



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/44/622
17 October 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-fourth session
Agenda item 12

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Human rights and mass exoduses

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 5	2
II. ACTION TAKEN BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL	6 - 11	3

Annexes

I. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES	6
II. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS	12

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In his report to the General Assembly at its forty-third session (A/43/743 and Add.1) the Secretary-General recapitulated the various steps taken by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights on the question of human rights and mass exoduses. Reference was made in particular to the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees, which submitted its final report (A/41/324, annex) to the General Assembly at its forty-first session, and to the action taken by the Secretary-General in reply to the request addressed to him by the General Assembly in its resolutions on the subject and the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts. The report also reflected views and information received from the Governments of Brazil, Mexico and the United States of America.

2. At its forty-third session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 43/154 of 8 December 1988. By this resolution, the General Assembly, inter alia, invited all Governments and intergovernmental and humanitarian organizations concerned to intensify their co-operation and assistance in world-wide efforts to address the serious problems resulting from mass exoduses of refugees and displaced persons, and also the causes of such exoduses; requested all Governments to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant international instruments, in particular in the field of human rights, as that would contribute to averting new massive flows of refugees and displaced persons; encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to take the necessary steps to discharge the function and responsibilities described in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees; noted the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information to co-ordinate information-gathering and analysis with United Nations bodies so as to provide early warning on developing situations requiring the Secretary-General's attention, as well as to provide a focal point within the United Nations system for policy responses; urged the Secretary-General to use the resources available to consolidate and strengthen the early warning system in the humanitarian area by, inter alia, early computerization of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information and strengthened co-ordination among the relevant parts of the United Nations system, especially the Office for Research and the Collection of Information, as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Centre for Human Rights of the Secretariat and the relevant specialized agencies; and requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session on the strengthened role that the Secretary-General could play in undertaking early-warning activities, especially in the humanitarian area, as well as on any further developments relating to the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts.

3. The Commission on Human Rights, by its resolution 1989/63 of 8 March 1989, while reiterating the above-mentioned invitation and request addressed to all Governments and international organizations concerned, inter alia, urged the Secretary-General to use the resources available to consolidate and strengthen the system for undertaking early-warning activities in the humanitarian area by, inter alia, early computerization of the Office for Research and the Collection of

Information and strengthened co-ordination among the relevant parts of the United Nations system, especially the Office for Research and the Collection of Information, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Centre for Human Rights and the relevant specialized agencies; and looked forward to the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session on the strengthened role that the Secretary-General could play in undertaking early warning activities, especially in the humanitarian area, as well as on any further developments relating to the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts.

4. In compliance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 43/154 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1989/63, the present report contains an update on the action taken by the Secretary-General with regard to the recommendations contained in paragraph 70 of the final report of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees.

5. In view of his reporting responsibility under the above-mentioned resolutions the Secretary-General, on 29 May 1989, addressed note verbales to all Governments and letters to United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned and requested them to provide him with information and views on any further developments relating to the recommendations by the General Assembly as well as those contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts. The replies received from Bahrain, Brazil, the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey, as well as those from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration are reproduced in annexes I and II respectively.

II. ACTION TAKEN BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

6. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/154 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1989/63, the Office for Research and the Collection of Information has continued to take various actions for the consolidation, enhancement and strengthening of the role of the United Nations in undertaking early-warning activities, including in the humanitarian area, in the light of the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees.

7. As part of a continuing process of monitoring political developments likely to have a bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security, the Office has kept the Secretary-General informed of developments regarding various situations, in different parts of the world, which had the potential of generating mass exoduses. The Secretary-General has taken discrete action with regard to some of these situations.

8. The Office has also advanced specific views on criteria for the development of an early-warning system and on measures of inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination necessary for the operation of an effective early-warning system.

/...

The Assistant Secretary-General for Research and the Collection of Information appeared personally before the Commission on Human Rights on 24 February 1989 and recapitulated the following criteria for an effective early-warning system:

"In thinking about future arrangements for early warning of possible refugees flows, it would seem that we would need to bear in mind the following elements:

"(a) The Group of Governmental Experts recommended that the United Nations monitor all potential outflows continuously. This would appear to be the primary responsibility of offices such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and the Office for Research and the Collection of Information.

"(b) The Group suggested that the Secretary-General give continuing attention to ways and means of averting new massive flows of refugees. This would seem to be a shared responsibility of the United Nations system.

"(c) The Group asked the Secretary-General to improve co-ordination within the Secretariat for analysing the information so as to obtain an early assessment on the situations which might give rise to flows of refugees. This would seem to be a 'lead responsibility' of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information.

"(d) The Group requested the Secretary-General to improve the co-ordination within the Secretariat of the efforts of United Nations organs, specialized agencies, and of Member States concerned for timely and more effective action. This also would seem to be a shared responsibility - in which the Office for Research and the Collection of Information is ready to provide its analytical services as appropriate.

"(e) The Group further requested the Secretary-General to make the necessary information available to the competent United Nations organs in consultation with the States directly concerned. This would seem to be a shared responsibility and I can say that the establishment of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information has generated considerable interest in the discharge of this function.

"These elements would seem to indicate that a co-ordinated arrangement for early warning should satisfy the following criteria:

"(a) The timely sharing and consolidation of information, with the Office for Research and the Collection of Information serving as a focal point.

"(b) The early assessment of information and situations, again with the Office for Research and the Collection of Information as a focal point.

"(c) A consultative arrangement among the Office for Research and the Collection of Information, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and other agencies for

assessing information and situations and for identifying options for the Secretary-General. This consultative arrangement could also be helpful in making information available to the competent United Nations organs in consultation with the States directly concerned.

"(d) An arrangement for rapid consultations in cases of urgent need."

9. Conscious of the need for system-wide co-operation in the establishment and functioning of an early-warning system in the humanitarian area, the Assistant Secretary-General undertook consultations with relevant agencies in Geneva when he visited the United Nations Office there to address the Commission on Human Rights. Aware of the importance of good working relations with concerned non-governmental organizations, the Office has kept in touch with a number of non-governmental organizations interested in the operation of early-warning activities in the humanitarian area and participated in various scientific activities in this area. For example, a senior member of the Office participated in a UNHCR training seminar at Madison, Wisconsin, United States of America from 27 November to 2 December 1988. Another senior member of the Office participated in a non-governmental organization seminar on early warning and conflict resolution, which was held at Oslo on 24 and 25 April 1989.

10. On the recommendation of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information, the Joint Inspection Unit has commenced a preliminary study on the co-ordination of early-warning activities with regard to potential refugee outflows. Two Inspectors and a staff member of the Unit visited the Office during the month of May 1989 to gather data and to conduct interviews with members of the Office and with officials in other parts of the United Nations system. The Office looks forward to the recommendations of the Inspectors.

11. The Office for Research and the Collection of Information has continued its efforts to develop a computerized system for early-warning activities, including in the humanitarian area. A specialist consultant has been retained to work on the Office's information system commencing in the summer of 1989. His tasks involve the preparation of a plan and the implementation of its first stage, for the Office's integrated data system, including the software solutions for the quantitative and qualitative data processing in the Office. The Office is continuing its work on early-warning indicators and on data systems, including the mapping of sources of data from both within and outside the United Nations, channels of communication, compatibility of equipment, possibilities and terms of access, as well as modes for exchange of information. Work is also being completed with regard to indicators of potential refugee flows.

/...

ANNEX I

Replies received from Member States

BAHRAIN

[Original: English]

[7 August 1989]

The Government of the State of Bahrain has not experienced any of the problems referred to in the note verbale of the Secretary-General, but remains alert to such issues. Consequently, further contributions are, therefore, not submitted.

BRAZIL

[Original: English]

[12 July 1989]

1. The Government of Brazil would like to reiterate and update previously sent information on recent developments relating to the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees, in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 42/144, as quoted in paragraph 17 of the report of the Secretary-General on Human Rights and mass exoduses (A/43/743).

2. Brazil welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 43/154 of 8 December 1988 and by the Commission on Human Rights of resolution 1989/63, of 8 March 1989, both entitled "Human rights and mass exoduses".

3. Brazil has expressed in the past its concern at the emergence of massive flows of refugees, which it considers to be a complex problem with undeniable destabilizing effects. Hence, it firmly supports the steps taken so far by the United Nations to examine the problem of massive outflows of refugees and displaced persons in all its aspects, including its root causes.

4. Brazil reiterates its support for the conclusions and recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees (A/41/324, annex). In particular, it recalls the Group's recommendation that the principal organs of the United Nations should make fuller use of their respective competence under the Charter for the prevention of massive flows of refugees and displaced persons.

5. Brazil has taken note with appreciation of the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information to co-ordinate information-gathering and analysis with agencies so as to provide early warning on developing situations requiring the Secretary-General's attention, as

/...

well as to provide a focal point within the United Nations system for policy responses. Brazil deems it an important step in establishing an early-warning system within the United Nations, since it could be instrumental in alerting international attention to deteriorating human rights conditions and to the possibility of mass flows. It could, moreover, stimulate efforts to alleviate the problems causing mass exodus and enable refugee agencies to organize emergency relief more rapidly and effectively.

6. In this connection, the role of non-governmental organizations, in particular, those active in the field of human rights, is paramount, as far as the whole process of the plight of refugees is concerned: first, on providing information on the reasons why refugees have fled - this information can be critical in detecting early signs of larger refugee flows. In refugee camps, the role of non-governmental organizations is crucial in monitoring the promotion and protection of human rights of refugees. Later on, non-governmental organizations can be helpful in providing information whether conditions in a home country are safe enough for refugees to return.

7. Brazil is deeply concerned by the increasingly heavy burden being imposed particularly upon developing countries with limited resources of their own by the sudden mass exoduses and displacements of population. Furthermore, it is concerned by the fact that the majority of refugees, today, are located in the least developed areas of developing countries. It seems that, during the 1980s, the impact of the world economic recession, combined with a few other relevant factors, has compounded the problem of refugees. The conclusion is that refugee issues cannot be any longer considered in isolation, but should be examined in the context of the problems related to development in a specific region. This approach leads to the establishment of a concrete link between refugee aid and development, with a new understanding of refugee policies and a new and more adequate interpretation of durable solutions.

8. As a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Brazil has been frequently stating those ideas and positions. During the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee, in October 1988, Brazil represented the Latin-American Group in the Bureau, with the post of Rapporteur. Moreover, Brazil participated in the International Conference on Central American Refugees, which was held at Guatemala City, from 29 to 31 May 1989. On that occasion it stressed the continuing support that it has lent to this initiative since its inception and through the whole process of organization and convening the Conference. Brazil joined the consensus on the adoption of the Declaration and Concerted Plan of Action in favour of Central American Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons (see A/44/527, annex). It envisaged the Conference not as an isolated event, but as a link in the process of achievement of peace in the region. Brazil has also taken note with appreciation of the actions of protection and assistance in favour of Central American refugees being carried out by the seven affected countries, with the co-operation of UNHCR and the support of the international community. Furthermore, it welcomed the catalytic role played by UNHCR in the region and the co-ordination of its efforts with those of UNDP and other development agencies.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

[Original: English]

[21 August 1989]

1. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany is pleased to note that the Secretary-General continues to give close attention to the question of international co-operation to avert new flows of refugees, which has been emphasized in the letter of 29 May 1989 from the Centre for Human Rights at the United Nations Office at Geneva. It is therefore looking forward to the Secretary-General's report to the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly on his activities in this connection.

2. From a very early date the Federal Government has given special attention to the question of international co-operation to avert new flows of refugees. As is known, it launched an initiative in 1979 to have this increasingly important subject put on the agenda of the General Assembly. That initiative was followed by thorough work by the Group of Governmental Experts appointed by the General Assembly, which lasted over three years. The results were debated at the forty-first session of the General Assembly and adopted by consensus in Assembly resolution 41/70 of 3 December 1986.

3. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany continues to regard the results of that basic analysis of the reasons for refugee flows and of the possibilities of averting them as highly important and topical. In the 10 years since the General Assembly first took up this subject the problem of refugee flows in all parts of the world has become even more critical. It confronts the international community with mounting tasks that can no longer be accomplished with the traditional means of emergency humanitarian and social assistance. It becomes more and more apparent that UNHCR, too, which plays an important role in this respect, is reaching the limits of its capacities.

4. Thus it is ever more essential for the international community, apart from its continuing obligation to ease the consequences of the flight and expulsion of refugees, to take effective measures to identify and remove the causes of refugee flows. Such movements should not even be allowed to begin, not only in order to ease the burden on the family of nations but above all to save the people affected by a great deal of suffering and distress, which is the inevitable fate of every refugee.

5. As recent years have shown, political, social and cultural tensions in various countries have destabilized the domestic situation to such an extent as to force large sections of the population to flee their native regions. Thus, although there are many different political, socio-economic and natural reasons for refugee flows, it is primarily the responsibility of the countries themselves to create conditions in their own territories which prevent any new mass exodus.

6. Of central importance in this respect is their obligation to ensure recognition of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The violation of those

/...

rights and freedoms, as also stated in General Assembly resolution 43/154, is a major cause of refugee flows. All countries are therefore called upon to ensure respect for and protection of human rights.

7. Only by means of a policy that protects human rights and aims at stability and social justice can countries retain or regain public confidence and thus meet their obligation not to provide any reason for flows of refugees from their territories. Only with this approach, moreover, will it be possible to create conditions enabling those who have already fled from their countries to exercise their right to return, as embodied in international conventions. The prevention of new flows and the repatriation of refugees are therefore closely connected.

8. Against this background the Federal Government reiterates the responsibility of the Secretary-General to undertake the early-warning activities with a view to averting new flows of refugees, to evaluate the information thus gained, and to take suitable measures to prevent conflicts. In this process the Secretary-General should use his powers to the full.

9. The Federal Government has therefore noted with satisfaction the establishment of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information in the spring of 1987. It sees in this Office an important instrument that will facilitate the Secretary-General's efforts to effectively perform the tasks to which he was assigned by the Assembly in resolution 41/70. The Federal Government supports the work of the Office and encourages it to discharge its functions actively.

10. In its own country the Federal Government will continue to fulfil all the obligations resulting from Assembly resolution 41/70 so as to ensure that the Federal Republic of Germany itself will not be a source of refugee flows.

TURKEY

[Original: English]

[14 August 1989]

1. In the course of its long history, Turkey has several times faced massive influxes of refugees and displaced persons. It is, therefore, more than familiar with the root causes of and problems resulting from mass exoduses. Believing that the scope and magnitude of this issue can be better understood on the basis of an illustrative case, the Government of Turkey would like to express its views on the subject with reference to the ongoing influx of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin to Turkey. This case has been chosen as the most illustrative one, because it is the largest forced population movement in Europe since the Second World War.

2. The mass exodus in question is a perfect illustration of the "fact that human rights violations are one of the multiple and complex factors causing mass exoduses of refugees and displaced persons" as expressed in the third preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 43/154. The outflow of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria is the direct consequence of the systematic human rights violations to which they

/...

have been subjected since 1984. As is known, the Bulgarian Government in 1984 imposed upon its citizens of Turkish origin a forcibly assimilation campaign through which all Moslem and Turkish names were changed to Slavic names, the use of Turkish language was banned, freedoms of expression and religion and practice of Moslem traditions were severely curtailed and even circumcision was forbidden.

3. Opposition to this campaign has been repressed through violence and bloodshed, causing many deaths and injuries. However, the members of Turkish minority, not accepting the loss of their ethnic, cultural and religious identity despite these brutal acts of repression, in May 1989 launched massive hunger strikes and peaceful demonstrations with a view to claiming the restoration of their rights. These events clearly marked the failure of the forcible assimilation policy of the Bulgarian authorities. Unfortunately, the Bulgarian Government has chosen to remedy this failure by resorting to the expulsion of ethnic Turks to countries other than Turkey at the outset, followed by direct deportations and massive outflows of people to Turkey. Consequently, more than a quarter of a million Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin have been or have felt compelled to leave their country as such within a short span of less than three months. The scope of this movement gives a clear idea of the conditions in which these people had to live in Bulgaria.

4. In order to prevent the creation of such conditions, the General Assembly has requested, in paragraph 3 of its resolution 43/154, all Governments "to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant international instruments, in particular in the field of human rights, as this would contribute to averting new massive flows of refugees and displaced persons". The Government of Turkey believes that the above request of the General Assembly is complemented with the recommendation of the Group of Governmental Experts inviting the States to "promote civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and accordingly refrain from denying them to, and from discriminating against, groups of their population because of their nationality, ethnicity, religion or language, thus directly or indirectly forcing them to leave their country" (A/41/324, annex, para. 66 (d)). The failure of the Bulgarian Government to comply with the above requests brings forth the question of what the international community should do when a case of mass exodus arises.

5. Paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 43/154 gives an answer to this question, by inviting all Governments and relevant international organizations to co-operate in addressing both "problems resulting from mass exoduses" and "causes of such exoduses". In the case of the outflow of the ethnic Turks from Bulgaria, Turkey has tried to address both sets of issues by calling upon Bulgaria to negotiate a voluntary emigration agreement with the presence of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to restore the rights of those who wish to remain in Bulgaria. Unfortunately, these proposals have been rejected by Bulgaria and consequently the problem resulting from the mass exodus of ethnic Turks have been aggravated. This case illustrates the fact that the failure of a Government to abide by its obligations in the field of human rights may lead to a problem of serious concern to the international community as a whole. In full cognizance of this fact, the Group of Governmental Experts reminds the international community of the need to improve international co-operation to avert new mass exoduses. The

experts expect this co-operation to contribute to the solution of those problems which are the direct cause of such flows. It goes without saying that international co-operation in this regard cannot be materialized unless the Government responsible for the emergence of the mass exodus agrees to change its negative stance. Therefore, in order to be able to remove the root causes of and avert massive outflows of refugees, the international community is in need of an effective mechanism that would ensure the co-operation of the country of origin. To this effect, the Secretary-General can be further encouraged and given concrete support by the Member States to discharge the functions and responsibilities described in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts.

6. However, efforts to establish practical international co-operation for assisting the refugees and displaced persons involved in mass exoduses should be increased. In this context, the creation of special funds by the relevant international agencies could be a very efficient measure, since the usual practice of making an appeal to the donor community for assistance is a time-consuming process that does not provide a timely response to the urgent needs of the persons affected from mass exoduses.

7. In short, the international community has so far been successful in defining the scope and acknowledging the importance of mass exoduses. Nevertheless, the international community has not yet been able to develop effective mechanisms to address the root causes of the mass exoduses and to provide affected persons with urgent assistance. Therefore, the Commission on Human Rights should keep this matter under consideration and envisage further concrete measures on the basis of the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts.

/...

ANNEX II

Replies received from United Nations bodies, specialized
agencies and intergovernmental organizations

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

[Original: English]

[4 September 1989]

1. As UNHCR reported to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-fifth session in March 1989, the intergovernmental Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees specifically acknowledged the direct relationship between observance of human rights standards, refugee movements and problems of protection. This reflected acceptance of the fact that human rights violations are more than a causal factor in mass exoduses. They also give rise to protection problems in countries of asylum and are a factor to be addressed in countries of origin in regard to return. Against this background UNHCR encouraged the Commission to broaden its debate on human rights and mass exoduses to reflect the relevance of human rights issues to all facets of the refugee problem. By drawing attention to such problems, the Commission can raise the level of international awareness about them and make a positive contribution to their successful resolution.
2. UNHCR has followed carefully all international efforts, including in the Commission on Human Rights and in the General Assembly, to address the issue of violations of human rights as a cause of mass exoduses of refugees. There is in its view a clear need for early-warning profiles on incipient refugee situations and a system to furnish timely advice of developing problems in this regard. UNHCR is following with interest the efforts of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information in this area.
3. In recognition of the close link between action in the human rights area and refugee concerns, UNHCR has been working over recent times to expand the possibilities for collaboration with human rights bodies and institutions, including the Commission and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights. Among the areas identified as likely to benefit from closer co-operation are the areas of training, information dissemination and promotion. There has already, for example, been participation by officials of UNHCR and of the Centre in seminars and courses for government officials organized by one or other organization. UNHCR field officers have assisted in the dissemination of the Human Rights Covenants and other basic human rights material. Such mutual co-operation is one which will be enhanced in coming months and years.

/...

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

[Original: English]

[15 August 1989]

The International Labour Organisation is in general agreement with the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees, and in particular with the need for observance of human rights as a means of preventing mass exoduses. ILO is ready to contribute to early-warning activities by providing information that might become exclusively available to it. ILO reaffirms its determination to continue to use the ILO procedures applicable in the implementation of human rights standards and instruments which have a bearing on this matter. Finally, ILO expresses its commitment to co-operate with the United Nations system, Governments and other bodies concerned, in initiating and providing appropriate assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

[Original: English]

[30 August 1989]

1. The FAO Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) has the mandate to monitor, on a continuing basis, the world food supply/demand situation and to provide early warning of food shortages and worsening nutritional conditions at individual country level. Information on refugees and displaced persons is collected and analysed and the food aid needs of these populations are assessed in co-operation with UNHCR and WFP.

2. As regards the possible involvement of GIEWS in early-warning activities in the humanitarian area, FAO would like to offer the following views:

(a) Through its monitoring of drought, food supply/demand situation and pre-famine indicators GIEWS has the capability to provide early warning of possible refugee flows resulting from natural causes (example: flow of refugees from Eritrea and Tigray Provinces of Ethiopia to the Sudan as a result of drought in 1984/1985);

(b) GIEWS could also give early warning of likely population movements when civil strife or internal disorders cause disruption of agricultural activities or interruptions of vital food supply lines (example: Mozambique refugees in Malawi and Zimbabwe because of war disruption to agriculture in the past two years);

(c) FAO could undertake to supply the above information to the Office for Research and the Collection of Information, which is proposed to be involved in the co-ordination of information flows in the humanitarian area.

3. FAO policies associated with emergency operations and agricultural rehabilitation projects are aimed at maintaining the stability of communities and helping to prevent migration of massive movement of population. For example, planning for urgent execution of rehabilitation activities in support of the needy people is taken up on an immediate basis, materials and services are provided to all concerned on an equitable basis, special attention is paid to the effects of a migrating population on other communities, agricultural materials are delivered to end-users and technical assistance is provided to ensure the most effective use of materials supplied.

4. It is considered important that there should be close collaboration on this matter among the various agency representatives at the field level. This subject could be made a standing item at the regular meetings of the emergency operations groups or other co-ordinating bodies at the country level. In countries with histories of mass exoduses, case studies could be put together to provide a basis for monitoring. Situations in countries with ethnic diversity, potential conflict and possible border disputes could be kept under regular review by the emergency operations groups or other co-ordinating bodies at the field level. Relevant information from the country could then be routinely transmitted to the United Nations and the concerned agencies.

5. In this connection, reference should be made to a JIU study that is being carried out on the co-ordination of activities related to early warning of possible refugee flows and comparable emergencies. FAO had the opportunity of having preliminary discussions in June 1989 with the JIU Inspectors engaged in the study.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR MIGRATION

[Original: English]

[8 August 1989]

1. The causes of mass exoduses are manifold and, at times, intertwined: political, social, economic and natural factors may compel people to leave their country of origin or residence. Until recently, mass exoduses were analysed extensively in terms of refugee movements, a fact that may have resulted in a fragmented, if not distorted, understanding of the problem.

2. Mass exoduses can be prompted by unilateral decisions taken by States resulting in mass expulsions of nationals or mass expulsions of aliens. In other cases, people have to leave to flee sudden natural disasters such as famine and flood, or progressive natural disasters (desertification, ecological disturbances and other environmental damages). Political instability, armed conflicts (international or non-international) or persecution may force people to leave their country to protect their physical integrity.

3. Because of this variety of factors compelling people to leave "en masse", it seems more appropriate now to analyse this phenomenon in the context of the movement of people, i.e. that of international migration. The migration approach

/...

is more conducive to a better understanding of the causes and consequences of the phenomenon and a more realistic assessment of the needs of the individuals concerned. In particular, it emphasizes the fact that any person, irrespective of his status, is entitled to imprescriptible rights and duties to be found in universally accepted human rights instruments.

4. The link between human rights violations and mass exoduses is recognized. This relationship, however, carries different features depending on the cause of the exodus, features which should be clearly distinguished when preventive and/or remedial action is considered.

5. There are situations where the direct cause of the exodus is a violation of a basic human right, for instance the mass expulsion of nationals. When aliens are expelled "en masse", the modus operandi of the expulsion very often results in the violation of basic human rights because of the inhuman conditions under which the expulsion order is carried out.

6. When people are fleeing because of natural disasters, or leave because of adverse economic conditions, their basic human rights, both during their flight and after, are eroded. The State of origin or residence may not have direct responsibility for the infringement of human rights; the responsibility is a shared or collective one.

7. While in some instances human rights violations may compel people to flee, these violations may not exist, as a cause, in other situations of forced movements of persons. In such cases, violations may occur during or after the coerced movement. This distinction is important in the setting up of early-warning systems that should be able to monitor any possible cause of mass outflows, i.e. not only those related to a direct violation of human rights.

8. As violations of human rights do occur during mass exoduses, attention should also be paid to establishing an appropriate mechanism whereby the movement of such persons could be effected with due regard for the human dignity of the individuals concerned. Once the forced movement has taken place, respect for human rights imposes on the international community the duty to lend protection and assistance to those vulnerable persons.

9. It is acknowledged that violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be among the main causes of mass movements of persons. This being said, it is of utmost importance to determine the moment of such violations, the responsibility of States (individually or collectively) and the role of such violations as the determining factor in the mass exodus. Once this assessment has been made, the international community will be in a position to better devise proper responses and the institutional mechanism to implement them.

10. In situations where mass movements of people have occurred, ICM can make arrangements for the organized resettlement of the persons concerned, or their voluntary return migration. ICM's offer of services in recent regional conferences (Central America, South-East Asia) amply testifies to it.

11. ICM is not involved in the acute phase of the mass movement itself, i.e. the forced movement from the country of origin or residence to the country of first reception, because of the constitutional requirement limiting its sphere of competence to voluntary migration (principle of the free movement of persons).

12. When a mass movement of people is likely to take place, ICM services can, at the preventive stage, constitute a humane alternative to the forced movement. An organized migration of people leaving voluntarily their country of origin or residence is by far a more acceptable solution, ensuring respect for the human rights of the individuals concerned.

13. When ICM was created in 1951, the basic principle to which all members adhered to was that of the free movement of people, i.e. the right of every one to leave freely any country, including one's own, and to return to one's country. This principle is still the cornerstone of ICM activities and any State wishing to join the organization must subscribe to it. By providing international assistance in any form of migration, ICM is helping in the safeguard of this fundamental human right. This principle sets at the same time the scope and limits of any ICM involvement in mass movements of persons.

14. The mass movement of population, as one specific form of migration, constitutes a most challenging issue of our time. Its causes and consequences need to be analysed to permit adoption of appropriate long-term solutions.

15. The research function of ICM has been strengthened under its updated Constitution. Research and consultations on migration issues are carried out not only in regard to the migration process but also the specific situation and needs of the migrant as an individual human being. More important, ICM is now offering a forum to States and international and other organizations for the promotion of co-operation and co-ordination of efforts on international migration issues, including studies on such issues in order to develop practical solutions.

16. Through its international seminars, regional workshops and other meetings, ICM can contribute to a better understanding of the causes and consequences of mass movements of people and an efficient dialogue between States. ICM is ready to co-operate closely with the United Nations and other institutions in the setting up and functioning of an appropriate early-warning system, which is a most useful means of avoiding unilateral adoption of forced measures by States.

17. ICM has assisted some of its member States in the creation of integrated national registration systems to permit tabulations of incoming and outgoing migration movements. It has also co-operated with Latin American member Governments in implementing national programmes for the regularization of the status of undocumented migrants, in conducting censuses of the undocumented population and in studying possible solutions to this increasingly serious problem. This expertise could be valuably used to help in the "introduction of an effective census mechanism ... in order to determine in an impartial and professional way the numbers of border-crossers requiring assistance in mass influx situations" (A/38/538), para. 4 (f)).