



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

FIFTY-THIRD SESSION

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Thursday, 27 July 1972
at 10.30 p.m.

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA

President: Mr. SZARKA (Hungary)

AGENDA ITEM 10

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Refugees (E/5138 and Add.1, E/L.1502, E/L.1515)**

1. Prince Sadruddin AGA KHAN (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, in accordance with the practice of the Council, he would not comment on his annual report (E/5138 and Add.1). He pointed out that the addendum to his report concerning the question of asylum was submitted to the Council for its information, and that it would be for the General Assembly to decide on further action to be taken. He stated that the Secretary-General had requested UNHCR to act as the focal point for the co-ordination of United Nations assistance to Southern Sudanese refugees, as it had done in April 1971 for United Nations assistance to East Bengali refugees in India. The operation in favour of the East Bengali refugees had ended and the report on the activities of the focal point on that matter was contained in the note by the Secretariat in document E/L.1502.

2. In the case of the East Bengali refugees, UNHCR had concentrated on fund-raising, over-all administration and co-ordination and public information. A number of international organizations, such as UNICEF, WFP, WHO and UNDP, had participated actively in the programme.

3. The focal point and the other United Nations agencies had not, as a rule, assumed any operational responsibilities in that they had not directly administered assistance to refugees in the camps. They had considered that their role was limited to raising funds, providing technical advice at the administrative level, channelling to India contributions in cash or in kind and procuring the necessary food and supplies. Through permanent inter-agency consultations and good co-ordination between the headquarters of various agencies and their field services, it had been possible for the focal point to avoid duplication, save time and maximize the effect of United Nations efforts.

4. With regard to the second large operation undertaken by UNHCR for assistance to Southern Sudanese refugees, he wished to thank the Council, which, in its resolution 1655 (LII), had endorsed the arrangements made for that purpose by the Secretary-General, UNHCR and other members of the United Nations system. At the regional level, those arrangements had also been supported through a resolution unanimously adopted by the OAU Meeting of Heads of State and Government, which had been held in Rabat from 5-12 June 1972. In order to inform the

members of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme of the dimensions of the problem, an informal meeting of representatives of Governments members of the Executive Committee had been organized in Geneva in late June, in which observers for the Sudanese Government and the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs had also participated.

5. In addition, the fifty-seventh session of ACC which had also taken place at the end of June had enabled the executive heads of the specialized agencies to appreciate the importance of the problem. Lastly, the non-governmental organizations had also been informed of the immediate assistance which the international community should provide to the Southern Sudanese refugees.

6. Following the Addis Ababa Agreement,¹ the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan had estimated that some 700,000 people would need to be resettled in a huge area where living conditions had been disrupted for over 17 years. In close co-operation with UNHCR, the Sudanese Government had estimated that an amount of \$22.5 million would be necessary to cover needs during the emergency phase scheduled to last one year from 1 July 1972. Immediate action had been taken to obtain the necessary resources and begin emergency relief activities. He was happy to report that, within two weeks of the Secretary-General's appeal, substantial contributions had been made to UNHCR, particularly by Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States of America and that in addition aircraft had been made available to UNHCR on very favourable terms. Contributions not channelled through UNHCR had been made by certain African Governments, OAU and various non-governmental organizations, and several Governments had made bilateral contributions. In all, the contributions to date in cash and in kind intended for assistance to the Southern Sudanese refugees amounted to over \$10 million, of which \$6 million had been channelled through UNHCR.

7. As in the case of similar operations, UNHCR and other organizations of the United Nations system were responsible for co-ordinating assistance, and the Sudanese authorities were responsible for direct relief measures with the co-operation of international experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Within UNHCR itself, a small special unit had been set up with the task of assessing needs, determining priorities, channelling the available resources and co-ordinating action between UNHCR and the other organizations of the United Nations system. Meetings between the various specialized agencies partici-

¹ Addis Ababa Agreement on the Problems of South Sudan, signed on 27 February 1972.

pating in the operation were taking place on a regular basis in Geneva with a view to co-ordinating relief activities.

8. After providing some information on the participation of various international organizations, he said that one of the key aims of the whole operation was the voluntary repatriation of over 180,000 Sudanese who had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. Since the conclusion of the Addis Ababa Agreement, more than 10,000 refugees had returned to the Sudan and the number of departures was increasing rapidly every day despite the fact that reception facilities were still very limited.

9. The emergency phase, which was to last one year, was now well on its way and nearly half of the funds necessary for the operation had been obtained. It was to be hoped that the operation could be brought to a successful conclusion so that all the refugees could finally return to their countries and be resettled in suitable conditions. There was, however, more to be done and it was not without reason that, when the Secretary-General had appointed UNHCR to act as focal point for the operations during the emergency phase, he had, at the same time, requested UNDP to act as the co-ordinator for a long-term reconstruction plan. It was to be hoped that UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system would co-ordinate their efforts so that when UNHCR discontinued its activities, the long-term reconstruction plans would have gained enough momentum so that the ultimate goal could be achieved.

10. In conclusion, he stressed that the major part of the financial target had still not been attained, and that contributions should be provided immediately in order to ensure that there would be no interruption in relief activities. He therefore renewed the appeal made by the Secretary-General on 3 July (1819th meeting) and urged Governments and the private sector to redouble their efforts in order to enable hundreds of thousands of Southern Sudanese refugees to return to their homes.

11. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America), introducing the joint draft resolution (E/L.1515), said that it echoed the appeal made by the Secretary-General at the beginning of the session. The High Commissioner and his colleagues had succeeded in co-ordinating a United Nations emergency relief programme for Southern Sudan and in meeting the urgent needs of some 500,000 displaced persons as well as repatriating more than 180,000 refugees in neighbouring countries. The sponsors of the draft resolution hoped that their text would be adopted by the Council unanimously.

12. Mr. SKOGLUND (Observer for Sweden) said that, in response to the appeal made by the Secretary-General on 3 July, his country had decided to contribute Swedish kr. 3 million to the High Commissioner to help him finance his emergency relief programme, and Swedish kr. 400,000 to the Swedish Red Cross. Sweden had already contributed Swedish kr. 200,000 in 1972 for assistance to Burundi refugees. His Government sincerely hoped that the task which the High Commissioner had so bravely undertaken on behalf of the Southern Sudanese refugees would be as

successful as the relief operations carried out on the Indian sub-continent with the assistance of the international community.

13. Mr. WIHTOL (Finland) said that his delegation wished to express its gratitude to the High Commissioner and his staff and to all those within the United Nations system or outside it who were serving the cause of international solidarity. In the Sudan, the return of the refugees to their homes was essential for the restoration of a normal situation in the areas concerned. In the draft resolution of which Finland was a sponsor (E/L.1515), the Council made an appeal to the international community for assistance for that purpose. His Government had made a cash contribution of 1 million Finnish marks, or about \$250,000, to assist the High Commissioner in bringing to a successful conclusion the task undertaken for the benefit of the Southern Sudanese refugees.

14. One of the heartening features of the economic, social and humanitarian activities of the United Nations was that in times of crisis the system seemed to be revitalized and produced its best results. That had been demonstrated by the activities of UNHCR and, in particular, by the relief operation for the East Bengali refugees. His delegation expressed the hope that the lessons learned from those experiences would be utilized in other situations when crisis was not imminent.

15. Mr. VETTER VON DER LILLIE (Observer for Australia) said that his country would also make a cash contribution to assist UNHCR in carrying out the operation to facilitate the resettlement of the Southern Sudan refugees in their country. His delegation was prepared to consider the suggestion that technical assistance should be given to the Sudan for the rehabilitation and resettlement of the refugees returning from abroad and the displaced persons in the country. It supported draft resolution E/L.1515.

16. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) thanked the High Commissioner for his very instructive statement and congratulated him on the vigour with which he applied himself to his supremely humanitarian task. There was no better illustration of international co-operation than the efforts made by the High Commissioner and his staff to save human lives, preserve human dignity and, where possible, resettle refugees in their homeland. The operation in the Sudan was especially difficult and especially important because the Sudanese refugees and the displaced persons in the Sudan had now been enduring their sufferings for seventeen years. He spoke with emotion of the recent visit which the President of the Sudan had paid to Nairobi, where he had found a considerable number of his fellow countrymen.

17. Mr. SEKYIYAMAH (Ghana) stressed the good work done by the High Commissioner in the Indian sub-continent. His delegation would comment on those activities at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly and confirm its support for the High Commissioner and his

staff. The response by the international community to the Secretary-General's appeal was encouraging, but a new appeal by the Council, as proposed in draft resolution E/L.1515, was nonetheless justified. His delegation entirely approved of that draft resolution and noted with satisfaction that the situation in the Sudan was gradually returning to normal.

18. The PRESIDENT noted that the eight-Power draft resolution (E/L.1515) had received unanimous approval and suggested that the Council should adopt it.

The draft resolution was adopted.

19. Mr. HAG-ELAMIN (Sudan) warmly thanked Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan and all the staff of UNHCR for their efforts to facilitate the repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees returning from abroad and of displaced persons in the Sudan. His Government had every confidence in the success of that mission and thanked the Council for unanimously adopting a draft resolution which reflected a spirit of solidarity and co-operation. In view of the generosity with which Governments had responded to the Secretary-General's appeal, there was every reason to be optimistic. He wished to thank, in particular, Austria, Finland and Sweden for the contributions they just paid or pledged. Lastly, he thanked the sponsors of the draft resolution and congratulated the High Commissioner on his excellent statement.

20. Mr. WANG Jun-sheng (China) said that his delegation had noted that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had continued in recent years to provide "assistance" to so-called "Tibetan refugees" and "Chinese refugees" in Macao.

21. Tibet was a Chinese territory and questions concerning it were internal affairs in which no foreign country or international organization had the right to interfere. After the failure of the serf-owners' rebellion which it had provoked in China's Tibet region in 1959, the Indian Government had coerced tens of thousands of the inhabitants of Tibet into coming to India and had profited from that incident to engage in rapid anti-Chinese activities. The so-called question of "Tibetan refugees" was a result of the Indian Government's interference and of its subversive policy towards China.

22. Both Hong Kong and Macao were Chinese territories. There had always been movements of the Chinese population between Hong Kong and Macao and other parts of China. Thus the Chinese living in Hong Kong and Macao were by no means refugees and the so-called "problem of Chinese refugees" simply did not exist. The "problem of Chinese refugees" in Hong Kong and Macao was nothing but a falsehood concocted by the Chiang Kai-shek clique which had long since been repudiated by the Chinese people.

23. In the past few years, at the instigation of the United States of America, the Chiang Kai-shek clique and India, the United Nations had illegally adopted several resolutions on the "question of Tibet" and the "problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong", which was not to its credit.

UNHCR had regarded as "refugees" the inhabitants of Tibet who had gone to India under coercion from the Indian Government, and the Chinese inhabitants of Hong Kong and Macao; it had also sought to raise funds and had set up offices and agencies for conducting illegal activities. Such action constituted a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and interference in China's internal affairs.

24. Despite some amendments to the text, the High Commissioner's report still recorded illegal activities which constituted interference in China's internal affairs. The Chinese Government and people absolutely could not tolerate that situation. His delegation solemnly demanded that UNHCR should cease forthwith its illegal activities concerning so-called "Tibetan refugees" and "Chinese refugees" in Hong Kong and Macao, abolish the bodies responsible for conducting those activities, and delete all those parts of its report which related to those questions.

25. Mr. JAIN (Observer for India) said he had been somewhat taken aback to find that, after a moving discussion on the problems of the Sudanese refugees, the opportunity had been taken, for reasons best known to the Chinese representative, to raise extraneous political issues.

26. His delegation wished to draw attention to the following statement in paragraph 75 of the report distributed as document E/L.1502:

"It is not the purpose, and it would be outside the scope of this report, to reflect on the socio-political events which led such a large population to leave everything behind and seek refuge in another country."

In quoting that paragraph, his object was to point out that in all the UNHCR activities at present being considered by the Council, the emphasis had been placed, as in the past, on the humanitarian aspect of the problem on the sympathy which the report sought to arouse for refugees, on the task of the international community in that sphere and on the measures which should be adopted in order to mitigate the sufferings and distress of refugees.

27. Throughout its long history, India had always had a humanitarian tradition. The Indian people had never remained unmoved by the distress and sufferings of others, and had endeavoured, despite their own difficulties, to provide assistance to refugees. Such assistance did not constitute interference in the internal affairs of another State, nor could it be construed as such. His country had provided aid to refugees regardless of the country from which they had come. If a refugee presented himself at its frontiers, it always opened its doors to him.

28. His delegation would have wished that that question had not been raised in the Council, in order to provoke a discussion which had nothing to do with the subject under consideration. His country wished to reaffirm that it had never interfered in the internal affairs of another country. Those who were used to interfering in the internal affairs of other countries could perhaps wax eloquent on the subject.

29. Mr. WAN Jun-sheng (China) said that the Indian Government had long cherished the aggressive ambition to meddle in the affairs of China's Tibet region.

30. It was an indisputable fact that India had engaged in a policy of intervention, subversion and expansion against China. Having coerced Tibetan inhabitants to come to India, it was still trying, under cover of "humanitarianism", to interfere in China's internal affairs. But such attempts were completely futile.

31. Mr. JAIN (Observer for India) said he had no intention of engaging in fruitless polemics, despite very serious provocation. He would merely categorically reject the unfounded charges that had just been made, which only made sense when contradicted.

32. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) said that his delegation wholeheartedly supported the activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They were entirely in accordance with the mandate of his Office and with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and other bodies.

33. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should decide to transmit the annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/5138 and Add.1) to the General Assembly for consideration at its twenty-seventh session.

It was so decided.

34. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should take note with satisfaction of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the activities of the United Nations focal point for assistance to refugees from East Bengal in India (E/L.1502).

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at midnight.