

UNITED NATIONS  
**General Assembly**

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

*Official Records*

THIRD COMMITTEE  
34th meeting  
held on  
Thursday, 7 November 1991  
at 10 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

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91-57184 5174S (E)

DISCF. GENERAL  
A/C.3/46/SR.34  
13 November 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: NARCOTIC DRUGS (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. E), A/46/222, 264, 336, 338, 480, 511; A/C.5/46/23)

1. Ms. LISSIDINI (Uruguay) said that illicit drug trafficking and its negative economic and social effects had grown alarmingly in recent years, but the international community had significantly improved its response at the same time. After years of mutual accusations, drug-producing and consuming countries had finally accepted the principle of shared responsibility. That acceptance had facilitated international cooperation, and should continue to be a basis for action. It was also encouraging to note the progress achieved in international regulation, through instruments such as the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the Political Declaration of the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly, and most recently, the establishment of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNIDCP). Her country had undertaken procedures for ratifying the 1988 Convention, and had also participated in several regional and subregional programmes.
2. Economics must be recognized among the underlying causes of illicit narcotic production. The necessary conditions must be established to make other crops profitable for farmers. Many of the economic factors involved, however, were external to the producer countries. Social risk factors must also be explored in order to reverse tendencies towards self-destructive behaviour, especially among young people. Neither repression nor treatment alone would successfully address the problem as a whole.
3. Uruguay was not a drug-producing country, but consumption and trafficking were increasing, especially among youth. There had been indications that traffickers were re-routing their operations into Uruguayan territory since their traditional routes had been disrupted. In response, her Government had established a national drug-abuse prevention and control board, and had begun a massive education campaign aimed mainly at high-school students. Furthermore, it was taking steps to prevent its banking system from being used for money-laundering.
4. Ms. MBELLA NGOMBA (Cameroon) said that her country, which was situated within a new transit zone for illegal drug trafficking, was beginning to experience the destructive consequences of the drug phenomenon. Drug abuse among young people and rising unemployment due to the global economic recession had brought about an increase in crime in Cameroon. In April 1990, her Government had hosted a regional conference on illicit drugs. The conference had focused on curtailing illicit drug activities through tighter border controls, increased national awareness of the dangers of drug abuse, training of more law-enforcement officers, and enhanced cooperation at the regional and international level.

(Ms. Mbella Ngomba, Cameroon)

5. Cameroon and its central African neighbours had joint commissions to ensure the enforcement of immigration and customs laws. Her country hoped to expand the work of those commissions to include collaboration in the detection and curtailment of drug trafficking and to enact regional legislation on the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Cameroon had recently ratified the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and fully supported its provisions. In view of the broad scope of the Convention and the other legal instruments in the field, her delegation believed that efforts should focus on full implementation of existing drug-control agreements, particularly the 1988 Convention, instead of drawing up new ones.

6. In the discussion of the Secretary-General's report on measures to enhance the United Nations structure for drug-abuse control (A/46/480), a number of delegations had raised pertinent questions concerning the proper implementation of programmes, adequate financing and personnel. Her delegation believed that those issues should be considered in the Fifth Committee. Furthermore, recruitment to UNIDCP should be based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. With regard to the redeployment of resources to meet the additional need for personnel, her delegation pointed out that the General Assembly could assess those requirements only after the preliminary execution and evaluation of the operational activities of the Programme. Lastly, she stressed the need to increase technical cooperation to assist developing countries in devising and implementing demand-reduction programmes as a major priority of the Programme. That approach, coupled with the promotion of agricultural exports from developing countries, would help to eliminate the drug cartels.

7. Mrs. BRUGGEMANN (World Health Organization) said that drug abuse was one of the serious public health problems of the century and was increasingly affecting wider segments of societies in many countries throughout the world. In its programme on substance abuse, WHO focused on promoting lifestyles that were free from substance abuse, controlled use of legal psychoactive substances for medical care, treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers, support for national programmes, and research and development to find solutions to drug-related problems. Her organization sought to encourage the safe and rational use of licit psychotropic medicines by providing relevant information on prescription practices and would continue to assess the therapeutic usefulness of substances as well as the seriousness of resulting public health and social problems.

8. As of 1990, WHO had studied over 400 substances in its effort to respond promptly to the changing patterns of drug abuse and the marketing of new psychoactive drugs, and had made recommendations for updating the list of controlled substances compiled by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

9. WHO was stimulating a global effort to reduce demand for illicit drugs by promoting national drug demand-reduction plans and conducting joint missions

(Mr. Giacomelli)

money-laundering, currency reporting, bank secrecy and confiscation. Requests for technical cooperation to combat money-laundering would be considered favourably. If the General Assembly wished UNIDCP to do more in that field, it might wish to consider enlarging its mandate.

20. Some countries had expressed the view that seized proceeds from drug trafficking should be made available to the Programme. Under the 1988 Convention, a party might give special consideration to concluding agreements on contributing seized proceeds and property to intergovernmental bodies specializing in the fight against illegal drug trafficking and drug abuse. It was therefore for Member States to consider that possibility. The Programme, for its part, would be glad to accept such contributions, which could significantly assist its technical cooperation activities.

21. INCB dealt with the question of the supply of and demand for opiates for legitimate purposes. The Board would receive from the Programme, particularly the Technical Services Division, the assistance it required, should that prove necessary. There seemed to be some misunderstanding as to the role of the Programme concerning policy-making organs. The Policy Planning and Evaluation Unit would have the task of drawing up plans, under his supervision, for the Programme itself. Once formulated, those plans would of course be submitted through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Lastly, he said that the discussion of the item had demonstrated the very high priority given by Member States to drug-related problems and the greater awareness of need for a global approach.

22. Mr. JAAFARI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that most members of the Committee had no doubt heard the statement made by the representative of Israel at the Committee's 33rd meeting with astonishment and had reacted with sorrow to the unwarranted provocation that it had constituted and to its irresponsible conflation of the illicit drug problem from which mankind as a whole was suffering and other, purely political issues that had no relation to the matter under discussion. While all others had focused on the importance of addressing a painful issue in a serious manner, the Israeli representative had violated the propriety that others were trying to observe in the work of the Committee in order to launch a fresh provocation aimed at harming Syria's international reputation as a major negotiating partner attempting to establish peace and at thwarting the rare opportunity that currently presented itself to reach a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East.

23. All would be able to recall how such provocation had begun on the eve of the Madrid peace conference, when the Israelis had proceeded to occupy the houses of Palestinian inhabitants of occupied East Jerusalem, and how such provocation had continued during the Madrid conference, when the Israelis had established a new settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan and had declared their resolve to double the number of settlers in occupied Syrian territory within one year. Was it possible to hope that the intervention of the Israeli

(Mr. Jaafari, Syrian Arab Republic)

representative reflected the final stages of that disease of extremism that met with the disapprobation of the civilized and peaceful world that all, in recent days, were hoping to create?

24. There had been consensus among speakers that the illicit drug problem was of universal scope and that it stopped at no borders, inasmuch as networks of an international mafia were in place in many parts of the world. Syria had always sought to strengthen and unite international efforts to combat the problem, and it acted in coordination with the relevant international agencies and exchanged information with them. With other Arab countries, it had participated actively in elaborating a model standard inter-Arab law on drugs and an inter-Arab strategy to combat the illicit use of drugs, both of which had been adopted by the Arab Ministers of the Interior in 1986. It had for long been holding discussions on the drug problem with INTERPOL, to mention only the meeting held at Damascus on 26 October 1991 by drug control bureaux, international liaison officers resident in Cyprus and the representative of INTERPOL at which participants had commended the destruction by the Syrian authorities of shipments in transit. There were also the reports sent by Damascus to the United Nations and to INTERPOL in the detection field and exchanges of information and expertise. Experts had called attention to the importance of that information in enabling the authorities in other countries to seize large quantities of hashish and other narcotic substances.

25. Members of the Committee should also recall, on the other hand, the astonishing conclusions reached by international investigators following the breakup of drug rings in certain Latin American countries, when it had become known that the advisers to the leaders of the Medellín cartel had been Israeli officers operating on behalf of the Israeli Mossad. The same officers had trained death squads working for the drug mafia in Colombia which, in August 1988, had assassinated one of the leading candidates for the presidency of that country.

26. Israel was, with malice, putting forward the theme of cooperation with the Arabs in combating drugs and in other fields while ignoring the need of first achieving peace and returning the Arab territories. In practice, Israel sought to cooperate with the Arabs in all matters other than that of a just and comprehensive peace based on the "land for peace" principle. When, however, Syria appealed to international legitimacy and to consensus resolutions on the establishment of peace, it became transformed, in the Israeli view, into a drug trafficker, an exporter of terrorism and an anti-Semitic country. It was not unlikely that the Israelis would one day call for its removal from the face of the earth because it insisted on the restoration of its usurped rights and its occupied territory. Since a mechanism for a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East had begun to take shape under the auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union, Israel had become afflicted by "cartographic colour-blindness" and there had been a dangerous increase in the inhuman antipathy of its representatives towards a Syrian negotiating partner striving for a just and

(Mr. Jaafari, Syrian Arab Republic)

comprehensive peace. The statement made by the representative of Israel had been one of an extremist and provocative political character and had had no relation to the fight against drugs.

27. Mr. BITAR (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli delegation had continued its practice of systematically attacking Lebanon in the Third Committee. It was well known that during the 16-year war in Lebanon, Israel had played a major role in destabilizing the Government and undermining every attempt at national reconciliation. In the chaos of war, hashish-growing had flourished in some parts of Lebanon. Since the re-establishment of the rule of law, however, Lebanon had done its utmost to combat the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. It had made considerable progress over the past year, even though Israeli authorities had condoned the smuggling of illicit drugs through southern Lebanon towards Israel. His Government would continue its fight to make Lebanon a drug-free society.

28. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he fully agreed with the Executive Director's viewpoint on the new United Nations drug-control structure and that the efforts made in establishing that structure were commendable. In its report to the Secretary-General (A/45/652/Add.1), the Group of Experts had stressed its belief in the feasibility of enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations drug-control activities without increasing resources. If all countries gave the new Programme sufficient time and support, it would undoubtedly prove successful. He requested the Executive Director to have the text of his closing statement circulated as a working paper of the Third Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 97: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (A/46/3, chap. VII, sect. H and Add.1, A/46/12 and Add.1, A/46/134 and Corr.1, A/46/139, A/46/323-S/22836, A/46/344, 371, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 471, A/46/501/Rev.1, A/46/568 and 612)

29. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the two main functions of her office, as mandated by the General Assembly, were to provide international protection to refugees and to seek durable solutions. The success of those endeavours depended on full recognition of the High Commissioner as the spokesperson for the international community's universal, non-political, humanitarian concern for refugees.

30. The activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had spread to all parts of the world. The majority of the world's current refugee population of 17 million were in the South, where a number of poor countries had generously received them. In addition, Eastern Europe had evolved from a source of refugees into a sanctuary for them. The recent accession of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees bore witness to the region's

(Mrs. Ogata)

growing involvement in the work of UNHCR. Those developments, together with increased participation in the work of UNHCR by all Member States in connection with the end of the cold war, created the best prospects to date for finding lasting solutions to refugee problems. Global changes, however, also presented new challenges through the re-emergence of ethnic and national tensions.

31. The perils and promises of the current world situation called for a three-point strategy focusing on prevention, emergency response and lasting solutions. Refugee movements should be prevented by the elimination or mitigation of factors potentially prompting them. The identification and analysis of those factors, in turn, was the first step towards lasting solutions. In the coming decade, political liberalization and economic disparity would probably be the strongest influences on population movements. Although UNHCR had not been specifically empowered to address all those issues, it could not afford to be inflexible in its approach.

32. UNHCR had demonstrated its flexibility in Viet Nam and Albania, where the causes of refugee problems had shifted from political persecution and repression to economic hardship. Operations in those countries therefore concentrated on the provision of economic, humanitarian and legal assistance, in cooperation with other international organizations. In Yugoslavia and northern Iraq, internally displaced persons and returnees received priority attention. Efforts in those countries focused on both immediate humanitarian aid and the creation of conditions favourable to long-term resettlement.

33. Mechanisms to address the plight of the internally displaced must be an important component of prevention strategy. In addition, the principle of national sovereignty must be reconciled with that of humanitarian access to the internally displaced, and must not become a barrier to appropriate international action. UNHCR would draw on its experience in negotiating agreements with all parties concerned in order to tackle the problem, which was one of its greatest current and future challenges.

34. During 1991, the international community had been confronted with some of the greatest humanitarian emergencies of recent times, and UNHCR had drawn many lessons from its involvement in those operations. There had been strong support for the proposed emergency preparedness and response mechanism. Large-scale and complex disasters such as those in the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa required concerted action beyond the capacity of any single Government or international agency. In addition to material means of response, effective coordination and cooperation were also required. Any coordination mechanism should facilitate joint action rather than add a bureaucratic layer of control and it should not include operational responsibilities.

(Mrs. Ogata)

35. Voluntary repatriation was the most desirable solution to overcrowded camps and dismal conditions. The right to return to one's country must be given as much emphasis as the right to seek asylum abroad. New prospects for peace in many areas of the world had improved the outlook for significant voluntary repatriation in 1992. It must be accompanied, however, by efforts to create proper conditions for reintegration as part of the national development effort.

36. Many refugees were returning to areas still affected by conflict. Even in such circumstances, UNHCR's non-political and humanitarian role must be accepted by the local government and the security of its staff and operational partners must be guaranteed. Removal of mines was a specific problem which posed a formidable obstacle to return of refugees, and which UNHCR had neither the political nor the technical capacity to address.

37. A strategy aimed at achieving solutions while responding to emergencies was costly, but the current year had seen unprecedented needs and unprecedented response. She was deeply thankful for the support of both donors and countries of asylum.

38. The mission of a non-political organization such as UNHCR must be to contribute to peace and reconciliation through pursuit of lasting humanitarian solutions. The opportunities for preventing and resolving refugee problems had never been greater.

39. Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship) said that the Secretary-General's report on the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa (A/46/371) had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 45/137, which called upon the international community to increase its assistance to the countries of southern Africa and reaffirmed the need to continue implementing the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa adopted by the Conference (A/43/717 and Corr.1 and Add.1). The Oslo Declaration focused on the humanitarian problems and their root causes in southern Africa, where some 4.5 million persons had been identified as refugees, returnees or displaced persons. It noted that additional resources were needed for urgent relief, particularly for internally displaced persons, and emphasized the link between relief, recovery and development assistance to promote self-sufficiency. It also reaffirmed the principles of solidarity, burden-sharing and global responsibility.

40. The Plan of Action identified four areas as best suited for effective action: emergency preparedness, needs assessment and delivery of assistance, recovery and development, and mobilization of resources. Document A/46/371 described the action undertaken by Member States and agencies in the United Nations system in response to the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action.



(Mr. Jonah)

41. The report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees in Somalia (A/46/471), prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 45/154, focused on refugees in the north-western districts of Somalia. Developments in Somalia and neighbouring countries since the adoption of the resolution had changed the nature and distribution of refugees in the Horn of Africa. Many of the refugees in Somalia had returned to their countries of origin and many Somalis had fled to neighbouring countries. Given the regional character of those population movements, programmes for all the countries involved had been made the subject of a consolidated inter-agency appeal by the new Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa. The Secretary-General had convened a special donors' meeting in September appealing for international assistance in support of the Special Programme.

42. Mr. van der HEIJDEN (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its 12 member States, said that what had seemed a finite post-war European problem at the time of the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the adoption of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 40 years back, had become a phenomenon of unprecedented dimensions. According to UNHCR statistics, there were approximately 17 million refugees seeking international protection outside their country of origin and a comparable number of displaced persons who had left their homes, without necessarily crossing national borders, and were outside current protection regimes. Refugee and migratory flows were becoming increasingly entangled but most migrants could not claim refugee status under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which the Twelve still regarded as the principal instruments offering international protection to refugees.

43. More attention must be paid to the protection and physical well-being of internally and externally displaced persons, the social and economic root causes of massive outflows and the effects of migratory movements on countries of origin and reception. The changed structure and size of the Office of the High Commissioner reflected the changed dimension of the refugee problem. In the current year, the Office's budgetary requirements had risen to a record level of almost \$1 billion, mainly due to the large migrations of people in the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa. The European Community and its member States constituted the Office's largest donor, having provided \$283 million between January and September 1991.

44. Despite the bleak outlook, there were some encouraging signs. Most of the 1.5 million Iraqi refugees had returned home; the High Commissioner had signed an agreement with the Government of South Africa on the repatriation of South African exiles and repatriation was due to start in the near future; the Cambodian scheme for voluntary repatriation, with UNHCR as the designated lead agency, was to be implemented following the signature of a political agreement in October.

(Mr. van der Haijden, Netherlands)

45. The overall refugee situation was not static and the Office must be capable of reacting quickly to events; it must be prepared to make choices and set priorities on the basis of assessed humanitarian needs. In her opening statement to the Executive Committee at its forty-second session, the High Commissioner had outlined three major objectives: strengthening the Office's emergency preparedness and response mechanisms; promoting voluntary repatriation; and promoting durable solutions through preventive measures.

46. With regard to the first objective, the number of emergencies had increased dramatically in 1991, leading to unprecedented loss of life, devastation and massive uprooting, and the burden on recipient countries, international organizations and donors pointed to the need to strengthen the United Nations emergency response capacity. The Twelve had introduced proposals earlier in the current General Assembly session, emphasizing the need for effective central leadership, better coordination machinery, an emergency fund to permit immediate response, and an inventory of human and material resources available in the United Nations framework and in States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Twelve welcomed the High Commissioner's proposals for strengthening the Office's emergency response capacity and improving the quality of its contribution to the United Nations system-wide response to emergency situations. They stressed the importance of inter-agency cooperation and system-wide coordination, and they urged the High Commissioner to make information on her emergency management capacity easily accessible and to include it in the proposed inventory, so as to achieve full exchange of information and avoid duplication.

47. Regarding the second objective, the Twelve agreed that 1992 should be the year of voluntary repatriation. That called for States' accepting responsibility by allowing nationals to return home and settle in society, effective counselling and well-planned and executed operations. Where programmes extended beyond the capacity and mandate of the High Commissioner and were dealt with on a case-by-case basis, cooperation with development agencies was crucial.

48. The Twelve supported the Office's efforts to find durable solutions, but noted that only 13.5 per cent of the Office's total expenditure on assistance was for voluntary repatriation, compared with nearly 60 per cent for care and maintenance. In a rapidly changing world, opportunities must not be missed through lack of preparedness or funds, and they welcomed the Executive Committee's decision to explore a range of options for dealing with that problem. With regard to the related question of people who were found not to be refugees but who nevertheless did not opt for voluntary repatriation, the removal of rejected applicants was a matter of discretion for individual States in accordance with their national laws. The Twelve welcomed the Office's efforts to assist such people by seeking guarantees from countries of origin for their return in safety and dignity.

(Mr. van der Heijden, Netherlands)

49. Regarding the third objective, preventive measures would remove the root causes of refugee flows and to that end it was necessary to understand why people had fled their homes. Refugee flows, which were the result of human rights violations, foreign invasion and internal conflicts, differed from migratory flows in search of a better life. The problem of causes, however, was beyond the High Commissioner's mandate, since it involved resolution of conflicts and protection of human rights, on the one hand, and economic development, on the other, although the Office could perhaps act as a catalyst or an early warning system. The Twelve welcomed the idea of preventive action by the Office and individual countries through cooperation with human rights bodies, mass information campaigns and the development of a "country of origin" database.

50. The Right Reverend Monsignor DUPUY (Observer for the Holy See) said that, despite some encouraging events recently, as in Cambodia, the refugee problem was increasing. The new migratory exodus was a source of direct concern to many Governments, since it reduced the possibility of resettling refugees who had waited for years in countries of first asylum.

51. The Holy See was aware of the restrictions that a narrow definition of "refugee" would impose on a global plan of action for the growing number of displaced persons, but the criteria used in official documents to define refugees were no longer adequate and failed to respond to new situations.

52. Pope John Paul II had spoken of human beings migrating, not from free choice but under pressure of hunger and sub-human conditions, or to escape persecution for their political or religious convictions; the representative of Malta had spoken of "hunger refugees"; and the Australian representative had stressed the need to assist displaced persons as well as refugees. The United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations must join without delay in seeking just and generous ways of dealing with all refugees and displaced persons, and countries of departure and reception must be helped in removing the causes of exodus, ensuring the fundamental rights of new arrivals as well as of their own citizens, and creating conditions for just resettlement or voluntary repatriation.

53. Every year, the Holy See made symbolic contributions to the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It also supported voluntary workers and agencies in every country where refugees and displaced persons sought asylum and/or resettlement. He appealed to all countries to assist the Vietnamese refugees, who had said that they would die rather than be subjected to forced repatriation.

54. Mr. DJIMRANGAR (Chad) said that, since the iron curtain had fallen and States had no further need to spend huge sums on the arms race, the international community should pay greater attention to the economic, social and humanitarian problems of the poorest countries. The effects of the current economic crisis on those countries were heightened by armed conflicts and natural disasters, which had led to major movements of refugees and displaced persons. Chad had gone through several years of war and was currently suffering from drought, floods and a cholera epidemic, which had caused thousands of dead and homeless.

55. His Government was greatly concerned about the situation of its refugees. The restoration of democracy, political pluralism and the rule of law in Chad had given new confidence to Chadians in exile, and thousands had returned home without assistance from UNHCR. Since the beginning of 1991, a total of 860,000 persons had returned to Chad from camps in neighbouring countries. His country was among the poorest on earth, and lacked resources and infrastructure to accommodate them. There was an immediate need for housing, rehabilitation of health-care infrastructure, agricultural supplies for reintegration of displaced farmers, vehicles to transport returnees to their home regions and to deliver foodstuffs, and technical and financial assistance in rebuilding livestock herds.

56. Democratization in Chad could not be fully implemented unless those obstacles were removed. His delegation renewed its appeal to Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations for assistance in implementation of repatriation and reintegration programmes for voluntary returnees and displaced persons.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.