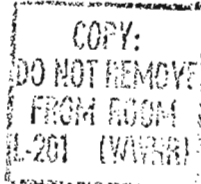




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THIRD COMMITTEE
40th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 13 November 1985
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 40th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ZADOR (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
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(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

(b) ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands) thanked the High Commissioner for his address, whose major themes he outlined, and for his dedication to the cause of refugees during his terms of office.
2. While the refugee problem was of a global nature, in 1984, Africa in particular had been struck by catastrophes of unprecedented dimensions. His delegation expressed its grief at the loss of human lives and the suffering which that continent had undergone, and paid tribute to the African host countries which, in spite of the fact that they themselves were among the hardest hit by the catastrophe, had maintained an open door policy for hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons adrift for mere survival. As the High Commissioner had rightly stated, the success of longer-term solutions were highly dependent on efficient responses at the emergency stages of a refugee influx. He therefore hoped that UNHCR would become better prepared to anticipate crises of such dimensions.
3. Emergency aid to Africa had certainly affected the availability of funds for development assistance. His delegation hoped that, as soon as the situation permitted, the emphasis would be shifted to rehabilitation and development. The recommendations of ICARA II, in particular, should be implemented, and UNHCR should resume its role as initiator, catalyst and co-ordinator of refugee-related development-oriented projects in Africa and strengthen its co-operation with the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa and other concerned agencies of the United Nations.
4. As the the High Commissioner had rightly mentioned, development projects benefiting the local population of the host countries as well as refugees, were needed, especially in low-income countries. Planning for such projects should begin at the very outset of a refugee influx. His delegation endorsed the conclusion of the of UNHCR Executive Committee that countries of asylum should consider the implementation of refugee programmes within their national development plans. Moreover, the governing bodies of such developmental organizations should bear in mind, when considering future activities in low-income asylum countries, the additional burden laid on those countries by the presence of refugees.
5. His delegation was encouraged to learn that the incidence of piracy attacks against asylum-seekers in the South China Sea, although still going on, had again declined. His Government continued its financial support to anti-piracy programmes.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

6. Women constituted the majority of the world's refugee population, and UNHCR assistance programmes for them should therefore be strengthened to help them become self-sufficient through educational and income-generating projects. The Netherlands welcomed the increase in the number of female members in the Professional staff of UNHCR, because, while there was still room for improvement, especially in the higher ranks, the increase would undoubtedly have a positive impact on policies and practical efforts in favour of refugee women.

7. The phenomenon of refugees and asylum-seekers who moved in an irregular manner from countries in which they had already found protection was a matter of growing concern. His delegation commended UNHCR for its efforts to formulate draft conclusions aimed at removing incentives to such irregular movements by granting permanent asylum and providing durable solutions. It hoped that a consensus would be reached on the matter in 1986.

8. For the second consecutive year and in close co-operation with UNHCR the Netherlands was operating a programme to resettle in its territory those refugees who were most in need. Special provisions had been made for handicapped refugees and those in need of resettlement for security reasons. It also participated in the RASRO scheme for refugees rescued at sea. In view of the pressing resettlement needs, his Government was prepared to increase the annual quota of refugees to be resettled in the Netherlands and to co-operate further with UNHCR in that respect.

9. While the world refugee population was stabilizing, it was still at an unacceptably high level. UNHCR should explore more actively, with the countries involved and the international community, the solution of voluntary repatriation. By organizing the San Remo Round Table on Voluntary Repatriation, UNHCR had taken a laudable initiative. It should also bring together countries of origin and asylum countries to assist them in programmes for the reintegration of returnees. To that end, UNHCR should continue to seek technical and financial co-operation from other United Nations bodies.

10. UNHCR was facing a financial crisis which endangered the quest for durable solutions. Increased contributions would not suffice to overcome it. UNHCR should strengthen its efforts for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness. His delegation welcomed the generous additional pledges announced by various donors during the thirty-sixth session of the Executive Committee. Those pledges had enabled the High Commissioner to overcome at least the major problems for 1985. The Netherlands had recently pledged an additional contribution of \$3.8 million, which had brought its total contribution to UNHCR for 1985 to more than \$10 million, a significant increase over its financial assistance in previous years.

11. The ambitious target of \$330 million, approved by the Executive Committee for 1986, should be met preferably by increases in contributions for the General Programmes of UNHCR. His delegation was pleased to announce that the Netherlands would increase its annual contribution to General Programme by about 30 per cent compared to 1985.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

12. With regard to the management of UNHCR, his country was prepared, together with other interested countries, to advise the High Commissioner on measures for improvement. Having always supported the equitable and predictable job-rotation system, it advocated strict adherence to that system in all echelons and the avoidance of unjustified divergencies. Further delegation of authority to lower levels, both at headquarters and in the field, was also needed. UNHCR should be encouraged to redeploy posts from headquarters to the field. As the crisis in Africa had demonstrated, there was an urgent need to strengthen the field structure in areas most affected by refugee problems, and to explore the possibilities of streamlining offices in countries where needs were not as compelling. Improvements in management were all the more necessary as the international community should fear the emergence in the future of new challenges in the world-wide refugee situation. Vigorous leadership, sustained by both donor and asylum countries, was needed for UNHCR, and his country stood ready to support it in the fulfilment of its strictly humanitarian, non-political mandate.

13. Mr. EGGERT (Finland) noted the paradoxical nature of the current situation of refugees in the world: although the number of accessions to the international instruments relating to refugees had been growing, there had been, at the same time, a continuing pattern of violations of the physical safety of refugees and asylum-seekers, growing xenophobic tendencies and many instances of refoulement and denial of asylum. His delegation fully supported the efforts of the High Commissioner to reverse those unfortunate trends.

14. It regretted that the Executive Committee of UNHCR had not reached a consensus on the principles aimed at prohibiting military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements and would have been prepared to accept the text debated there in October 1984.

15. On the other hand, it noted with satisfaction the success of the RASRO scheme in which it had participated in a spirit of burden-sharing.

16. It welcomed the fact that the problems of refugee women had been taken up by the Executive Committee and its Sub-Committee on International Protection, and urged that the special needs of refugee women should be taken into account when identifying and implementing assistance programmes.

17. In view of the grim financial situation facing UNHCR, which the High Commissioner had correctly predicted in 1984, there was a need for careful project planning and for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness in assistance programmes.

18. His Government had considerably increased its financial support to UNHCR in recent years. In 1985, its contribution had been approximately 50 per cent higher than for 1984, and it envisaged a further increase in 1986. It was also increasing its reception capacity and had decided to increase the number of refugees it received to about 100 yearly.

(Mr. Eggert, Finland)

19. In the matter of assistance, his delegation was gratified that the global refugee situation had stabilized and that there was a trend to favour durable solutions.
20. The catastrophe in Africa had created a new kind of refugee problem which required increased international co-ordination in the emergency phase as well as in the rehabilitation phase. UNHCR had extended its assistance to drought victims, although such assistance did not normally fall within its mandate. The activities of UNHCR on that occasion had demonstrated the usefulness of co-ordination with various organizations.
21. In conclusion, Finland supported the statement by the High Commissioner on the basic role of UNHCR, which should remain entirely non-political and genuinely humanitarian, namely, independent of any State, movement or ideology and working for the refugee, the human being and the individual.
22. Mrs. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Kenya) said that the work of UNHCR, carried out in co-operation with donor agencies and countries and various organizations of the United Nations system, such as UNDP and FAO, to cope with the emergency situation in Africa caused by - among other factors - drought, famine and civil conflicts, had saved a considerable number of lives, which showed that that type of co-operation should be continued.
23. In his report (A/40/12), the High Commissioner had stressed the specific but often ignored needs of refugees, namely, health problems and problems of groups which were particularly vulnerable, such as children, women, old people and the disabled.
24. Her Government had been concerned with implementing its policy towards refugees within the framework of international conventions. Kenya accepted refugees regardless of their country of origin, although the majority were from neighbouring States. Kenya offered equal opportunities to all refugees, which it encouraged to engage in income-generating activities and to become self-sufficient through self-employment. Moreover, it opened its schools, in particular its primary and secondary schools, to refugee children. It continued to work in consultation with the UNHCR office at Nairobi but, despite all its efforts, it could not meet all the refugees' needs.
25. Because of its very complexity, the refugee problem could not be looked at as the problem of only the asylum State and UNHCR. It was just as much a problem of the country of origin and the international community and, if a durable solution was to be found, the root causes of the problem must be sought. Humanitarian assistance given to countries of asylum and resettlement by UNHCR should be reinforced by development programmes and assistance to the most affected countries. In his report, the High Commissioner had stated that the countries of asylum in Africa should, in particular, strengthen their economic and social welfare infrastructure in order to cope with the influx of refugees. Kenya was grateful to the High Commissioner for his efforts to alleviate the refugee problem

(Mrs. Arungu-Olende, Kenya)

in Africa, especially through the First and Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, and thanked the donor countries and international organizations for their support.

26. Since the High Commissioner had faced some of the most trying periods in the refugee situation during his eight year term of office, Kenya congratulated him on his outstanding accomplishments.

27. Mr. NINGATA (Central African Republic) called to mind the tragic nature and magnitude of the refugee problem affecting 10 million human beings, most of whom were women, children and old people, and the recurrent nature of the problem, which was often aggravated by severe natural disasters, such as those which had stricken Africa in the past three years. That continent had more than 5 million refugees, whose presence added to Africa's endemic ills, namely poverty, malnutrition, sickness and illiteracy.

28. That situation prompted the Central African Republic to advocate two principles: broad accession to the relevant international and regional pacts; and the search for, if not the control of, the causes of the problems in order to determine the best possible solutions at the national and international levels.

29. The Central African Republic had acceded to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the 1969 OAU Convention. Moreover, it had established, under its Ministry of the Interior, a national committee on refugees which it had restructured in order to make it more efficient.

30. In other respects, the Central African Republic had always been and remained a country which accepted large numbers of African and other refugees: Belgians, Angolans, Sudanese, Ethiopians and, in particular, Chadians often numbering as many as 100,000, which was a considerable burden for a nation of 3.5 million classified as one of the least developed countries.

31. To facilitate the reception, protection and integration of refugees, his Government and UNHCR had drawn up a programme for regrouping refugees in areas which enabled them to engage in farming and animal husbandry. That programme had already made it possible to resettle several thousand, and provided them with basic health care and food aid while they waited for their first harvests.

32. Moreover, in its urban centres, the Central African Republic provided the refugees with educational, health and employment facilities.

33. In short, his Government was co-operating, as far as its means permitted, with the High Commissioner in dealing with the transit and voluntary repatriation of refugees.

34. However, the contribution of the Central African Republic remained modest and would gain from being supported and strengthened by the generosity of the international community, such as that shown at the two international conferences on assistance to refugees in Africa.

(Mr. Ningata, Central African Republic)

35. However important the reception and integration of refugees were, it was even more important to determine and tackle the root causes of the problem. While some causes seemed to elude human control, the problems of political origin could be solved. That was why the Central African Republic was emphasizing the search for and control of the causes, especially in the case of Chadian refugees, whose repatriation would be hastened by the adoption of a comprehensive political solution.

36. Mrs. NDUKU (Zaire) said that refugees, whether they were fleeing war, political or religious intolerance, or natural disasters, were in a very special situation of which the international community was, fortunately, becoming increasingly aware. Zaire, which was a party to various international instruments concerning the protection of refugees, remained and would continue to remain loyal to its traditions and its policy of solidarity, sharing with refugees in its territory, currently numbering 500,000, the few resources which it had, whether hospitals, schools or food.

37. UNHCR had recently been confronted with both a worsening of the situation in some parts of the world and the crisis in Africa and had been taking emergency measures to meet the needs of the growing number of refugees for which it was responsible. Zaire welcomed the fact that UNHCR favoured durable solutions and, in particular, voluntary repatriation. It hoped that UNHCR would strive to establish self-help services in the refugee communities and to integrate projects for refugees into regional development plans. It whole-heartedly supported the idea, put forward at the Second International Conference for Assistance to Refugees in Africa, that a link should be established between aid to refugees and development assistance.

38. Mr. FARAH DIRIR (Djibouti) said that the plight of refugees and displaced persons, which continued to be of concern to many Governments, could not be ameliorated unless the international community as a whole participated not only through UNHCR but directly in relief and rehabilitation programmes and offered refugees the possibility of resettlement in third countries or repatriation to their countries of origin.

39. The refugees on the African continent had become wanderers, who had to struggle to survive and whose presence was often a burden on the countries of asylum, where resources and social services were at best insufficient to meet the needs of the local inhabitants. The state of the world economy and the recurrence, several years in succession, of the drought that had devastated crops and pasture lands, destroyed herds and resulted in the exodus of millions of nomads, had aggravated the refugee situation, particularly in East Africa. Djibouti, in the eight years since it had become independent, had given asylum to more than 50,000 refugees, who constituted nearly 12 per cent of its total population. That was one of the highest ratios of refugees to nationals in the world. Those refugees came for the most part from rural areas but large numbers of them, registered and unregistered, were living in the city of Djibouti, where social, health and school services were barely able to meet the demands made on them. It was therefore in

(Mr. Farah Dirir, Djibouti)

those sectors that financial, technical and material assistance was required. Most of the refugees had been able to return to their countries thanks to the programme of voluntary repatriation implemented in accordance with the tripartite agreement reached between the Djibouti and Ethiopian Governments and UNHCR. That process was nevertheless being hampered by the persistent drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, and more than 20,000 refugees and displaced persons still needed the relief and rehabilitation programmes. The international community must help the countries of asylum, such as Djibouti, to cope with the situation, find countries of second asylum where there were more favourable conditions and, to the extent possible, promote voluntary repatriation. Djibouti expressed its appreciation to the countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies whose financial and technical assistance had permitted it to continue relief and rehabilitation programmes in its territory.

40. Mr. SENE (Senegal) said that tensions, conflicts, wars and social disturbances in some parts of the world had increased the flow of refugees, whose numbers were estimated to be more than 10 million, over half of them in Africa. For the countries of asylum, which were in many cases developing countries, that problem was compounded by the effects of natural disasters.

41. In carrying out its mandate, UNHCR was faced with many obstacles, in particular the unfavourable economic conditions resulting from the recession in both developing and industrialized countries. Another of its difficulties was the fact that international principles concerning the protection of refugees were quite often violated, as indicated in document A/40/135. Thus admission, even temporary, had been refused to persons seeking asylum and several forms of dissuasion had been applied to discourage the arrival of refugees: indefinite detentions, threats or attacks on personal safety, armed attacks or acts of piracy. The political will of States and the support of Governments and donors were certainly essential factors in putting an end to those abuses, but it was also imperative that UNHCR should mobilize all its intellectual resources and know-how.

42. The principle of non-refoulement was universally recognized as a basic norm for the international protection of refugees. It was therefore essential to elaborate the procedures for determining the status of refugees. The initial determination in that respect was made by a central authority and was subject to appeal and review. Refugee status did not afford immunity from criminal process, and the report of the High Commissioner (A/40/12) set forth the exceptional circumstances that could lead to the expulsion and deportation of refugees on very serious grounds of national security or public order. Generally speaking, existing procedures should be improved while maintaining the legal guarantees and preserving the traditions of hospitality of the countries of asylum. The High Commissioner also mentioned in his report the economic, social and cultural rights of refugees which must be recognized.

43. During the period covered by the report, there had been large-scale repatriation programmes in Africa and in some Latin American countries as a result of political changes and amnesty declarations.

(Mr. Sene, Senegal)

44. In carrying out its mandate, UNHCR must constantly strengthen its co-operation with States and intergovernmental and non-governmental regional organizations, increasing its consultations aimed at finding a durable solution and helping refugees to adapt to geopolitical facts and the social and cultural realities of peoples.

45. Senegal noted that 43 African States out of 51 were parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol. The 1969 OAU Convention, which broadened the concept of the term "refugee", was an essential regional complement to those instruments. The General Assembly, in its resolution 34/61, had endorsed the recommendations of the Arusha Conference, which had urged the United Nations and all its bodies to apply that Convention whenever it studied the problems of refugees in Africa. The President of Senegal, who was also the current Chairman of OAU, had requested all States, at the thirty-sixth session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR, to ratify that Convention, to which only 29 of the 51 States members of the Organization of African Unity had acceded. The African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, which had been adopted at Nairobi in 1981 but had not yet entered into force because it had been ratified by only 15 States, included innovative legal concepts - right of the family, right of solidarity, right to development - and would provide useful legal support for the protection of the fundamental rights of refugees. The current Chairman of OAU had requested member States to ratify the 1969 Protocol and the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights. OAU and UNHCR had co-operated in organizing the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA). At the second ICARA Conference there had been discussions on the measures to be taken, beyond emergency assistance, to promote self-sufficiency in the countries of asylum or in the countries of origin in cases of voluntary repatriation. At the end of the Conference donors had undertaken to execute, within the framework of supplementary assistance and through their bilateral co-operation programmes and machinery, nearly a third of the 128 projects which gave priority to water supply, health, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, training and transport infrastructures. UNHCR was studying with the Afro-Asian Legal Consultative Committee the question of voluntary repatriation with a view to adopting an addendum to the principles concerning the treatment of refugees.

46. In the Middle East, the Human Rights Commission of the League of Arab States had requested its members to accede to the international instruments concerning refugees and to elaborate a supplementary regional convention on refugees. Senegal believed that UNHCR and the League of Arab States should pay special attention to the problem of the travel documents of Palestinian refugees living outside the area of competence of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Islamic Conference supported the activities of UNHCR.

47. UNHCR also had contacts with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Cartagena Declaration, the result of a colloquium held in November 1984 in Colombia, would give new impetus to humanitarian law in Central America. That Declaration had called upon the States in the region which had not yet done so to accede to both international instruments

(Mr. Sene, Senegal)

relating to the status of refugees without making reservations limiting their application, and had called upon States which had made such reservations to consider withdrawing them. Indeed, there were only 97 States parties to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, and they were therefore far from being universal in character. The Cartagena Declaration had extended the concept of the term "refugee" and had stipulated that the principle of non-refoulement should be acknowledged as a normative and overriding legal principle.

48. Senegal was happy to learn that the situation of asylum-seekers in the South China Sea, who were victimized by acts of piracy, had improved, especially as a result of the Anti-Piracy Arrangement established by the Thai Government and donors. He expressed the hope that the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea would continue and that the Rescue at Sea Resettlement Offers (RASRO) Scheme would be implemented.

49. The Council of Europe and the European Economic Community (EEC) were co-operating, for their part, with UNHCR in the areas of refugee protection and assistance. The third Lomé Convention between the countries of the EEC and the African, Caribbean and Pacific States contained provisions relating to helping refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and integrated development in the asylum country, or in the country of origin in the case of repatriation.

50. Senegal was extremely interested in international humanitarian law, which was in constant evolution. Senegalese experts had followed closely the Addis Ababa seminar on South African refugees, and the meetings at San Remo, Florence and Yaoundé on the principles of humanitarian refugee law. Senegal had ratified the Organization of African Unity Convention on refugees and the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. It was host to thousands of refugees and a subregional UNHCR office for West Africa was located in its Territory. It maintained close relations with UNHCR, a special centre for the treatment of refugees suffering from physical or social handicaps, established at Dakar, was one of the projects initiated in that connection.

51. In view of the serious financial crisis currently affecting UNHCR, it was essential to improve management methods and techniques. As the High Commissioner had said in introducing his report, more than \$US 500 million per annum were needed to meet the needs of refugees, a figure which should be kept in mind at the next pledging conference.

52. Senegal hoped that the strategies for refugee women adopted at the Nairobi Conference would be implemented in order to ease the suffering of refugee women.

53. Senegal, which was also convinced that prevention was better than cure, was following very closely the efforts being made to prevent new refugee flows.

54. Mr. KHALIL (Egypt) said that, whereas the refugee problem had been a European problem at the time of the Second World War, it had become an African, Asian and Latin American problem, in other words a problem of all the third world

(Mr. Khalil, Egypt)

countries. Refugees today needed specific protection, and it was important to understand the nature of the problem facing the developing countries in order to find better ways of solving it. While it was essential to have the requisite financial resources, the humanitarian aspect should also be taken into account.

55. The reports before the Committee under item 105 underlined the pressing needs of refugees. He wondered if the time had not come for the international community to assume its responsibilities and attack the underlying causes of the refugee problem. Their number, indeed, was still growing. New mass flows of refugees must be averted; that was a task in which all countries should participate, taking into account, in particular, the problems of the host countries - mostly developing countries affected by natural disasters. He welcomed the activities undertaken by UNHCR to implement durable solutions and co-ordinate assistance with the host countries.

56. The question of violence against refugees gave cause for extreme concern. The international community should try to put an end to such inhuman conduct.

57. As a State party to the refugee conventions of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, Egypt was happy to note that a growing number of States had acceded to them. It called upon States which had not yet done so to ratify those instruments, which could not be effectively implemented until they became universal. Egypt also supported the provisions of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies concerning refugee women.

58. Egypt believed that the satisfying results of the first and second International Conferences on Assistance to Refugees in Africa showed that the African countries had fulfilled their obligations to refugees despite their limited resources and the natural disasters which had befallen some of them. Egypt itself had aided refugees within the framework of its bilateral relations with host countries or within the Organization of African Unity, through UNHCR. It had made the contributions which it had pledged during the first Conference of 1981 and was offering assistance in the amount of more than \$1 million. Egypt continued to provide technical and medical assistance to African host countries.

59. Mrs. OSSEIRANE RAMADAN (Lebanon) said that the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees was particularly important to her country for two reasons. Firstly, Lebanon had for centuries been a haven of refuge for thousands of people fleeing persecution and wars and, secondly, it was now a recipient of the services of UNHCR, which was continuing to come to the aid of foreign refugees and which, since 1975, had also been providing help to thousands of Lebanese victims of wars being waged in its territory by foreigners. That situation had made the Lebanese Government and people aware of the problems of refugees throughout the world which the High Commissioner had so well described in his report (A/40/12). Lebanon felt that the problems of refugees were the responsibility of the entire international community, and all States Members of the United Nations should therefore help to solve them.

(Mrs. Osseirane Ramadan, Lebanon)

60. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, originally established to deal with European refugees, currently had a much heavier work-load because it had to assist refugees all over the world. Lebanon hoped that, with the help of the Organization, economic, political and social conditions comparable to those from which Europe had benefited after the Second World War would be created in the developing regions which needed them the most, especially Africa and South-East Asia. In the meanwhile, world public opinion must be made aware of the seriousness of the refugees' tragic situation in those regions and the magnitude of the help which they needed.

61. The financial crisis now facing UNHCR as a result of the 1985 budget deficit should be overcome at all costs by stepping up fund-raising, increasing visits and bilateral contacts with Governments and holding more pledging conferences. It was also necessary to guarantee more stable funding for UNHCR so as to avoid similar situations in the future. Her country welcomed efforts to establish a complementary link between development assistance and refugee relief. The promotion of self-sufficiency among refugees also strengthened the situation of the host country.

62. The refugee situation was much more complex and diversified than it had been just after the Second World War. Her country considered in particular that no distinction should be made between displaced persons within a country, and refugees seeking asylum abroad. Their tragedy was the same, their difficulties the same. She expressed her gratitude in that regard to UNHCR for the help which it was providing through its Beirut office to thousands of displaced Lebanese and she appealed to the international community to increase its assistance to those refugees, through UNHCR, especially as winter was approaching.

63. With regard to the request referred to in paragraph 59 of the High Commissioner's report (A/40/12), she stressed that the Lebanese authorities had empowered their competent services to renew the Lebanese travel documents held by Palestinian refugees, in spite of the fact that the question of Palestine remained on the agenda of the Special Political Committee. It was often easier to discuss problems than to find appropriate solutions to them. Pending a political settlement, short-term solutions must be found, especially in order to ensure the physical and legal protection of refugees. Problems which arose sometimes between refugees and the population of the host country were not always the result of xenophobia. The need to balance the needs of the inhabitants of the host country with those of refugees should be taken into account.

64. Where repatriation was not possible, it was essential to take short-term and medium-term measures such as integration in the host country or resettlement in a third country. In any event, each case had to be dealt with on its merits, and neither solution could be arbitrarily applied at the expense of the other. Countries which needed manpower or which could easily take in refugees could perhaps be requested to give asylum to those people. Another solution might be to provide aid to countries which agreed to accept them.

(Mrs. Osseirane Ramadan, Lebanon)

65. The question of refugees required in-depth study and investigation. Lebanon hoped that the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation, to Avert New Flows of Refugees would soon be able to submit its study on the causes underlying the mass exodus of refugees and on ways and means of stemming the flow.

66. In conclusion, her country expressed its profound gratitude and appreciation to the High Commissioner and his assistants for the dedication with which they had carried out their noble mission, in particularly difficult and sometimes dangerous situations, and assured UNHCR of its co-operation and its full support.

67. Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that it was the imperialist, hegemonist and expansionist policies, the pressure and interference in the internal affairs of States and the oppressive, repressive and aggressive policies of racist and dictatorial régimes that were responsible for the refugee problems everywhere, whether they were the problems of the blacks in South Africa, who had become refugees in their own country, the Palestinians in the Middle East, or refugees elsewhere in Africa, in Asia and in Central America. It was therefore essential to put an end to those policies, to abolish those régimes, to eliminate the sources of tension and conflict and to restructure international economic relations in a more equitable manner.

68. After the war of aggression waged against it by the imperialists, his country had no other wish than to live in peace and to reconstruct its economy. Falling prey to the propaganda of a foreign country and to economic difficulties resulting from the war, part of the Lao population had left the country. His Government had done everything possible to prevent that exodus and favoured genuine voluntary repatriation. Those who wished to return to the country could do so without fear for their safety. Thanks to that humanitarian policy, many had returned since 1980. His country had during 1985 welcomed back 235 people from Thai camps at Champassak and Bokeo, and another 525, expelled from Thailand after being robbed of all their possessions by the local authorities of that country. Many more had returned of their own accord, with or without help from UNHCR. Many of those said that they had gone to Thailand out of curiosity or because they had hoped to go on to resettle in the United States, France or elsewhere. To a certain extent, the camps themselves had been an attraction. When the Thai Government had decided to close the Nongkhai camp in 1984 and to transfer the refugees to a camp where conditions were more austere, hundreds of them had preferred to return to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Some circles continued to vilify his country by telling lies, out of revanchism because the Lao people had put an end to their reign. Although they made much fuss about the situation of Lao refugees elsewhere, they were careful not to mention the information which had appeared in the Western Press concerning the large number of those refugees who had been sent back to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, after having been trained, equipped and financed abroad, in order to commit acts of subversion and destabilize the country. How could they make humanitarian speeches while using those unfortunate refugees for political and military ends? Their undertaking constituted the main obstacle to voluntary repatriation. In order to resolve the refugee problem, a pragmatic, humanitarian and non-political approach was necessary. The international community

(Mr. Kittikhoun, Lao People's
Democratic Republic)

should concentrate on the real nature of the problem and find durable, constructive and humanitarian solutions. His country was ready to work towards that goal, thanked UNHCR for its help, and promised its full co-operation in the future.

69. Mrs. BUTIKU (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the presence of millions of refugees in Africa was a challenge to UNHCR, African Governments and the entire international community. It was not only a matter of providing temporary humanitarian relief, but of finding a permanent solution to the problem.

70. Her country had established adequate administrative and legal machinery to receive refugees. It had recognized that speedy admission and settlement procedures would minimize the physical and psychological suffering of the refugees and accelerate their adaptation to the new environment. Since the Tanzanian Parliament considered that the host States should ensure the welfare and physical safety of refugees, it had adopted appropriate legislation to that end.

71. Her country had given citizenship to some 38,000 refugees and had provided more than 4,000 square kilometres of land for their exclusive use. The Government had provided 10 dispensaries, 2 health centres and 47 primary schools for them. In 1982/83, it had spent the equivalent of \$US 1.5 million to support the refugees. Since her country's resources were very limited, it was obliged to ask the international community seriously to consider financing the projects proposed at the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, which would be the beginning of a process leading to durable solutions to the African refugee problem. The refugees were perfectly capable of productive activity. Of the seven refugee colonies in her country, six were self-sufficient in food.

72. Her delegation regretted that some States had opposed any agreement on principles for the prohibition of military attacks on refugee camps. It appealed to the General Assembly to strengthen paragraph 3 of resolution 39/140, which condemned such attacks. The General Assembly should also request UNHCR to continue its efforts to reach an agreement on the subject.

73. Mr. ZARIF KHONSARI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the deterioration in the situation of refugees throughout the world posed a challenge to the international community; the latter had an obligation not only to provide short-term humanitarian assistance to those unfortunate people, but also, and even more importantly, to attack the root causes of the phenomenon. The example of the displaced Palestinians and Afghans clearly showed the ineffectiveness of any assistance programme which ignored the political causes of the problem, namely the occupation of the homelands of the Palestinian and Afghan "refugees" by foreign Powers.

74. Any solution which did not lead to the voluntary repatriation of the refugees was doomed to failure. In most cases, exile was accompanied by the breaking of family ties, and settlement in another country brought social, cultural and psychological problems which sometimes led to criminal behaviour by the refugees, directed against their fellow refugees or the population of the host country.

(Mr. Zarif-Khonsari, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Those problems, together with the financial burden shouldered by the host country, could lead to an attitude of rejection among the local population. Such was the case in many societies, regardless of their level of development or political system. Attempts to resettle the refugees in third countries should take second place; voluntary repatriation should be the main objective.

75. His country had taken in more than 1.8 million Afghan refugees and several hundred thousand Iraqi citizens. On the other hand, more than 2 million Iranian civilians had been driven from their homes by the war. Those population movements had created many economic, demographic and social problems in the Islamic Republic of Iran. That country was managing to cope with the situation despite its limited economic resources and the extraordinary cost of the war which had been forced upon it. It was pleased to note that UNHCR had opened an office in Teheran. However, the UNHCR financial contribution to the programmes of the Council for Afghan Refugees was minimal in comparison to the contributions made to other countries, in view of the number of refugees involved. The Iranian people considered themselves bound by the principles of Islam to be hospitable towards their Afghan brothers and sisters, with whom they had religious, cultural and linguistic links. His country's co-operation with UNHCR was mainly intended to ensure that the aspirations of those refugees were taken into account in any international action affecting them. However, it was to be hoped that the international community would take a greater share in the costs of supporting the refugees. Until the foreign occupation army in Afghanistan was withdrawn, thus permitting the voluntary repatriation of all Afghan refugees, there was no hope of improvement in their situation.

76. The famine in Africa and the efforts of UNHCR had demonstrated once again the need for international co-operation in a crisis of that magnitude. Without denying the importance of emergency aid, his delegation believed that it was essential not to neglect long-term development and rehabilitation projects both in affected areas and in host countries.

77. Although the refugee problem could not be effectively resolved unless its political causes were tackled, it was imperative that UNHCR should be free of all manipulation and should not become an instrument of political pressure on the part of certain countries. His country was convinced that those requirements would be taken into account in the election of the next United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

78. Mr. ZURITA (Spain) said that, since the existence of millions of refugees was the work of mankind, because of civil unrest, international conflict, foreign intervention, political and religious persecution, and systematic violations of human rights, the solution to the problem depended to a great extent on the attitude of the international community. It was a matter of some concern that acts affecting the life and security of refugees, particularly in refugee camps, continued to be committed and claim their victims, above all, among the most vulnerable groups, such as women, children and elderly or handicapped persons. It was also alarming that the majority of refugees were in the poorest countries, which deserved all possible international aid.

(Mr. Zurita, Spain)

79. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner that it was essential to encourage durable solutions, whether they took the form of voluntary repatriation or resettlement in third countries. Repatriation was often a difficult option for refugees; after several years abroad, they experienced repatriation as a second exile. Co-operation between the host countries and the countries of origin was essential in order to reduce that ordeal. The Governments of Spain, Argentina and Uruguay, together with charitable organizations and UNHCR, had collaborated to enable persons exiled in Spain to return to their own countries after the restoration of democracy there. Two thousand Argentines and a similar number of Uruguayans had thus been able to return home. UNHCR approval of the Spanish Government's attitude during that operation, and also of the facilities provided for refugees in transit to other countries, was gratifying to his country, which desired to adopt a policy of generosity towards refugees.

80. Resettlement was the only alternative to repatriation. It was, therefore, alarming that traditional countries of asylum were tending towards restrictive policies, particularly because of the current economic crisis, and that refugees in those countries increasingly fell victim to xenophobia. It was essential to conduct a campaign to sway public opinion in those countries, in order to convince the people that a policy of generosity would pay off in the end. It was also important to ensure that refugees were not subjected to unjustified detention or imprisonment. Formalities and procedures for seeking asylum and refugee status should be made easier. Uncertainty about their status could drive refugees to despair. His country was concerned at the restrictive admission policies of some countries and at violations of the principle of non-refoulement. It was also important to recognize the economic and social rights referred to in the High Commissioner's report and to encourage the reunification of families. His country had taken note of the High Commissioner's recommendations on naturalization and the issuing of identity documents to refugees. It would continue its present political and financial support for UNHCR activities, and called upon States Members of the United Nations to do the same.

81. At the end of 1983, his country had issued a basic law on asylum and refugee status, which gave UNHCR a consultative role in the inter-ministerial commission on applications for asylum or refugee status, currently numbering more than 10,500. Spain currently had 3,000 de jure refugees and 15,000 de facto refugees, most of them from Latin America. It had organized information seminars for social workers, public servants and charitable organizations active in that area. It had set up the Centro estatal de servicios sociales de refugiados, asilados y desplazados (National Centre for Social Services for Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Displaced Persons), which came under the Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Labour; that was a genuine centre for documentation, research and information and a meeting-place for all who were working on the refugee problem. His Government collaborated with the Red Cross, the Spanish Committee for Refugee Aid and other non-governmental organizations, such as Caritas Internationalis and the International Migration Centre (IMC).

82. In the present era of political conflict, it was crucial to preserve the strictly humanitarian character which had marked the activities of UNHCR in the past.