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held on  
Wednesday, 13 November 1985  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING**

Chairman: Mr. ZADOR (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES  
(continued) (A/39/402 and Add.1-2; A/40/3, A/40/12 and Add.1, A/40/88, A/40/89,  
A/40/117, A/40/135 and Add.1, A/40/267, A/40/425, A/40/491, A/40/492, A/40/501,  
A/40/586, A/40/587, A/40/588, A/40/589, A/40/590, A/40/678 and A/40/705)

(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

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

1. Mr. BAKER (Director, Unit for Special Economic Assistance Programmes, Office for Special Political Questions), introducing the sub-item on assistance to refugees in Africa, said that at the conclusion of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, the Secretary-General had been requested to monitor all follow-up action and to keep the General Assembly informed of developments. The report requested of the Secretary-General was contained in document A/39/401 and its addenda.

2. While some progress had been made in implementing the decisions of the Conference, the situation of refugees had been overshadowed in the past year by drought and famine in Africa, which had also affected refugees. The crisis was not over and the international community must continue to deal with related problems and re-commit itself to efforts to pursue the objectives of the Conference.

3. In that connection, voluntary repatriation remained the ideal solution. If that was not possible, then conditions must be created in the host country to assist the refugees in becoming integrated in the community. Thirdly, the host countries should receive the assistance they required to strengthen their infrastructure in order to deal with the refugee problem. Finally, the international community should provide relief care and maintenance pending durable solutions.

4. On behalf of the Secretary-General, he wished to express his appreciation to the donor countries, the countries of asylum and the Organization of African Unity for assisting in the follow-up activities. The Secretary-General, in co-operation with OAU, UNHCR, UNDP and the international community, was fully committed to pursuing the objectives of the Conference.

5. Mr. KIRDAR (United Nations Development Programme) said that following the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, UNDP had been entrusted with responsibility for following up on the development-oriented, refugee-related projects submitted at the Conference. Its task was to promote that type of assistance to refugees and returnees in the countries of settlement or of origin in Africa. The resident co-ordinators in the 19 African countries concerned had actively promoted the funding of refugee-related development projects, facilitated the flow of relevant information and sought to co-ordinate and link refugee-related projects to ongoing or planned development programmes.

(Mr. Kirdar, UNDP)

6. Following the Conference, donor countries had indicated interest in some two thirds of the 128 projects initially submitted by 14 countries, stressing that in most instances, negotiations and funding would be on a bilateral basis. Since then, five other African countries had prepared another 35 projects. The funding of the 163 refugee-related development projects had been progressing more slowly than many had hoped, partly because attention had been diverted from those longer-term projects to emergency requirements. None the less, progress had indeed been achieved and by June 1985, 30 of the 163 projects were being funded and two new refugee-related development projects had been financed. Most of that assistance was being provided on a bilateral basis. Since preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General, four new projects would be financed by UNDP and two projects had been identified and would be financed from UNDP trust fund resources. One project was being funded by the European Economic Community. Some 30 other projects were under active consideration mostly for bilateral funding and implementation. UNDP was involved in a number of those negotiations, either in a co-ordinating role or as an administrator or earmarked contributions.
7. An analysis of donor response showed that priority was being given to projects which helped to meet some of the major needs of refugees and local populations affected by drought and famine. They included projects relating to water supply, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, health and education. As of 1 July 1985, the Secretary-General had received \$US 7,541,559 for refugee-related development assistance and that money was being administered under a trust fund set up for that purpose by the Administrator of UNDP.
8. In accordance with the recommendations of the Conference, UNDP had sought to co-operate with non-governmental organizations in follow-up activities. Bilateral donors too were funding the implementation of NGO projects. It must be recognized, however, that much remained to be done. UNDP, for its part, was committed to implementing the recommendations adopted at the Conference and to translating them into concrete achievements.
9. Mr. AKYOL (Turkey) said that despite encouraging new developments in Africa and South-East Asia, especially in the search for immediate or durable solutions, in many regions of the world, the countries burdened with a refugee problem were also those least able to finance their own development. In addition, some Governments, confronted with an unfavourable economic situation, continued to adopt restrictive measures so that in the host countries the refugees were increasingly hampered in exercising their fundamental social and economic rights. It was therefore highly important to establish a direct link between development action in those countries and assistance granted to refugees.
10. Of the three durable solutions - voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement - the first was certainly the most desirable, but the most difficult to achieve. In that connection, his delegation noted with satisfaction the voluntary returns of refugees to some countries in South America, Africa and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. His delegation believed that a balance should be struck between the other two durable solutions - local integration and resettlement. Resettlement should not continue to be the solution of last resort,

(Mr. Akyol, Turkey)

so as to relieve the burden on countries of first refuge or transit, which were generally developing countries with many economic, social and population problems. In addition, assistance from the developed countries to developing countries should be continued in order to ease the burden of the presence of refugees in accordance with the principle of equitable burden-sharing. His delegation fully supported the idea that assistance to refugees should be development-oriented in order to enable refugees to contribute to the economic and social life of the host countries.

11. In Africa, the drought had considerably hampered the efforts of UNHCR to find durable solutions, as demonstrated by its appeals for emergency relief funds. In the circumstances, the success of the voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian refugees to Djibouti and other HCR actions in the Sudan, Somalia and various southern African countries merited attention.

12. The number of refugees had remained relatively stable in Central America. His delegation was gratified, on the other hand, by the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Argentina and Chile. In South-West Asia, Pakistan sheltered the greatest number of refugees in the world and it was vital that the international community, through UNHCR, should give generously until the situation in Afghanistan permitted the Afghan refugees to return to their country in safety. In that connection, in the past year, active co-operation had been established between the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNHCR in order to implement the programme for local integration of Afghan refugees. His delegation paid a tribute to Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran for their humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees.

13. In Indo-China, large numbers of refugees continued to be a burden on the countries of first refuge, in particular, Thailand, which had limited resources to devote to them and to the new arrivals of Kampuchean refugees. Turkey, in observance of the principle of non-refoulement was one of a number of European countries which continued to shelter a relatively high number of refugees and to provide transit facilities.

14. His delegation was concerned about the threat to the physical safety of refugees which existed in several regions of the world. It was regrettable that the UNHCR efforts to prevent such acts as military attacks on refugee camps had not been successful. He noted, however, that fewer boats had been victims of piracy in the South China Sea in 1984 and welcomed the continuation of the programme to combat piracy and the participation of the Government of Thailand in that effort.

15. One could not over-emphasize the strictly humanitarian character of assistance to refugees, independently of the political character of the crisis or conflict that had provoked their flight. Political considerations, if brought into assistance activities, would not only delay the application of immediate solutions, but would threaten the very principles which were the foundation of refugee protection. His delegation regretted the restrictive and discriminatory practices which a number of countries had adopted in recent years with regard to the principle of asylum. The most serious violation of the principle of non-refoulement was in the political area. As indicated in the report of the High

(Mr. Akyol, Turkey)

Commissioner, there were countries which hesitated to grant asylum to refugees persecuted in the countries of origin out of fear of compromising their relations with those countries, often neighbours. Those hesitations had even led in some cases to decisions that were pure and simple refoulement, which constituted flagrant violations of the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

16. UNHCR needed the support and solidarity of the international community in order to solve the problems of refugees and the recent appeal launched by the High Commissioner warranted the urgent attention of the international community.

17. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) said that UNHCR was faced with the challenging task of providing protection for millions of unfortunate people who had been forced to seek refuge outside their home countries as a result of the persistence of colonialism, the racism of apartheid, the denial of the right to self-determination, gross violations of human rights, internal conflicts and military aggression and alien occupation. A new and tragic dimension had been added to the refugee problem by natural disasters, including drought and desertification.

18. The essential operation of UNHCR as the focal point for assistance in refugee situations would not have been possible without the generous reponse of donor countries and voluntary organizations and without the close co-operation of the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system. Accordingly, his Government supported all efforts aimed at safeguarding the non-political character of the Office of the High Commissioner. The establishment of that Office had proved to be one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations.

19. While his Government supported the idea of voluntary repatriation of refugees, its realization was contingent on removal of the factors which had caused their flight in the first place. Accordingly, asylum and protection must remain the fundamental concern of the Office of the High Commissioner until such time as genuine voluntary repatriation was possible. UNHCR officials should act cautiously in matters concerning tripartite agreements and avoid appearing to create an environment conducive to "voluntary" repatriation. To act otherwise would be too close to refoulement, which was universally and properly condemned.

20. Somalia strongly supported the emphasis placed by the High Commissioner on the principle of non-refoulement and on the principle that the granting of asylum was a peaceful and humanitarian act, which should not be regarded as unfriendly by any other State.

21. Since the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, there had been a major economic emergency on that continent brought on by the combined effects of widespread and severe drought, adverse world economic conditions and, in some cases, internal conflicts. Many of the Conference objectives remained to be achieved and the level of assistance required to resolve the current refugee crisis had risen significantly. In that connection, he welcomed the Secretary-General's statement that the task of averting the immediate and tragic consequences of drought must not overshadow the need to promote

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

refugee-related development projects. Regrettably, the response of the donor community to requests made at the Conference for specific refugee-related projects had been slow.

22. Somalia urgently needed assistance to strengthen its infrastructure and national services that had been severely overburdened by the refugee presence and therefore looked to the international community for a renewed commitment to burden-sharing.. Earlier flows of refugees in Somalia had been estimated at some 700,000. However, since June 1984, about 150,000 new refugees had sought asylum in Somalia, creating a crisis that had tended to distract attention from long-term planning. Hundreds of lives had been claimed by cholera and other diseases closely related to malnutrition, many of which could have been saved if the Government's appeals to the international community for prompt intervention had been heeded in time.

23. The international community should exert political and diplomatic pressure in dealing with the rootcauses of the destructive and massive refugee problem in the Horn of Africa. With regard to the question of the conditions prevailing in the areas from which the refugees in Somalia had fled, his delegation wished to express serious reservations about paragraph 76 of the generally commendable report of the High Commissioner (A/40/12) and paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/40/587). It was extremely puzzled by the statement that under a registration exercise carried out in the Ogaden, it was said to have been determined that some 317,000 persons had returned to Ogaden camps spontaneously from Somalia during the course of 1983 and 1984. The number of refugees in camps in Somali was monitored by international and voluntary organizations carrying out refugee assistance, and no such exodus had been shown in their reports. His delegation strongly questioned the assumption that large numbers of refugees receiving relief assistance and a measure of security in Somalia had returned to an area decimated by drought, famine and conflict.

24. Along with voluntary repatriation, the need for the local settlement of refugees had also been adopted as Government policy in Somalia. It was intended to help the refugees to produce at least their own food requirements. His Government was fully aware of the demands which the emergency situation in Africa had made on the international community. However, because of that situation, the level of food consumed by the average refugee had been just as low in Somalia as in more publicized crisis areas.

25. The serious financial problems faced by UNHCR were a matter of great concern to all who valued caring for refugees and who sought durable solutions. Without the generosity and support of major donor countries and humanitarian organizations, UNHCR could not be expected to fulfil its humanitarian mandate. His Government therefore endorsed the High Commissioner's plea for increased resources.

26. His delegation also reiterated its belief that a specific international authority should be established to carry out independent verification procedures such as determining the numbers of refugees in host countries, the credentials and numbers of returnees and the conditions relating to the flight, return, protection and safety of all refugees.

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

27. The retirement of the present High Commissioner afforded an opportunity that should not be missed for a thorough review and restructuring of UNHCR in order to take full account of the tragic refugee realities of today's world. His delegation hoped that the new High Commissioner, when appointed, would address himself seriously to those realities.
28. Mr. MAXEY (United Kingdom) said that, while the famine in Africa was due in great measure to natural phenomena, the plight of refugees who had fled from persecution, intolerance, foreign occupation and the denial of their civil and political rights was clearly man-made. His Government called upon all States whose policies had created flows of refugees, to make fundamental reforms and allow the refugees to return home. In the meantime, however, the work of UNHCR remained essential. The Office had maintained its non-political status, and had managed to streamline its operations, and keep down administrative costs. Efficient management and generous donations from the public had enabled UNHCR to cope with the latest emergency in Africa. His Government had been encouraged by UNHCR's revision of its financial requirements and its promotion of co-operation between international organizations on refugee aid, such as the World Bank project in Pakistan.
29. The United Kingdom had contributed £3.4 million to UNHCR general programmes in the current financial year. Another £9 million had been pledged in response to special appeals, and more pledges would be announced at the pledging conference on 15 November. Over £5 million had been allocated to non-governmental organizations involved in projects connected with the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II).
30. His Government was particularly concerned at the plight of Afghan refugees. The United Kingdom had given substantial assistance to the commendable work on behalf of those refugees being undertaken in Iran and Pakistan.
31. There was an alarming trend towards violence against refugees. His Government welcomed the Anti-Piracy Arrangement established by the Government of Thailand and the Rescue at Sea Resettlement Offers (RASRO), as well as UNHCR's insistence on the basic right of non-refoulement. Unfortunately, the Executive Committee of the Programme of UNHCR had not been able to arrive at a set of conclusions on international protection at its recent session.
32. It was essential to find a long-term solution to the refugee problem. Voluntary repatriation was the most desirable option, provided that the refugees' safety was guaranteed. It was also vital to find ways of preventing the human tragedy of refugees: his Government supported the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees, and hoped that it would conclude its work during 1986. The irregular movements of refugees were a growing problem. Countries must determine the exact number of refugees they were responsible for. The conclusions of the UNHCR Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection would benefit all genuine refugees and asylum-seekers.

(Mr. Maxey, United Kingdom)

33. The United Kingdom had already taken in 19,000 Vietnamese refugees, mostly from Hong Kong refugee camps, and was prepared to accept another 550 refugees; it was to be hoped that its decision would encourage other Governments to accept Vietnamese refugees for resettlement. Australia, New Zealand and Luxembourg had already done so. The United Kingdom might then be in a position to take in a further, limited number of refugees from Hong Kong.

34. After paying a tribute to the outgoing High Commissioner, he said that, with the will of the international community behind it, UNHCR could work as a catalyst for change. It could only be as effective as the international community made it.

35. Mr. ZAWAWI (Malaysia) said that, beginning in 1975, Malaysia had seen an influx of hundreds of thousands of Indo-Chinese illegal immigrants and displaced persons seeking refuge and protection. Ten years later, the refugee problem in Malaysia had not lost its urgency, and Malaysia continued to provide humanitarian assistance to those unfortunate people. The much-needed funds intended for the country's social and economic programmes had been used for relief operations, and the problem also had wide domestic political and security implications.

36. The position of the Malaysian Government on the question of illegal Vietnamese refugees was well known: Malaysia would continue to provide humanitarian assistance, such as first transit facilities, to those people pending their resettlement in third countries. As reported in document A/40/12, resettlement in third countries remained one of the primary solutions for the Indo-Chinese refugees. His Government expressed its heartfelt gratitude to the United States, Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and other countries for responding to Malaysia's plea to provide resettlement opportunities and for their generous financial contributions and technical assistance. Perhaps more could be done to relax the rigid criteria for the selection of refugees for resettlement, by basing selection on humanitarian grounds rather than merely on filial ties, occupational ability or previous relationship with the adopting country.

37. The international community was duty-bound to address squarely the question of the root causes of flows of refugees if it was to avert new refugee crises. In that regard, Viet Nam had an important role to play in taking firm measures to stop its people from fleeing the country illegally. Malaysia appealed to Viet Nam to co-operate fully with the High Commissioner and resettlement countries to ensure the smoother and more effective implementation of the Orderly Departure Programme, thus reducing the number of "boat people" and contributing to regional peace and stability.

38. Malaysia was well aware that the refugee problem was not restricted to Asia. The natural calamity that had befallen the peoples of Africa was not only tragic but had increased world awareness that human suffering knew no boundaries. In other regions, thousands of refugees languished in temporary camps, uprooted from their homes because of foreign military aggression and intervention. Pakistan and Iran shouldered the heavy humanitarian responsibility of caring for refugees uprooted from Afghanistan. It was not enough to feed, clothe and provide shelter



(Mr. Zawawi, Malaysia)

to the refugees; the root causes of the calamities that had befallen those people must be analysed and understood, and the international community must apply pressure to the countries of origin to make them assume their international responsibility for averting such exoduses.

39. Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand) paid a tribute to the dedicated efforts and able leadership of the outgoing High Commissioner, Mr. Hartling.

40. As a country of first refuge for hundreds of thousands of Indo-Chinese refugees, Thailand had worked to alleviate the plight of those unfortunate people for more than a decade. The communiqué issued after the 18th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1985 had reiterated that temporary refuge in ASEAN countries had been granted to refugees on the understanding that they would subsequently be resettled in third countries. However, there had never been less than 100,000 refugees and displaced persons in Thailand. The number of Lao and Vietnamese refugees had increased dramatically. He called upon all States to provide resettlement opportunities for refugees, and called upon the countries of origin to promote the orderly departure of refugees and to ensure the safe and voluntary repatriation of those of their nationals who chose to return.

41. Unfortunately, voluntary repatriation, which was the most acceptable solution, had not as yet proved practicable in South-East Asia. However, his delegation welcomed the resumption, on a limited scale, of the UNHCR programme on voluntary repatriation of Lao displaced persons to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. His delegation considered that a local integration programme was not appropriate under the conditions prevailing in Thailand, and that resettlement in third countries or voluntary repatriation was a better solution.

42. Regrettably, in 1984 there had been brutal attacks on Kampuchean refugee encampments along the Thai-Kampuchean border which had caused a new influx of civilian refugees into Thailand. The responsibility rested with the aggressor, and the violation of national sovereignty was particularly deplorable: it must be clearly understood that giving shelter to refugees did not constitute a hostile act.

43. His delegation was gratified to note that attacks on refugee boats had declined. In co-operation with UNHCR, his Government had established the Anti-Piracy Arrangement, which had recently been extended for a third year. However, many incidents still occurred on the high seas: concerted efforts were needed from all States of the region, especially the country responsible for the exodus. His delegation also welcomed the emphasis placed on the rescue of those in distress at sea.

44. His country sympathized with the problems faced by South-West Asian and African countries. It supported follow-up action on the ICARA II conference, particularly in respect of refugee-related development projects, and awaited with interest the report on ICARA II, to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council. The Round Table on Refugee Women, held in Geneva in April 1985, had made an important contribution to the United Nations Decade for Women.

45. Mrs. BAZAROVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the responsibility for the refugee problem lay with those who unleashed war and armed conflict, supported racist régimes and practiced interventionist and neo-colonialist policies. A genuine solution could only be achieved by reducing tension, consolidating peace and restructuring international economic relations. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were driven from South Africa by the racist régime of Pretoria or confined to bantustans where they became refugees in their own country. As a result of the wide-ranging aggression in Lebanon, some 2 million Palestinians were still living in refugee camps.

46. It was alarming to note the increase in the number of refugees being pressed into service as mercenaries, sometimes to fight against their own countries. Such measures exploited the tragic situation of the refugees, and those Governments which followed that practice deserved the most categorical condemnation.

47. It was essential that aid to refugees should not be used for intervention and hostile action against the host States. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics provided considerable assistance to African and other developing countries in order to alleviate their economic problems. In 1984, economic aid alone had amounted to 11 billion roubles, or 1.4 per cent of Soviet GNP. All that assistance was provided without exploiting developing countries or siphoning off their capital, which might put the "aid" provided by Western countries in a better perspective.

48. Mrs. ZOGRAFOU (Greece) said that a new kind of refugee flow had been activated by natural disasters and the flight from starvation, and there had been set-backs in the field of international protection. She expressed the hope that Governments would stand up to their responsibility to assist in preventing violations of such protection, and would co-operate closely with the High Commissioner in initiating action when refugees' rights were threatened. In that respect, the role of the High Commissioner was as crucial as ever.

49. It was encouraging to note that the High Commissioner was devoting an increasing proportion of existing resources to durable solutions. Voluntary repatriation of refugees, or return of displaced persons, remained the most desirable solutions. In many cases, when their plight was a result of foreign invasion and military occupation, it would end only when foreign occupation troops withdrew and normal conditions were restored. In that connection, she noted the case of displaced persons in Cyprus, where approximately 200,000 Greek Cypriots had been forced to flee their homes in 1974 as a result of the Turkish invasion and the resulting occupation of part of their island. She expressed her Government's appreciation for the work done by the High Commissioner in co-ordinating aid programmes for the displaced persons in Cyprus.

50. She joined previous speakers in welcoming the special attention given by the High Commissioner to the particular problems of refugee and displaced women. Lastly, she noted that, in recognition of the importance of voluntary contributions for refugee assistance, the Government of Greece was pledging \$100,000, or an 11 per cent increase over the previous year's contribution.

51. Mr. PASTOR (Honduras) said that Honduras, although it was not a signatory of international treaties concerning refugees, had shown a humanitarian attitude by giving asylum to tens of thousands of people, mainly women and children, who had emigrated from other countries to Honduras in search of peace and security. On Honduran territory, one out of every 100 inhabitants was a refugee, making Honduras the largest Latin American refugee host country after Mexico, and placing it in a difficult position because it was one of the relatively least developed countries in Latin America.
52. As part of the refugee flows from neighbouring States, some elements were filtering in which had been involved in conflicts outside Honduras and which had abused the autonomy which the Government of Honduras had conceded from the beginning to the refugee camps, where there were no Honduran Government officials. The refugees themselves had appointed co-ordinators for the various camps to represent their concerns and needs, a process which had not always yielded positive results. However, that did not mean Honduras had waived its sovereign right to control and exercise jurisdiction in the camps. Anyone who thought that the status of refugee conferred immunity from legal action on the part of the host country was under a misapprehension. The Government of Honduras could not allow those who entered the country seeking its protection, ostensibly as non-combatant civilians, to attempt to convert humanitarian shelter into an instrument for settling conflicts involving other countries. His Government would continue to study ways of exercising greater control over the camps and would continue to collaborate with UNHCR in its humanitarian work as long as it did not affect Honduras' legitimate sovereign rights.
53. Thus far it had been the Government's policy not to establish admission quotas or a maximum period of stay and refugees had not been discriminated against on the basis of nationality, ideology or ethnic group. As a gesture of confidence and good will, the Government had entrusted the co-ordination of the refugee programme to UNHCR officials.
54. He stressed the need to deal with the basic causes of refugee flows, because an understanding of those causes could help to reduce the suffering of the refugees, especially women and children. His delegation had also taken note of the full support expressed by many previous speakers of the specific provisions concerning refugees contained in the draft Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America. He noted that voluntary repatriation under the auspices of tripartite commissions was one of the High Commissioner's recommendations for achieving lasting solutions. The Government of El Salvador had already appointed a representative to the Tripartite Commission which would deal with voluntary repatriation of Salvadoran refugees, and the Government of Honduras had also appointed a representative. Only the High Commissioner's representative now had to be appointed. Assistance continued to be given to more than 15,000 Nicaraguan Indian refugees for their local resettlement in rural villages along the three main rivers in the region; it was hoped that most of the Nicaraguan refugees would soon be self-sufficient in terms of basic food needs.
55. His Government expressed its solidarity with the peoples of Africa who had fled their countries of origin because their lives and safety were in danger. He

(Mr. Pastor, Honduras)

drew attention to the plight of Djibouti, which, despite its small size and weak economy, had sheltered thousands of refugees, and to the generous support being given to refugees by other African countries and by Asian countries, such as Pakistan and Thailand. However, the Government of Honduras recognized that in order to solve the problems of refugees it was necessary to deal with the structural roots of those problems.

56. His Government was therefore firmly convinced that a definitive solution to the refugee question in Central America could be found only by achieving a just and lasting peace through national reconciliation in the countries having internal conflicts, and by strengthening democracy and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

57. Mr. HUANG Jiahua (China) said that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the international community had achieved marked progress in the past year in providing relief and international protection to refugees. While his delegation was pleased to see those results, it felt deeply concerned over the present state of the refugee problem. The total number of refugees had been on the increase, and new problems kept arising while old ones remained unsolved. Military attacks on refugee camps had occurred in various parts of the world, and "boat people" were still drifting on the South China Sea, crying desperately for help. Moreover, in the past two years, the increasingly acute shortage of funds for the refugee aid programme had led to a serious financial crisis in UNHCR. Some of its projects had had to be suspended, and a number of pledges had yet to be fulfilled.

58. China had always held that the refugee problem must be tackled from two angles, namely, providing international protection and material relief on the one hand, and eliminating the root causes on the other. Only when the country committing aggression against Kampuchea stopped its acts of aggression and expansion and gave up its policy of exporting refugees could the tide of refugees in Indo-China be stemmed; only when foreign military occupation of Afghanistan was terminated could the several million Afghan refugees return to their homeland in safety and honour; only when Israel ceased its aggression and expansion could the refugee problem of the Middle East be completely solved; and only when the system of apartheid was eliminated and colonial rule over Namibia was ended would it be possible to achieve a satisfactory solution in southern Africa. UNHCR, limited by its mandate, was of course unable to solve those political issues directly. However, in formulating policies and dealing with specific refugee problems, it should try to do whatever it could to help to eliminate the root causes of the refugee problem.

59. In recent years, UNHCR had done a great deal to provide better international protection for refugees. Its Executive Committee, which had recently concluded its thirty-sixth session in Geneva, had reached consensus on several documents regarding international protection. Emphasis had been placed on the consideration of durable solutions to the refugee problem. Although many countries held that voluntary repatriation should be treated as the first option, local settlement as

(Mr. Huang Jiahua, China)

the second and resettlement as the last, his delegation felt that specific problems called for specific analysis. He noted the limited number of cases of voluntary repatriation in recent years, some of which had been successful. In terms of the total refugee population in the world, however, the necessary conditions did not yet exist for the voluntary repatriation of most refugees. The option of local settlement should also be based on feasibility. Local settlement would be far too difficult for underdeveloped countries, where the majority of refugees were concentrated. In view of the current realities, then, efforts for resettlement - the third option - should not be relaxed. It was especially necessary to explore new resettlement opportunities for refugees who had been in the Indo-Chinese refugee camps for a long time.

60. An important guideline for the humanitarian work of the United Nations concerning refugees was international co-operation and burden-sharing. The developed countries were duty-bound to share the burden of the many poor and over-populated developing countries which had become refugee host countries or countries of first refuge.

61. The Chinese Government and people profoundly sympathized with the refugees living in dire misery and supported United Nations humanitarian efforts to assist them. As a member of the UNHCR Executive Committee, China had actively participated in the international community's activities in rendering assistance and protection to refugees. Despite its stringent economy and heavy population burden, China had generously accepted 280,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and had provided material and financial assistance to refugees from Afghanistan and Kampuchea, and to those in Africa. As in the past, China would continue to make its contribution to the humanitarian cause of refugees.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.