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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 457th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 3 October 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. CESKA (Austria)

later: Mr. AZIKIWE (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

STATEMENTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY

1. Mr. STOLTENBERG (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), on behalf of his Office, solemnly acknowledged the major historical event of German reunification, marking the rejection of the dogmatism that had bred the cold war. The new Germany was the mirror of a new Europe. He hoped both would be the mirror of a new world. On behalf of UNHCR, he expressed his best wishes to the German nation.
2. The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of the Executive Committee, also spoke of the truly historic nature of the occasion coinciding with the forty-first session of the Committee. The German people deserved congratulations and admiration for the patience and perseverance with which they had managed to re-establish their unity by a peaceful, democratic process and constitutional means.
3. Germany's return to unity marked the end of the division of Europe and the confrontation between East and West. The crucial role played by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) should be underscored.
4. The Committee had high hopes of the German delegation's contribution to its work, and welcomed its support for the cause of refugees around the world. It wished Germany and its people well-being and prosperity.
5. Mr. BENEDETTI (Italy) read out, on behalf of the countries of the European Economic Community, an official declaration on German unification issued that day by the Twelve.
6. Germany's return to unity marked the end of the division of Europe and the legacy of the war. The German people was recovering its rightful place in the consort of nations, to the satisfaction of the Community and its member States. The historic change had happened peacefully and democratically, in compliance with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. The Community paid tribute to the steadfastness of the German people and the wisdom of the Governments and statesmen who had made it possible.
7. The restoration of German unity heralded a new era for Germany and Europe, and a period of co-operation and stability on both sides of the Atlantic. The unification of Germany was occurring on the eve of major decisions which would shape the future of the European Community. The Federal Republic had already made an outstanding contribution to European integration, and the united Germany would be a still more powerful factor for European cohesion.
8. Germany's regained unity would facilitate the task of the Community and its member States in consolidating, through the CSCE process, the climate of trust which now extended throughout Europe. It would perforce strengthen the peace and security, solidarity, progress and democracy to which all the peoples of Europe aspired.

9. The European Community and its member States welcomed the new citizens of the Community, and expressed their warmest wishes to the German people and Government for a shared future of peace and prosperity.

10. Mr. MARTIUS (Federal Republic of Germany) observed that the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Genscher, had told the General Assembly that Germany was conscious of its responsibilities and would work for peace and freedom in Europe and throughout the world. Successive Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic had repeated to the General Assembly that their Government would work for a state of peace in Europe in which the German nation would recover its unity in free self-determination. It had indeed done so, since reunification was the result of a democratic, peaceful process in which the entire German nation had exercised its right of free self-determination.

11. The united Germany would make no territorial claim whatsoever against any other country. It would confirm the existing frontier with Poland in a treaty under international law, thus contributing to peace in Europe.

12. The re-establishment of German unity and full sovereignty would not alter the country's active commitment to the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of peace and human rights, the promotion of economic development and social justice in all parts of the world, and the protection of mankind's natural resources.

13. As an industrialized country, the Federal Republic was conscious of its responsibility towards the less developed nations. Reunification would not work against the interests of the third world. On the contrary: the united Germany would work still harder to combat poverty and underdevelopment and to protect the environment.

14. On that historic occasion, Germany commemorated the victims of the Second World War, of tyranny and of injustice, and was mindful of its responsibility. The third of October was for Germans a day of joy but also a day of reflection. He thanked all those who had trusted and supported the legitimate rights of the German people.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

15. Mr. SHIRDON (Somalia) remarked with satisfaction on the reorganization of the Office and the balance struck between needs and the resources available. His delegation was particularly pleased that the cost of the revised general programmes for 1990 tallied with the approved level of expenditure, at about \$380 million. It found it unfortunate, however, that special programmes were not so well supported, in particular the Special Programmes for Durable Solutions which, ironically, could release resources for use elsewhere.

16. On the subject of refugees in his country, he said that over the past decade Somalia had done a great deal for refugees despite the numerous difficulties it faced as a developing country, and had joined in concerted efforts to find a durable solution. Encouraging results had been obtained since the previous session of the Executive Committee.

17. In 1990, his Government and UNHCR had drawn up a joint plan of action which would allow refugees the choice of returning to their countries or settling in Somalia. Under that plan, refugees in the south had been registered and it had been found that 70 per cent of them wished to settle in Somalia while 30 per cent wished to return home. His delegation appreciated recent moves by some donors to offer durable solutions for the Ethiopian refugees, and the calls by certain delegations in support of such solutions.

18. As regards the refugees in the north of the country, the United Nations had recently taken the premature decision to terminate the Extraordinary Interim Emergency Programme, leaving over 150,000 refugees without any source of livelihood. His Government was therefore putting together an assistance programme with the help of the international community pending the imminent repatriation of the refugees, and was very appreciative of the generosity shown by certain donor Governments.

19. Developing countries which afforded asylum to a high proportion of refugees in relation to their own populations were, in essence, the principal donors to the cause of protection and assistance, but at colossal cost to themselves. The international community was approached from time to time for help, in accordance with the concept of refugee aid and development expounded in Executive Committee documents for some years. His Government welcomed the UNHCR initiatives in Somalia and urged the Office to revive its efforts to promote the refugee-affected areas project. In conclusion, he praised the work being done by United Nations Volunteers in his country.

20. Mgr. CAUSERO (Holy See) said that the Holy See would like a number of objectives and recommendations to appear in the High Commissioner's programme for the coming year.

21. In the view of the Holy See, the chief responsibility of UNHCR was still to afford protection, and the Working Group on Solutions and Protection should take that matter up without delay. In affording protection, UNHCR should collaborate with non-governmental organizations to ensure refugee safety. Humanitarian solidarity and concerns must not flag, despite clear signs that public opinion was becoming weary of the fate of refugees.

22. His delegation was happy that the High Commissioner and many delegations recognized the link between the refugee phenomenon and human rights, ignorance of which lay at the heart of the problem. The High Commissioner rightly pointed out in his note on international protection that action of two kinds was needed: promoting respect for human rights, and alleviating the socio-economic problems which provoked population exodus. That approach highlighted the importance of development aid and international solidarity.

23. The Holy See was particularly concerned about two specific aspects of the High Commissioner's activities which merited attention during a period of financial restraint and programme overhaul. The first concerned the vulnerable group of women, children and the handicapped. The assistance rendered all too rarely involved women in activities designed to benefit them, keeping them in a dependent status aggravated by the problems of security and self-sufficiency they faced in camps and elsewhere.

24. The second aspect was the need to ensure that voluntary repatriation - the best solution to uprooting - really was voluntary. In order to do that, refugees must be told what opportunities for reintegration into their home countries they would actually have, and it must be ensured that they could return in complete safety.

25. His delegation felt that non-governmental organizations could usefully help the Office to carry out its mandate, and should be more closely associated with the activities of the Office as partners. Such collaboration should be based upon an exchange of ideas and on specific arrangements for co-operation in the preparation of programmes of activity.

26. His delegation congratulated the Office on its tireless application. Like the High Commissioner, it felt that refugees and migrants were the conscience of mankind and a permanent reminder of the need to resist political and economic repression throughout the world.

27. Mr. RIVAS POSADA (Colombia) said that over the past year the High Commissioner had managed to turn the crisis at UNHCR into an opportunity to reconsider the administrative structure of the Office and the policies it should follow in discharge of its mandate. The High Commissioner was thus giving the members of the Executive Committee working with him an opportunity to help find the best ways of taking up the challenge which the international community faced: maintaining or, if possible, improving the quality of services given to refugees despite current financial constraints. To save money, UNHCR had had to cut its staff and close some regional bureaux. Care must be taken that the savings thus generated did not come at the expense of quality in the execution of either general or special programmes.

28. His country was particularly worried lest the programme set up following the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA), which the High Commissioner had described in his opening statement as a model of what could be done to help refugees and of voluntary repatriation, suffer as a result of the decision to close the Central American regional bureau. It would be wise to consider putting off any decision on the subject until the work of CIREFCA had been completed.

29. Finding more efficient ways of managing resources was just as important as finding new sources of finance. The establishment of a special contingency account had been suggested. His delegation believed that, once properly defined and distinguished from the Emergency Fund, such an account could

provide a flexible mechanism for financing activities requiring an immediate UNHCR presence on the spot. Consideration should therefore be given to establishing the special emergency account in the near future.

30. Another matter of concern to his delegation was the question of priorities. The High Commissioner had told the Committee that, in view of budget restrictions familiar to all, educational services in some refugee camps had had to be abandoned. There were currently 200,000 refugees of school age in western Ethiopia and Malawi. If education was not felt to be as important a need to them as food, shelter and health, there was a risk that the tragedy would be repeated in other refugee camps. The young population would thus have to bear the consequence of the crisis. Education was an inalienable right of children and young people, even in emergencies. The purpose of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children was to make respect for the rights of children and young people a matter of paramount concern for all States. Refugee childrens' education must not become an activity subject to changing priorities, as the Working Group's report recommended. On the contrary, consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing special funds for education, co-ordinating curriculum development with UNICEF, asking non-governmental organizations to make a special effort to help in that area, and appealing for volunteers so that the human resources available within the refugee population could be put to use; and inexpensive teaching programmes should be developed to enable children to acquire knowledge appropriate to their age which they would need to cope with their circumstances. The question of education showed how important it was to ponder the goals of UNHCR protection and to view UNHCR assistance in its broader socio-economic aspect as well as the "human rights" dimension of refugee status.

31. According to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the essential aim of protection was to ensure the exercise of human rights, which included not only civil and political but also economic, social and cultural rights. Education was the first cultural right and, as such, part of the basic needs of any human being. His delegation therefore appealed to the international community to enable UNHCR to give the educational needs of refugee children absolute priority.

32. The other matters which had given his delegation pause were prevention and the right of asylum. Developing preventive policies was perhaps the best and most appropriate way of reducing the number of refugees. It would require timely mediation wherever it appeared that conflict was about to break out, the promotion of human rights and the international instruments enshrining them, and the proclamation of the fundamental principle that regard should be had for civilian populations in the event of international or domestic armed conflict. By building on the programmes of assistance offered by the Centre for Human Rights and the good offices of the entire United Nations system in States where critical situations arose, the problem of refugees around the world could be attacked at its roots. That, however, was not a task for UNHCR alone. The entire United Nations system, including the Security Council, must be associated in effective and timely intervention. Such a concerted effort

would bear fruit eventually. Joint meetings should be held on the possibility, and UNHCR could submit a draft strategy for consideration by other organizations in the United Nations system.

33. The right to asylum needed to be defined in relation to the current scope of the refugee problem. The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees said that the purpose of protection was to preserve refugees' lives in conditions of dignity and freedom. Owing to their situation, refugees were particularly vulnerable and needed the support of the international community. But, as the High Commissioner said in his note on international protection, according refugee status was often tricky because of the great number of migratory movements in the present-day world. The criteria for refugee status must therefore be clearly defined in order to ensure that those entitled to it were granted the right of asylum.

34. The Latin American region had a long tradition of asylum. His delegation thus felt it important to define criteria by means of which the entire international community could accept the right to asylum as the proper form of protection for refugees. The task could be entrusted to open-ended working groups, perhaps with assistance from representatives of other United Nations bodies. An inter-agency dialogue would, indeed, help to advance the search for durable solutions to benefit a vulnerable group.

35. Mrs. LYAGOUBI-OUAHCHI (Tunisia) said that, despite the current difficult financial climate, UNHCR was sparing no effort to improve the lot of refugees - whose numbers, unfortunately, did not appear to be decreasing - and to help and protect asylum-seekers in every region in a spirit of solidarity and on the basis of equitable burden-sharing. There could be no lasting solution, however, without development aid. The continuing existence of certain sources of tension, of uneven development, of colonialism and of basic rights denied was an obstacle to development, like the human rights violations which the international community was duty-bound to overcome and settle. As development centred on the individual, she called on the international community to give substance to its pledges to combat poverty, inequality and injustice and encourage the creation of a fairer world.

36. International assistance to UNHCR should be commensurate with the growing tasks and responsibilities UNHCR had to cope with in order to ensure the survival, protection, reintegration and treatment of displaced persons with a modicum of dignity. UNHCR must therefore be given additional resources to match the needs of first-asylum and resettlement countries with their ever-growing burden. The return of peace to certain regions should be accompanied by moves to facilitate the reintegration into civilian society of refugees, who mostly received assistance. Accordingly, UNHCR programmes must be given enough support for the Office to provide all the assistance necessary to integrate the refugees into the economic life of the countries where they had found refuge. There could be no effective protection if the means to provide it were not available.

37. Assisting voluntary repatriation should remain UNHCR's principal concern, since that solution had the merit of ending the rootlessness and wanderings of the displaced persons concerned.

38. The documents before the Executive Committee called for thought on the future direction of refugee policy overall. There were ample causes for concern: growing problems with asylum, on which protection for refugees rested; the shortage of resources for meeting refugee needs; military and armed attacks on refugee camps and holding areas; the sexual maltreatment of refugee women and children; refugees and asylum-seekers in detention; refoulements; expulsions; and restrictive interpretations of the right to asylum, to jobs, to welfare and to freedom of movement. Faced with such serious problems, the Committee needed to adopt realistic and flexible approaches without, however, compromising the fundamental principles involved. It was also important that the difficulties it faced should not lead UNHCR to confine itself to survival operations and priority-setting. Nor should a want of resources hinder the ideal solution, voluntary repatriation, when conditions favoured it.

39. It was incumbent on the international community to concern itself with the welfare of refugees in the name of international solidarity. The High Commissioner's "six-pillar" strategy (A/AC.96/753, para. 18) thus deserved universal endorsement and encouragement. Her delegation was in favour of co-operation with development institutions. It strongly hoped that all States would make additional contributions. The developing countries giving asylum were already in the throes of economic problems, and were finding it hard to bear the weight of the refugees they were allowing in a spirit of humanitarian solidarity.

40. Her country associated itself with the repeated calls on the donor community to make an extra effort. UNHCR action would be made more effective thereby. New sources of finance also had to be found, in part by accepting private donations, to supplement traditional sources. Contributions from other international bodies working with UNHCR were to be encouraged, but UNHCR must not be relieved of its primary responsibility for affording protection and finding durable solutions. Additional resources would also allow fresh demands to be met in the event of emergencies.

41. UNHCR had a leading role to play in affording international protection for refugees; she emphasized her country's concern over the status of the Palestinians living in camps in the occupied Arab territories, whose fundamental rights continued to be ignored and denied, in as much as they enjoyed no international protection.

42. Her country fully supported UNHCR, and her delegation was ready to co-operate actively with it in the Working Group on Solutions and Protection.

43. Mr. ARTEAGA (Venezuela) said that his country supported United Nations activities for refugees and had therefore been happy to agree to the recent opening of a UNHCR regional bureau in Caracas.



44. The documents prepared by UNHCR for the current meeting and the opening statements by the outgoing Chairman and High Commissioner indicated that, if UNCHR had not yet overcome the crisis resulting from its precarious financial status, it was at least on the right track. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the "six-pillar" strategy the High Commissioner had drawn up (A/AC.96/753, para. 18). It welcomed the moves towards rationalization, and the spirit of co-operation and understanding shown by UNHCR staff. The organigram annexed to document A/AC.96/XLI/CRP.1 clearly showed the new structure of the Office, and his delegation approved of the logical and innovative design. Still, it was concerned that the Programme and Technical Support Section did not seem to be at the high level which his delegation had always advocated, notably at the extraordinary session of the Committee in May 1990. That concern was in part allayed by the document entitled "UNHCR policy on refugee women" (A/AC.96/754). His delegation endorsed the principles underlying that policy (para. 3 of the text). It wished to take that opportunity to congratulate the Canadian Government on providing a Co-ordinator for Refugee Women.

45. Incidents in which refugees were turned away, expelled, extradited or detained in inhumane conditions continued to multiply, even as efforts were made to promote respect for human rights worldwide. Recent international events had given rise to particularly disturbing massive exoduses. He had been very interested by the note on international protection (A/AC.96/750) presenting the outlines of a policy which UNHCR and the international community could develop together. That document would be very valuable to the Working Group on protection, which would be meeting shortly. He had also read with interest the document on refugee women and international protection (EC/SCP/59). His delegation noted with satisfaction the high priority attached by the High Commissioner to the question of refugee women which, during 1990, had been examined from a number of viewpoints by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection as well as the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. The demographic makeup of the refugee population had always been a matter of concern to his delegation, which thought it would be useful for the Executive Committee to be informed, every time it met, both of the problems encountered and of the steps taken to protect and assist all components of the refugee population. The Committee should also be informed of problems and solutions specific to each component.

46. In many cases, regrettably, the current crisis in UNHCR prevented it from saving lives and barely allowed it to do more than help people to survive. The statement by the Deputy High Commissioner to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters had been very frank on that point. Without doubt, the situation was at the moment very difficult, in particular for thousands of refugee children. It must be hoped that the contacts due to take place between UNHCR and UNICEF would yield concrete results. He endorsed the High Commissioner's comments about programmes to provide education, a fundamental right which was frequently breached. His delegation supported all efforts to prevent such programmes from being abandoned. It also shared the

High Commissioner's concern over missed opportunities to find solutions. It must be hoped, at the very least, that the solutions already worked out could be put into effect.

47. Finally, his delegation was pleased that the process begun by CIREFCA was regarded as a model solution. The process was based on a link between UNHCR activities and development, something which his delegation had long argued for. His country hoped that future programmes would move at the same pace as those currently under way. It had already provided extensive support for CIREFCA and its follow-up.

48. As the High Commissioner had said in his opening statement, the international community would not be able to resolve the refugee problem unless it attacked the causes: the human rights violations, inequality and injustices which people had created and tolerated. The only solution lay in a policy of asylum for refugees and development aid for the dispossessed of the world.

49. Mr. TOTH (Hungary) welcomed the head of the German delegation, who was attending the Executive Committee for the first time as the representative of a united Germany. On the first day of German unity, it was particularly appropriate to look back a little and recognize the important role that the refugee issue, and more concretely refugees from the German Democratic Republic, had played in generating changes in relations between the two Germanies. His countrymen were proud of the decision taken on 12 August 1989, when refugees seeking asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany had been allowed to leave Hungary. The events since that time showed that a new Europe, free of fear and division, was no longer a dream.

50. He summarized the main factors leading to the establishment of official relations between his Government and UNHCR. In early 1988, his country had had to cope with a major influx of asylum seekers from Romania. In September 1988, the number of refugees had reached 9,000, and by March 1989 it had been over 17,000. All signs were that the situation was likely to continue, so the authorities, the churches, humanitarian and charitable organizations and even ordinary people were roused to action to help refugees. The country had decided to seek international help. In March 1989 it had acceded to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol concerning the Status of Refugees. In October 1989, the necessary agreements had been signed between UNHCR and his Government; they dealt with the first assistance programme and the opening of the branch office in Budapest. As a result, the necessary framework for co-operation between Hungary and UNHCR had been established just when the number of refugees from Romania surged.

51. The continuing influx of refugees had created problems which the country had tried to handle in a co-ordinated manner. Given its geo-political environment, it could only make use of one of the normal three options for solving the refugee problem.

52. Voluntary repatriation, one of the durable solutions, had been accepted in only 2 per cent of all cases, mainly during the short period between January and February 1990; since that time, practically no one had opted for it. The second option, resettlement in a third country, had also proved to be purely academic. While most of the asylum-seekers came from Romania, the existence of uprooted people from at least 17 European countries or ethnic groups and 14 non-European ones could not be ignored. Resettlement in a third country for asylum-seekers who, owing to their national ethnic, cultural or religious affiliation or personal ambitions, did not wish to remain in Hungary had turned out to be the privilege of a small minority. Only 10 per cent had received permission to move to the country of their choice in western Europe or North America.

53. The third option was integration. In the case of his country, that was what the majority of the arrivals wanted, partly because they knew that the other options were not open to them and also because their linguistic, cultural and spiritual background made integration a viable alternative. Hungarian regulations and practice made it relatively easy for refugees to find jobs or obtain vocational training so that they could ply a trade or learn a new one. Their integration was, nevertheless, extremely costly because many of them had dependents who also needed housing, education and social security benefits.

54. In December 1989, hope had been dawning that the radical improvement in the political climate, particularly in Romania, would stop refugees arriving in Hungary. Unfortunately that had not been the case, except in the first two months of 1990. Pogroms against "ethnic Hungarians" in Romania in March 1990, and crackdowns on student demonstrators in Bucharest, sent a new wave of refugees into Hungary. According to reports from the reception centres and local authorities, 14,342 new arrivals had been registered between 1 January and 31 August 1990, not including people who, for one reason or another, did not wish to report to the authorities. By comparison, between 1 January 1988 and 31 December 1989, an extremely difficult two years, 36,000 asylum-seekers had been registered. The figures available suggested that the number of new arrivals in 1990 would be substantially higher even than during that period. The refugee situation in Hungary was that sensitive to progress or setbacks in democratization in the region.

55. Those negative trends, aggravated by a deterioration in economic performance, were likely to reduce his country's reception capacity. Higher per capita debt servicing, the inevitable restructuring of the economy and increases in prices generally could only erode the budget allocations available for receiving refugees at a time when the increased number of arrivals really required a corresponding increase in budget allocations. In the circumstances, and especially since UNHCR assistance funds had not reached projected levels for either 1989 or 1990, his country's domestic efforts simply must be bolstered by external aid.

56. His country's attitude to the refugee problem was clear: it encouraged no one to leave his or her homeland. It did, however, expect a new influx of refugees. It had recently become an illegal transit country for people making towards Western Europe. Despite difficult economic and social conditions, it was abiding by its international obligations and trying to help displaced persons by all available means. Asylum-seekers were treated on an absolutely equal footing with Hungarians and had free access to employment, social security and health care benefits and education at all levels. Because of the wave of refugees from Romania, the settlement fund would not be able to cover needs for the remaining part of 1990. Financial assistance from UNHCR had declined by nearly 80 per cent in the current year, and a special, supplementary effort co-ordinated by the High Commissioner was therefore much to be desired, in order to enable the country to give asylum-seekers the humanitarian assistance they needed.

57. He emphasized, in conclusion, that the causes of the refugee problem must be addressed, with an emphasis on the link between protection for refugees and respect for human rights. His Government believed that it was the inalienable right of every individual to live, remain in or return to his or her homeland, where fundamental human rights and freedoms should be duly respected. His country would work resolutely to win universal respect for those rights.

58. Mr. Azikiwe (Nigeria) took the Chair.

59. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) said that his country was providing shelter to the largest single caseload of refugees from Afghanistan. Thanks to help from the international community and the mobilization of its own resources, it had managed, at great sacrifice, to look after those refugees; but the decline in external aid over the past four years was making the task more and more difficult.

60. As the quantities of wheat donated by the World Food Programme were insufficient to meet the refugees' needs, the Government had already had to draw 570,000 tonnes from its own stocks at a cost of some \$125 million, and would have to meet a further "shortfall" of 226,000 tonnes in 1990. It also had to spend large amounts (\$27.9 million per year) on transporting commodities inland and compensating landowners for land it had acquired for refugee camps.

61. As for assistance from UNHCR, the picture was just as dismal. Assistance had fallen from \$46.1 million in 1987 to \$31.1 million in 1989. The \$38,060,000 initially budgeted for 1990 had been reduced to \$30,935,000, and only three instalments of about \$9.5 million had been received so far. UNHCR's contribution of kerosene for 1990 had been slashed to only 19 million litres, from the 39 million originally planned. Saudi Arabia had pledged 20 million litres, but with the current situation in the Gulf it was unlikely to be able to keep its promise. The refugees would therefore have to fall back on Pakistan's meagre forest resources, already depleted, for fuel - which might provoke clashes with the local population. He urged the Executive Committee to take steps to halt the decline.

62. His country wholeheartedly supported the pilot project for voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees sponsored by the United Nations: it had already produced results, and should be extended beyond the stipulated three-month period. UNHCR and donors must, however, ensure that Afghan refugees who were unable to return continued to receive assistance in Pakistan until they were in a position to go home.

63. Many Pakistanis working for Afghan refugee relief organizations were made redundant when the organizations were wound up, and often found it difficult to find other employment. They should be compensated for their efforts with a bonus equivalent to one year's pay, plus one month's pay for every year of service rendered. Donors should also consider providing new vehicles for the relief operations, to replace the current aging fleet.

64. Substantial damage had been done to the environment in the areas occupied by Afghan refugees. UNDP had sent a mission to evaluate it. According to its report, colossal efforts and substantial resources would be required to repair the damage done in certain cases. His Government would shortly be approaching donors for assistance in doing so, and it must be hoped that the international community would respond generously.

65. The crisis in the Gulf had only aggravated Pakistan's already precarious economic situation. The additional expenditure entailed by the increase in oil prices was over \$1 billion, and the drying up of the remittances from Pakistanis returning home from Kuwait and Iraq represented an outright loss of \$400 million per year. Re-absorbing the thousands of returnees would also pose enormous problems. It was necessary to consider ways of increasing the part played by UNHCR in assisting expatriates suddenly forced to leave the countries where they had been working, who, deprived of their livelihood, were reduced virtually to the status of refugees. Nuclear, chemical and other accidents could create similar problems. How best to address such situations, of which there had recently been tragic examples, must be urgently considered.

66. Mr. RUML (Czechoslovakia) said that, after witnessing exoduses before and after the Second World War, his country had recently begun to take in refugees, and was running into many problems. It lacked the experience, the material means, and the legal framework to deal with the influx of asylum-seekers, and years of isolation had fostered xenophobic attitudes among its population.

67. Conscious of its responsibilities, the Government was sparing no effort to come to the aid of the refugees, who were being provided with assistance in a variety of forms at three reception centres. After consultations with the representative of UNHCR in Vienna, it had recently drafted a refugee bill drawing on the principles set forth in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The Government was also considering many applications for refugee status, bearing in mind the need to ensure respect for human rights, and observing the international agreements on the subject even though it had not yet formally adhered to them. Before the end of the year, draft legislation would be put before the Federal Assembly enabling Czechoslovakia to sign and ratify the Convention and Protocol.

68. His Government welcomed UNHCR's intention to help it deal with the refugee issue, and invited the High Commissioner to visit the country and send a mission to work out the details of co-operation.

69. New waves of refugees were likely to arrive in the months and years to come, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. European countries needed to combine their efforts to overcome the problems which would inevitably arise, and any solution would have to form part of a concerted move which took account of the new European realities.

70. Mr. HARUN-UR-RASHID (Bangladesh) said that, 40 years after the establishment of UNHCR, the refugee problem appeared to be more serious and more complex than ever. Nine refugees out of 10 came from developing countries, and while the situation had improved in Namibia and Central America, it was scarcely promising in the remainder of Africa and Asia. Additionally, the resources of UNHCR remained inadequate to meet growing needs, and it must be hoped that member States would increase their contributions in order to put the finances of the Office on a more solid footing.

71. His country attached great importance to the work of UNHCR, whose field office in Bangladesh was working well. It applauded the strategy proposed by the High Commissioner to deal with the financial crisis, and the increased co-operation with non-governmental organizations in the areas of international protection, fund-raising and public education.

72. The world was becoming increasingly interdependent and problems, increasingly international; solving them required concerted action. The problems included environmental degradation, which might in future lead to an increase in the number of refugees, particularly in third world countries.

73. Recent events in the Middle East had forced hundreds of thousands of people to seek temporary refuge in third countries. The international community and the media regarded them as refugees, but they did not match the traditional definition.

74. It was therefore time to look seriously at the mandate of UNHCR and its ability to respond to new situations requiring humanitarian assistance. Great changes had taken place since the establishment of the Office, but UNHCR had proved itself flexible and had come to the aid of many refugees in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Still, the definition of a refugee needed to be revised to cover wider categories of people and situations, and the further extension of UNHCR's mandate should be considered in that light.

75. Finally, he thanked the international organizations, donors, numerous non-governmental organizations and all the countries which had generously contributed to the repatriation of Bangladeshi nationals since the beginning of the Gulf crisis.

76. Mr. RASAPUTRAM (Sri Lanka) hailed the reunification of Germany and expressed his best wishes to the German delegation. He thanked the High Commissioner for his detailed report on the activities of UNHCR and his plans for making the Office more effective.

77. Conflict situations created migratory flows not only between countries but also within countries. In order to prevent too strict an interpretation of its mandate from restricting assistance to refugees who had left their countries, UNHCR must be flexible and show it could adopt new attitudes and methods to deal with new problems.

78. UNHCR must expand so that it could meet any eventuality. It must therefore have greater resources. At the same time, the additional resources should not be provided at the expense of development assistance.

79. Three years had elapsed since UNHCR had launched its Special Programme of Limited Assistance, designed to promote the resettlement of Sri Lankan returnees and afford assistance to internally displaced families. The programme must now make allowance for the many displaced persons coming from the Gulf. Thanks to the programme, executed jointly with the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, around 45,000 emigrants from southern India had returned to Sri Lanka and received aid immediately upon their arrival. In the longer term, the programme envisaged the rebuilding of infrastructure in affected areas and financial aid, vocational training and, where necessary, land for the returnees. Restoring damaged infrastructure was essential to the reintegration of refugees. The Government had also tried to create jobs in agriculture and fishing and, together with the National Housing Development Authority, had built 6,500 units of housing, while a similar number were under construction. The Government was grateful to the High Commissioner and his staff for helping to carry out the programme, sometimes in difficult conditions, for the benefit not only of target groups of refugees but also of local communities.

80. While helping to carry out the UNHCR programme, his Government had also tried to address the cause of the refugee flows, and had thus entered into dialogue with a variety of Tamil groups, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In early June, however, for no apparent reason, the LTTE had broken off the negotiations and resumed its terrorist activities, obliging the security forces to take steps to restore order. Terrorist violence had swollen the ranks of internally displaced persons. The Government was currently spending over a million dollars per day to help them and had chartered several ships to transport essential supplies. It was being assisted by UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and many other organizations. The Tamil terrorists had destroyed or stolen UNHCR property, and threatened UNHCR staff. Although figures were hard to come by, LTTE activities appeared to have driven around 67,000 Sri Lankans to seek refuge in southern India. The Sri Lankan and Indian Governments had discussed how to deal with the situation and would be asking UNHCR to help them arrange for the repatriation and resettlement of the exiles in due course.

81. His Government hoped that the LTTE would forswear violence and agree to take part in the political process, which was the only way the people in the north and east of the country would be able to elect their own representatives democratically. It was pleased that it could look for assistance to UNHCR, with which it was in close contact both in Geneva and in Colombo.

82. Mr. KOBAI (Kenya) remarked with satisfaction on the administrative and budgetary measures instituted by the High Commissioner in line with the recommendations of the Executive Committee to improve the financial standing of UNHCR and enable it to respond more effectively to refugee needs. Unfortunately, the financial crisis at UNHCR had had a serious impact upon programme delivery, particularly in Africa.

83. He noted with concern that, as pointed out by the High Commissioner in his opening statement, UNHCR was finding it difficult to respond with sufficient flexibility and effectiveness to new emergencies or to plan ahead. That problem must be attended to immediately because refugee flows could develop very quickly, as recent events in Liberia and the Middle East had shown. Among other things, donors, both traditional and other, needed to consider substantially increasing their financial contributions to UNHCR.

84. Aid and shelter should not be permanent institutions, and every effort should be made to permit refugees to return voluntarily to their countries. Prominence should therefore be given to promoting the peaceful settlement of conflicts, and then the developed countries should help the originating and asylum countries in the third world, Africa in particular, to broaden their economic bases in order to meet the basic needs of their local populations as well as the refugees within their borders. It would thus be possible to stem the flow of "economic" migration northwards from the south and east. He called upon the donor community to honour the pledges made at the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa so that the projects approved could be put into action.

85. His country was grateful to UNHCR for its assistance in meeting the needs of the refugees within its borders. Its reception facilities were, however, inadequate. The Thika Centre, for example, had been designed to house 320 people but currently had a population of 1,500. New reception facilities also needed to be built in the rural north of the country where many displaced persons had taken refuge.

86. His country was ready to work closely with UNHCR and the international community to arrive at peaceful settlements to the conflicts ravaging Africa, in order to promote by far the most desirable solution, voluntary repatriation. It had already been working hard to that end. In conclusion, he said that his country shared the joy of the newly reunited Germany, and wished it the best for the future.

87. Mr. CHADHA (India) congratulated the Chairman on his election and paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman, who had done UNHCR invaluable service in helping to streamline the operations of the Office and steer the



Executive Committee through a period of crisis. He had listened with interest to the opening statement by the High Commissioner, who had effectively highlighted the crucial issues and vital aspects of the global refugee situation. His country endorsed the three major goals set by the High Commissioner for the months to come. Like the outgoing Chairman, his delegation was disturbed that the number of refugees continued to grow and that refugees were mostly to be found in third world countries. It therefore supported UNHCR efforts to find durable solutions to refugee problems and to secure international protection and aid for refugees.

88. The people displaced by the crisis which had just broken out in the Middle East included at least 200,000 from India. The United Nations system had come to their assistance in a very creditable manner. His country had left no stone unturned to attend to the needs of its nationals and had already repatriated over 70,000 at its own expense. Although such persons were not refugees in the strict sense, they needed humanitarian assistance because they had been driven from their normal places of residence by totally unforeseen events.

89. Several speakers had already emphasized the need to distinguish refugees fleeing political persecution from economic migrants. It was true that more and more economic migrants were trying to improve their situation by applying for asylum-seeker or refugee status. Nevertheless, migrant flows still chiefly comprised refugees driven from their homes by human rights violations or conflict. There could be no durable solution to such problems until the human rights situation in many originating countries had been restored to normal. The Commission on Human Rights had repeatedly urged all Governments to implement the international human rights instruments which they had ratified. His country, with a long tradition of taking in and protecting refugees, had repeatedly emphasized that there could be no repatriation of refugees except on a voluntary basis.

90. His Government was very concerned about the influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, who had numbered over 85,000 at the beginning of the year and had since increased to over 115,000 with the resumption of hostilities in Sri Lanka in June 1990. The burden of supporting over 200,000 refugees in its territory was, for his country, a very heavy one; it hoped that a negotiated solution to the Sri Lankan conflict could be found and that the Tamil refugees would be able to return home. His country was willing to help UNHCR establish and administer camps for Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka itself, under international supervision.

91. His country was favourably disposed to a political settlement of the Afghan problem in conformity with the Geneva Accords, and supported United Nations efforts to provide humanitarian and economic relief for the Afghan refugees. It had pledged 100 million rupees for that purpose, 50 million rupees of which would be channelled through the office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for assistance to Afghan refugees. The rest would be paid bilaterally; part already had been.

92. Over the past year, positive results had been obtained on two broad fronts. First, the United Nations had successfully repatriated Namibian refugees, and should be congratulated on doing so within a limited period and under sometimes difficult conditions. In Central America, the peace process had allowed many refugees and displaced persons to return home in dignity and honour. The accomplishments of the International Conference on Central American Refugees could serve as a model for dealing with similar problems in other parts of the world. In conclusion, he hoped that the High Commissioner and his staff would be able to acquit themselves of their noble humanitarian mandate.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.