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*President:* Mr. SCHEYVEN (Belgium).

## Election of a Vice-President

1. The PRESIDENT said that, by virtue of rule 23 of its rules of procedure and a decision which it had taken earlier, the Council was required to elect a Vice-President to replace Mr. Fakhreddin (Sudan) who was unable to attend the session.

2. Mr. JERBI (Libya) nominated Mr. Ahmed (Sudan).

*Mr. Ahmed (Sudan) was elected Vice-President by acclamation.*

## AGENDA ITEM 15

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Refugees (E/4677 and Corr.1)**

3. Prince Sadrudin AGA KHAN (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing the report (E/4677 and Corr.1), said that while the refugee problem was, in terms of numbers, a comparatively minor one, it was a living proof that men had failed to live in harmony. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, unanimously supported at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, had been able to do a certain amount of useful work towards the achievement of solutions to that eminently humanitarian problem.

4. The basic aims and intentions of UNHCR remained unchanged: it sought permanent solutions to refugee problems by helping the persons concerned to cease being refugees.

5. After a brief flare-up, the situation in Europe seemed to be becoming stabilized once again. The role of UNHCR had been less to provide funds, because European Governments had faced the situation with generosity, than to supply expertise through its representatives in the countries concerned. The aim had been to facilitate voluntary repatriation and, where that could not be done, to help the people concerned to move as quickly as possible to avoid stagnation.

6. In Latin America, the Office was continuing to assist aged and handicapped refugees who had been resettled there many years previously. No new problems had arisen but, to deal with that residual case-load more effectively, appropriate administrative arrangements had been made in UNHCR representation, particularly in Argentina, where many refugees coming within the competence of UNHCR were living, and where increasing facilities were being made available for the handicapped among them.

7. In Asia, the Office was still concerned with the settlement and rehabilitation of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong and Macao and of Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal. As a result of certain missions undertaken by his representatives in the area, a number of Governments had raised the problem of certain groups of refugees who might be without protection or status. Consequently, it might be necessary to strengthen the Office in Asia.

8. Although his Office was not concerned with the Palestinian refugees, who were the responsibility of UNRWA, the tragic situation in the Middle East had created problems for other refugees also. Many such refugees had been economically and socially uprooted as a result of events and his Office had been called upon to increase its aid to them and also, wherever possible, to promote the movement of those people to countries where they could lead a more stable economic life.

9. The greater part of his work was still concentrated in Africa. The situation had not improved in that new groups had been added to the existing refugee population, while the situation in Nigeria had created a number of refugee problems outside that country, particularly in Equatorial Guinea. To meet that need and to respond to frequent requests received from Governments, he was obliged to intensify the implementation of his protective function and his programmes of material assistance.

10. Considerable progress had been achieved in the matter of protection. Since the forty-fifth session of the Council, the number of accessions to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees had increased from fifty-three to fifty-six while ratifications of the 1967 Protocol to that Convention had risen from seventeen to thirty-five. In addition, the Netherlands had submitted to the Governments signatories to the 1957 Hague Agreement relating to Refugee Seamen, a draft protocol designed to extend the benefits of the Agreement to refugees covered by the 1967 Protocol.

11. Refugees had to be given a status consistent with the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The Office was judged not only on the basis of its achievements with regard

to large groups but also on the basis of what it was able to do for the protection of the individual; in that connexion, its presence had to be strengthened in the field. The situation in Africa frequently precluded the possibility of exercising the protective function from headquarters and he therefore intended to add offices to the existing branch offices in West Africa and East Africa. There would be two such offices dealing with protection, with representatives who would be in a position to travel from country to country as needed. There had been an accumulation of refugees in African urban centres and that process, added to the existing exodus from the rural areas to the urban centres, had increased unemployment, produced social and economic problems of all sorts and given rise to a certain amount of political tension. It was gratifying, therefore, that OAU had set up a wide network of correspondents in many different African countries under its Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees; those correspondents sought opportunities for refugees in Africa. The success of that initiative was essential if the creation of a hard core of refugees, such as that which had developed in Europe in the post-war years, was to be avoided. If each country considered that it was another country's responsibility to take in such refugees, all doors would be closed to them and their ultimate settlement and rehabilitation might become virtually impossible.

12. The Office's programmes in the rural areas had also to be strengthened so that, by providing opportunities in the field, hope was given to refugees who might otherwise go to the city and find no opportunities there either. By providing such opportunities in Africa and by strengthening the OAU Bureau, the brain-drain would also be limited since refugees who left Africa, sometimes settled permanently outside the continent.

13. Voluntary repatriation was the best solution to any refugee problem but it could resolve only a small part of it. In the meantime, the obvious answer was to give the refugees an opportunity to live a normal life in their countries of asylum. A concerted approach was required, since UNHCR assistance quickly brought the refugees to a level of living similar to that of the local population. From then on, the problem became one of development. An *ad hoc* meeting of the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes had been convened in Geneva in January 1969 to study the role of each United Nations body in an integrated refugee settlement scheme. The results of the meeting were reported in detail and analysed in the thirty-fifth report of ACC (E/4688, paras. 11-14). Excellent results had been obtained with a view to increasing the scope and speed of co-operation between UNHCR and other members of the United Nations system in the rural settlement of refugees. Furthermore, in some countries the development agencies had either already taken over or would take over in the relatively near future.

14. Unfortunately, some countries had been rather reluctant to adopt the integrated zonal approach since there was a feeling that refugees were only there temporarily and

would eventually go home. That was a very dangerous attitude to adopt, because uncertainties, complications and additional costs to the international community could arise very rapidly. An office such as his own could not continue relief indefinitely: that would be bad for the refugees themselves, bad for the countries concerned and financially and administratively crippling for UNHCR. The countries which had accepted the integrated zonal development approach could testify to its success.

15. In other parts of the world where, for various reasons, the refugee problem had not been resolved, its stagnation had generated instability and unrest. If refugees were to be converted into active and fully productive human beings, they must be given a status guaranteeing them the fundamental rights of the individual. It would be paradoxical, indeed, if a refugee who became uprooted from his own country as a result of injustice or discrimination were to find himself in a category of his own in the country of asylum. A refugee was a man like any other man, and any man could become a refugee.

16. In Africa, there was the possibility that the refugees of today might be the leaders of their countries tomorrow. To facilitate their settlement, the Office had intensified its educational and vocational training activities, with the expert assistance of UNESCO and the financial assistance of the Scandinavian Governments.

17. A lesson had been learned in Africa: cheap and hasty schemes simply did not work. A settlement had to be really effective and viable or it was merely a thin disguise for relief. The total cost of a well-organized settlement was a trifle to most Governments and the Office had attempted to maintain a reasonable average ceiling of programme needs and targets over a year.

18. If the United Nations Development Decade was aimed at overcoming poverty, distress and under-development, the refugees should not be forgotten. There could be no better application of the plans for the proper utilization of human resources.

19. Assistance to refugees was not simply a work of charity and not even a work of justice; it was a constructive effort aimed at resolving the problem once and for all and ensuring that thousands of individuals should make a positive contribution to the general prosperity of the countries which had opened their doors to them because they supported the universal principle of the right of asylum.

20. Mr. AHMED (Sudan) was sure all members of the Council would agree that the record of the High Commissioner for Refugees was one of which the United Nations could be proud. Many countries had received refugees while nationals of others were refugees abroad and, in some cases, a country found itself in both categories. All such countries had developed strong ties with the High Commissioner and had co-operated with him in the pursuit of the common objective.

21. Refugees constituted a human problem of the first order which was as complex and many-sided as man himself. Its solution required sympathy, understanding, patience and tolerance. In addition to being a human problem, however, it was also an economic, social, legal and political problem which could have serious and far-reaching implications for societies and Governments. Effective measures to resolve the problem constituted a positive contribution to human welfare, economic and social development, the elimination of tension and friction between States and, consequently, world peace. The Sudan attached the greatest importance to the High Commissioner's work and would continue to support him in the future, to the full extent of its possibilities, as it had done in the past.

22. His delegation strongly endorsed the idea that the objective of the High Commissioner's activities was not to promote dependence on material assistance or to create an army of unemployed living in foreign countries and causing economic and social problems for their host countries, but to resettle refugees and render them capable of earning their own living and participating in the normal life of their countries of residence. Material assistance was simply a temporary and transitional necessity.

23. The main function of the High Commissioner was the settlement, education and training and legal protection of refugees, the ultimate aim being either their full integration in the country of residence or their voluntary repatriation to the country of origin. In that connexion, he was happy to note that, during the period under consideration, some 20,000 refugees had been voluntarily repatriated.

24. During the year covered by the report, the Office had been most active in Africa. The number of refugees in that continent had risen from 860,000 at the beginning to 950,000 at the end of the year. The High Commissioner was, quite rightly, placing the main emphasis on rural settlements, one of the most important features of the rehabilitation programme. It was also the most interesting for the host countries since it had an important part to play in their economic and social development. A most welcome trend had been the close co-operation between the High Commissioner, Governments, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations and social welfare bodies. The report revealed many examples of the positive results so achieved. He welcomed the decision by the ILO and UNESCO to contribute to refugee programmes in Africa and to provide expert advice and funds under their own technical co-operation programmes. Similar initiatives taken by FAO, WHO, UNICEF and WFP involved not only the extension of support and consultative services but also the supply and provision of equipment. Assistance to refugees was a fine example of an area in which concerted action could produce the best results. His Government supported the High Commissioner's efforts to intensify such co-operation and endorsed the conclusions of the *Ad hoc* Inter-Agency Meeting, held in Geneva in January 1969, that co-operation between the High Commissioner's Office and other United Nations bodies could be extended, particularly at the first and second stages of settlement.

25. The Office had also made considerable progress in the legal aspects with respect to the protection of refugees, their social and economic rights, right of asylum, recognition of their status and their acquisition of new citizenship.

26. His delegation was happy to note the increasing co-operation between the High Commissioner and OAU. One result of that co-operation was the new draft convention governing the specific aspects of the problem of refugees in Africa, adopted by the OAU Council of Ministers in February 1969, which was complementary to the 1959 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

27. Much valuable work had been carried out by the High Commissioner and his staff in the Sudan. Large and elaborate settlement projects had been initiated in the south and east for the settlement of refugees from neighbouring countries. The primary objective of the scheme was to assist the refugees to attain a satisfactory level of self-reliance and to reach the economic and social levels of the local population. That was particularly important as a prerequisite for zonal rural development schemes at a later stage under the national development plan. A similar project for an even larger settlement of refugees had been worked out by the Sudanese authorities with the High Commissioner's representative in Khartoum, in close co-operation with the specialized agencies operating in the Sudan, on the basis of various feasibility studies and surveys carried out by the Sudanese Government.

28. As a result of such schemes and of the general co-operation between his Government and the High Commissioner's Office, an atmosphere of mutual confidence and respect had been created and reinforced by recent visits to the Sudan by the High Commissioner himself and by senior members of his staff.

29. With respect to financing, it was regrettable that little more than half of the programme target for 1969 was covered by funds paid or pledged by Governments. He strongly urged member Governments to increase their regular contributions or to make special contributions for the High Commissioner's Programme since that would constitute a highly unselfish gesture for a highly noble cause.

30. Mr. BENLER (Turkey) said that, at its nineteenth session, the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, of which he was a member, had been unanimous in its desire to re-elect Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan to the office of High Commissioner, and he therefore welcomed the unanimous confirmation of that desire by the General Assembly at its twenty-third session.

31. The report of the High Commissioner was succinct and informative. One striking aspect was the discrepancy between the programme which had been successfully carried out and the obvious inadequacy of the financial resources of UNHCR. The main reason for that fortunate state of affairs was the method of work adopted, involving the establishment of priorities. An example was the

increasing importance attached to the problems of refugees in Africa, which accounted for 60 per cent of the total budget. Another equally important priority was the holding of inter-agency meetings. The Office regarded refugees as future producers, individuals and families requiring economic assistance and a legal status. Since its own resources were inadequate, it made wise use of the services of other international organizations and of the aid of those countries whose Governments welcomed refugees. Striking examples referred to in the report were the programmes in Burundi and the Central African Republic, whose success the Turkish Government earnestly desired.

32. Another aspect of co-ordination was exemplified by the *Ad hoc* Inter-Agency Meeting, held in Geneva in December 1968, on the use of volunteers in United Nations projects, which had been attended by a representative of the Office and was referred to in *HCR Bulletin*, No. 4. The conclusion of that meeting brought to mind General Assembly resolution 2460 (XXIII), requesting the Council to study the feasibility of creating an international corps of volunteers for development and was a result of the initiative of the Shahinshah of Iran. In his study of the implementation of that resolution, the Secretary-General would be advised to consider, *inter alia*, the use of young people in connexion with UNHCR projects.

33. The High Commissioner's report appealed for more financial resources. The Turkish Government particularly welcomed the increasing aid provided by the Scandinavian countries, and above all, the new contributions from developing countries. In spite of a heavy refugee burden, Turkey had doubled its contribution in 1968. His Government was also interested in such aspects of UNHCR's activities as nutrition and the protection of refugees; it had taken steps, including exemption from customs duties, to promote the sale in Turkey of records of the World Star Festival, and congratulated those responsible on the success of the Festival. The success of UNHCR's activities was due not only to its rational approach to the problems confronting it, but also—and perhaps more importantly—to the dedication of the Commissioner and his staff.

34. Mr. MBAPILA (United Republic of Tanzania) was glad to note that the High Commissioner's activities continued to be guided primarily by humanitarian considerations. His Government was grateful for the assistance it was receiving under the UNHCR programme, particularly as the number of refugees in Tanzania was increasing. It fully supported the High Commissioner's policy of encouraging refugees to participate in the host country's economic and social life, especially in rural communities. Emphasis was quite rightly placed on education, which would enable the refugees to assume political and economic responsibilities when they returned to their own countries. The refugee problem was basically a political one: most of those arriving in Tanzania had faced great dangers and hardships to escape from Portuguese colonial rule. It was the responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States to secure universal acceptance of humanitarian principles and to eliminate colonialism, oppression and injustice so that

refugees could return to their own countries. Meanwhile, it was the duty of the international community to give the refugees every possible assistance.

35. Mr. CAPPELEN (Norway) noted with satisfaction that progress in the resettlement of refugees had continued and that a growing proportion of them were self-supporting. The co-ordination and integration of refugee assistance with general development programmes was a prerequisite for any lasting solution to the refugee problem. The High Commissioner's participation in the meetings of the Inter-Agency Consultative Board had already proved useful and he was glad to note that UNHCR was strengthening its relations with other agencies. He endorsed the conclusion, reached at the *Ad Hoc* Inter-Agency Meeting on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, that UNDP action and *ad hoc* action by specialized agencies should be undertaken when necessary and on the recommendation of UNHCR. Zonal development plans were of particular importance and he was glad that the inclusion of some African refugee settlements in future zonal development projects was being considered. Early contact between UNHCR and the agencies was essential for a smooth transition from emergency assistance to development assistance. He appreciated the active participation of African Governments in the execution of several refugee projects which would also benefit the local population. His Government had long ago mentioned the need for secondary and higher education for refugees and again recommended the earliest possible inclusion of secondary education in the UNHCR programme. As it was often difficult to find suitable employment for refugees to make them self-supporting, he hoped that the ILO's action under the World Employment Programme would also benefit refugees.

36. The number of new accessions to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol had been encouraging. The draft convention governing specific aspects of the refugee problem in Africa, adopted by the OAU, was further proof of the concern of African States for refugee protection. Norway intended to apply the 1957 Hague Agreements relating to Refugee Seamen to refugees covered by the 1967 Protocol.

37. The High Commissioner's appeal had resulted in a significant increase in contributions during 1968, but there was an urgent need for still greater funds in 1969. Norway believed that Governments should bear the main responsibility for basic UNHCR programmes and was increasing its contribution by 25 per cent. Voluntary organizations would continue to have a valuable role to play in UNHCR programmes.

38. Mr. ABE (Japan), after expressing appreciation of the dedicated efforts of the High Commissioner and his staff, said that, in view of its complexity, the refugee problem called for more vigorous concerted action by UNHCR and all the other United Nations agencies concerned. While he agreed with the High Commissioner that UNHCR's true *raison d'être* was to find and apply permanent solutions to the refugee problem, he felt that the only real permanent

solution to the problem was to eliminate its fundamental causes. Meanwhile, he hoped that the High Commissioner would continue to enable refugees to participate fully in the economic and social life of the host country.

39. Mr. TUBBY (United States of America) expressed particular satisfaction with UNHCR's participation in pioneer rural development projects, such as the one in Burundi, being carried out in co-operation with other agencies. The international protection of refugees was UNHCR's main responsibility and the international community should continue to single out problems which needed urgent attention. Refugees should be able to participate fully in the economic and social life of their host country, enjoy equality under national law and live in dignity. Their permanent segregation in refugee settlements could only result in political unrest. Refugees should not be returned to their countries if they feared persecution there.

40. UNHCR should maintain its role in Africa, where the refugee problem was becoming increasingly complex. Its programme should continue to help refugees to become self-supporting as soon as possible. The United States had acceded to the 1967 Protocol, although it already accorded full rights and protection to refugees. He hoped that other countries would accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol and would conscientiously apply them both.

41. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom), expressing his Government's full confidence in the High Commissioner and his staff, noted with satisfaction the progress made in the international protection of refugees and the growing material assistance provided for them. Increasing attention was quite rightly being concentrated on Africa's refugee problems and he expressed support for the rural settlement programmes. He welcomed the increasing inter-agency co-operation in assistance to refugees, especially the action mentioned in paragraph 15 of the High Commissioner's report. He hoped that such co-operation would continue. His Government had contributed the equivalent of \$300,000 to the 1968 UNHCR Programme and would continue to make similar contributions. Recalling that the Council had long since found it unnecessary to discuss the High Commissioner's actions or policy, he asked whether it would be possible to arrange for the High Commissioner to report direct to the General Assembly, thereby reducing the Council's work-load.

42. Mr. PAPIĆ (Yugoslavia), noting with satisfaction the increase in the number of signatories to the 1967 Protocol, welcomed the draft convention adopted by the Council of Ministers of OAU in February 1969 supplementing the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. He was also glad to note the increasing co-operation between UNHCR and other United Nations bodies. His Government supported the High Commissioner's humanitarian efforts and endorsed his appeal for financial support.

43. Mr. KRISHNAN (India) expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by the High Commissioner, his global approach to the refugee problem and his policy of

concentrating efforts where they were most needed. In view of his limited resources, the High Commissioner rightly tried to enlist the full support of the other United Nations bodies concerned. The need for an integrated approach and continuous co-ordination should always be borne in mind. His Government had increased its contribution to the UNHCR programme in 1969.

44. Mr. MAS (France) expressed approval of the guiding principle applied by the High Commissioner and commended him on the progress made, especially in Africa, despite the increase in the number of refugees. He supported the High Commissioner's policy of promoting the integration of refugees in the economic and social life of the host country and also the strengthening of UNHCR's co-operation with UNESCO, UNDP and WFP. In Europe the limited funds available greatly restricted international refugee assistance but, if the flow of refugees continued, international action on a wider scale would become necessary.

45. The High Commissioner had rightly emphasized the importance of the international protection of refugees. France already applied most of the principles embodied in the 1967 Protocol, to which it would shortly accede. He noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had participated in the International Conference on Human Rights, held in Teheran in 1968, the conference of the International Law Association, held in Buenos Aires in 1968 and meetings of OAU. He hoped that, in the course of their co-operation in connexion with International Education Year, the agencies concerned would try to promote refugee education and training.

46. His Government supported the wise humanitarian principles applied by the High Commissioner and his apolitical approach to the refugee problem.

47. Mr. van BELLINGHEN (Belgium) said that the question how man in the twentieth century, although unable to eliminate the war and tension which were responsible for the refugee problem, had nevertheless been able to take joint action to remedy that problem, could be answered only by reference to the devotion, competence and energy of the High Commissioner and his staff.

48. Belgium had a long tradition of hospitality to refugees; his Government had made substantial contributions to UNHCR since 1955, and was increasing its contribution as from 1969. It had ratified the 1967 Protocol and was thus a party to all international instruments concerned with refugees. To mark that ratification there were plans for the settlement in Belgium, in co-operation with social organizations, of a small number of handicapped refugees. His Government was aware of the urgency of the refugee problem, and was convinced of the excellence of the work done by UNHCR, especially in Central Africa, where co-operation with the specialized agencies was leading to the social reintegration of refugees. The aim of integrating refugees into society deserved the energetic and extensive support of all the specialized

agencies and of Governments, and his delegation therefore hoped that the Commissioner's appeal for additional contributions would be successful.

49. Miss MUTER (Indonesia) congratulated the High Commissioner on the dedication, imagination, competence and energy which he and his staff had demonstrated, and for the new dimension of humanitarian concern which he had brought to his Office. There had been a recent shift in emphasis from Europe to Africa and Asia. Indonesia was deeply concerned at the refugee problem, and welcomed the humanitarian efforts adopted by the international community. Her delegation endorsed the recommendations concerning UNHCR's future activities in the report, and shared the High Commissioner's satisfaction at the growing response by Governments to appeals for contributions. However, the minimum target sought by the Executive Committee could not be reached solely through contributions by Governments; the contributions of non-governmental organizations therefore continued to play a vital role, and the High Commissioner's appeal for continued contributions was therefore justified.

50. Mrs. ZAEFFERER de GOYENECHE (Argentina) said that her Government fully supported UNHCR's work. On behalf of the Mexican delegation, she wished also to state that the Mexican Government supported the Commissioner's activities. She welcomed the specific reference by the High Commissioner in his statement to Argentina's support; in October 1968, Argentina had ratified the 1967 Protocol and had undertaken to assist in the resettlement of both partially and totally incapacitated refugees.

51. Mr. HILL (Jamaica) said that his delegation welcomed UNHCR's imaginative and constructive programmes, which went beyond social welfare and included social and economic reconstruction. Such programmes could be implemented only with the co-operation of Governments in an effort to resolve the problems which persisted as a result of political, economic and social discrimination. His Government supported UNHCR's efforts in that direction, and would continue to contribute to the fullest extent possible to its work.

52. Mr. JERBI (Libya), speaking on behalf of his own delegation and that of Kuwait, commended the High Commissioner and his staff on their excellent work, which was well reflected in the report.

53. Mr. NOLAN (Ireland) said his Government sincerely appreciated UNHCR's work over the past year and would continue its support for the protection and relief measures undertaken. A few years previously it might have been felt that UNHCR's activities were coming to an end, at least in Europe; however, as a result of the redefinition of the concept of refugees and of certain events which had taken place, that hope had not been fulfilled. The increase in the number of refugees in other parts of the world made it clear that the end to the problem of refugees was not in sight. His delegation was confident that every thing possible was being done, and believed that the Council should unanimously endorse the report.

54. Prince Sadruddin AGA KHAN (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that until it was possible, once injustice and man's inhumanity to man had been eliminated, to end the work of his Office, he and his staff would continue to work with dedication. He wished to thank all those who had offered their advice, encouragement, guidance and support.

55. The PRESIDENT said that, in the absence of any objection, he would assume that the Council was in favour of unanimously adopting a draft resolution reading:

*"The Economic and Social Council*

*"Takes note with satisfaction of the report prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/4677 and Corr.1) for transmission to the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session."*

*It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.