



UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL  
A/AC.96/SR.389  
14 October 1985  
ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 389th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 9 October 1985, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. CHIBA (Japan)  
later: Mr. CHARRY-SAMPER (Colombia)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

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

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Ms. NORBERG (United Nations Council for Namibia) said that, over the past year, the plight of the Namibian people had continued to worsen. In brazen defiance of the expressed will of the international community and of United Nations resolutions and decisions, the racist régime of South Africa had installed, on 17 June, another internal administration in Namibia. The true face of that so-called administration had been revealed recently when security forces had arrested 54 persons, including SWAPO officials and Church leaders, who were taking part in a peaceful commemoration of Namibia Day. The United Nations Council for Namibia had called for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arrested and detained.
2. The need to assist Namibians who had fled their country continued to be a priority area of the Council for Namibia. The United Nations Fund for Namibia, which was the main vehicle for financing assistance programmes, had been established by the General Assembly in 1970 to enable the Council to provide the Namibian people with comprehensive assistance. The three accounts of the Fund (the General Account, the Nationhood Programme Account and the Institute for Namibia Account) were used to finance all the assistance activities. Having lived under colonial domination for 100 years and being currently subject to the repressive system of apartheid, few Namibians had received educational or professional training. When the country achieved independence, qualified manpower would be needed at all levels of society and, without the assistance of the international community, the United Nations would be unable to run the necessary training and research programmes.
3. The many thousands of Namibian refugees in Angola, Zambia and Botswana were in need of food and material aid (clothing and shelter) and would also need educational assistance in order to make a constructive contribution to the development of their country after independence. Help had already been given on a significant scale by UNHCR, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and other multilateral and bilateral assistance organizations. In spite of the increased assistance provided by the United Nations Council for Namibia, and the offers of employment to young Namibians which enabled them to leave the refugee camps, the needs for qualified manpower were far from covered.
4. It had not, however, been possible to approve any new projects and the United Nations Council for Namibia needed additional financing for the funding of three major projects. The first project was intended to provide agricultural assistance to SWAPO settlements in Zambia and Angola, covering a wide range of agricultural activities with the overall aim of making the settlements self-sufficient in food production, but with manpower training as an important secondary aim. Additional financial resources were being sought for an expansion of the programme. The second project was concerned with in-service training. Plans had been prepared to enrol about 100 trainees in various African countries. Although 50 had already been placed, continuation of the programme would be dependent on the availability of additional funds. The third project was a seven-year literacy programme, the immediate objective of which was to train personnel for the subsequent implementation of the programme. Commitments had already been made by the United Nations Fund for Namibia and the Commonwealth Secretariat, but financing was still required for the purchase of equipment and food to meet other running costs. The United Nations Council for Namibia appealed to the international community for assistance to enable those projects to be implemented.

5. Mr. SSALI (Uganda) said that, at the time of its establishment, UNHCR's role had been considered to be temporary and limited in scope, as it was mainly intended for post-war refugees from a particular region. Although the character of the Office had changed, its ideals had remained the same. It was very sad to find, more than 30 years after the adoption at Geneva of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, that, although ideal solutions had been articulated by the High Commissioner and the international community, fewer and fewer countries were incorporating them into their national policies.

6. Apart from natural disasters, the reasons that forced refugees to flee were mainly oppression and violation of fundamental human rights. In some cases, the oppressive régime was imposed by a minority which had seized power and in others by the majority on so-called minority groups. The bulk of the millions of refugees throughout the world were from countries whose governing régimes had deliberately or by default denied equal rights to all or most of their nationals. Unfortunately, such régimes had on occasion been propped up by other countries. The international community had the moral duty not only to provide material assistance to refugees but also to take a positive stand against such adverse forces, since the complex problem of refugees could not be solved within the framework of individual national action.

7. One of the major causes of the refugee exodus in Africa was the abominable apartheid régime. His delegation was genuinely concerned over Pretoria's acts of aggression and vandalism in the southern African region. There was need for greater pressure on the apartheid régime to cause it to withdraw from Namibia, so that the thousands of Namibian refugees could return to their country and participate in its social and economic development. His delegation noted with appreciation that many members of the international community had taken positive steps to persuade the South African Government to change its policy.

8. With regard to the granting of asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in the 1951 Convention and the Declaration on Territorial Asylum adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1967, Uganda had always welcomed refugees who had fled from neighbouring countries for political, religious or ethnic reasons and could not safely return there. Those refugees had been allowed to choose their place of residence, and were offered educational and employment opportunities; social interaction had also been encouraged so as to promote their integration. In spite of some unfortunate incidents that had caused a violent displacement of refugees and Ugandan nationals alike in three districts during the 1982 civil conflicts, Uganda would continue to welcome refugees and play an increasingly important part in the search for a permanent solution to the refugee problem. That deplorable - and politically motivated - episode had been engineered by a régime which violated the fundamental human rights of both aliens and its own nationals. That régime no longer existed.

9. Regarding the fate of displaced Ugandan citizens in camps in Rwanda, the Government of Uganda had set up a legal task force to enumerate them. Some of them had since been repatriated in response to a government appeal to all Ugandans. Uganda was a country of 34 tribes, one tribe being the Banyarwanda, any member of which was treated, both in fact and in law, as a Ugandan citizen under the Constitution and the Citizenship Act.

10. The new Ugandan Government had unreservedly declared its commitment to national reconciliation by calling on all Ugandans in exile to return to their country and it was hoped that they would do so when peace and stability had been restored by the current negotiations. Voluntary repatriation was the best solution to the refugee problem and his delegation fully supported the High Commissioner in his efforts to achieve it. In a spirit of burden-sharing, countries which had eliminated situations responsible for the exodus of waves of refugees should encourage their nationals to return, so as to relieve the countries of asylum of the burden. In that connection, his delegation would like to request the neighbouring countries, which had nationals still living as refugees in Uganda, to take back those who wished to return.

11. The policy of his Government with regard to the welfare of refugees in Uganda covered a number of different fields: rehabilitation of the infrastructure of the refugee settlements, something which could not be continued without external assistance; assistance towards the resettlement and adaptation of the refugees; the transfer of displaced persons and the creation of new settlements to relieve congestion; environmental improvement of the settlements, two of which were threatened with desertification as a result of the combined effects of the drought, overpopulation and overgrazing, a development which the Government was attempting to halt; and eradication of the tsetse fly, which had reinfested three settlement zones. His Government was counting on UNHCR assistance for the two latter tasks and hoped that its financial predicament would not stand in the way since the primary aim was to make the refugees less dependent on international aid and to reduce the burden on the Government. It was a matter of deep regret that a greater financial contribution could not be made from national sources.

12. Uganda's contribution in kind had, however, been substantial: it had provided about 700 square kilometres of land for refugee settlements accommodating about 120,000 people and some 100,000 head of cattle. Tens of thousands of refugees had also been settled in rural and urban areas, most of whom had been completely integrated into the general population.

13. To encourage voluntary repatriation, the Government had already set up a National Relief and Resettlement Committee and co-ordinating committees at the district level. Arrangements had been made with the leaders of refugee groups to encourage refugees in Zaire and Sudan to return home without any pre-conditions. It also intended to send high-powered delegations to Zaire, the Sudan and Kenya to launch similar appeals. Resettlement would, however, require the rehabilitation of land and the provision of food and material assistance to about 390,000 persons. It would also be necessary to improve the internal road network, build schools and health centres and sink boreholes. The task was certainly a formidable one but, with the assistance of the international organizations and friendly Governments, Uganda would bring it to a successful conclusion.

14. There was another problem which was outside the competence of UNHCR although it was still humanitarian in nature. Millions of people had been displaced within the country as a result of armed conflict in the area known as the Luwero Triangle. Those persons were not strictly speaking refugees, but they were in need of assistance. In view of the magnitude of the problem, he appealed to the international community to co-operate in its solution.

15. Mr. LOPEZ NOGUEROL (Argentina), having paid tribute to the High Commissioner as being to a large extent responsible for the many achievements of his Office, said that one of UNHCR's main tasks was to ensure the international protection of refugees, on which the possibility of finding durable solutions depended. It was deeply regrettable, therefore, that the situation in that respect was far from satisfactory and that violations of human rights and attacks on the basic interests of refugees and asylum-seekers continued to occur. Instances of the arbitrary detention of refugees, attacks on refugee camps, acts of piracy and the forcible return of refugees were becoming more frequent. In the face of that grave situation, it was to the credit of UNHCR that it had not relaxed its efforts. Mention should be made, in particular of the organization of the Cartagena Colloquium of November 1984 which had produced some very useful recommendations.

16. The generalization of practices aimed at discouraging applications for asylum were a matter of concern, since they indicated a resurgence of xenophobic attitudes stirred up by the economic difficulties of the various countries. Governments should not forget that those nations, to whom appeals were currently being addressed in the name of solidarity, were the same ones whose nationals not so long before had applied in large numbers to the young nations of the world for admission and had been welcomed without any question of imposing quotas or other restrictions. The American continent was exemplary in that regard. Although some countries, including many of the poorest developing countries, had shown great generosity in welcoming hundreds of thousands or even millions of refugees, others had turned a deaf ear. Moreover, the financial burden was not well distributed among the donor countries, some of which had been extremely generous, while others had yet to bring their contributions into line with the tragic situations afflicting the world.

17. In the circumstances, therefore it was necessary to intensify UNHCR activities in the field of international protection, and it was a matter of particular regret that, in spite of the great efforts made, the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection had not succeeded in drafting a set of principles on military attacks on refugee camps and settlements. His delegation would like to think that further consultations would make it possible to work out a text sufficiently balanced to command general agreement, thus providing the international community with a useful and dissuasive instrument. General Assembly resolution 39/140 provided an excellent starting point for such a text, which should be worded in such a way as not to water down the resolute condemnation that resolution contained.

18. His delegation - like many others - recognized that the most desirable solution to refugee problems was voluntary repatriation, but it was not always possible and sometimes the causes of the exile had first to be eliminated. The success of some voluntary repatriation programmes in Africa, particularly those relating to Ethiopian refugees in Djibouti and refugees from Guinea, was most welcome. Another source of deep satisfaction was the return of refugees to Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay following the restoration of democracy in those three countries. The restoration of civil and political rights in Argentina had paved the way for an organized repatriation of Argentine nationals who had been obliged by circumstances to flee the country. That priority task had been successfully carried out by his Government, with the help of UNHCR and ICM, to which his delegation expressed its gratitude. His Government subscribed to the conclusions of the Round Table on Voluntary Repatriation, held under the auspices of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law at San Remo in July 1985, whereby UNHCR was authorized to continue to care for refugees after their repatriation.

19. His Government had undertaken a series of measures for the resettlement and reintegration of Argentine nationals returning from abroad and had set up a national commission for that purpose. In addition, it had lifted the geographical reservations with regard to refugee status, which it had entered with respect to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. In spite of its economic difficulties, his Government would endeavour to contribute to the search for durable solutions to the situation of refugees and displaced persons. To that end, it had initiated a project, in co-operation with ILO and ICM, for the settlement of Salvadorian and Argentine peasants on lands provided for the purpose by the provinces of Salta and Jujuy in the north-west of the country.

20. His delegation paid tribute to UNHCR for its many assistance activities and was particularly pleased to see that an increased proportion of the available resources had been devoted to durable solutions, in accordance with the repeated requests of the Executive Committee. It was, however, a matter of concern that assistance activities were threatened by the serious financial crisis and that programme reductions had had to be made. Various reasons had been put forward for the fall in contributions, but the actual reasons were of little importance. All that countries such as Argentina, crushed by their mounting external debt and by an unfavourable international economic climate, could do was to keep their frontiers open and offer their goodwill, which had never faltered in spite of the crisis. His delegation was still sure, however, that the traditional donors would be able to respond rapidly. The UNHCR deficit was really very small in proportion to world expenditure on armaments and could be made good without too much difficulty.

21. His delegation welcomed the award of the Nansen Medal to Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, whose untiring efforts on behalf of Latin-American refugees deserved particular gratitude from Latin America in general and Argentina in particular.

22. Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco), having thanked the High Commissioner for the details he had given of the wide-ranging activities of UNHCR and the difficulties encountered in various parts of the world, especially in arriving at durable solutions, said he was very sorry to hear that the High Commissioner intended to depart on the completion of his term of office.

23. The international community was becoming more and more concerned about the problem of refugees and displaced persons which, since the Second World War, had assumed the more complex form of mass outflows of peoples. After reaching an intolerable level during the 1970s, the process had become relatively calmer in recent years. Over the last 12 months, however, the number of refugees and displaced persons had once again risen sharply, especially in Africa, where drought and famine had caused a massive flow of refugees, aggravating the economic and social situation of many of the least developed countries. UNHCR had been obliged to provide assistance on an exceptional scale to meet that situation, thus negating its efforts to stabilize, let alone reduce, expenditure.

24. His delegation welcome the generosity displayed by the international community on behalf of the countries of Africa which, in spite of their difficulties, were receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees. Morocco maintained bilateral and regional co-operative relations of various kinds with those countries: for example, it had contributed \$10 million to the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel, made loans for infrastructure financing, granted a moratorium on debts, donated equipment and vehicles and food aid, participated in agricultural projects, trained technical staff and provided technical assistance, medical and veterinary supplies and fertilizers.

25. The financial crisis which UNHCR had been undergoing for the past few months, as illustrated by the urgent appeals of the High Commissioner for funds to provide full financing for the General Programmes and for the implementation of the emergency programmes in Africa, was likely to become still more acute unless some chronic refugee situations could be ended. It was worth noting, in that connection, that a number of countries including Morocco had argued in the past for a stricter interpretation of UNHCR's mandate, a limitation of the duration of material assistance and a more energetic search for and implementation of durable solutions. Such an approach was not only necessary but salutary, if similar financial crises were to be avoided in the future.

26. It was equally obvious that UNHCR would have to continue providing refugees and displaced persons with the protection and emergency aid they needed, without however neglecting the search for and promotion of durable solutions, which were the only means of finally relieving the Office of situations which imposed a serious burden on its budget and prevented any strengthening of its activities in areas of the greatest need. His delegation had noted with satisfaction, in the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1984-1985 (A/AC.96/657) that an increasing proportion of the resources under the General Programmes for 1986 had been allocated to the search for and implementation of durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement in a third country. That was a move in the right direction which was in keeping with article 1 of the Statute of UNHCR; the Governments of Zaire and Tanzania had successfully promoted solutions of that type with the assistance of UNHCR.

27. It was also known that the High Commissioner was having difficulty in implementing durable solutions in some situations which had become congealed. The Executive Committee should be informed of such difficulties so that it could take the necessary decisions. At the same time, UNHCR assistance should be granted only to countries which offered full collaboration and did not place obstacles in the way of the exercise of the whole of its mandate. In the face of a steadily deteriorating international economic situation, UNHCR should use its limited resources in a judicious way and only on behalf of persons whose refugee status had been objectively recognized on the basis of stringent criteria.

28. In the field of internal management, his delegation welcomed the declared aim of UNHCR to improve the system of staff rotation between headquarters and the field. It was also pleased to see that 95 countries were currently represented in the professional staff and that attempts were being made to recruit a larger number of women in that category.

29. The problem of the international protection of refugees and displaced persons had become more acute since the beginning of the 1980s, particularly as a result of attacks by the South African régime against refugee camps and settlements in neighbouring countries. Quite recently, Palestinian camps in Tunisia had been the target of an abominable attack by Israel which had resulted in numerous casualties. In that connection, his delegation associated itself with the statement by the representative of Tunisia, a country which had never ceased to support the Palestinian people in its just struggle. His delegation, which welcomed the demonstration of international solidarity on behalf of Tunisia and the condemnation of the aggressor by the Security Council, could not but condemn such barbaric behaviour, which was on a par with the acts of piracy against asylum-seekers on the high sea.

30. Morocco was also anxious to ensure the protection of several thousands of its own nationals, displaced against their will into a neighbouring country. Those persons should be ensured their freedom and protected from political and moral exactions and pressure. That would be possible only if the country of asylum ceased to give priority to its own political interests over humanitarian concerns. His delegation thus urged that the UNHCR representation in Algeria should not content itself with providing assistance, but should endeavour to arrive at the only possible solution, namely the voluntary repatriation of the Moroccan nationals.

31. Mr. HUSAIN (Observer for Pakistan) said that, in his opening statement, the High Commissioner had emphasized the crucial financial aspects of the refugee problem. His delegation wished to pay tribute to the High Commissioner and his staff for their dedicated work on behalf of millions of refugees throughout the world.

32. It was ironical that the developing countries of first asylum, which were endeavouring to improve the situation of their own peoples, should be required to bear the main burden of the refugees. Pakistan was currently harbouring more than 3 million refugees, or one third of the total world refugee population. Although they represented a serious material and financial burden, they continued to receive assistance in a humanitarian and Islamic spirit. His Government had taken the necessary steps to provide refugees with food, shelter, medical care and educational facilities with the help of UNHCR, other United Nations bodies, voluntary agencies and donor countries. There were 311 refugee camps in 17 districts of the North-West Frontier Province, in six districts of Baluchistan and in one district of the Punjab. As things stood, one person in seven in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan was a refugee. In some districts, the refugee population was as large as or greater than the local population. Those refugees needed not only food and material assistance but also a peaceful environment.

33. The refugee influx into Pakistan had severely stretched the natural resources and economic structures of the country. While implementing assistance programmes, his Government was thus, at the same time, endeavouring to bring the refugees to a stage of self-sufficiency through agricultural, animal husbandry or handicraft projects. Reference might be made, in particular, to a pilot project costing \$US 20 million, launched on the initiative of UNHCR and supervised by the World Bank whose aim was to create employment and generate income for the Afghan refugees and to develop the economy of the refugee settlements. The refugees were participating in labour-intensive activities in the areas of irrigation, road building, reafforestation and pasture reclamation in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, where the natural resources had suffered greatly from the refugee influx. The project was going well and would be completed by the end of 1986.

34. In spite of those positive efforts, the immediate needs of the refugees were still considerable, necessitating a flexible and humanitarian ongoing assistance policy tailored to meet refugee requirements. Without the generous assistance of UNHCR and the donor countries, it would be impossible to assist the refugees who continued to arrive in large numbers. The difficulties which had been experienced in implementing the ongoing assistance programme approved by the Executive Committee in 1984 were very worrying and the High Commissioner had referred to the critical financial situation as being liable to prejudice some of the elements in the UNHCR Programme. His Government, which had spared no effort to ensure the implementation of a credible programme for the benefit



of the Afghan refugees, shared the concern expressed by the High Commissioner in his opening statement. It hoped, nevertheless, that the policy of assistance to Afghan refugees in Pakistan would not be drastically modified and that the donor countries would continue to meet their responsibility to those refugees.

35. His country had received, for a temporary period and on purely humanitarian grounds, Afghan refugees who were longing to return to their own country. The refugees themselves were fully aware of their delicate situation vis-à-vis the host country, a situation which had to be taken into account by all those who wished to give them assistance.

36. Mrs. dos SANTOS (Observer for Angola) said that her country had received more than 100,000 refugees fleeing from dangers in the neighbouring countries. Her Government, which was attempting to help those refugees to achieve self-sufficiency, felt bound to emphasize the links between politics and the socio-economic situation in the region. The promotion of durable solutions in southern Africa was impeded by the aggressive policy of the South African racist régime, which attacked refugees and destroyed their property, thus prejudicing the implementation of assistance programmes and destroying the economic and social structures of her country. Special mention should be made of the Cassinga massacre, in the Huila region, and of the bombing of Boma in the Moxico region, both of which had caused enormous destruction. Africa was currently a geopolitical grouping seeking a new economic, social and political base, where some countries had experienced a massive exodus of population, particularly as a result of natural disasters. The most seriously affected countries had made known their urgent needs at the meeting on refugees held in Angola from 11 to 13 March 1985 and at subsequent regional conferences.

37. Southern Africa was torn between the battle against apartheid and its development efforts. The economic cost of the wars of liberation was astronomical, while the conflicts of the past three years had given rise to massacres, population outflows and serious destruction of property. Faced with the aggressive policy of the South African racist régime, the countries of southern Africa had been obliged to devote human and material resources, which could have been used to raise the standard of living of their peoples, to the preservation of their political, economic and strategic independence. Consequently, no effort should be spared to remedy that situation and to eradicate apartheid.

38. Although some progress had been made during 1985 in respect of refugee assistance, especially in the fields of education, health, housing and professional training, the situation of the refugees in Angola tended to deteriorate as a result of the intensification of aggressive operations by the Pretoria régime, which was waging an undeclared war against Angola. There were not, and there never had been, any Namibian refugees or members of SWAPO in the zones occupied or attacked by South Africa and it was the Angolans themselves who had been the victims of those aggressive acts, carried out in utter defiance of international law and the United Nations Charter.

39. Her delegation categorically condemned the armed attacks of the South African racist régime against Angolan territory and urged the international community to contribute more generously to assistance programmes to refugees and to the most seriously affected population groups, i.e. the children and the elderly.

30. Morocco was also anxious to ensure the protection of several thousands of its own nationals, displaced against their will into a neighbouring country. Those persons should be ensured their freedom and protected from political and moral exactions and pressure. That would be possible only if the country of asylum ceased to give priority to its own political interests over humanitarian concerns. His delegation thus urged that the UNHCR representation in Algeria should not content itself with providing assistance, but should endeavour to arrive at the only possible solution, namely the voluntary repatriation of the Moroccan nationals.

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39. Her delegation categorically condemned the armed attacks of the South African racist régime against Angolan territory and urged the international community to contribute more generously to assistance programmes to refugees and to the most seriously affected population groups, i.e. the children and the elderly.

40. Mr. SENE (Observer for Senegal) said that the refugee problem had become so great that it was a challenge to the conscience of all mankind. In the face of the challenge of the presence on the African continent of more than half the world's refugees, the States members of OAU had drawn on their traditional values of hospitality and solidarity. It would be clear, therefore, that he had listened with great interest to the High Commissioner's account of the activities of the institution he had headed for eight years. The High Commissioner had given an accurate account of the tragic situation of millions of refugees throughout the world.

41. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment to seeking durable solutions and its will to contribute to immediate efforts to overcome the most pressing difficulties, an attitude that should be shared by all States concerned with the humanitarian cause of the refugees. Senegal, a welcoming and hospitable country, handled the refugee question in accordance with the relevant international legal instruments, namely, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. On behalf of the President of Senegal, he appealed to those African States which had not yet done so to ratify the latter convention. Only 29 of the 51 States members of OAU had so far acceded to that valuable instrument, whereas 43 States were parties to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. It also seemed appropriate to recall the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted in 1981, which had not yet entered into force, because only 15 States had ratified it. There was no doubt whatsoever that that Charter would provide an important legal underpinning for the defence and promotion of human rights.

42. On 5 August 1968, Senegal had promulgated Act No. 68/27 on the status of refugees, which made the international legal instruments he had mentioned part of its domestic law. Under that Act, a National Eligibility Commission had been established which took account of the Executive Committee's recommendations.

43. The black peoples of South Africa and Namibia who were the victims of repression and oppression were being driven out of their countries, and that was creating thousands of refugees. In southern Africa, and also recently in Tunisia, refugees had been the victims of military attacks. In that connection, he recalled the terms of General Assembly resolution 39/140. In view of that situation, the Executive Committee should adopt, at its current session, if not a code, as some speakers had suggested, at least a position along the same lines as that of the General Assembly.

44. The approximately 5,200 refugees whom Senegal was sheltering were receiving efficient assistance through a close co-operation between the UNHCR Regional Office, the Senegalese Red Cross and the National Committee for Assistance to Refugees. Since 1972, the UNHCR presence in Senegal had taken on a regional dimension: it controlled a subordinate mission in Nigeria and advisory services in the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo; in other West African countries it was represented by the UNDP offices. Among the many projects carried out in Senegal, mention should be made of a regional project for treatment of refugees suffering from physical handicaps.

45. The unprecedented financial crisis which UNHCR was currently undergoing was a challenge to the entire international community. It was to be hoped that the donor countries, in particular, would give the fullest support during that critical phase. The General Programmes should not be neglected, for they were essential both to overcome pressing problems and to find durable solutions. However, UNHCR had had to launch vast emergency operations for the benefit of certain African countries at the expense of those programmes. If the current financial crisis was to be resolved, the resources necessary for reaching the targets that had been set in the framework of ICARA II must be found, in order to avoid an ICARA III.

46. His delegation also hoped that the strategies adopted at the Nairobi Conference for the benefit of refugee women would lead to concrete and effective results. For its part, his Government was participating in all the efforts being made to identify an international approach to the causes and effects of the mass movements and enforced displacements of persons with due regard for the recognized standards of humanitarian law.

47. Mr. NGO HAC TEAM (Observer for Democratic Kampuchea), having paid a tribute to the ASEAN countries, and particularly Thailand, for sheltering hundreds of thousands of citizens of his country, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity were being increasingly threatened, said that the Power occupying Kampuchea had once again recently sent reinforcements of several tens of thousands of soldiers, with a large number of tanks, undoubtedly to prepare an offensive during the dry season. According to ICRC figures, in January and February 1985 130,000 Kampuchean, had already had to take refuge in Thailand following Vietnamese attacks. Those persons had been forced to flee the border villages they had built with great care, and which he himself had had occasion to visit; they were currently obliged to subsist in temporary camps in Thailand, under extremely difficult material conditions.

48. The flow from the interior of Kampuchea towards the frontier, was also continuing especially because the occupiers were conducting more and more wholesale conscriptions of people, which, for example, were preventing the farmers from doing their work and were thus causing a food shortage. Viet Nam was imposing such large-scale forced labour mainly for the purpose of sealing off the frontier with Thailand, which was more than 700 km long. At the same time it was continuing, according to a pre-established plan, to install its settlers in the richest parts of the country, in gross violation of article 49 of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

49. Viet Nam's stubborn attempt to impose a military solution had so far caused the failure of the international community's efforts towards a peaceful settlement, especially the ASEAN proposals for indirect talks in July 1985, to which the coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea had fully subscribed. At a meeting chaired by Prince Norodom Sihanouk on 28 August 1985, that Government had reaffirmed its attachment to a peaceful settlement in the framework of the relevant United Nations resolutions, with a view to the withdrawal of foreign forces and to self-determination of the Kampuchean people. Lastly, in the name of the coalition Government, he thanked all the Governments, international organizations and private associations which had contributed their generous humanitarian aid to the Kampuchean people.

50. Mr. TARRAH (Observer for Somalia) said he wished to stress the continuing gravity of the refugee problem in his country. There were in Somalia 700,000 "old" refugees, who had arrived between 1978 and early 1984 and were living in

camps established in five regions. In addition, however, about 150,000 new refugees had sought asylum since June 1984; many of them had been subjected to a verification process by joint committees on which UNHCR, WFP, voluntary organizations and the Somali Government were represented. Those new refugees were living in reception centres and temporary camps, in addition to the network of 36 camps which accommodated the old refugees. Unfortunately the influx of refugees had aggravated conditions that were already unsatisfactory and had caused the outbreak of cholera and other epidemic diseases which had spread to Somali nationals. Thousands of lives had been claimed either by cholera or by other diseases caused by malnutrition. Those lives could have been saved if his Government's appeal to the international community had been heeded in time. The influx was still continuing and had put a further burden on Somalia's fragile socio-economic development; in the circumstances there was a need for energetic measures on the part of the international community.

51. His Government believed that the most desirable durable solution was voluntary repatriation. UNHCR was currently helping to repatriate a group of 700 refugees in the Qoryoley region. The repatriation of that group had been scheduled for 24 September, but it had been deferred.

52. With regard to local settlement, several large-scale projects had been designed to enable refugees to achieve self-sufficiency in 1984 and in 1985, but it had not proved possible to fund them. The funds allocated for local settlement projects in previous years, an amount of \$US 12 million annually, had not been made available for unexplained reasons.

53. His Government had, on several occasions, expressed its readiness to undertake a recount of the refugees, which had been suggested for quite some time. It had recommended that the United Nations should make a survey of the numerous urban refugees who received no assistance from the international community. It had requested UNHCR to devise a method to reassess the refugees so as to put an end to speculation at the expense of innocent and destitute persons. His Government had accepted the methodology proposed, with minor modifications, and it assured all those who were to take part in the operation of its maximum support.

54. In 1985, the General Programmes for Somalia had been seriously disrupted. In mid-year drastic cuts had been made. Although the General Programmes elsewhere in the world had been cut by 16 to 20 per cent, those in Somalia had been reduced by 35 per cent. Some people saw in that a sort of punishment for the exchange rate problem that had arisen. Only a few days previously, his Government had learned that another programme reduction would be necessary. To put an end to that situation, UNHCR must be given all possible support by the major donor countries and humanitarian organizations; for its part, his Government would do everything it could.

55. The question of the rate of exchange was already receiving appropriate attention, particularly from the UNDP Governing Council. A full exchange of views between his Government and concerned agencies of the United Nations system had recently taken place. In that context, it was surprising that the question should currently be referred to in the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. Since that was so, however, he would like to outline some basic facts. In the first place, the official rate of exchange in Somalia - 37 Somali shillings to the United States dollar - had been properly established by Central Bank Circular FDH-51/84 of 30 December 1984. It had been arrived at after the most cordial and comprehensive discussions between his Government and

IMF officials. Again on the specific advice of IMF, his country - and it was not in any way unique - had also established an "open market rate" for private and commercial transactions as a way of combating speculation and stabilizing the prices of imported goods. The current exchange rate of 37 shillings per dollar was much more favourable than the preceding one, which had been 26 shillings. United Nations agencies certainly stood to benefit from that rate for their purchases in local currency.

56. He recalled that the UNHCR programme estimates for Somalia had been published in mid-1984 on the basis of the then extant exchange rate of 17 shillings per United States dollar. At its 1984 session, the Executive Committee had approved those estimates, and, when the official exchange rate had since gone from 17 to 37 shillings, there should be a substantial increase in available UNHCR resources in terms of local currency. The current position of his Government was therefore that it was the legal responsibility of UNHCR, UNDP and other United Nations agencies, along with all embassies and missions, to abide by the Central Bank Circular. Nevertheless, the views of the various concerned agencies were being studied at that very moment by his Government, with a view to eliminating any misunderstandings that might have occurred relative to the measures that had been introduced.

57. Mr. GUELLEH (Observer for Djibouti) said that the international community had been much called upon in the previous year as a result of the serious drought which had struck many African countries, already burdened by the presence of large refugee populations. In that context, UNHCR would have to face up to the financial difficulties which were jeopardizing its activities in sectors which threatened the very survival of the refugees. In his preliminary statement, the High Commissioner had stressed the serious consequences of the Draconian budgetary reductions which would have to be made if his appeal to the generosity of the international community were not sufficiently heeded. For lack of financial resources, it might well no longer be possible to provide sick refugees with the necessary medical care and the most vulnerable refugees with nutritional supplements, to offer refugee children the opportunity of an elementary education or to save women refugees from gruelling work. In order to avoid such consequences, the traditional donors and the host countries should steel themselves to further sacrifices.

58. The protection of refugees was another essential problem, especially in view of the military attacks against their camps and the acts of piracy of which they were victims. On 1 October 1985, the Zionist forces had committed an infamous act of aggression against Tunisia; the fact that the PLO had its headquarters in the Tunis suburbs could not justify that odious act, since the organization in question was recognized by the United Nations and was officially represented in a large number of countries. Fortunately, many countries had reacted vigorously, and the Security Council had adopted an admirable resolution. He also protested against the attacks which the racist South Africans had launched against Angola and Botswana.

59. In Africa, and also in Asia and Latin America, millions of men, women and children of all ages had been received by developing countries, some of which were among the least developed or were also suffering from drought. Djibouti, for its part, despite extremely unfavourable natural and economic conditions, had received a number of refugees which represented nearly 15 per cent of its population. The difficulties which that had created in respect of food and health care had gradually been overcome. Health coverage had been gradually introduced, and the education of the school-age children had slowly but surely been organized.

60. His Government was concerned to seek durable solutions, and had co-operated with UNHCR and the countries of origin for the voluntary repatriation of refugees; a programme along those lines set up in 1983-1984 had made it possible for half of the refugees in Djibouti to return to their countries. However, Djibouti was still sheltering more than 20,000 refugees who were waiting in uncertainty, whereas the drought persisted. In that context, it would be very difficult for Djibouti, whose GNP had decreased by nearly 10 per cent in the past year, to bear the consequences of a reduction in the UNHCR General Programmes. He hoped that international solidarity would make it possible to prevent the UNHCR financial crisis from having such serious consequences.

61. Mr. TESSEMA (Observer for Ethiopia) said that his country, a founder Member of the United Nations, applied the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in the same disciplined way it respected the principles enshrined in the Charter, and it intended to continue to do so in order to facilitate the implementation of the High Commissioner's programme of activities.

62. In spite of its very limited resources and the persistent drought of recent years, his Government was committed to the alleviation of the plight of refugees and to the search for durable solutions. Despite over three decades of activities by UNHCR, the refugee problem at the global level continued unmitigated, and millions of persons were still living in precarious conditions far from the land of their birth.

63. The problem of African refugees and returnees had reached alarming proportions as a result of the current natural disasters and in spite of the efforts of the international community to assist them through ICARA I and ICARA II. The resources generated had not been sufficient to finance projects developed for the refugees in the continent; that situation was jeopardizing the collective and individual endeavours to search for durable solutions to the existing problems and avert new refugee flows. The attempts to resolve those human problems should be guided solely by the spirit of solidarity and humanitarian considerations, and it was essential that UNHCR activities should be better attuned to the particular problems of refugees and returnees, through appropriate mechanisms for supervising the proper implementation of its operational activities, in line with the Statute of UNHCR.

64. The Executive Committee should also look into the plight of South African refugees, who were being subjected to continued bombing and barbarous military attacks in their land of refuge by the racist régime of South Africa.

65. With regard to the situation of refugees and returnees in Ethiopia, his Government was continuing to address itself to immediate problems as a springboard towards seeking durable solutions. In addition to the voluntary repatriation programmes so successfully implemented in co-operation with the Republic of Djibouti and UNHCR, integration programmes were being undertaken wherever possible.

66. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of Ethiopia had set up a programme of resettlement and integration at Itang, in western Ethiopia, together with training programmes related to cottage industries. Four hundred families would be resettled in the current year, and steps were being taken to accommodate future needs.

67. His delegation believed that the programmes funded by UNHCR should take into account both the immediate needs and long-term well-being of the beneficiaries and should adopt a flexible approach to implementation. They should go beyond relief



and should aim at ensuring a more stable and productive life for refugees and returnees. At no time should technicalities become a stumbling block to the efforts made, for the element of humaneness should always be placed above all other considerations, in accordance with the principles which had inspired the establishment of UNHCR.

68. Commissioned by UNHCR, the League of Red Cross Societies had since 1984 registered 317,000 returnees who had been forced to flee from their homes during the 1977-1978 war of aggression against their country. UNHCR's insistence on registration had slowed down the resettlement programme somewhat, but it had been carried out in the most scientific manner by the League of Red Cross Societies and was an exemplary process which should be emulated by other countries. Although that requirement had been met, less than 60 per cent of the returnees registered were receiving assistance. It was regrettable that the basic recovery programme designed to stabilize the living conditions of the returnees had not yet been fully applied due to a lack of the necessary funds. In the meantime, the influx was continuing at a rate of over 1,000 returnees a month, and it was inexplicable that neither UNHCR nor the refugees' country of temporary residence had reported a decrease in the number of Ethiopians still remaining in the camps. It could only be assumed that rations allocated before the influx of returnees to Ethiopia continued to reach those camps that had long since been abandoned. That was a matter of grave concern, which deserved clarification by the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee.

69. His Government strongly rejected the astronomical figures cited in document A/AC.96/657 for Ethiopian refugees still to be found in neighbouring countries and requested the application of a stringent registration process in the countries concerned.

70. Of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had crossed the western border of Ethiopia to seek refuge in Gambella province, only 76,000 were being assisted by UNHCR in co-operation with the Government, and the remaining refugees were being provided for by the Government alone.

71. Threats to slash UNHCR funds and to cut back on allocations for ongoing programmes were especially disheartening in view of the increasing number of refugees and returnees. Ethiopia therefore added its voice to the appeals of the High Commissioner and those of other countries for a substantial increase in UNHCR resources so that the plight of the refugees could continue to be mitigated.

72. His Government of Ethiopia still viewed voluntary repatriation as the most desirable course for a durable solution and thought the repatriation of 33,000 Ethiopians from the Republic of Djibouti was a vivid example of what could be achieved through sustained, collective effort on the part of all concerned. Only such concrete steps could help prevent or at least curb the ever-increasing flow of human migration, for whatever reason, and only the joint political will and total commitment of the countries of both origin and asylum would facilitate the practical application of such measures.

73. His Government would continue to co-operate with UNHCR in the realization of programmes directed towards the amelioration of the plight of refugees and the solution of their problems. It expressed its gratitude to the donor countries, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations for the generous assistance they had given it.

74. Mr. DOWEK (Israel) paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman, the staff of UNHCR and, in particular, the High Commissioner, who for eight long years had kept UNHCR as unpolitical as possible and prevented the overshadowing of refugee interests and needs by political haggling and bickering.

75. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner that UNHCR had become a different organization from what it had been in 1978 with respect to the scope of its activities and its ability to cope efficiently with an ever-evolving world situation. It was largely a result of the personal contribution of the High Commissioner himself that UNHCR's work had succeeded, by a constant checking of its means of action, in meeting the ever-growing needs of the old and new refugees. His delegation therefore supported the proposals to widen and deepen project evaluation and the audit process by the use of internal and external experts in the framework of the authorized United Nations bodies. The ever-growing needs in the field of refugees and the constraints on financial and human resources demanded from the world community the highest attainable standards of cost-effective management. It should not only provide for the most urgent needs of refugees but should also review its policies and programmes with a view to elaborating permanent solutions and redistributing on a more objective and more just scale the substantial - albeit limited - total sum of resources allocated to that humanitarian problem. Such a review should release the resources needed for the promotion of permanent solutions. In that connection, it should not be forgotten that there were millions of refugees whose predicament received virtually no press coverage but who, despite their will to improve their condition themselves, needed considerable assistance, while all eyes seemed to be focused on the powerful, well-organized and almost professional refugees of long date who clung to their refugee status and to the benefits thus acquired.

76. His delegation noted that, for the past four years, the Executive Committee had been unable to reach a consensus on the drafting of a resolution laying the cornerstone for a more humane and efficient approach to the tragic problem of military attacks on refugee camps and settlements. It rejected the idea, expressed the previous year by the Tunisian delegation in the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, that refugee camps should be granted international protection even if they served as a launching pad for military attacks or the refugees themselves were officered by military personnel. On the other hand, it fully agreed with the position stated by the representative of Morocco in October 1983 (A/AC.96/SR.360) whereby the country of asylum should ensure that refugees did not become involved in armed reprisal raids and did not engage in military activities, and that refugee camps and settlements should be used exclusively for civilian and humanitarian purposes. That statement was supported by the third, fourth and fifth preambular paragraphs and article 2, paragraph 6, and article 3, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the OAU Convention of 10 September 1969, according to which countries of asylum should settle refugees at a reasonable distance from the frontier of their country of origin, every refugee had the duty to conform to the laws and regulations of the country in which he found himself and to abstain from subversive activities against any State member of the OAU, and signatory States undertook to prohibit refugees residing in their territories from attacking any State member of the OAU by use of arms, through the press or on the radio. Those principles, which were simply common sense, were fully in keeping with existing and widely respected international instruments and should be applicable not only to Africa but to refugee camps and settlements throughout the world. For its part, UNHCR should

urge the world community to grant its protection to refugee camps in order to put an end to such attacks. It was obvious, however, that protection involved not only rights but also duties and that refugees should not use their camps as armed bases, para-military training camps, arsenals or starting points for the launching of terrorist or military actions, under penalty of forfeiting their refugee status and seeing the camps lose all rights to international protection. The camps and settlements should be used exclusively for their designated humanitarian purposes, and attacks of any kind against them would be unthinkable if their residents led peaceful lives under the supervision of UNHCR representatives and local authorities. It was unacceptable that some people should advocate giving international protection to refugee camps and settlements under all circumstances, even when - or perhaps because - they were used for military and terrorist purposes. His delegation was convinced that the international community sought peace, understanding and co-operation, and it fully supported the draft resolution submitted by the Swiss delegation and its efforts to reach a consensus.

77. Lastly, he wished to refer to the vicious attacks of a political nature made on his country since the beginning of the session, in violation of the traditions of UNHCR and its mandate. His delegation refused to allow the spirit of international co-operation prevailing in UNHCR to be perverted by political confrontations, as had occurred in some of the specialized agencies. He would simply remind the speakers who had brought up the Israeli air attack on the PLO extraterritorial enclave in Tunisia from which terrorist actions were carried out throughout the world against Jewish and non-Jewish civilian targets, that UNHCR dealt with refugee matters and not with the promotion of terrorism, nor for that matter with the struggle against terrorism. Were that not so, his delegation would have raised the plight of the boat people, the ordeal of hundreds of sea and air passengers and, quite recently, that of the "Achille Lauro" victims of acts of piracy committed by PLO terrorists, as well as the bloody fighting between Shiites and Palestinians in the refugee camps of Beirut.

78. Mr. Charry-Samper (Colombia) took the Chair.

79. Mr. MALDANODO (Observer for Honduras) said that there had always been excellent co-operation between his Government and the High Commissioner, whose dedication and sensitivity would leave a lasting impression in the hearts of Hondurans.

80. Having heard the statements by certain delegations regarding the incident which had occurred on 9 August 1985 in the Salvadorian refugee camps at Colomoncagua, he thought he should correct certain facts which had obviously been received in a distorted form.

81. His Government, incidentally, had been the first to deplore the incident, which had hit the headlines of the national and international press. Over the last six years, Honduras had been receiving large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries trying to escape the crisis prevailing in Central America, with all the consequent economic, political, social and other types of repercussions that that entailed, and had had to take steps to deal with conflicts which might endanger public order. Despite its economic difficulties, Honduras had thus provided humanitarian assistance to such refugees and assisted the staffs of UNHCR and other national, international and non-governmental humanitarian institutions to carry out their duties. The fact

that no representatives of the authorities lived either temporarily or permanently in the refugee camps was evidence of the Government's good faith. Some refugees, however, taking advantage of that situation, had indulged in abuses incompatible with the local laws which they were bound to respect as recipients of asylum in Honduras.

82. It was under those circumstances that, during a mission of inspection conducted on 27 August 1985 in the neighbourhood of the camp, a military patrol had arrested José Antonio Chicas Sánchez, a Salvadorian national, who had in his possession a rifle and ammunition. When he was questioned it emerged that he was a refugee and that some of his compatriots inside the camp were engaged in subversive acts. After trying in vain to contact the UNHCR staff member in charge of protection, the military commander of the area had ordered that the camp be investigated. A group of refugees had reacted violently to the entry of the military, and a corporal had been disarmed and wounded in the leg. It was only logical to think that, without that violent reaction and lack of respect for authority, there would have been no need to deplore the death of the refugee concerned and that of another person or the arrest of 10 persons suspected of acts of subversion. It should be stressed that there had not been any attack and that, in addition, the case in question was an isolated one which did not indicate any systematic policy on the part of his Government, and should not tarnish six years of co-operation and excellent relations with both the refugees and with UNHCR. The refugees from the Colomocagua camp had since been transferred to the Mesa Grande camp, at a reasonable distance from the frontiers, as recommended by UNHCR.

83. According to UNHCR, Honduras was currently harbouring 47,800 refugees distributed among its various regions, of which 19,500 were Salvadorians, 500 Guatemalans and 19,200 Nicaraguans (3,800 Ladinos and 15,400 persons of Indian origin - Miskito and Sumo). In the Bogotá Declaration the World Council of Indigenous Peoples had denounced the treatment of the last-named in their country of origin and the violations of their fundamental rights, which had caused them to leave their homes.

84. His Government supported all the points of the Cartagena Declaration and would accede to the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, to which it referred, once the negotiations of the Contadora Group had been concluded.

85. With regard to the repatriation programme which the Executive Committee had approved at its thirty-first session in 1980 (resolution 18), his Government would be very pleased if the 47,000 refugees currently on its territory were to choose voluntary repatriation. As indicated in the Report on UNHCR Assistance Activities in 1984-1985 (A/AC.96/657), 2,352 refugees, mainly Salvadoreans, had been repatriated as well as 84 Ladinos and 22 Miskitos from Nicaragua, who had freely chosen voluntary repatriation to their country of origin. In the same report, the High Commissioner indicated that a similar number of refugees were expected to choose voluntary repatriation in 1986. The Governments of Honduras and El Salvador had appointed a special delegate who was to serve on the Tripartite Commission responsible for the programme to repatriate the Salvadorian refugees.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.