of burden-sharing and hoped that those concerned would continue to extend their valuable assistance.

94. Pakistan was grateful for the generous response of donor countries and the active involvement of UNHCR in the refugee relief assistance work in Pakistan. However, despite its meagre resources, his country had been contributing nearly half of the total cost of the assistance programme. The strains on the ecology and economy of Pakistan, as a result of such a large number of refugees, were obvious. In addition, their concentration in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan had generated many demographic strains. Those were great pressures that could not be measured in any monetary terms and he hoped that that crucial aspect would be fully borne in mind during the evaluation of the relief assistance programme.

95. His Government was also aware of the need for income-generating work opportunities for the refugees. In that connection, some small schemes, such as kitchen gardening, poultry and egg production, bee keeping and training in certain skills were being undertaken at present. In addition a three-year pilot income-generating project, estimated to cost \$20 million, formulated at the request of the High Commissioner and supervised by the World Bank had been in the process of implementation since February 1984. Its objectives were basically to create employment and income for Afghan refugees and to repair and develop economic assets in refugee areas. His Government attached great importance to the programme, but as a pilot project, its impact would naturally be limited and cover only a small proportion of the refugees. It was obvious that their needs in the relief sector would not diminish in the immediate future. It was therefore hoped that that important aspect would continue to receive due attention in the future assistance programme for the refugees.

96. In conclusion, he said that his Government had given temporary shelter to the Afghan refugees on purely humanitarian grounds. The refugees themselves fervently desired to return to their country with dignity and honour. His Government would continue to shoulder its responsibilities until the refugees returned safely to their homeland.

97. Mr. KHERAD (Observer for Afghanistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that during the debate, the representatives of certain countries such as the United States, Japan, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan had shed abundant crocodile tears over the so-called Afghan refugees. His Government had already explained its position in that regard in its statements contained in documents A/35/154, A/35/238, S/13951, A/36/77 and A/38/559. In addition, his delegation had on a number of occasions given relevant information and had stated that the figures mentioned by some representatives had been deliberately and absurdly inflated in order to obtain more funds from international sources.

98. His delegation reaffirmed that most of the people considered to be refugees were nomads who had always disregarded frontiers in carrying out their seasonal migrations and pursuing their nomadic lifestyle. They could therefore not be regarded as refugees. There were also migrant workers who had left Afghanistan in search of work in neighbouring countries, well before the April Revolution.

99. In recent years, a large number of Afghans had returned to their villages and towns, but their names remained on the list of those receiving international assistance. Thus, the actual number of refugees was considerably lower and they could return freely to their home whenever they wished to do so. He stressed that there was no obstacle to the honourable return of Afghans to their homeland, as provided for by the Decree of the Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan on the General Amnesty, adopted in June 1981.

100. His Government had called on all Afghans whose hands were not stained with the blood of their compatriots and who were temporarily outside the country because of the deceitful propaganda of the enemies of the Revolution to return home and resume their normal life. Special legislation had already been adopted under which those who returned to Afghanistan were assured of their security, freedom and all other conditions necessary to enable them to participate in the economic and political life of the country.

101. Replying to that appeal, thousands of Afghans had returned to their homes and resumed a normal life. Their number would have been even greater if certain artificial obstacles had not been created by some neighbouring countries. His delegation hoped that those countries would cease such activity, so that those who had left the country could return to their homes.

102. He reaffirmed that such an action would not only help to resolve the so-called refugee problem, but would also make it possible to consolidate peace in the region and exert a positive and decisive influence on the process of détente and in improving the climate of international relations.

103. The refugee problem, which was due to various causes, should be considered from a purely humanitarian standpoint and not be exploited for political purposes.

104. With regard to the unfounded remarks by the United Kingdom delegation, he said that everyone was aware that the United Kingdom, sheltering behind hypocritical language, habitually distorted events in order to mislead public opinion and to conceal its policy of aggression and interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The intrigues of the United Kingdom and its reprehensible manoeuvres, which his delegation condemned and firmly rejected, were not new. The United Kingdom, a perennial enemy of the freedom and prosperity of the Afghan people, had never forgotten its defeats on three occasions in Afghanistan and invariably sought to create complications for the heroic Afghan nation. However, the situation had changed, and the United Kingdom could not divert the revolutionary Afghan people from the path it had freely chosen.

105. The representative of Pakistan would deceive no one when he spoke of his country's so-called duty and humanitarian assistance. Such statements could not be convincing coming from the representative of Pakistan, a country which had become a hotbed of aggression against its neighbour and a base for constant attacks by bandits and mercenaries against the peaceful towns and villages of Afghanistan.

106. Pakistan, the United States and their allies had made intervention in Afghanistan State policy. Efforts to militarize Pakistan and United States plans to transform that country into a base for its central command had added to the instability and insecurity in the area and in the region of the Indian Ocean as a whole. No one could deny the armed intervention and acts of aggression of the United States and Pakistan against the Government and people of Afghanistan and their interference in his country's internal affairs, mentioned in the "Green Book" relating to the undeclared war. The undeclared war unleashed by the United States and its accomplices, through Pakistan, against Afghanistan was an example of international terrorism and a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules governing international relations.

107. Mr. MAHALLATI (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said with regard to statement by the representative of Afghanistan, that it was indeed strange that because of changes in the climate, about one-fifth of the population of Afghanistan had travelled to neighbouring countries and had decided not to return home. For humanitarian reasons, he called on the Afghan Government to put an end to the plight of the Afghan refugees.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.