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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOUASSI (Togo)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN EL SALVADOR

1. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of the Committee, expressed sympathy and solidarity with the people and Government of El Salvador for the anguish caused to that country by the recent earthquake.

AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION TO AVERT NEW FLOWS OF REFUGEES: NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/41/324, A/SPC/41/L.5)

2. Mr. AOKI (Japan) associated himself with the Chairman's expression of sympathy for the people and Government of El Salvador. The Japanese Government was sending a medical team at once to assist in the relief operations and hoped that the international community would furnish substantial assistance to El Salvador.

3. In connection with the agenda item under discussion, he was gratified that the report submitted by the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees (A/41/324) contained very important and constructive recommendations. In particular, the report reminded Member States of the need to respect their obligations under the Charter and other existing international instruments by refraining from the threat or use of force, from intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of a State and to settle their disputes by peaceful means. He exhorted States to promote human rights and not to deny them to certain population groups or discriminate against those groups. States should do everything in their power to prevent new flows of refugees, particularly by co-operating with each other and by encouraging co-operation at the regional and subregional level. Whenever there were new flows of refugees, States should respect the norms and principles of international law, including the right of refugees to return freely to their own country and the right to receive adequate compensation, where appropriate. Finally, in cases of natural disaster, States should assist the countries affected. The principal organs of the United Nations should endeavour to make full use of the powers granted them by the Charter to prevent massive new flows of refugees. His delegation welcomed the recommendations which defined the role and responsibilities of the Secretary-General in that field.

4. He paid a tribute to the seriousness and sense of responsibility with which the members of the Group had performed their task. They had demonstrated that the intergovernmental organs of the United Nations could be effective in achieving important agreements. They had been able to overcome political, ideological, geographical, economic and social differences.

5. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that all delegations would vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.5 of which his country was a co-sponsor.

6. Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand) said that the international community was seriously concerned by the refugee problem, not only for humanitarian reasons but also because of the heavy burdens which refugee flows imposed on the international community which was ill-prepared for phenomena of such magnitude. There were currently in the world more than 10 million refugees who were almost completely

(Mr. Kasemsri, Thailand)

dependent on the international community for survival. In Thailand alone, there were currently 400,000 refugees and displaced persons from Kampuchea, Laos and Viet Nam; altogether about 1 million refugees and displaced persons had sought temporary refuge in Thailand during the past decade.

7. For the countries of first refuge, which included Thailand, and which often had only limited resources, the effects of such refugee movements could be disastrous. They could undermine the political and social stability and the economic development of entire regions, thus endangering international peace and security. In short, the refugee problem had a negative impact on everybody: the refugee himself, the receiving State, the country of origin and the international community at large.

8. It was for that reason that his delegation had supported the initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany for the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the problem. Recognizing that the Group would need the co-operation of countries of origin, Thailand had welcomed the decision of one country of origin, which was a root cause of refugee exodus in South-East Asia, to join the Group.

9. In order to facilitate the work of the Group, the Thai expert had agreed to address only new refugee situations rather than new refugee flows from existing situations. Indeed, discussion of the latter point had proved difficult and would have made any progress impossible. Accordingly, to avert deadlock, the Group had agreed to adopt a constructive and pragmatic future-oriented approach designed to enhance international co-operation. That approach, however, in no way detracted from legitimate concerns over existing refugee situations and the need to find urgent solutions to them. The Group considered that it would be an illusion to believe that solutions for the future could be found without profiting from the lessons of the past.

10. The root causes of massive refugee flows were well known: the policies and practices of racist and oppressive régimes, aggression, colonialism, apartheid, foreign domination, intervention and occupation. Hence there was a need, in the view of the Group of Governmental Experts, to include in the consideration of international issues and situations the question of how to avert new flows of refugees. The report also emphasized the need for States to respect international obligations and for United Nations organs to make fuller use of their respective competences under the Charter in that regard.

11. The refugee problem was not only the result of tragic conflicts, it was also a potentially dangerous problem in itself, with destabilizing effects extending far beyond the point of origin. Only with improved international co-operation could the problem be solved.

12. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the Committee would adopt unanimously the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report as well as draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.5, of which Thailand was a co-sponsor.

13. Mr. GOLEMANOV (Bulgaria) noted with satisfaction that the Group of Governmental Experts had been able to submit its report after eight sessions. He welcomed in particular the spirit of co-operation and the constructive efforts of all members of the Group, which constituted a positive example of the need to seek, and the possibility of finding, solutions to the problems before the United Nations through serious dialogue and co-operation in accordance with the Charter.
14. His delegation agreed with the conclusion of the Group of Governmental Experts that the causes and factors which produced massive flows of refugees were the result of a number of political, economic and social problems which were often interdependent and were influenced by the overall international situation. It therefore followed that measures aimed at strengthening international security, developing good-neighbourly relations and creating an atmosphere of confidence would contribute to improving international co-operation to avert massive new flows of refugees.
15. Most of the recommendations formulated by the Group were focused in one form or another on that important aspect of the problem. His delegation was convinced that, by taking those recommendations into account, Member States would make a useful contribution to promoting international co-operation to avert new massive flows of refugees.
16. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan) said that 25 per cent of the five million refugees in Africa were in the Sudan and were settled in rural areas with some large camps located on the eastern, western and southern borders of the country.
17. His Government was sympathetic to the lot of persons who, for reasons beyond their volition, had been forced to leave their homes; it had therefore always insisted that the problem should be approached from a purely humanitarian point of view and should not be used for political purposes.
18. Sudan, faced with a difficult world economic situation, lacking financial and technical means and adequate health, social, educational and other services, and exposed to the effects of a serious drought, had not been able to achieve the goals which it had set for agricultural and animal production. Nevertheless, the Sudanese authorities, making full use of the meagre resources at their disposal, had continued their strenuous efforts to ensure the survival of several hundred thousand refugees and the distribution of food supplies and other resources had become their principal concern in the border areas in question.
19. Throughout the years, the massive influx of refugees had obstructed the country's economic and social development plans and had had a disastrous impact on security and stability in the border areas.
20. For all those reasons, Sudan attached primary importance to a co-ordinated and constructive effort by the international community to prevent new refugee flows. The recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts pointed in the same direction. Their adoption could not fail to provide the community of States with

(Mr. Idris, Sudan)

an excellent instrument for co-operation in the area. It was for that reason that his delegation hoped that draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.5 would be adopted unanimously.

21. Mr. SANCHEZ (Philippines) expressed, on behalf of his delegation, its deepest condolences to the people of El Salvador, who had been stricken by a violent earthquake.

22. His delegation greatly appreciated the work of the Group of Experts and the principled and future-oriented approach of the report. The refugee problem not only aggravated the difficulties of Governments, destabilized entire regions and was a threat to international peace, it caused indescribable suffering to millions of people and did great violence to human dignity.

23. The report of the Group of Experts drew attention to the root causes of the refugee flows and pointed to the existence of an entire body of international legal norms and instruments which should direct the efforts of States to alleviate the problem and prevent its recurrence.

24. The massive flows of refugees resulted less from natural disasters than from acts arising out of the policies of States and known as oppression, repression, aggression, colonialism, apartheid, and foreign domination, intervention and occupation. For that reason, States must adhere scrupulously, in the conduct of their domestic and foreign affairs, to the principles on which human rights and international morality were based. It was necessary to strengthen co-operation between States and collaboration with the organs of the United Nations, which must be informed as quickly as possible of all new developments. Those organs must make full use of their powers under the Charter.

25. As a country directly exposed to refugee problems which frequently experienced natural disasters, the Philippines fully appreciated the value of the analysis contained in the report of the Group of Experts and, in order to demonstrate its support for the Group's recommendations, it had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.5.

26. Mr. OKELY (Australia) said that since 1945 Australia had received some 440,000 refugees, who had made an important contribution to the country. In addition to providing aid to refugees as a receiving country, Australia participated in carrying out international programmes under the auspices of the United Nations and other organizations.

27. Draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.5, of which Australia was a co-sponsor, was the result of a long and difficult process aimed at determining the means to improve international co-operation in order to avert new massive flows of refugees, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Group contained in the report (A/41/324) deserved the support of the Committee. His delegation particularly favoured the recommendations on enhancing the role which might be played by the Secretary-General. Australia would prefer the adoption of provisions enabling the

(Mr. Okely, Australia)

Secretary-General to appoint a special representative to monitor massive flows of refugees, collect relevant data, advise the Governments of receiving countries and mediate between those countries and the countries of origin.

28. His delegation also supported the other recommendations of the Group of Experts, particularly the one urging Member States to recognize their obligations to avoid creating the conditions which were likely to precipitate new massive flows of refugees.

29. His Government would continue, as in the past, to receive refugees and help them resettle in the country. It believed, however, that there was an increasing need to find, at the international level, durable solutions to the problem of refugees other than resettlement.

30. Lastly, he hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

31. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation joined all other delegations which had expressed their condolences to the people of El Salvador, which had suffered a violent earthquake.

32. Turning to the item under consideration, he stressed that the massive flows of refugees resulted from an entire range of complex and often interrelated economic, social and political problems which were linked to the international economic situation. Nevertheless, their root causes undeniably lay in the policies of aggression, national and racial oppression, apartheid, acts of foreign intervention and the creation of hotbeds of tension. If States wished to eliminate those causes, they must recognize an obvious truth: international relations must be based on strict respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. States must make a unified effort to ensure the normalization of the international situation, strengthen security, confidence and good-neighbourly relations because only by acting in a responsible manner and showing political realism would the international community be able to avert new flows of refugees. The solution to the problem was based on the conclusion of mutually acceptable agreements between the States directly concerned, free of diktat or outside interference.

33. Among the main factors causing refugee flows, mention should also be made of the difficult economic situation which many developing countries were experiencing, the colonial and the neo-colonial exploitation to which they were subjected and their unfavourable position in the world economic system. With regard to the economic aspect, the definitive solution to the problem depended on a radical restructuring of the international economic order in order to establish a system which was egalitarian, equitable and based on very broad and mutually beneficial co-operation.

34. His country agreed that the Charter and the other important United Nations documents contained a body of norms and principles of international law whose implementation in good faith would surely help resolve the problem. The United Nations system had a vast apparatus geared to solving political, economic, social and humanitarian problems and in implementing the recommendations of the Group of Experts that apparatus should be used fully and effectively.

35. Mr. ELEIH EILE ETIAN (Cameroon) said that the problem of refugees was one of the humanitarian questions of greatest concern of our era. That concern was even more acute in Africa, the continent which currently had the greatest number of refugees and where the causes of that situation were far from being eliminated.
36. Many Africans fled their countries because elementary human rights, the right to liberty, security and well-being, were neither guaranteed nor respected there. Without interfering in the so-called internal affairs of States, the United Nations could not ignore such situations, which might cause new flows of refugees. The Group of Experts had pointed out that when populations were confronted with acts of aggression, foreign domination, armed intervention and occupation, they had no recourse but to flee their country. That was what had happened in Chad, many of whose nationals had taken refuge in Cameroon. As the Cameroonian Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated in the general debate, a just and speedy solution to the tragedy of Chad would make it possible to avert new massive flows of refugees from that country.
37. The practices of the iniquitous and criminal régime of South Africa and its extension into Namibia caused the greatest movements of refugees on record in Africa. Deprived of their most basic civil rights, humiliated and dehumanized, the blacks in South Africa were refugees in their own country. By striving for the immediate and unconditional independence of Namibia and the dismantling of apartheid, the international community would be able not only to avert new massive flows of refugees, but also to create conditions enabling those who had left those two countries to return. All types of pressure aimed at making the Pretoria criminals listen to reason must be brought to bear.
38. Lastly, he said that his delegation was a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.5.
39. Mr. RUIZ-CABAÑAS (Mexico) said that his country had carefully studied the report of the Group of Governmental Experts and noted with satisfaction that the Group had clearly defined the phenomenon of refugee flows, so that it would not be confused with other massive population movements such as the movements of migrant workers and their families.
40. His delegation felt, like the Group of Experts, that it was most often political factors which caused massive flows of refugees, while recognizing that certain economic factors and natural phenomena also contributed to that phenomenon.
41. His delegation fully supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Group. Respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would help avert new massive flows of refugees. Lastly, his delegation felt that all action by the Secretary-General in that field must be taken within the framework of constant communication with the States concerned and with due regard for the mandates of the United Nations organs competent to deal with those questions.