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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 386th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 8 October 1985, at 9.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. CHIBA

(Japan)

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General debate

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The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4)

1. Mr. THABANE (Lesotho) said that his country pledged its solidarity with the Government and people of Botswana following the invasion of their territory by units of the South African defence force in June 1985. Having gone through that agony itself, his own people fully appreciated the intensity of the trauma.
2. That event and others like it could only add to the urgency of the problems involved in protecting refugees. He remembered with great pride the successful seminar held earlier in the year at Addis Ababa on refugees in southern Africa. The main theme of that seminar had been protection and that subject remained paramount.
3. Addressing the National Assembly in Maseru on 30 September 1985, the Prime Minister of Lesotho had stated that, although his country intended to continue admitting bona fide refugees and would live with the phenomenon of South African refugees for as long as apartheid survived, it refused to be blamed for policies which were not of its making. His Government was inspired and guided by the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Organization of African Unity Convention on Refugees, article II, paragraph 2 of which stated that "The granting of asylum to refugees is a peaceful and humanitarian act and shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act by any member State."
4. His delegation's anger and frustration had also been aroused by the attack on the sovereignty of the territory of the Republic of Tunisia by the Israeli defence force. Once again, innocent civilians had been brutally killed as a result of an attack on persons who had been granted asylum by a country whose motives were nothing but humanitarian. He could only hope that a consensus would emerge that the safety and protection of refugees was and would continue to be an international responsibility.
5. His country and most of its neighbours had been stricken by the worst drought in 50 years and the difficulties they faced could only increase their inability to provide hospitality in their best tradition. They would therefore continue to look to the international community to help the High Commissioner sustain the present levels of assistance for short-term and long-term refugee relief programmes.
6. In conclusion, he expressed gratitude to the High Commissioner for visiting Lesotho when he had first assumed office, an honour no other High Commissioner had paid his country.
7. Mr. FOURDIN (Belgium) said that his delegation had listened with great interest to the statement made by the High Commissioner and shared his concern that some refugee assistance activities might have to be reduced for lack of sufficient resources. Although there had been some stabilization of the refugee

problem in the past financial year, the extent of that problem fully justified the international community's concerns. The stabilization of the problem would be the first step in the gradual resorption of the largest refugee groups, through intensified efforts to promote the voluntary repatriation of an increasing number of refugees. A tribute should be paid to UNHCR, which through its many activities, was endeavouring to alert public opinion to the distress of victims of persecution. It was also encouraging that Governments were on the whole aware of that distress and of the urgent need to relieve it through sustained efforts in the form of food, medical, financial and technical assistance provided either bilaterally or through the competent international organizations such as UNHCR.

8. The example of Pakistan, where many Afghan refugees were finally achieving self-sufficiency through active participation in the local economy, was a heartening one and it was to be hoped that the same would occur in other parts of the world with large concentrations of refugees. Another positive aspect was the fact that the financial objectives of the General Programmes had been kept to a lower level than in the past, albeit a level which UNHCR was having great difficulty in attaining. That reduction was necessary in view of the severe budgetary constraints which Governments were experiencing as a result of the economic crisis and he hoped that UNHCR would continue its efforts along those lines. Refugee needs were, of course, considerable and UNHCR activities had gradually been expanded to include different types of material assistance, but the more rational management of funds should be sought wherever possible. In that connection, he noted that UNHCR was taking specific measures for that purpose as a result of the work of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

9. His delegation was also pleased with the results which UNHCR had achieved in the area of the protection of refugees, particularly as a result of co-operation within the Sub-Committee on International Protection, which, during the past week, had discussed such important problems as the situation of women refugees, attacks on refugee camps, rescue at sea and repatriation. He trusted that the Sub-Committee's conclusions would be endorsed by the Executive Committee and implemented in the countries concerned.

10. A number of European Governments were experiencing large influxes of illegal immigrants, who were requesting asylum in the hope of regularizing their situation. They were part of a social phenomenon which was even more widespread and permanent than that of refugees and involved a migratory movement that brought people from underprivileged countries to countries perceived to be more prosperous. With the help of the crisis, that movement was gaining momentum and causing negative reactions that might harm genuine refugees. Measures had to be taken at the international level, if possible with UNHCR's co-operation, to put an end to such influxes. In that connection, he noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had organized consultations with the Governments concerned in May and June 1985. The conclusions which had emerged from those exchanges of views and, in particular, the emphasis placed on the important role of the Council of Europe were fully acceptable to his Government.

11. He paid a tribute to the Belgian non-governmental organizations which were making such tireless efforts to assist refugees and asylum-seekers. Belgium had concluded an agreement with the Inter-Governmental Committee for Migration under which that organization would assist any asylum-seekers who voluntarily decided to return to their countries or to emigrate elsewhere. At UNHCR's request, the Belgian Government had recently decided to admit 25 handicapped refugees and their families under the "Dix ou plus" programme. Those refugees would also be given assistance by non-governmental organizations.
12. In view of the economic situation, it was now difficult for Belgium to consider the possibility of new refugee programmes. Following its traditional policy of co-operation with UNHCR, it would nevertheless make every effort to respond as positively as possible to UNHCR requests for Belgian participation in General and Special Programmes, either in cash or in kind, and for the acceptance of refugees belonging to particularly vulnerable groups.
13. In conclusion, he noted that, on 1 January 1985, Belgium had enacted new legislation on nationality that was particularly favourable to refugees living in Belgium. He hoped that many of those refugees would avail themselves of the opportunity to acquire Belgian nationality.
14. Mr. PURCELL (United States) said that the current session was being held at a time of special concern about the adequacy of funding for programmes carried out under the leadership of the High Commissioner and his Office. The High Commissioner had spelled out the dimensions of that problem and all members of the Executive Committee bore the responsibility of supporting UNHCR's efforts to deal with it. The task would not be an easy one, but it must be approached in a spirit of good will and constructive comment in order to ensure that the basic needs of the world's refugees would continue to be met.
15. Referring to the challenges the High Commissioner had faced since assuming office eight years previously and to the many accomplishments for which he would be remembered, he said that, when the High Commissioner had come to Switzerland in 1978, refugees from Indochina had been arriving in large numbers in countries often ill-prepared to offer them even temporary asylum. Following the first Indochinese boat refugee conference in Geneva in December 1978, the High Commissioner had issued what had come to be a virtually continuous series of appeals for international burden-sharing to resettle the refugees in third countries. More than 1.5 million Indochinese had found haven outside the region - and that was by any measure one of the great humanitarian accomplishments of the twentieth century. In 1979, UNHCR had played a vital role in the emergency care and temporary resettlement of Cambodians moving into Thailand and of growing numbers of refugees from Laos. One of the persons who had escaped from Cambodia at that time was Dith Pran, whose odyssey of survival had been so compellingly documented in the film "The Killing Fields" and whom the High Commissioner had appointed as goodwill ambassador on behalf of refugees everywhere.

16. While co-ordinating the international response to the Indochinese refugee crisis, UNHCR had been faced with mounting waves of refugees fleeing Afghanistan into Pakistan and other neighbouring States. Third country resettlement had not been a major element of the solution to that crisis, since the Governments concerned had been prepared to offer temporary refuge if supplemental material and financial support could be provided by others. That was an arrangement that had worked, thanks to the generosity of the Government and people of Pakistan, the international framework provided by UNHCR and the valuable contributions made by concerned donors.

17. The most sustained challenge the High Commissioner had faced had been in Africa, where the refugee problem had been the tragic and continuing phenomenon of the past decade. The High Commissioner's recognition of that challenge had been evident at the first African refugee meeting, which had been held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1979 and at which Governments had reached agreement on measures going beyond the principles set forth in the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. They had extended refugee protection to victims of events seriously disturbing public order in their countries of origin, as well as to victims of persecution.

18. Faced with the recurrent need for crisis solutions, UNHCR had taken the lead in forging the necessary link between refugee aid and development aid; that had been one of the major themes of the International Conferences on Assistance to Refugees in Africa.

19. Programmes dedicated to lasting solutions and refugee care required large expenditures of funds; total funding for the General and Special Programmes approved by the Executive Committee in the past eight years had exceeded \$US 3 billion. It was a tribute to international burden-sharing that resources had been provided in such generous amounts.

20. While in some cases refugees needed only legal protection, the needs of the vast majority ranged from care and maintenance programmes to programmes enabling them to become self-supporting. The days when refugees were a minority living temporarily in an industrialized economy while awaiting resettlement in another industrial society appeared to be over.

21. The definition of donor country must be expanded to include asylum countries which provided their land and shared their lives with the refugees. His own country had received over 1 million refugees for permanent resettlement in the past 10 years. The new arrivals enriched the nation, but there was growing concern about balancing resettlement with other durable solutions. Extraordinary efforts were required, both to reduce the numbers of refugees requiring third country resettlement and to find other more satisfactory solutions to their plight.

22. Another important aspect of the situation was the ever-growing competition for financial support. Such competition required ever sharper discipline on the part of those responsible for overseeing the expenditure of funds; funds in donor budgets must be earmarked for refugees and pledged early enough so that UNHCR could plan its programmes in an orderly fashion. Together with the complementary provision of emergency funds, such budget restructuring could better enable donors to meet refugees' needs.

23. Turning to the High Commissioner's Programme, he said that, in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters and in past meetings of the Executive Committee, his delegation had joined others in constructive proposals to strengthen programme management and delivery. It had been in the lead of those calling for more vigorous efforts to stop pirate attacks on refugees, had made full use of the Orderly Departure Programme from Viet Nam administered by the High Commissioner and had called for strengthened emergency response capability, especially in view of the massive arrivals of refugees in eastern Africa during the past year.

24. His delegation had emphasized the need for improved international burden-sharing and for co-ordination by the High Commissioner with the United Nations system as a whole. It had welcomed the establishment by the United Nations of special structures and procedures to co-ordinate emergency operations in Africa, following the successful example of the United Nations Task Force which co-ordinated relief operations on the Thailand-Cambodia border. His delegation had also joined others in urging the fullest possible degree of information sharing and mutual support by affected countries, donors and the agencies of the United Nations system.

25. Having worked hard to provide its share of donor support, his country, viewed with the most serious concern the budget crisis facing UNHCR. In the past year, his country had contributed \$US 123 million to the High Commissioner's programme requirements for 1985. In addition, it had provided approximately one half of Africa's overall emergency food needs.

26. With regard to the High Commissioner's assessment of the programmes and services to be curtailed if additional contributions were not immediately forthcoming, his delegation supported the view that basic life-sustaining services should be given priority. Africa in particular was an imperative. It was to be hoped that all donors would make a special effort to identify additional sources of food and cash contributions that were so desperately needed for refugees in Africa, while maintaining support for essential programmes in other regions. The financial crisis, serious as it was, afforded an opportunity to consider future directions for UNHCR. It should now be evident that the refugee problem was a long-term one and that the need for assistance and protection would continue into the future.

27. Certain aspects of the High Commissioner's programme and organization were becoming increasingly clear and widely accepted. First, there was recognition that, while refugee issues would continue to affect both donor and asylum countries, the most acute refugee burdens in the years ahead would have to be borne by the developing countries, often the most economically distressed among them. UNHCR's emphasis on the link between refugees and development reflected that reality. Secondly, there was recognition that, in refugee work, what began as something temporary often became permanent: short-term needs impinged on long-term solutions. Although the prospect of unexpected refugee arrivals was viewed with concern and alarm, it was a fact of life that refugees and displaced persons would continue to cross national frontiers. They would need help and the international organizations concerned would be called on to play their part. Thirdly, continued safe and humane first asylum required recognition that, in the first instance, refugees were primarily the responsibility of the country offering asylum.

Programmes for refugees had to take full account of the sovereignty of host countries and could be carried out effectively only with the vigorous participation of the Governments and peoples of the countries concerned. There would still be a need, at the appropriate time, for the integration of assistance to refugees and returnees into national development programmes. Fourthly, the responsibilities entrusted to the High Commissioner and the continuing constraint on resources called for ever-greater humanitarian diplomacy and the highest standards of cost-effective management. The experience of recent years had shown that the question now was not whether there should be an operational capability, but, rather, how and how well UNHCR programmes were being managed. There had to be a consistent focus on the organization and management of programmes which benefited refugees wherever they were.

28. In the present circumstances, there was always the possibility of a refugee emergency which no single agency or organization could resolve and in which UNHCR as the primary operating partner would have to engage a range of governmental, United Nations and non-governmental organizations as partners. UNHCR should continue to play a leading role in the direction and management of essential programmes for refugees, functioning in partnership with the Governments concerned, taking the lead in international co-ordination, drawing on the resources of other United Nations agencies and private organizations and developing the kind of longer-term relations with donors that had proved essential in attracting the necessary financial support. The establishment of such a productive partnership would provide an opportunity to build on UNHCR's distinguished record and on the lessons of the past to create new approaches for dealing with new problems and planning for the future, always bearing in mind the interests and needs of refugees.

29. Mr. ENDO (Japan) said that his country was fully aware of the gravity and urgency of UNHCR's financial difficulties and had accordingly made a contribution of 6.8 billion yen (\$US 31.6 million) for UNHCR assistance programmes in South-East Asia and Africa. It had also pledged an additional amount of 1.5 billion yen (\$US 7 million) for UNHCR assistance programmes for Afghan and Indochinese refugees. The domestic financial situation in his country would, however, prevent any further substantial increase in contributions. He suggested that appeals should be made to non-governmental organizations and the general public for additional funding. Since strong criticism of UNHCR financial management had been expressed during discussions in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, UNHCR must take stringent measures to review its expenditures in all areas of activity with a view to overcoming the current financial crisis.

30. His delegation noted with deep concern that the international protection of refugees was becoming increasingly difficult as a result of the decline in the number of rescues at sea, continuing acts of piracy, military attacks on refugee camps and acts of physical violence against refugee women. It was therefore entirely appropriate that the Nansen Medal for 1985 had been awarded to Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, Archbishop of Sao Paulo, for his devotion to the defence of the human rights of refugees in Latin America, a region where refugee problems had always been a matter of serious concern to his country. It welcomed the introduction of the new RASRO scheme on 1 May 1985 and had supported the Anti-Piracy Programme in the past three years, making a contribution of

84 million yen (\$US 391,000) for the current fiscal year. Voluntary repatriation was, when feasible, always the most durable solution and his Government, which had supported the Lao Returnee Programme in the past three years, had just pledged 47 million yen (\$US 220,000) for the current fiscal year.

31. Refugee assistance activities had recently expanded in scale and had become more complicated, especially following the mass exodus of refugees from south-east and south-west Asia and in Africa. Against that background, the evaluation of UNHCR assistance activities had become increasingly important; the evaluation system should therefore be further strengthened with a view to more effective programme implementation. Measures also had to be taken to strengthen the field establishment through staff rotation and greater decentralization. In that connection, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the role of UNHCR in south-east Asia (1979-1983) contained a number of useful conclusions and recommendations concerning UNHCR management policy and staffing in south-east Asia.

32. Turning to current refugee problems, he pointed out that the number of refugees in south-east Asia had now risen to 160,000 and represented a serious burden for recipient countries in the region. Many of those refugees had not been offered resettlement in third countries and the problem of long-stayers in refugee camps was becoming very serious. Japan had continued to contribute to the relief of Indochinese refugees, granting first-asylum facilities, accepting refugees for resettlement and making financial contribution. To date, 8,500 boat people had been granted first asylum in Japan and his Government had decided in July 1985 to double the target figure for resettlement from 5,000 to 10,000. To facilitate resettlement in Japan, missions would continue to be sent to interview refugees in south-east Asian refugee camps. Japan had, moreover, already contributed 5.3 billion yen (\$US 24.7 million) to the UNHCR General Programme For Indochinese refugee assistance for the current fiscal year. It had also contributed to the Orderly Departure Programme since 1982, pledging 48 million yen (\$US 223,000) for the current fiscal year, and had made financial contributions to the Indochinese refugee relief activities of international organizations such as the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

33. Joint efforts by the Government and the private sector in Japan had surpassed expectations and Japanese emergency relief for famine-stricken refugees in Africa from January 1984 to March 1985 had amounted to about \$US 165 million. A further contribution of 1.4 billion yen (\$US 6.5 million) had also been made to the UNHCR General Programme for African refugee assistance for the current fiscal year. Refugee-related development projects aimed at lessening the burdens of countries receiving refugees were of vital importance. At ICARA II, Japan had expressed interest in water supply, health and hygiene projects and had subsequently carried out a project to strengthen food transportation for refugees in the Sudan.

34. The presence of 2.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 1.9 million in Iran was a serious burden on those countries. Since the repatriation of Afghan refugees to their homeland was unlikely to take place in the near future, Japan had recently pledged 1.4 billion yen (\$US 6.5 million) to the UNHCR General Programme for Afghan refugee assistance in Pakistan and Iran.

35. Mr. ARNOLD (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation was well aware that the conditions under which UNHCR was working were becoming increasingly difficult and that idealism and perseverance were necessary to ensure the attainment of goals necessitated by the plight of refugees. It was also clear to all that the crucial subject of the current session was UNHCR's financial situation.
36. The refugee situation in the world remained dramatic. Despite enormous international efforts in Africa, much remained to be done to avert further suffering and to restore a viable basis for the lives of the affected populations. In other parts of the world, new flows of refugees persisted, while durable solutions for refugees of former years had not yet been found.
37. His Government reiterated its firm commitment to the task of alleviating the plight of refugees throughout the world by co-operating with UNHCR, as well as in activities within the framework of the General Assembly. In that spirit, it had continued to pursue the initiatives launched with the aim of preventing future massive flows of refugees.
38. His Government would continue to play an active role in the financing of UNHCR activities as far as available resources allowed. In 1984, its overall share of contributions to UNHCR in cash and in kind had amounted to over \$US 30 million. In 1985 to date, it had contributed almost \$US 22 million. It would make further efforts to help improve UNHCR's current serious financial situation.
39. His Government was concerned by the fact that the shortfall in the financing of General Programme activities for 1985 was worse than expected, with an income-gap of \$US 76 million for General Programmes and \$US 17 million for Special Programmes. It was especially concerned that the share of current-year contributions in the overall financing of General Programmes was decreasing at an alarming rate, while income from secondary sources, such as "carry-overs", interest and cancellations or refunds, was also declining. That situation had led to a financial shortfall of enormous dimensions, even though UNHCR had managed to streamline its General Programmes operations in such a way that an 18 per cent reduction of the approved financial target for 1985 might be possible; without such efforts, UNHCR's difficulties would have been even greater.
40. The Executive Committee was faced with the choice of either reducing programme targets or raising considerable additional funds on short notice at a time of economic strain. In that context, he was glad to be able to announce an additional contribution to UNHCR's General Programmes of DM 3 million for 1985. His Government was, moreover, currently discussing further possibilities for contributions.
41. In view of the increase in activities in Africa and Latin America and the relative stabilization of programmes in South-East and South-West Asia, his Government's contributions continued to focus on the Africa Programmes and it was giving increasing attention to the promotion of durable solutions in Central America. Support for Afghan refugees was another of its priorities. It would continue to support the Orderly Departure Programme from View Nam, as well as family reunification for Indochinese refugees, and had just drawn up a list of 200 names of persons to be brought to the Federal Republic of Germany for that purpose.

42. His Government had noted with satisfaction that the share of durable solutions in UNHCR's programme activities was on the increase. In its view, UNHCR's co-ordinating and catalytic role in co-operation with the existing multilateral and bilateral executing agencies should be strengthened and increasing emphasis should be placed on a regional approach to the question of durable solutions.

43. Undiminished flows of asylum-seekers and refugees to countries outside their region of origin were a cause of growing concern to potential asylum countries. His Government welcomed every effort made by UNHCR to reach a better understanding of the root causes of such movements. The knowledge gained in that respect would be instrumental in preventing, as much as possible, flows of refugees from first-asylum countries to other regions and in strengthening the concept of regional solutions.

44. His country continued to do its best to help bona fide asylum-seekers in accordance with the right of asylum provided for in its Constitution. However, the burden borne by the Federal Republic of Germany as a result of the increasing influx of refugees was becoming too heavy. Some 600,000 foreign refugees, with or without legal status, were currently staying in the country while new applications for asylum were likely to reach 70,000 in 1985. Account should also be taken of the fact that some 200,000 Germans from eastern and south-eastern Europe had been taken in since 1981.

45. His Government was aware that the alternative of resettlement in third countries had so far been the principal durable solution for Indochinese refugees. It had therefore decided to support UNHCR's Disembarkation Resettlement Offers Scheme (DISERO). It had also followed with interest the apparently successful commencement of the new Rescue at Sea Resettlement Offers Scheme (RASRO). The Federal Republic of Germany had so far received some 10,000 boat people.

46. His Government had noted with concern that it had not been possible to ensure the physical safety of refugees in any larger measure than during previous years. It therefore welcomed UNHCR's efforts to increase its effectiveness in the field of international protection and hoped that the Executive Committee's work on a statement of principles condemning and prohibiting military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements would be completed at the current session. It was satisfied that it had been possible to extend the Anti-Piracy Arrangement, with the Royal Thai Government for another year. In that connection, special attention had to be given to follow-up investigations and the prosecution of suspects on land.

47. He was convinced that the spirit of co-operation and dedication to the cause of refugees which had always prevailed in the Executive Committee would once again guide efforts to find viable solutions to refugee problems.

48. Mr. WIDGREN (Sweden) said that the current alarming budgetary shortfall had to some extent been caused by one of the largest emergency operations ever undertaken by UNHCR. In addition, many protection problems remained unsolved and continued armed attacks on refugees had shocked the world.

49. The High Commissioner had to act swiftly and decisively to meet urgent demands. In Africa, 1 million persons had for more than a year been dependent on UNHCR for their existence. Efforts to achieve durable solutions had been set

back by the emergency operation programmes, which still required further resources. It was important to bear in mind that the refugee problem in Africa was only one element in a developmental crisis.

50. Governments had a responsibility to provide acceptable living conditions for their nationals, although harsh natural conditions played an important role and socio-economic and political factors also lay at the root of refugee flows. Stricter adherence to human rights commitments and the adoption of socio-economic measures were necessary in many instances, for asylum States should never be under greater pressure than countries of origin to provide solutions to refugee problems.

51. It was difficult to see how major refugee problems could be solved if voluntary repatriation did not play a more important role in the future. His delegation agreed with the report of the round table held at San Remo in July 1985 in which emphasis had been placed on the High Commissioner's role as initiator, co-ordinator and supervisor of voluntary repatriation.

52. His delegation once again noted with regret that agreement still had not been reached on a resolution concerning military attacks on refugee camps. Individual Governments and UNHCR should strongly condemn such attacks wherever they occurred. His Government had taken note with satisfaction of the Security Council's condemnation of the attack by South African troops on alleged refugees from South Africa in Botswana. It also deplored the regrettable events which had taken place in the Colomocagua refugee camp in Honduras.

53. In many cases, UNHCR was requested to assist persons who were not de jure considered as refugees. It thus provided assistance, protection and legal advice for displaced persons and groups who were vulnerable in various respects. Many Kampucheans on the Thai-Kampuchean border constituted such a vulnerable group and they were receiving material assistance through UNBRO. His country urged UNHCR to explore every possibility of providing protection for those Kampucheans.

54. Pakistan, already burdened with millions of refugees from Afghanistan, continued to receive refugees who were now mostly from Iran, which in turn was accommodating a large Afghan refugee population. In the last few years, South-West Asia had been the setting for the largest population movement of recent times. Given the size and complexity of the refugee problem in the region, a stronger presence by UNHCR would be desirable. Adequate resources must be found to deal with that refugee problem, as well as for measures already initiated to promote durable solutions in the area.

55. It was essential that first asylum-countries should be given every possible type of support for the accommodation of refugees. Refugee problems should be dealt with as closely as possible to the source, where a wider range of solutions might be available.

56. The issue of irregular movements of persons who could not claim to be fleeing from severe forms of repression and persecution had been receiving a great deal of attention in the past year. If such movements were not halted, it might be difficult to continue to generate active support by the general public for traditional refugee policies. While the High Commissioner's initiative to study

the extent and nature of irregular movements of asylum-seekers and refugees was much appreciated, UNHCR's role in that regard was not clear, although the conclusions reached by the Sub-Committee on International Protection (EC/SCP/40) were realistic and balanced.

57. His delegation appreciated the consultations held in May 1985 on arrivals of asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe. The High Commissioner's summary of that meeting could be seen as a point of departure for continued work on the matter and was a reflection of the Swedish Government's staunch commitment to refugees and of its willingness to work towards durable solutions.

58. UNHCR had made a valuable contribution to the discussion of the specific problems and needs of women refugees at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Nairobi in July 1985. Those needs should now be given full attention.

59. He noted with satisfaction that co-operation between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations had been further strengthened. With their experience and sincere devotion, those organizations were highly effective partners in the implementation of programmes.

60. His delegation shared the High Commissioner's concern about the 1985 budget shortfall and was pleased to announce that Sweden was about to consider a further contribution to UNHCR for 1985, bringing its total support in a single year up to more than SKr 100 million. His Government looked forward to continuous close collaboration in UNHCR activities, as well as with the UNHCR Nordic Office, which would be located in Stockholm.

61. His Government took the view that the link between refugee aid and development had been more firmly established by ICARA II and that, despite the current emergency, Governments should bear that link in mind when they considered new allocations in favour of Africa's refugees and other needy groups.

62. During his eight years in service, the High Commissioner had carried tremendous responsibility and faced numerous challenges as new refugee situations had arisen. He had ensured the survival of many, brought relief to others and given new hope to many oppressed and uprooted people around the world thanks to his deep personal commitment to the cause of refugees. It was continued tireless efforts of that nature, as well as persistence and imagination, that were needed to solve the world's serious refugee problems.

63. Mr. MEBAZAA (Tunisia) said that the current session of the Executive Committee was taking place under difficult circumstances marked by obstacles to the international community's efforts to assist refugees. UNHCR was facing a serious budgetary deficit as a result of the demands made on it to relieve refugee crisis situations in the past two years. That could have adverse effects on UNHCR activities if the international community did not respond generously. Countries of asylum also faced difficulties because of factors such as the international economic situation; many of those countries had reached the saturation point and could not take in any more refugees. The precarious economic and legal situation of many of the homeless were also causing difficulties for certain countries.

64. Tunisia had always attached a great importance to humanitarian problems and placed high hopes in UNHCR's assistance activities. It was convinced of the joint responsibility of the entire international community for the burden of providing asylum. Assistance should keep pace with demand in the form of aid from the wealthier countries or the granting of asylum to groups from developing areas.

65. The High Commissioner had made laudable efforts over the past five years to draw up a programme and its operation was one of UNHCR's signal successes. On the basis of UNHCR's experience and taking account of financial and other difficulties, the policy of constructive and continuing co-operation between the Office of the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee was a means of strengthening co-operation among the component parts of the international community for the well-being of refugees everywhere. While that policy enhanced the role of the Executive Committee, the role played so far by the Office of the High Commissioner should not be underestimated. In his Government's opinion, mutual co-operation could benefit both parties and refugees as well.

66. International protection was the cornerstone of all assistance. He paid a tribute to the contribution made by the Executive Committee through its many recommendations to the strengthening and upholding of humanitarian law and the right of asylum and said that his delegation would like further recommendations to be adopted along those lines, especially concerning military attacks on refugee camps. His delegation had also stated that it would like the Executive Committee to take a resolute stand on infamous attacks on civilian populations. Although he himself had refrained from taking part in the discussion of that question on account of his official functions at the head of the Executive Committee, he now wished to refute the allegation that Tunisia was a country of asylum for armed refugees.

67. The attack on Tunisia which had taken place on 1 October 1985 and which had had an adverse effect on efforts to assist refugees had been an abject act of aggression against his country and a manifestation of the terrorism which Israel used to challenge international opinion and act in breach of humanitarian values. In bombing civilian targets, causing victims among the civilian population and damaging civilian buildings, Israel had also violated Tunisian sovereignty and its territorial integrity. That attack could not be justified and it was an outrage to the conscience of mankind. Its purpose was to beat Tunisia into submission so that it could not assume its responsibilities towards its refugees. Tunisia would, however, always uphold its commitment to solidarity with all national liberation movements and, in particular, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

68. Tunisia's experience might jeopardize the future of the international protection of refugees because it implied that there was no sure asylum for political refugees. The question of places of asylum which would be sufficiently secure had become a mockery; it was not possible to contemplate humanitarian solutions applicable to all countries when certain countries thwarted the efforts being made. When Tunisia had gained its independence, it had welcomed refugees; the fact that it had more than once been the victim of aggression would never turn it away from what it considered to be its duty. International law existed in support of its attitude. Even in the most remote periods of history, the law of the jungle had not triumphed and force had always been doomed to failure.

69. In the hope that the current session would attain its objectives, particularly with regard to military attacks on refugee camps and settlements, he appealed to the Executive Committee to adopt a clear position, rejecting injustice and striving for peace. His delegation was grateful to all countries which had supported Tunisia in condemning a cowardly attack which had been contrary to humanitarian law. He also paid a tribute to the High Commissioner for all the efforts on behalf of refugees that he had made during his years in office.

70. Mr. ROBERTSON (Australia) said that his delegation greatly appreciated the efforts which the High Commissioner had made to help refugees over the past eight years.

71. The present time was one of both crisis and challenge for UNHCR. The Office faced a particularly critical funding situation, largely because of the severity and extent of current refugee problems, but also because drought, famine and other disasters in Africa had strained to the limit the funds which donor Governments could make available for international relief.

72. It was clear that the refugee problem was becoming a permanent feature of the modern-day world. The challenge was not merely how to surmount the liquidity problem of the mid-1980s, but also how to develop new thinking and mechanisms that had some chance of minimizing the problem and of reducing the likelihood of its recurrence. UNHCR would have to make a renewed call on the reserves of humanity, courage and readiness to innovate that had guided it since its inception and Governments would need to provide the clear and committed support and guidance without which UNHCR's task could not be performed.

73. There was an obvious gap between what the international community had expected of UNHCR and the resources which the community had been able to make available to meet those expectations. In recent decades, UNHCR's activities had expanded in both their scope and the nature of their beneficiaries. At the request of the international community, UNHCR currently assisted a wide range of groups, the majority of which did not fall within its original mandate. Most recently in Africa, it had been seen that UNHCR's effort to respond to the needs of all those groups might exceed the limits of what one organization could realistically be expected to achieve. The time had come for UNHCR and the Governments of States represented in the Executive Committee to identify more clearly what activities the Office was expected to be able to perform and to ensure that the resources needed to achieve those goals were provided.

74. The most obvious example was the task of responding to the emergency in Africa. In particular, the situation in the Sudan had called for massive expenditure by UNHCR on behalf of persons who were not clearly covered by the High Commissioner's mandate. That did not mean that UNHCR should not assist them or that the need for UNHCR to develop further its capacity to respond to such emergencies should be questioned, but that the Executive Committee must give serious attention to the level and nature of its expectations of UNHCR and must fit them into the collective mandates and capacities of international organizations in general.

75. The need for co-operation and understanding between the High Commissioner and Governments was nowhere clearer than in south-east Asia. Although the exodus of refugees from Indochina had declined in recent years, the situation remained serious. Boat outflows from Viet Nam were continuing at unacceptably high levels, often with tragic consequences. Camp caseloads of both boat and land refugees

remained high. If the Indochinese situation was not to stagnate indefinitely, vigorous new initiatives would be required. In particular, there was an urgent need for UNHCR to take further steps to promote voluntary repatriation, for which it must have the full support of Governments.

76. The Australian Government had demonstrated its support for voluntary repatriation in the Indochinese context. Its efforts to facilitate a political solution were in no small way aimed at eradicating the root causes of the refugee outflow. In addition, it was providing substantial financial contributions to programmes in Laos and Cambodia designed to facilitate the reintegration of returnees. It had also supported the recent introduction of refugee eligibility screening for Laotians arriving in Thailand. It regarded that development as particularly significant in that it represented a recognition of the importance of ensuring that the benefits of refugee status and protection were reserved for those who had a genuine claim to refugee status. In recent years, it had become increasingly clear that the nature of population movements from Indochina was changing, taking on the characteristics of a migration, rather than a refugee movement. The Governments of Australia and other concerned countries were seeking to explore the extent to which migration solutions might form part of the response. A separate feature of the Indochinese situation was the position of Cambodians recently evacuated to Thailand. The Australian Government was deeply concerned over the plight of those people and had sought to contribute to their material welfare by making significant donations to the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) and to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The international community ought to consider the future of those groups with a view to ensuring their safety and well-being without prejudicing their ability to return to their own country when circumstances so permitted.

77. During his visit to the south-east Asian region earlier in 1985, the Australian Minister for Emigration and Ethnic Affairs had emphasized that Australia would not undertake any initiative to resettle new groups of displaced Indochinese as refugees. In its resettlement programmes, his Government was seeking to establish realistic levels of intake in response to the most compelling situations. Accordingly, it remained committed to assessing refugees individually to ensure that only those genuinely fearing persecution were admitted to the country as refugees. Programme priorities emphasized people who had links, especially family links, with Australia. In seeking to help the most needy cases, his Government would continue to respond to victims of persecution and discrimination, unfettered by the technical constraints of United Nations definitions of refugees. Australia was increasingly concerned at the unrealistic international expectations that had developed regarding the capacity of a small number of countries with active immigration policies to accept refugees.

78. His Government had been considering what more it could do to help solve the critical funding problem facing UNHCR. It could now announce an increase of \$A 600,000 in its core contribution to UNHCR's General Programmes for 1986, making a total of \$A 4.7 million. The whole of that amount would be paid in early January 1986. His Government would also provide \$A 400,000 for UNHCR's General Programme for Border Crossers in Papua New Guinea, to be made available before the end of 1985. The news of the generous gesture made by UNHCR staff in donating one day's salary had been particularly moving.

79. At the present stage, he was unable to indicate the total amount that would be made available for UNHCR Special Programmes in 1986. However, since the beginning of the Australian financial year in July 1985, his Government had announced contributions in cash and kind totalling \$A 1.5 million for Special Programmes in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. It would also provide food aid to the value of about \$A 4.5 million for Afghan refugees in Pakistan through the World Food Programme. Moreover, AUSTCARE, the Australian non-governmental organization specializing in refugee matters, had decided to contribute \$A 75,000 to UNHCR to enable the Publications and Information Department to proceed with the printing and distribution of the December issue of the magazine "Refugee", which would have been at risk because of liquidity problems.

80. Australia's record of co-operation with, and support for, the work of UNHCR had been good. Perhaps the greatest long-term impact was the contribution that countries like Australia could make to analysing the nature of refugee problems and working with UNHCR to develop a policy framework within which durable solutions could be found. For many years, Australia's efforts had been directed towards devising an integrated, comprehensive response to refugee situations and to helping to meet the immediate consequences of those situations as they arose. While Australia had provided generous resettlement opportunities to refugees of concern to UNHCR, it had consistently emphasized voluntary repatriation as the most appropriate durable solution.

81. Australia had taken part in a number of recent seminars and discussions, such as the meeting at San Remo. It welcomed their outcome, particularly the conclusions of the San Remo meeting on voluntary repatriation currently before the Executive Committee; it hoped that positive action would be taken on them at the present session. At San Remo, governmental experts had pointed the way towards an imaginative evolution of the international community's thinking in response to tragic human situations that would not go away or did not conform to the classical definitions appropriate to the early post-war years. It was clear from the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner that the promotion of voluntary repatriation must, with protection, be one of the two primary objectives of the Office's activities. It was also clear, however, that UNHCR could not achieve concrete results without the active assistance of Governments. The latter must be prepared to commit their support to the High Commissioner's humanitarian objectives and ensure that his continuing and innovative activities were backed up by their political will. If the refugee tragedy was ever to be brought within manageable proportions, the international community, under the High Commissioner's leadership, must look comprehensively at refugee situations - at their causes and at their effects. He was confident that the present crisis in the fortunes of UNHCR and the policy challenges facing the Executive Committee would lead to a reaffirmation of the co-operative partnership between UNHCR and Governments.

82. Mr. BEESLEY (Canada) said that he had listened with interest to the High Commissioner's valedictory report on the situation of refugees throughout the world. The problems involved were increasingly demanding and, if they were to be solved, a greater measure of persistence, imagination and equitable burden-sharing was called for. A sustained effort by all members of the international community would be required to meet the challenge.

83. His delegation was deeply concerned about UNHCR's serious financial situation. The Office continued to have Canada's full support and he sincerely hoped that, in a spirit of equitable burden-sharing, the international community

would come to UNHCR's assistance during such a critical period. The seriousness and urgency of the financial crisis required prompt and innovative measures, including more effective linkages between refugee aid and development, the further strengthening of the management of UNHCR programmes and the more active soliciting of funds by UNHCR, particularly from non-traditional sources, such as the general public and non-governmental agencies, which had responded so generously to the crisis in Africa. Funding from the private sector would seem to be especially appropriate and would help to broaden the emergency resource base.

84. In stressing the role which the private sector could and did play, his Government was not shirking its responsibilities and was fully prepared to play its part in equitable burden-sharing. During 1985, Canada had contributed \$Can 16 million directly to UNHCR programmes and a further \$Can 2 million to refugees through other channels, as well as \$Can 14 million in food aid to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. His Government would give active consideration to the possibility of making an earlier payment of its 1986 contribution in order to ease the anticipated cash flow problem and had taken note of the difficulties caused by the fact that programmes could be approved without Governments necessarily committing the funds required for them.

85. Equitable burden-sharing nevertheless meant much more than financial contributions. He agreed with the Australian representative that more countries must come forward with offers for the permanent settlement of refugees. It would be a mistake to assume that the favourable response of traditional resettlement countries could automatically be relied upon. Canada was, of course, a major resettlement country for refugees from all over the world. For instance, it had recently resettled over 100,000 refugees from Indochina and, in 1984 alone, it had admitted 15,400 refugees requiring permanent settlement from most parts of the world. Canada did not view those matters in financial terms; its approach was humanitarian. Nevertheless, in the context of equitable burden-sharing, it should be noted that, in 1984, the direct costs borne by his Government for the resettlement of refugees had amounted to more than \$Can 30 million, quite apart from the substantial costs borne by the provinces and by non-governmental organizations. Throughout the 35 years of UNHCR's existence, Canada had always been willing to provide homes for refugees in need of resettlement. On every single occasion when international upheavals had created a need, it had been in the forefront of those prepared to respond. In absorbing hundreds of thousands of refugees, its social fabric had been greatly enriched.

86. It was of paramount importance that UNHCR should ensure that its programmes were planned in such a way as to take account of the need for durable solutions and to avoid significant shortfalls and indiscriminate last-minute cuts. Canada was prepared to assist actively, in an advisory role with other interested countries, in attempting to ensure that UNHCR policies and programmes continued to reflect those objectives. Organizational structures and management procedures should be flexible and should promote the cost-effective implementation of essential UNHCR assistance activities.

87. The drought-related crisis in Africa had placed a tremendous additional burden on UNHCR. The High Commissioner and his staff were to be commended on their humanitarian action and a tribute should be paid to the staff for its gesture in donating one day's salary. UNHCR should promote more equitable burden-sharing, in co-operation with the United Nations and other agencies

involved in the African emergency, in order to respond effectively to the needs of traditional refugees and displaced persons in Africa, as well as other non-refugee populations affected by the current situation. The search for durable solutions might have had to take second place in the face of more pressing problems; however, the undertakings expressed at ICARA II must not be forgotten and it was to be hoped that initiatives in favour of local resettlement and voluntary repatriation could be resumed as soon as possible.

88. His delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's recent initiative to promote voluntary repatriation, which, despite the difficulties involved, had always been recognized as the most appropriate solution to refugee problems. The High Commissioner's personal involvement would continue to be required in many situations.

89. The protection issue was still a major source of concern. The recent tragic events at Colomocagua in Honduras, as well as attacks on refugee camps elsewhere, were reminders of the continuing need to make every effort to protect all refugees, particularly those who remained close to the situations which had caused them to flee.

90. The High Commissioner had taken steps to ensure that genuine refugees continued to benefit from the full protection of the Convention. The consultations on asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe held in May 1985 had produced a clear reaffirmation of the need to live up to the humanitarian standards defined in international refugee instruments. His delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's establishment of a study group to examine the problem of irregular movements of asylum-seekers and refugees and looked forward to endorsing its conclusions at a later stage.

91. His delegation also welcomed the special attention being paid to the particular vulnerability of refugee women, who, with their children, accounted for the majority of refugees. Refugee women were frequently obliged to assume a significantly changed socio-economic role in the context of difficult conditions, new environments and limited resources. Specific recommendations aimed at improving their capacity for self-reliance should be encouraged. That process would be facilitated by a further strengthening of UNHCR's focal point for co-ordinating women's programmes. UNHCR should also attempt to ensure greater equity for refugee women, particularly heads of families, in literacy, vocational and other training programmes, as well as in income-generating activities. Possible biases against women with respect to the granting of asylum, local integration and resettlement should be removed and collaboration between UNHCR and other agencies concerned with the special needs of women should be improved.

92. A continuing source of concern was the under-representation of women professionals within UNHCR, as in many other United Nations bodies. The gap was especially marked in senior management positions and his delegation hoped that the High Commissioner would step up his efforts to recruit women to posts carrying the highest responsibilities in the Office.

93. Irregular population movements obviously reflected a large measure of discontent among the persons concerned. Doubts on the part of refugees as to the adequacy of protection and assistance in countries of first asylum could sometimes fuel unrealistic dreams of resettlement in other countries. Both the conditions prevailing in countries of first asylum and the inadequacies of resettlement planning needed to be investigated. However, that should not be seen as the sole responsibility of traditional immigration countries. The time had

come for an expansion of the whole resettlement planning process. On the basis of the annual refugee resettlement needs analysis presented by the High Commissioner, a procedure should be established for incorporating the responses of all existing and potential resettlement countries, so that recommendations could be made to countries resettling refugees and so that the Executive Committee could be provided with estimates of resettlement needs and of the prospects of meeting them. A procedure of that kind would, in conjunction with appropriate responses to protection problems in countries of first asylum, respond to the needs of those refugees who felt that irregular resettlement was the only possible answer to what they perceived as unbearable situations. Adequate protection and care in countries of first asylum, with improved co-ordination of resettlement possibilities, would also mean that those refugees who subsequently arrived through irregular means could return to the country of first asylum without fear of refoulement.

94. Thanks were due to the High Commissioner and to his dedicated staff for the important contribution they had made in overcoming the many problems facing refugees. They could always rely on the full support of the Canadian delegation in their demanding task. In particular, a tribute should be paid to the impressive achievements of Mr. Hartling as he prepared to relinquish the onerous but rewarding responsibilities for refugees which he had borne for the past eight years.

95. Mr. STARK (Holy See) congratulated the High Commissioner on his achievements over the past eight years in endeavouring to cope with the enormous refugee problem.

96. The Holy See's delegation in the Executive Committee had consistently emphasized the humanitarian problem of granting asylum to refugees. The right to asylum and to non-refoulement continued to be a historical challenge to the free world and, together with the question of security and family reunion, was one of the most important refugee problems. In the past few years, the problem had been considerably aggravated in the developed countries. The High Commissioner's function of providing legal protection had met with difficulties because of the great numbers of incoming refugees and asylum-seekers and the consequences of unemployment. In such circumstances, the public, unaware of the true situation in the refugee's countries of origin, brought pressure to bear on their Governments to restrict the granting of refugee status, particularly if refugees did not fall within the classic definition found in international legal instruments. Thanks were due to those Governments and voluntary agencies in traditional countries of refuge that had understood that asylum-seekers were helpless victims of political upheavals who often had no official documentation and could not return to their countries of origin without being exposed to repression, torture and severe punishment. The Roman Catholic Church had always emphasized the individual responsibility of citizens of recipient countries to make a positive response and Pope John Paul II had drawn attention to the problem posed by the rehabilitation of refugees in recipient countries. The recent award of the Nansen Medal to Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, Archbishop of Sao Paulo, was a due recognition of the efforts of Catholics in Brazil to alleviate the sufferings of refugees.

97. His delegation was glad that the Sub-Committee on International Protection had examined the question of refugee women, in view of the high incidence of pirate attacks on boat people and of the frequent violations of women's safety after their arrival in camps or elsewhere. The problem deserved to be carefully considered and required counter-action at both the international and national levels, since women and young girls constituted a high percentage of the world's refugees.

98. Voluntary repatriation should be encouraged whenever possible. The High Commissioner had a special role to play in that respect, particularly with regard to collective repatriations.

99. The efforts made by UNHCR to find durable solutions for asylum-seekers and refugees were greatly appreciated. The industrialized countries had always attracted needy refugees and the Office had the difficult task of seeking to ensure that the agreements signed by 97 States on the legal protection of victims of persecution and oppression were respected. The international community should spare no effort to support it in that role in the years to come.

100. Mr. VARGAS (Nicaragua) said it was a source of satisfaction to his delegation that the High Commissioner had reported in his statement that progress had been made in achieving satisfactory and durable solutions to refugee problems. The decision by UNHCR staff to donate one day's salary to refugee problems was indeed a generous gesture. Recipient countries, particularly developing countries in the grip of economic problems, had also shown great generosity in allowing large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers to stay in their territories. His delegation fully endorsed UNHCR's appeal to the international community for further contributions.

101. The underlying cause of Central American political instability, which was in turn responsible for the serious refugee problem in that region, was to be found in its history of exploitation, oppression and inequality, coupled with the present threat of foreign military aggression. His country, in particular, having elected to pursue an independent political line, had been the victim of armed aggression from the North and many Nicaraguan citizens had been forced to flee their country. The refugee problem could therefore not be considered in isolation from the general problem of peace in the region and every effort should be made by the Member States of the United Nations to give effect to the purposes and principles of the Charter and to uphold the principles of international law concerning non-intervention and friendly relations and co-operation among States.

102. His Government co-operated closely with UNHCR on the basis of generous Nicaraguan legislation aimed at enabling refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and at the promotion of durable solutions. It had required UNHCR assistance for only 5,000 of the total number of 23,000 refugees in Nicaragua from 1981 to 1985 and that was a remarkable achievement for a nation of only 3,200,000 inhabitants. The level of economic and social integration that had been achieved despite the deep-seated economic crisis and unprovoked foreign aggression reflected his Government's determination to solve the refugee problem. As a result of the success of local integration measures, the number of refugees needing international assistance had dropped significantly between 1983 and 1984. His delegation had circulated a document which would provide the Executive Committee with full information on measures to assist refugees in Nicaragua, including the generous facilities made available for voluntary repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin.

103. His Government fully endorsed the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees adopted as part of the conclusions of the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama organized by the Government of Colombia in November 1984. It was, however, deeply concerned about the situation of Nicaraguan citizens who were being held in refugee camps in neighbouring countries contrary to the principles of international law and the spirit of the Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America and whose only means of returning to Nicaragua was to escape from the camps. The numbers of Nicaraguan refugees, which were, in any case, grossly inflated, were being used as a political weapon and as a pretext for slanderous attacks on UNHCR. The extension of his Government's Amnesty Decree until July 1986 was helping to promote the voluntary repatriation of Nicaraguans who, as a result of foreign aggression, had been forced to emigrate or had been abducted by counterrevolutionary groups. Most of the Miskitos and Sumos who had been in Honduras had expressed a desire to return to Nicaragua and over 100 of them had already opted for repatriation under UNHCR auspices. It was also estimated that at least 4,000 other refugees wished to return to Nicaragua to take up residence on two sites in their old communities. In view of the continuing serious economic situation in the country, his Government would be unable to meet all the needs of those and other returnees. He therefore appealed to the international community to support their resettlement and reintegration with financial contributions.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.