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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 463rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 7 October 1991, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. AZIKIWE (Nigeria)

Chairman: Mr. RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN declared open the forty-second session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. After welcoming Her Royal Highness Princess Märtha Louise of Norway and all those present, he noted that the current session of the Executive Committee was taking place in a context of considerable improvement in the international political climate. Times were changing, more hopefully perhaps than at any other period in history. Regrettably, there had also been disappointments, since a time of change was inevitably a time of uncertainty, turmoil and fear as well as of hope. The challenge for the Executive Committee was to ensure that the changes taking place were channelled towards finding durable solutions to the refugee problem.
2. Since the Committee's forty-first session the plight of refugees had continued to assume crisis proportions, especially in the developing countries, as a result of an ever-growing increase in their numbers and of the inadequacy of the resources available to cover UNHCR's activities. New emergencies had arisen, with their dramatic toll of human lives and perennial suffering. The protection and welfare of refugees were equally at stake; they were problems that must be tackled urgently and conclusively. UNHCR had to try to stem the tide of refugees and to care for those who had gone into forced exile, as well as to adopt an imaginative and practical approach to ensure their eventual voluntary repatriation.
3. The increase in the responsibilities and tasks entrusted to the High Commissioner's Programme was a sad testimony of the present times. In October 1990 there had been approximately 15 million refugees. Since then the global caseload had increased by 2 million. Urgent measures had to be taken to mobilize humanitarian assistance, particularly food. A great deal had been said about emergency humanitarian assistance, especially in the context of enhancing the United Nations ability to deal with the complex situation more effectively, more speedily and in a coordinated manner. While the goals of enhanced coordination and efficiency were shared by all, Governments, especially those of donor countries, must make available to the international humanitarian agencies the means required for them to carry out their tasks, and the agencies, for their part, must demonstrate a willingness to adapt to current realities and be receptive to new thinking and approaches.
4. The situation in the Persian Gulf, the Horn of Africa and southern Africa were vivid examples. He himself had visited refugee camps in Ethiopia, Malawi and Guinea. His impression was that UNHCR faced a critical dilemma as to how to respond to the legitimate needs of the helpless refugees with the scarce resources at its disposal. He earnestly hoped that the donor community would give prompt and adequate attention to those emergency areas in order to avoid a situation which could lead to a massive human tragedy.

5. Thanks were due to UNHCR's staff, especially those working in refugee camps, who had performed well in a very harsh environment, notwithstanding the shortage of relief supplies compounded by financial constraints. In 1991 the High Commissioner, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, had been confronted with some of the severest challenges that the Office had ever faced, and she had dealt with them with commendable determination and dedication.

6. On the fortieth anniversary of UNHCR's existence, new methods and common approaches for eliminating the causes of refugee flows must be sought. Fortunately, the Programme had gained a great deal of useful experience over the past years and thus had a much clearer determination to make the decisions needed for an effective response to refugee needs. Global refugee problems could no longer be viewed from a regional perspective and the political will to eliminate the unprecedented wave of new refugees must be marshalled. Millions of people, particularly from Afghanistan and in southern Africa, the Horn of Africa and South East Asia had spent too many years in limbo waiting for the international community to put an end to their plight. The ultimate protection for refugees was to find a durable solution to their problems. In 1990, considerable progress had been made in the repatriation operations to Namibia, in Central America, and between Angola and Zaire, while preparations for eventual repatriation to Afghanistan, Somalia and Ethiopia were well advanced. Regrettably, many long-term refugees continued to live in exile, waiting for a solution to be provided through the assistance of the international community, especially the donor community. Current trends clearly indicated that the world might be moving into a new era in which greater attention would be paid to prevention, but finding durable solutions should not be seen in isolation from protection. He therefore noted with satisfaction the report of the Working Group on Solutions and Protection, which had discussed key substantive issues and had taken important decisions, knowing that the outcome of its deliberations would have a direct impact on the well-being of millions of displaced persons. Congratulations were due to all participants in the Working Group, whose task was to deal with the immediate challenges intelligently and, at the same time, not to lose sight of the longer-term goals and possibilities.

7. If the international community failed to resolve the problems of abject poverty and under-development and to institutionalize the promotion and enjoyment of all human rights, its search for durable solutions to the refugee problem would be futile. The complementarity of refugee aid and development could not be overemphasized. More attention needed to be paid to incorporating development components into refugee projects and to catering for refugee needs in development activities, since enhanced economic development, together with the observance of all human rights, would provide durable solutions and thus reduce the number of refugees. The international community must take up that challenge. Flagrant violations of human rights could endanger both national and international peace, since people would always flee from oppression and tyranny. The instances of the causal relationship between human rights violations and new refugee flows were abundant and worldwide.

8. Finally, the Executive Committee should renew its appeal to all States which had not yet done so to accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The lofty ideals enshrined in the 1951 Convention could be safeguarded while, at the same time,

they could be made more relevant to the complex reality of current refugee situations. It might be necessary to bring the provisions of the Convention into line with the broadened mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner.

9. Regional instruments, too, played an important role in the protection of refugees, and their promulgation should be encouraged where they did not yet exist. Wider accession to, and faithful implementation of, those instruments should be encouraged, as well as the promotion of national legislation on the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers.

10. The commendable role played by non-governmental organizations should also be recognized. Their humanitarian activities should be seen as complementary. Some of them, apart from supplying relief materials, had carried out useful studies in areas of direct concern to UNHCR, which should continue to develop closer cooperation with them for the benefit of refugees in general.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (item 2 of the provisional agenda)

11. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Chairman.

12. Mr. MAHIGA (United Republic of Tanzania) nominated Mr. Riedmatten (Switzerland).

13. Mrs. RUESTA DE FURTER (Venezuela) and Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) seconded the nomination.

14. Mr. Riedmatten (Switzerland) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

15. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited members to nominate candidates for the office of Vice-Chairman.

16. Mr. LANG (Austria) nominated Mr. Lanus (Argentina).

17. Mr. KHACHADPAI BURUSAPATANA (Thailand) and Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco) seconded the nomination.

18. Mr. Lanus (Argentina) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

19. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited members to nominate candidates for the office of Rapporteur.

20. Mr. SHANNON (Canada) nominated Mr. Yishan Zhang (China).

21. Mr. SEMICHI (Algeria) seconded the nomination.

22. Mr. Yishan Zhang (China) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

23. Mr. Riedmatten (Switzerland) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

24. The CHAIRMAN warmly welcomed Mrs. Sadako Ogata, High Commissioner for Refugees. Rarely had any of her predecessors assumed office in such difficult circumstances. Since her arrival at Geneva in early 1991 she had been faced with crises and problems of considerable scope and complexity, and with her tenacity, devotion and deep sense of human values she had earned the respect of all those called upon to cooperate with her.

25. Almost 30 years previously, when a student at the University of Geneva, he had been invited to attend a few meetings of the Executive Committee. Looking back on that experience, which had been followed by a brief period with UNHCR's legal service, he was able to realize the fundamental changes that had taken place within UNHCR since the early 1960s. At that time the work of the Programme had been mainly concerned with refugees from the Second World War, within a relatively simple, well-known and predictable legal and political framework. The current situation was very different. UNHCR was increasingly called upon to work in situations in which refugees represented only a minority of persons fleeing from natural or man-made disasters, only a minority of those who were undeniably in need of protection or material assistance. Unfortunately, the current migratory flows were tending to become one of the most striking, and also distressing, characteristics of the present time. Whatever their causes, the international community could not remain indifferent to them because of their extent, their political consequences and the human suffering which they reflected.

26. Distressing as it might be, the situation was, paradoxically, also one of hope. Firstly, the upheavals in international relations had, in certain cases, created a situation which, for the first time in many years, gave legitimate ground for hope that some crises could be resolved and that the refugees which they had produced would be able to return to their countries. Secondly, those upheavals, together with certain crises, had led to a very extensive debate on emergency humanitarian mechanisms, their purpose, and their modes of operation. It was essential that such an opportunity to improve and refine the mechanisms available to the international community should not be missed. The discussion was of direct concern to UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies, and it was gratifying to note that, under the High Commissioner's leadership, reflection on the subject was progressing rapidly. Opinions as to how to solve the many problems facing UNHCR, as to how to mobilize the resources needed for its activities, and as to its future role or the precise place which it should occupy within the United Nations system were not necessarily uniform within the international community. It was, nevertheless, encouraging that basic thinking on all those issues had been initiated. He was confident that the Executive Committee would deal with them in a constructive spirit, bearing constantly in mind that the ultimate aim of its deliberations was to find a solution for the thousands of men, women and children for which UNHCR often represented the only hope. In that difficult task the Committee could certainly rely on the professionalism, devotion and self-sacrifice of the High Commissioner and her staff and of many non-governmental organizations.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (item 3 of the provisional agenda) (A/AC.96/XLII/L.1)

27. The provisional agenda (A/AC.96/XLII/L.1) was adopted.

28. The CHAIRMAN suggested that as in previous years, the Executive Committee should consider applications from observer Governments to participate in the informal meetings of the Executive Committee and its Sub-Committees under agenda item 7.

29. It was so decided.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4)

30. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed all those present to the session of the Executive Committee. She extended a special welcome to H.R.H. Princess Märtha Louise of Norway who had become a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, and to Barbara Hendricks who had just returned from a visit to Thailand as Goodwill Ambassador.

31. She looked forward to continuing with the Bureau the close cooperation she had enjoyed with the outgoing Chairman and Bureau. The outgoing Chairman's field trips were indicative of his own and indeed the Committee's close involvement in and active support for refugee matters which would be more than ever necessary.

32. The work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was a mirror of the world itself. In an age where it was sometimes difficult to see whether news was triggered by events, or events by the news media, it was important for an institution like UNHCR to have both the capacity to respond promptly to and to grasp the implications of the changes in the surrounding world. In that changed and changing world, in particular, UNHCR's operational capacity must be balanced by an appropriate policy formulation capability. Although she had only been in office for eight months, that period had, in the opinion of many, been truly unprecedented in many respects.

33. In the Persian Gulf, following the largest and fastest refugee exodus in recent times, all but some 70,000 of the 1.5 million Iraqis who had fled had returned; however, some 500,000 people despite having returned, were still displaced. In the Horn of Africa, massive humanitarian operations had had to substitute for more constructive economic and social development efforts, and the situation there gave rise to a mixture of hope and concern. In Europe, the free movements of people that had only recently been seen as the harbinger of political change in the East had now become the source of deep disquiet, and occasional fear in the West, where growing numbers of asylum seekers had stretched existing procedures to their limits. On the other hand, the countries of Eastern Europe, which had until recently been producers of refugees, were now receiving them; she believed that it should now be possible to look at the application of the "cessation clause" in that region. She welcomed the countries of Eastern Europe that had joined the work of the Executive Committee. She also welcomed their accession to, or their

intention to accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol; those acts underlined the continued relevance of the refugee instruments in the post cold war era.

34. The year 1991 had been marked not only by exodus but also by opportunities for returns. The previous month she had signed an agreement with the Government of South Africa paving the way for a UNHCR presence there and the safe return of exiles. UNHCR was also standing in the wings ready to repatriate Western Saharans to participate in the referendum on the future of the Territory. In Cambodia, as the lead agency for voluntary repatriation, UNHCR was accelerating its preparations to keep pace with the rapid and positive political developments, although further action was hampered by inadequate response to the Secretary-General's appeal, the previous year, for \$US 33 million for preparatory arrangements. She strongly urged Governments to make immediate and generous contributions.

35. In other parts of the world, solutions were going almost unnoticed. In Central America, regional peace initiatives and the CIREFCA process had allowed large numbers of refugees to return home, and the last refugee camp for Nicaraguans in Costa Rica would shortly be closing. UNHCR had established a presence in Eritrea as a prelude to significant returns from Sudan. The peace agreement in Angola made it realistic to plan for the return of 300,000 refugees early the following year. A Tripartite Commission, comprising Burundi, Tanzania and UNHCR, was planning the return of some 94,000 refugees to Burundi. Tripartite discussions between Laos, Thailand and UNHCR were expected to lead to the voluntary return of some 55,000 Laotians over the next few years. Returns to Viet Nam currently exceeded 13,000, and the outflow from that country had subsided considerably, with the notable exception of arrivals to Hong Kong. Consultations were continuing in order to end the stalemate in finding a dignified and humane solution for those who were determined not to be refugees, and she was hopeful that a consensus could soon be reached to allow all those who had not qualified as refugees to return home in safety and dignity. In Afghanistan and Liberia too, despite the climate of insecurity, large numbers of refugees had returned to their countries.

36. New emergencies, repatriation operations or prospective return movements, as well as ongoing care and maintenance programmes had created the highest ever UNHCR programme requirements. Whereas at the end of 1990 the expected total expenditure in 1991 had been estimated at \$US 560 million, the current projected total needs for 1991 amounted to \$US 982.5 million. A year of unprecedented needs had been matched by an equally unprecedented response and donors had made available \$US 785 million in voluntary contributions. She was deeply grateful for that support, and saw it not only as a sign of confidence in UNHCR, but as a clear commitment on the part of the international community to participate in an effort of solidarity and burden-sharing to alleviate the plight of the 17 million refugees under UNHCR's care. The contribution of the countries of asylum to that international effort was immeasurable.

37. She was acutely conscious that UNHCR's performance must measure up to the confidence placed in it by the international community. One could appreciate the strains on a bureaucracy which in the course of 15 months had had three High Commissioners and, within a period of 18 months, had gone through a

retrenchment exercise followed by a 60 per cent increase in its activity. The administrative and management requirements to respond to the record needs of the past year had been staggering. She had been impressed by the patience and commitment of UNHCR staff, many of whom risked their personal safety in difficult field situations. She wished to record a special tribute to six Somali and Ethiopian colleagues who had lost their lives during the recent upheavals in their countries. UNHCR's effectiveness depended heavily on the commitment and contributions of a motivated staff guided by competent senior managers, at the appropriate level, as she had pointed out in her Note on the Review of the Classification of the Directors' Posts. She was eminently aware of the need to address a range of personnel issues that had gone unattended as UNHCR had concentrated on meeting the demands of an exceptional year.

38. As the fortieth anniversary year of UNHCR drew to a close, issues of migration and refugees had become an increasingly important and essential component in formulating a more open and just world order. The ending of the cold war had given rise to new challenges, with on the one hand risks of further displacement as nationalistic, ethnic and religious tensions flared up, and on the other immense opportunities for solutions in the changing climate of multilateralism. At the same time, stagnant refugee situations of Afghans, Mozambicans and Liberians festered, eroding and impeding regional peace. She believed that UNHCR must chart a forward-looking strategy which focused on prevention and solutions and addressed the totality of the refugee problem, from exodus and relief to return and reintegration. Such a strategy had three aims.

39. The first aim was to improve UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response mechanism. In addition to building its own capacity, UNHCR was entering into agreements with Scandinavian Governments and non-governmental organizations for access to their capacities, in terms of staff and equipment. The proposals submitted at the current session would not only enable UNHCR to respond to refugee emergencies, but could also contribute to a United Nations system-wide emergency response to large and complex humanitarian disasters. UNHCR's recent experience in the Persian Gulf area and in the Horn of Africa had underscored the clear need for an arrangement that fully utilized the political and humanitarian potential of the United Nations, while assuring a coordinated operational response, whose goal should be to facilitate cooperation, and not to add to the bureaucratic layer of control. There should be a standby arrangement for funds, personnel and equipment supported by a standing inter-agency secretariat. In responding to emergencies, their most vulnerable victims, women and children, should not be forgotten. With the example of the Coordinator for Refugee Women in mind, she intended to appoint as soon as possible a Coordinator for Refugee Children, thanks to the support of the Government of Norway. It was painfully obvious that despite some useful policy guidelines developed in the past few years on refugee women and children, the Office still had a long way to go in translating policies into systematic concrete action. Another vulnerable element in emergencies was the environment. Economizing on refugee assistance in the short term might incur prohibitive environmental costs in the long term. The impact of large numbers of refugees on the environment, as illustrated in Malawi and in Pakistan, underscored the need to give greater consideration to environmental

issues. She hoped that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro the following year would pay attention to the link between population movements, the environment and development.

40. The second goal was to pursue every opportunity for voluntary repatriation. The right of refugees to return to their homeland, must be given as much recognition as the right to seek asylum abroad. Renewed confidence in the ability of the United Nations to tackle global challenges was opening up new prospects for peace around the world. The prevention and solution of refugee problems was inextricably linked to those peace-building and peace-keeping efforts. She saw 1992 as the year for voluntary repatriation. However, the brighter prospects for the return of many refugees did not allay her concern about the kind of life to which they were expected to return. Her recent visit to Ethiopia, to which refugees had returned to escape fighting in Somalia, only to find themselves hungry and homeless, led her to ask how long they would remain, in the absence of any prospects and whether UNHCR would be confronted with returnee emergencies just as it now faced refugee emergencies.

41. Large-scale repatriation could only succeed if there was a concerted international effort to create proper conditions for return. Most of the countries to which refugees were returning had been devastated by war, and already had large numbers of internally displaced persons. Returning refugees could only be properly reintegrated if there were comprehensive programmes for political, economic and social construction or reconstruction. Successful voluntary repatriation went beyond the mandate or resources of UNHCR alone. The Office was not a development agency, but she was determined it should act as a catalyst, sensitizing, encouraging and cooperating with development organizations, donors, and most of all the countries concerned.

42. She was optimistic that the concept of returnee aid and development would attract much interest and support: the country of origin would benefit from the return of its citizens, who would act as a dynamo for local, regional or national development efforts; development organizations and lending institutions would see an interest in contributing to humanitarian solutions that might provide more stability for long-term economic development, and thirdly donors would prefer to see their resources directed towards consolidation and lasting solutions rather than protracted care and maintenance programmes in countries of asylum. She had prepared a Note on Voluntary Repatriation to provide some thoughts and ideas on the subject, and looked forward to further reflection with members of the Executive Committee.

43. The third objective was to promote solutions through preventive measures at the source of the problem. The first step was to define who was in need of international protection. The Working Group on Solutions and Protection had helped to clarify some of the issues, but it was important for the international community to arrive at a clear and agreed understanding on who deserved international protection. People did not leave their homes voluntarily: refugees fled to save their lives and economic migrants to improve their prospects. A better understanding of the mechanisms that drove people to move would help to identify the ways in which outflows could

possibly be prevented. Prevention should be perceived not as building barriers to stop people moving, but as removing or reducing the factors that forced displacement.

44. The root causes of refugee flows were ultimately related to political conflict or human rights violations. The responsibility as well as the capacity for addressing those root causes lay with Governments and bodies other than UNHCR, although she believed that UNHCR should promote and assist them in that task and should be prepared not only to switch resources as necessary from the country of asylum to the country of origin, but also to develop the necessary tools for effective action to prevent refugee flows. Those tools were: closer cooperation with human rights bodies and participation in wider early-warning activities; developing a country of origin database, on which work had already started, as a means of avoiding outflows and helping to provide advice on refugee status determination, the application of cessation clauses and the "safe country" concept; closer contacts with development and lending institutions and lastly promotion of mass-communication campaigns to address the expectations and misconceptions of those seeking to move, such as the mass-communication strategy the Office was shortly to launch in Europe, capitalizing on its experience from Viet Nam.

45. At the June 1991 meeting of the Executive Committee, she had drawn attention to the importance of responding to the needs of the internally displaced. What was required was a coordinated and concerted response from the United Nations system, from ICRC, and non-governmental organizations. In that respect, the ONUSAL operation in El Salvador could also offer interesting lessons. Respect for national sovereignty had to be reconciled with the needs of the internally displaced for protection and assistance, and it was necessary to build on principles of humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law to develop a legal framework and operational guidelines for humanitarian access to those in need.

46. In developing its strategy on prevention and solutions, UNHCR should not and would not abrogate its responsibility to promote a liberal asylum policy. At a time when respect for human rights and the rule of law was gaining universal ground, she would like to see greater emphasis on and acceptance of UNHCR's supervisory protection role in favour of refugees. With that aim in mind, the Office had begun a review of its resources and structures in Europe, so that new policy priorities might be established, but would do its utmost to avoid incurring additional costs.

47. She believed that it was crucial for UNHCR to develop a higher public profile. She was deeply concerned to sense a rising xenophobic mood in various countries, and strongly urged all leaders to use their power and influence to combat that dangerous trend. UNHCR must contribute to a more informed and credible public debate by providing reliable facts and figures, and had already begun work to improve its reporting on refugee statistics.

48. She concluded by emphasizing that the ultimate goal must be to act in such a way that people were not forced to flee or, alternatively, to find solutions so that people ceased to be refugees. Some of those activities came within the competence of UNHCR, others required mobilization of and cooperation with Governments, other United Nations agencies,

inter-governmental agencies, regional organizations and of course non-governmental organizations who were UNHCR's unfailing and invaluable partners. The presence of so many at the Executive Committee was a clear indication of interest and readiness to join in such efforts.

49. UNHCR had been created in 1951 at the height of the East-West confrontation in order to protect and assist those fleeing totalitarian persecution. Eventually, the desire of people to move across borders to enjoy freer and better opportunities forced the regimes in Eastern Europe to change. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 had been one of the most significant events symbolizing the end of the cold war. The lesson to be learned was that building walls was no answer against those who felt compelled to flee; the answer should be to build bridges between West and East, North and South to allow democracy, human rights and prosperity to spread, a course to which UNHCR was firmly committed.

50. Mrs. LAFONTANT-MANKARIOUS (United States of America) said that she believed that 1991 would prove to be an exceptional year for UNHCR for two reasons. First of all the programme level for combined general and special programmes had increased by more than 80 per cent and had enjoyed solid donor support in excess of initial expectations. Secondly, emergencies in Liberia, northern Iraq, Iran, Turkey and in the Horn of Africa had highlighted the increased need for UNHCR, and indeed the entire United Nations system to improve both emergency coordination and the ability to respond quickly and adequately to complex humanitarian emergencies. Her Government was working with other international delegations in New York on a comprehensive restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat that would include the critical elements of the Organization's emergency response. She offered her Government's full support for the High Commissioner's proposals for improved UNHCR emergency response and was proud to announce a special pledge of \$1 million for that activity. Her Government was eager to work with UNHCR in establishing both an emergency stockpile and appropriate emergency personnel arrangements. The High Commissioner must be able to draw quickly on fully-qualified emergency managers both from within and outside UNHCR to provide protection and deliver assistance during complex humanitarian emergencies.

51. The year 1992 might well be a year of durable solutions. Refugees from Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Africa, Western Sahara, Rwanda, Burundi and perhaps Afghanistan might have an opportunity to return to their homes, some after more than a decade. UNHCR, donors, host countries and countries of origin must prepare for those possibilities so that they were not squandered. It was true that money without an acceptable political context could not buy a durable solution, but equally, without adequate preparation, including funding, the combination of repatriation and local integration would not succeed. That again raised the question of the line between refugee aid and development and would require cooperation with a wide range of other United Nations and non-governmental organizations. She was confident that the High Commissioner would adapt to that new challenge.

52. The world today was very different from that in 1951 when the agency was created. UNHCR had not only to maintain its ability to respond to crises but also to meet demands such as emergency readiness capability and involvement in

durable solutions. Her delegation commended UNHCR's significant work in convening the Working Group on Solutions and Protection and other forums to consider the current refugee and migration challenges. It had been tenacious in keeping Governments mindful of the need to preserve protection for those who needed it. The current political changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would give UNHCR ample opportunity to provide expertise to those Governments and others over the coming year. Some of the political changes in the world demanded from UNHCR integrated responses of protection and assistance, sometimes coupled with solutions. Her delegation believed that organizational reorientation would help UNHCR to improve its response in such cases and it had some suggestions which might serve to focus the Executive Committee on support for the High Commissioner in adapting UNHCR to new situations.

53. Although emergency response was currently at the forefront of discussions throughout the United Nations system, the Executive Committee must also address the General Programme of UNHCR. In 1989-1990, the Committee had made it clear to UNHCR that its proposed budget level should be "realistic", i.e., based to no small degree on the level donors were expected to fund. However, the corollary was that members of the Executive Committee must accept the responsibility of assuring themselves that the budget presented was adequate to avert at the very least, malnutrition and other preventable illnesses. Internationally recognized standards for minimum nutrition and health care must be reflected in each country programme. Her delegation had been actively reviewing the budgets prepared by UNHCR and found them to be excellent summaries of the activities which were included in the current year's programme. Her delegation had, however, expressed its concern in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters about insufficient back up for the proposed 1992 activities. Without more detail, it was impossible to evaluate whether the requested levels were appropriate to the needs.

54. In determining and approving an adequate assistance programme, the Executive Committee should evaluate whether the proposed programme budget reflected the policies and objectives it had adopted. In particular, her delegation would like assurance that the Committee's policy and guidelines on refugee children were covered and that programmes had been planned to implement them. At the current meeting, the Committee was being asked to approve and adopt similar guidelines for the integration of refugee women's needs into UNHCR assistance programmes. UNHCR must establish a system of accountability to ensure that both sets of guidelines were used to design and implement country programmes and budgets. The United States believed that many of the current inadequacies in refugee care worldwide could be eradicated if the 1988 Guidelines on Refugee Children and the proposed Guidelines on Refugee Women were implemented, since both sets of guidelines represented a comprehensive approach to caring for those vulnerable groups of refugees who together represented 80 per cent of the refugee population. A new approach to the way UNHCR programmes were formulated and presented might be required to enable the Committee to ensure that refugee assistance was adequate and reflective of its policy. Her delegation would be pleased to assist the High Commissioner in such an endeavour.

55. The 1991 crisis in the Gulf and in the Horn of Africa had allowed many dedicated UNHCR staff to demonstrate their abilities in emergency management. Her delegation wholeheartedly agreed with the suggestions in the High Commissioner's plan for improving UNHCR's emergency response capability about areas where personnel policies might be reformed. The staff of the organization established in 1951 centred round the basic function of providing legal protection and the right of a refugee to present a claim for asylum. Currently, however, the term "protection" had been broadened to include physical safety and liberty. And refugee assistance had to be acknowledged as the primary consumer of UNHCR's budget programme. Those newer aspects of UNHCR functions called for a broader variety of specialization in UNHCR. The Office had made progress in that direction, but each employee had the right to feel confident that his expertise would be recognized by the personnel system and that superior performance would be rewarded. In the Sub-Commission on Administrative and Financial Matters, her delegation had outlined some specific steps to support the career needs of a diverse staff corps and provide added flexibility to the organization.

56. Some of her remarks might appear over-ambitious, but it would not assist the Executive Committee on UNHCR if she failed to call attention to a number of basic changes which her delegation would like to have considered. She concluded by assuring the High Commissioner that the United States Government would continue to support her and her Office.

57. Mr. SHANNON (Canada) congratulated the Governments of Poland and Romania which had recently become signatories to the 1951 Convention.

58. Canada had long been concerned for refugees and wished to encourage all member States first, to respond to the root causes which were leading to massive numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers and second, to discuss the situation on the political level, in order to develop comprehensive international strategies and political and institutional will to deal with the linkage between refugee, asylum-seeker and irregular migrant flows.

59. With regard to the international context within which mass movements of individuals occurred, he said that although the forces driving the current massive changes in the world might be familiar, the complex interrelationships between the elements frequently brought unpredictable results. The international community must continue to be guided by certain central goals, namely, to protect and assist refugees directly and to endeavour, through the preservation of peace and promotion and respect for human rights, to avoid the creation of new refugee situations. Those goals were challenging but they could be attained if the collective will was present. The root causes of refugee movements were poor economic prospects, civil disorder, armed conflicts and environmental degradation and must be addressed comprehensively; simply to call for larger financial transfers would not do. The international community as a whole must generate the essential commitment, both collectively and domestically, and in the South as much as in the North. The problem was now so serious that it was no longer possible to speak delicately and indirectly. The necessary political and institutional will must be developed to mobilize the international community to more effective efforts.

60. Events after the Gulf war had shown that despite questions of mandate and organizational shortcomings, the international community could respond in a coordinated fashion when the political will was present. For example the "safe haven" principle had offered a practical and innovative approach to dramatic new movements of people. However the exceptional circumstances in the Gulf had been accompanied by an exceptional level of funding. Canada had so far contributed \$35 million in 1991, an increase of more than 50 per cent over 1990. In the coming year, it would make every effort to allocate the resources it believed necessary to assist UNHCR but it could not be assumed that the same level of funding would be available. The Gulf war had also made clear the need for greater coordination in the responses of the various United Nations agencies to the displacement of persons. As Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs had stated in the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 1991, it was time to appoint a senior official for humanitarian relief and disaster assistance, with the mandate and resources necessary effectively to coordinate international responses with dispatch and compassion. Such an appointment would create the avenue for the inter-agency responses to crises. Canada also supported the establishment of a new United Nations fund to provide flexibility for humanitarian relief at the onset of a disaster. The major beneficiaries of such an initiative would be the refugees.

61. Nevertheless, the international community must resist forcefully the notion that more persons could be assisted by simply broadening the definition of refugee in the Convention. To expand the Convention, in an era of severely restricted resources, would serve only to disadvantage those most in need to whom the international community had a special moral responsibility by further diluting available funds.

62. Canada did not propose to abandon its traditional role as a resettlement country but its programme was placing greater emphasis on protection. Resettlement had never benefited more than a tiny percentage of the world's refugees and his delegation was pleased with the pragmatic tone of the 1991 "Note on Resettlement", which made it clear that resettlement was a solution of last resort and that such a solution must not be allowed to impede the repatriation or local integration of the vast majority of the world's refugee population. On the other hand, Canada welcomed UNHCR's efforts to increase understanding and support for the special needs of refugee women and children: the constant struggle to make financial resources meet expanding needs must not be allowed to divert attention from the most elemental needs of that group, including its need for effective protection and security.

63. Although Canada continued to have specific resettlement programmes from abroad, it also received, like many other nations, large numbers of spontaneous asylum-seekers, claiming to be refugees. Its response to date had been to spend increasing amounts of money on elaborate mechanisms to determine whether such claims were well founded. Overall, the Canadian refugee status determination system was the most generous in the world. It was, however, inefficient and in fact implicitly inhuman to spend thousands of dollars on each asylum-seeker who reached Canadian territory while many millions more, who never succeeded in moving more than a few kilometres from home, received only a few dollars from the international community. The question arose as to whether that kind of distortion should be allowed to continue.

64. The protection of Convention refugees was the international community's paramount responsibility. Protection of refugees, particularly in industrialized countries was provided through complex legal systems, but an essential element of refugee determination systems was the removal of non-refugees. Order and control must be re-established over migratory movements. Failure to do so would result in the loss of the domestic public support so critical to efforts to assist true refugees. To some extent, Governments must bear the responsibility for the current disorder, because of the failure of States to harmonize their procedures for determining Convention refugee status. It was imperative to develop effective multilateral, bilateral and regional agreements on the issue of asylum-seekers. Such agreements were essential to support effective refugee status determination systems. His delegation was pleased to note that the Sub-Committee on Protection had begun considering the concept of safe third countries to which asylum-seekers might be removed. Such concepts were currently being contemplated by many countries, including Canada, as a viable option to manage claimant levels better and curb abuse. The agreements would require the State parties to them to adopt broadly similar procedures and standards of application in the treatment of Convention refugee claims. By so doing, member States would prevent asylum-seekers from "asylum shopping" and ensure that Convention was applied fairly and efficiently. The agreements could be developed in close cooperation with UNHCR. Measures to deal with the consequences of international migration must be recognized as a key issue in future regional peace conferences and other international forums.

65. Finally, he wished to stress that one important aspect of the refugee problem was the role of countries which created refugee movements or permitted their creation. There were many refugee situations rooted in long-standing ethnic animosities which would be difficult to eradicate. Nevertheless, the international community should firmly condemn the practice of some Governments in exploiting those divisions for political reasons, as a denial of basic rights that could lead to persecution. The overall goal must be to strengthen the international rule of law as expressed in instruments such as the 1951 Convention. In their domestic laws and policies individual countries must adopt a clear-minded pragmatic and humanitarian approach to the problem of large-scale population movements. Failure to develop more effective collective responses would jeopardize the continued viability of the international system for refugees.

66. Mr. BODDENS-HOSANG (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its 12 member States, said that they were deeply committed to promoting respect for the fundamental principles of refugee protection and would remain a major financial contributor to UNHCR programmes.

67. The UNHCR had gone through many changes in the 40 years of its existence. From a small bureau mainly concerned with problems of protection and essentially focused on Europe, it had grown into a large agency, investing mainly in assistance and in seeking durable solutions for refugee problems worldwide. In 1950, the predicament of refugees had been seen as a finite question, difficult but solvable. Currently people were keenly conscious of its magnitude. For 40 years the Convention, to which currently as many as 101 States were parties, had been a guiding light. It had been severely strained by changes in the composition of the refugee population and by a disturbing

increase in manifestly unfounded asylum requests. Nevertheless, it had continued to provide States with the leading principles on protecting and assisting those who were indeed refugees. The Community renewed its commitment to the Convention of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol.

68. Further changes in the ambit of UNHCR's operations must lie ahead in response to new challenges. He wished however first to refer to a number of important and encouraging regional developments. UNHCR and the Government of South Africa should be congratulated on reaching agreement on the voluntary repatriation of South African refugees and political exiles. The peace agreement in Angola was an important step which might enable UNHCR soon to mount its plan of repatriation of Angolan refugees. However the refugee situation in the Horn of Africa continued to be a cause of grave concern, especially the plight of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees living in isolated camps in eastern and south-eastern Ethiopia who were almost wholly dependent on airlifted supplies and the many thousands of Sudanese returnees who had fled camps in Western Ethiopia. United Nations initiatives to facilitate the shipment of humanitarian food aid, to the camps in southern Sudan merited full support. The Twelve welcomed the consolidated appeal that was launched for the region as an important contribution towards improved inter-agency cooperation. The Twelve wished to confirm their continued support for the High Commissioner's programme to provide assistance during the coming winter to the displaced Iraqi Kurds. They were gravely concerned about recent developments in central and south-east Europe which might portend massive flows of people in addition to the many thousands already displaced. They urged UNHCR to remain vigilant and provide early warning information where possible.

69. The European Community and its member States were looking forward to discussing in the Executive Committee some of the future developments in the role of UNHCR. The United Nations humanitarian relief system had been severely tested by the dramatic deterioration in the global refugee situation and had revealed weaknesses in terms of leadership, lead time and overall coordination. The time had come to put into place a permanent mechanism to deal with emergencies in a more efficient manner. Accordingly, the Twelve had introduced proposals at the General Assembly to enhance the United Nations emergency response capacity, more specifically by the appointment of a high-level coordinator for emergency humanitarian assistance, who should have direct access to the Secretary-General. The coordinator would chair an inter-agency committee based in Geneva and consisting of representatives of all United Nations agencies and organizations, with a standing invitation to other organizations involved. It should maintain close links with non-governmental organizations. The suggestions for an overall improvement of the emergency response capacity did not in any way diminish the UNHCR's responsibility to enhance its own emergency-preparedness and response capability. On the contrary, given its unique capacity and experience, it should develop practical arrangements to improve delivery of relief and assistance. In that connection the Twelve welcomed steps already taken to secure the necessary human resources through permanent cooperation agreements with individual non-governmental organizations. The Twelve also welcomed UNHCR's concrete proposals on staffing, emergency relief supplies and funding and urged other agencies to take similar steps. The Twelve supported the recent agreement between UNHCR and the World Food Programme to rationalize the

division of responsibilities between the two organizations with regard to resource mobilization and delivery of food aid. It was a praiseworthy example of close inter-agency cooperation. An important lesson learnt from past emergencies had been that emergency assistance should be directly supportive of recovery and long-term development. Accordingly, the development assistance organizations of the United Nations system should become involved at an early stage and collaborate closely with those responsible for emergency relief and recovery.

70. The Working Group on Solutions and Protection, created the previous year, had shown a comprehensive and dynamic approach to dealing with the issue of refugees in all its aspects and to looking at solutions in terms of prevention and cure. The observations and recommendations contained in its report gave a number of clear directions for that process, which was not confined to the Executive Committee and should be expanded to other relevant forums. In order to carry the process further within UNHCR, the Twelve would be sympathetic to the idea of activating the Sub-Committee in a manner similar to the present functioning of SCAF. Although the nature and scope of the refugee issue had changed dramatically over the last four decades, the Working Group had wisely acknowledged the need to uphold the traditional function of UNHCR to provide protection. The wide support expressed in the Working Group for withdrawing geographic reservations on the Convention was welcomed. The Working Group was right to consider that violations of human rights, the prime root cause of flight, could only be effectively redressed if the States concerned recognized their responsibilities in that regard, and correct in asserting that it was the responsibility of the international community to improve its capacity to deal with mass flows of people fleeing repression and armed conflict and to develop an effective rapid-response mechanism. The Twelve requested UNHCR to report to the next Executive Committee, or inter-sessional meetings of the Sub-Committee on Protection, on future developments with regard to the recommendations in the very useful report of the Working Group.

71. Although the problem of refugees and asylum seekers had assumed vast and complex proportions, the Office of the High Commissioner was still instrumental, as it had been for the past 40 years, in providing protection to those who needed it. Since UNHCR could not succeed in those endeavours without the active support of States, he called upon States that had not yet done so to accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol without any geographic reservation. Wider acceptance of the protection principles laid down in the Geneva Convention would primarily benefit the refugees themselves since it provided them with internationally recognized basic guarantees. It was thus appropriate that the principle of protection had been included on the agenda of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on Protection, and the High Commissioner was commended on her substantive paper on a major protection topic of the day. The "safe country concept", if properly applied would serve the Convention's basic principle of protection and assist in handling manifestly unfounded claims for asylum. No major change in protection policies was suggested, but a combination of existing instruments was proposed. As the numbers of applications for asylum grew, it was increasingly important to develop fair and effective filtering mechanisms; further development of the safe country concept, provided it was properly applied, would play an important part. In order to reduce misuse of asylum procedures, it was important that those found not to be refugees should return to their

own countries. Although the removal of rejected applicants was a matter for individual States in accordance with national immigration laws, the Twelve welcomed UNHCR's endeavours to assist the process by seeking guarantees of return in safety and dignity to be provided by countries of origin, which ought not to prevent re-entry and reintegration of their nationals. The Twelve had, in the Dublin Convention of 1990, which made specific reference to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, developed common guidelines on the responsibilities of member States in examining requests for asylum. Ratification procedures were under way in many countries and it was hoped that implementation of the Dublin Convention would reduce the number of asylum-seekers travelling from one country to another - a phenomenon known as "refugees in orbit" - and those lodging multiple requests for asylum, a practice referred to as "asylum shopping". The UNHCR was commended for its constructive participation in continuing dialogue with the member States of the European Communities on implementation of the Dublin Convention and on the harmonization of its asylum policies.

72. On financial matters, the European Community and its member States were gratified that UNHCR had remained within the 1990 General Programme's target and had carried a surplus of \$US 11 million into 1991. Nevertheless, in view of the massive increase in humanitarian needs in early 1991, the Twelve considered the increase of \$US 24 million in the General Programme budget acceptable. It was, however, regarded as a necessary once-only measure and it was hoped that expenditure in 1991 would remain within the target agreed at the present Executive Committee. It was in the organization's long-term interest to continue to align its budget with a predictable level of income. On the other hand, the Twelve called upon the High Commissioner to solicit funds from a wider circle of potential donors, in particular from wealthy members of the international community that had so far not contributed substantially to UNHCR's work, and to seek a more reasonable sharing of the burden among traditional donors. A combination of tight budgeting and unprecedented humanitarian disaster had strained UNHCR's financial and human resources. The Twelve reaffirmed their confidence in and admiration for the staff of the Office in coping with those demands.

73. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had played a key role during the past 40 years in alleviating the plight of many millions of people in need, in endeavouring to secure at least a minimum of human dignity for them and in providing them with a minimum of hope. The European Community and its member States would continue to lend their full support to the Office in meeting the challenge of the years ahead.

74. Mr. KOUCHNER (France) said that UNHCR had travelled far during the past 40 years. As a human rights activist, a doctor who had worked in a wide variety of refugee camps and now as Minister for Humanitarian Action, he paid a tribute to the work UNHCR had accomplished.

75. However, the tragic events of the past year meant that attention must be focused on the future, as the High Commissioner had acknowledged through the innovative and practical proposals put forward in her address. Times were changing, the political make-up of the planet had radically altered in under two years, but new tensions and new and complex challenges were rife. On the African continent, where courageous moves were being made towards democracy

and economic progress, major crises were being experienced in a number of regions, in particular the Horn of Africa, where in some cases tens of thousands of refugees, or rather returnees, among them many children, were out of reach of UNHCR help because a change of regime had sent them home. Change would be needed in the future to ensure that humanitarian law protected human beings rather than Governments. More human and financial resources, in addition to those already engaged, were needed in the Horn of Africa; it was imperative that the international community give a concerted response to the appeal for funds made recently in Geneva and New York. Efforts should also be made to combat a possible slackening in the response to such appeals. Furthermore, watchfulness was needed and international institutions and instruments should be strengthened in order to serve as a bar to increasing displays of xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism being triggered by population change and migration. While in other parts of the world such as El Salvador and Cambodia, conflicts appeared to be finding a welcome solution; in Cambodia in particular the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of returning refugees would require an immense effort; continuing vigilance would also be necessary as long as the conditions that had caused their exodus in the first place still remained.

76. In the new world context, in which refugees were still in a desperate plight, UNHCR had drawn up a coherent strategy, on the basis of discussions within the Executive Committee, to ensure that action on the refugee problem would not be restricted to the material assistance they so urgently needed but would provide global, concerted and lasting solutions to current refugee problems and the economic migrations that were often confused with them. Refugee status was by definition temporary. A refugee should be able, and would no doubt wish, to go back to his country when conditions there were such that neither his life nor his freedom were in danger, in other words that democracy and tolerance prevailed. The ideal solution was not to place refugees in camps; it was to ensure their return home, to provide for their protection at home and, in the long term, to prevent any need for their departure. The international conscience, which was said to be awakening, should extend to refugees and migration. For economic, demographic, political and xenophobic reasons, large refugee camps might be less acceptable in the future. All countries, whether countries of origin, countries of temporary stay or countries of asylum, would need to cooperate in finding solutions to such problems, and all United Nations agencies, Red Cross societies and non-governmental organizations would have to participate in helping refugees and ensuring the development of areas affected by mass population movements. The joint studies and activities being conducted by the United Nations agencies were welcomed; all action that would help to rationalize approaches, reduce costs, and increase the effectiveness and openness of the work done would be supported by France. Such new solutions would also have to be based on a wide-ranging discussion of the migration phenomenon, in which the UNHCR would be called on to play a leading role, since the object would be to protect the institution of asylum and to dissuade oppressors. He hoped that by the end of the century circumstances that produced refugees would have been eliminated at source through the spread of democracy and tolerance.

77. UNHCR under the High Commissioner's leadership had undertaken a number of practical actions such as assisting the new authorities in Central and Eastern Europe to draw up legal and administrative instruments and to establish a proper procedure for according refugee status. But even there many uncertainties remained.

78. The High Commissioner wished to establish a data bank on countries of origin. Information and documentation in the humanitarian field was perhaps the area where policies should be thoroughly overhauled and restructured in close collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights. Such integrated action which aimed at finding solutions to all aspects of the refugee problem and was intended to give a greater understanding of migratory movements, in no way removed the need to strengthen capabilities to respond to emergencies, which should be the second prong of any effective UNHCR strategy. That need had been recognized in the new structure that had been developed following the shortcomings experienced during the events in the Gulf and which now provided a real emergency stand-by service. He also welcomed the establishment of a file of national experts and of members of non-governmental organizations that could be made available to UNHCR. France had supported an initiative of that nature in the wider context of assistance to the victims of natural disasters and other related emergencies in proposing General Assembly resolution 43/131, later supplemented by General Assembly resolution 45/100, with a view to making a more effective multilateral response to emergency situations. Those resolutions had been unanimously endorsed by States since they were intended to aid victims and reduce the number of persons forced to flee their countries.

79. All States had a responsibility to facilitate free access by victims to international organizations. No State ought to be able to block the passage of humanitarian assistance. A tribute had to be paid to the enormous contribution to humanitarian assistance made by non-governmental organizations, many of whom, as a result of the high quality of their work, deserved to take part in UNHCR missions. He therefore regretted that many non-governmental organizations working in the field were not always considered as valid partners. In humanitarian assistance, interference was a dangerous word too frequently invoked and too frequently distorted. It implied a forced intervention. The resolutions France had sponsored, however, concerned the right to humanitarian assistance, which was only supplied at the request of the victims and never imposed on them. It had nothing whatever to do with democratic interference - a political concept outside the context of the subject under discussion.

80. During its current session, the United Nations General Assembly would be considering how to strengthen machinery for coordinating humanitarian action in the interests of providing an effective response to victims' needs. He welcomed the interest States were showing in improving the coordination of assistance and the techniques for providing it. There were still potential refugees in many parts of the world, where violence was increasing. The UNHCR could continue to count on France's support in its endeavours to come to their assistance.

81. Mr. INGRAM (Executive Director, United Nations World Food Programme), noting that the close relationship between the UNHCR and the World Food Programme stood as a model of inter-agency cooperation within the

United Nations system, congratulated the Governments supporting UNHCR and its secretariat for a daunting task well done, and saluted UNHCR staff for their dedication and their achievements.

82. The year 1991 had witnessed a series of major global emergencies of an unprecedented scale and devastating coverage. In addition to mass population displacement and refugee influxes, food shortages due to drought and sudden natural disasters had posed special challenges to the World Food Programme, so that emergencies of one form or another had absorbed more than half the Programme's total resources. The change in focus away from the Programme's initial task of development to humanitarian relief had created special challenges and, in 1991, had placed an unprecedented strain on the international donor community and the United Nations system, including the Programme. The resulting lack of coordination and insufficient urgency in responding to emergencies in such critically affected regions as the Gulf and Horn of Africa were criticisms that were forcing the United Nations and Governments to consider how to ensure in future a more effective international response to complex emergencies of great humanitarian concern, including such measures as restructuring the United Nations Secretariat and creating new coordinating arrangements, including the possible establishment of a revolving financial fund under the control of a high-level coordinator.

83. The World Food Programme was generally acknowledged, within the limits of its capabilities, to have played a constructive and in many ways indispensable role in emergency responses. It was, however, ready to improve its capabilities within the framework of whatever arrangements might be decided upon by the General Assembly and Secretary-General of the United Nations.

84. An effective international response necessarily involved many actors, including United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and bilateral donors as well as the Governments of the countries afflicted by emergencies. Good coordination thus required a clear delineation of functions, to avoid confusion and enable the main problems to be dealt with as quickly as possible. A well conceived and fully-agreed division of labour was thus required, but the United Nations still had some way to go in that respect.

85. Most emergency situations had a requirement for food relief, which in terms of value and tonnage was the most important constituent of an effective international response, since although health and shelter were vital, feeding very poor people who had lost their livelihoods as a result of an emergency was generally the first requirement. Over the past decade, the central role of the Programme in food emergencies, not only for the provision of food but also for solution of logistics problems and coordination of a smooth flow of food to afflicted people, had been increasingly accepted by all concerned. However, an even more effective and more economical international response to food emergencies was feasible provided, among other things, that donor Governments were willing to respond more quickly within an overall framework of assistance. The dramatic increase in man-made food crises during the past few years had been accompanied by large-scale population movements that had created extraordinarily challenging and complex emergencies. As food aid normally constituted about two thirds of the overall input in refugee relief operations, it was understandable that the feeding of refugees currently

absorbed almost three quarters of all the Programme's humanitarian relief allocations. Approximately 80 per cent of refugee food needs being met through United Nations agencies was channelled through the Programme.

86. UNHCR and the World Food Programme had, over the years, worked out an effective division of labour, embodied in the Joint Memorandum of Understanding concluded in 1985, and often cited as a particularly successful example of United Nations inter-agency coordination. The World Food Programme had progressively become the principal coordinator and major supplier of basic food commodities in refugee feeding operations managed by UNHCR. Considering the sharp increase in refugee food aid and the growing logistical complexity of ensuring an adequate and cost-effective response, the Executive Committee of UNHCR and the Governing Body of the Programme had actively encouraged the two organizations to share responsibilities for operational activities related to refugees. A joint UNHCR/WFP task force had as a result formulated new proposals on coordination, commodity and cash resource mobilization and logistics implementation, all essentially aimed at achieving greater programming effectiveness and improved inter-agency cooperation, with the Programme focusing on the food aid and logistics sectors and UNHCR concentrating on the other key relief sectors and access to productive income-generating activities. He and the High Commissioner had given their joint approval in January 1991 to the principles of the proposed new arrangement which were to be embodied in a revised Memorandum of Understanding.

87. If the arrangements between the two organizations were to work smoothly they had to be well understood and accepted by donors. To that end, UNHCR and WFP had organized two donor information meetings, in Rome and Geneva, in late June in order to clarify the major issues. The first stage of the new arrangements would begin on 1 January 1992, when the Programme would undertake mobilization of all basic food commodities, as well as of the cash needs for external transport and inland delivery, and would arrange for transport of commodities to recipient countries. During phase II, starting in 1993, and on a case-by-case basis by arrangement with UNHCR, the Programme would progressively assume responsibility for arranging the internal transport and delivery of all basic commodities to "Extended Delivery Points" within recipient countries. That should help ensure delivery of the right commodities at the right time to beneficiaries at an overall cost to donors less than under current arrangements. While major donors had welcomed - indeed pressed - for such arrangements, their responses to the detailed proposals were coming in more slowly than anticipated. He therefore appealed to Governments to take all steps necessary to enable the new arrangements to be instituted on the scheduled date.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.