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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-first session

REPORT ON THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

(Geneva, 6-16 October 1980)

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SECTION I -- INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its thirty-first session from 6 to 16 October 1980 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Election of Officers

2. Under rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure, which provides that officers shall be elected for the whole year, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Mr. O.Y. Birido (Sudan)
Vice-Chairman: Mr. P.H.R. Marshall, C.M.G. (United Kingdom)
Rapporteur: Mr. K. Shimizu (Japan)

Representation on the Committee

3. Members of the Committee were represented at the session as follows:

Algeria	Finland	Lesotho	Thailand
Argentina	France	Madagascar	Tunisia
Australia	Germany, Fed.Rep. of	Morocco	Turkey
Austria	Greece	Netherlands	Uganda
Belgium	Holy See	Nicaragua	United Kingdom
Brazil	Iran	Nigeria	United Republic of Tanzania
Canada	Israel	Norway	United States of America
China	Italy	Sudan	Venezuela
Colombia	Japan	Sweden	Yugoslavia
Denmark	Lebanon	Switzerland	Zaire

4. The Governments of Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Kampuchea, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Ireland, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Somali Democratic Republic, Spain, Swaziland, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe were represented by an observer, as was the Sovereign Order of Malta.

5. The United Nations system was represented as follows: United Nations, Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), International Labour Office (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank.

6. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers: the Commission of the European Communities, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the League of Arab States, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

7. The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) were also represented at the meeting.

8. Adoption of the agenda - Decision of the Committee
 1. Election of Officers
 2. Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.96/575/Rev.1)
 3. Statement by the High Commissioner and General Debate (A/AC.96/INF.160)
 4. International protection (A/AC.96/579, 581, INF.152/Rev.2, INF.161 and INF.162)
 5. Voluntary funds accounts for 1979 and Report of the Board of Auditors (A/AC.96/576 and Add.1)
 6. Establishment of a UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions (A/AC.96/582 and 583)
 7. UNHCR assistance activities (A/AC.96/577 and Addenda 1 and 2, A/AC 96/580, 581 and 585)
 8. Status of contributions and ~~over-all~~ financial requirements for 1980 and 1981 (A/AC.96/578 and 584)
 9. Any other questions
 10. Consideration of the draft report on the session

SECTION II - GENERAL DEBATE

(Item 3 of the agenda)

9. In responding to the High Commissioner's opening statement, which is reproduced at annex to this report, speakers paid tribute to the High Commissioner and his staff, at Headquarters and in the field. The Executive Committee recognized the efforts undertaken by the Office in the face of the further unprecedented situations arising from a continued increase in the number of persons of concern to UNHCR. The Committee agreed that the new dimensions of the problems facing the Office made it more imperative than ever that they provide the firmest support to the High Commissioner in his activities. Speakers noted that the Office of the High Commissioner had experienced problems in adapting to the changed circumstances of recent years, as indicated by the High Commissioner in his statement, but agreed that the complexity of the new situation was such that it would have been surprising had the Office not encountered problems.

10. Frequent reference was made to the root causes of refugee situations which, in the view of many speakers, were threatening to destabilize the existing international order in some parts of the world and to undermine national fabrics. It was the shared view that these root causes were outside the realm of UNHCR's competence, but that they should be addressed as a matter of urgency in the appropriate fora, since only by successes in the political field could the international community look forward to a reduction in the number of situations giving rise to the movement of people in search of asylum outside their own countries.

11. The burgeoning increase in the activities of UNHCR had affected traditional patterns and definitions. In the field of international protection, for instance, the High Commissioner's role had been greatly extended; budgets indicated that considerable amounts were having to be expended on relief, care and maintenance as well as for durable solutions, often for long periods, to meet the needs of a continuously increasing caseload of persons of concern to the High Commissioner.

12. Speakers emphasized the need for better co-ordination between international relief agencies in order to ensure that available resources are used in the most effective manner possible. They therefore welcomed, as an important step in that direction, the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1980 asking for a review of emergency operations during the last decade (1980/43), and the statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his annual report on the Organization that he was undertaking a review in this area with the objective of ensuring that the resources available were applied in an effective and flexible manner. Some speakers were of the opinion that this exercise need not, and indeed should not, involve a fundamental reconsideration of the mandates of the bodies concerned. Some delegations argued that refugee problems should be linked to the mainstream of development activities within the United Nations system. The High Commissioner should base his programmes on his mandate.

13. Many speakers referred to the importance of emergency preparedness and in this context mentioned financial resources and also personnel resources and material resources. It was pointed out that qualified technicians as well as, for instance, transport means must be available at short notice in emergency situations. They also emphasized that in taking concrete steps aimed at increasing the preparedness of the High Commissioner to act swiftly and effectively in emergency situations, full use should be made of already existing operational capacity in the field provided by United Nations bodies or other relevant organizations. They welcomed the establishment of an Emergency Unit within the UNHCR.

14. In view of the many new demands placed on UNHCR, speakers also welcomed the establishment of a Policy, Planning and Research Unit and of the training programme for new staff. They declared themselves convinced that the size of the task facing the High Commissioner required a global review in order to adapt the structures of his Office to its new tasks. The High Commissioner was also commended for the regular dialogue and contact which he had established with members of the Committee, and was urged to further strengthen and broaden the process in the future.

15. It was also generally agreed that the Executive Committee could play a more active part in strengthening the position of the High Commissioner and of his Office - an institution which had proved so valuable. With this in mind, there was general support for a proposal concerning the creation of an informal working group on an experimental basis to consider the general financial, administrative and management aspects of UNHCR's activities, particularly in view of the level of funding requirements which had been attained; accountability and the cost-effective use of public funds was particularly stressed. Such a working group could contribute to the search for maximum efficiency.

16. With regard to the financing of UNHCR and its activities, some speakers expressed support for the High Commissioner's continuing efforts to seek the incorporation in the regular budget of the United Nations of a larger proportion of his administrative expenditure, and endorsed the study proposed in the paper produced as Addendum 1 to document A/AC.96/577 as a suitable basis for pursuing the matter.

17. As in previous years, there was a general reaffirmation of the fundamental character of the function of international protection and of the need for increasing efforts to promote further accessions to, and implementation of, the basic instruments. Several speakers expressed disappointment at the fact that in certain areas of the world only a few States had acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and/or the 1967 Protocol. The work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection was the subject of many appreciative statements, and speakers looked forward with confidence to a continuation of the valuable work which it had carried out since its creation in 1976. Several speakers deplored the pirate attacks on asylum-seekers at sea in one part of the world, and urged the international community to assist countries of the area to eradicate this menace to human safety and life. As regards rescue at sea in general, stress was placed on the need for continued exercise of internationally accepted humanitarian principles and maritime practices by ship-masters and ship-owners. Satisfaction was expressed at the establishment of a reserve pool of resettlement places to be used in the case of persons rescued at sea by ships flying a flag of convenience - or the flag of a nation unable to undertake to resettle those people. Some representatives suggested that an appropriate time had come, in the light of experience and in view of the diminishing caseload, to reassess the problems of rescue at sea and the treatment of persons so rescued. Hope was expressed that in South-East Asia countries would be able to ease their admission policies towards those seeking refuge, particularly as the caseload of both boat people and those who had arrived overland and were awaiting resettlement had been considerably reduced. Tributes were also paid to those countries offering resettlement opportunities for Indo-Chinese and other persons in need, and strong pleas were made for sustained efforts in this direction as well as for an increase in the number of countries participating in the resettlement process. With respect to the integration of Indo-Chinese persons in countries of resettlement, many speakers referred to the UNHCR workshop on the subject which had been conducted the previous week as having been extremely useful for the exchange of experiences.

18. Speakers noted with concern the gravity of situations that had occurred since the previous session of the Committee with the arrival of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the movement of hundreds of thousands of Kampuchean along the Thai/Kampuchean border, the exodus of persons from Chad, and continuing situations such as in the Horn of Africa. One representative drew the attention of the Executive Committee to the great number of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq in Iran. Another representative refuted that there were any Iraqi refugees in Iran. Several speakers referred to the presence of over 1 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and called upon UNHCR and the international community to provide adequate and timely assistance to these refugees and the need to seek early and durable solutions of the problem. Two speakers, referring to the situation in Cyprus, stressed the necessity for the continuation of humanitarian assistance. Another speaker requested that attention be paid to refugees in Latin America, especially those in Central America and the Caribbean. Attention was also drawn to a remarkable increase in the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe into Western European countries of first asylum. At the same time, speakers were pleased to note positive developments, of which the independence of Zimbabwe and the declining caseload in South-East Asia were notable examples, and emphasized the need to maintain the momentum which had been achieved in these and other situations. Tribute was paid to all those countries which continued to provide asylum to refugees.

19. Several speakers considered that the international community was not giving sufficient attention to the situation of refugees in Africa. They stressed that African countries, some of which were among the poorest in the world, continued to harbour a high proportion of the refugees assisted by UNHCR. The hospitality traditionally accorded by the African countries to refugees and the expenses which resulted from this effectively placed these countries amongst donor countries. Underlining the imbalance in UNHCR's assistance to the disadvantage of African refugees, certain speakers considered it essential that all countries offering asylum to refugees under the mandate of UNHCR receive the same treatment. They declared that there was a limit to the level of the assistance that these countries could provide. A particular tribute was paid to the countries who found themselves in this situation. Some speakers deplored the fact that refugee camps had been the object of aggression by racist régimes and requested the international community to assist the countries concerned to remove these threats to security and human life. The Arusha Conference in 1979 had constituted a positive first step to highlight the continent, and it had been agreed that there should be an active follow-up to its recommendations. In addition, it was essential to promote the utmost support for the planned pledging conference for refugees in Africa (ECOSOC resolution 1980/55) for the preparation and successful outcome of which the High Commissioner was urged to provide his full co-operation.

20. The observer from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) made a statement to the Committee which included references to the work of his Organization in the field of refugees, in particular the work of the Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees (BPEAR). He also informed the Committee that the OAU enjoyed the active co-operation of UNHCR in promoting the implementation of the recommendations of the Arusha Conference of 1979 on the Situation of Refugees in Africa. He pledged the continuing and full support of the OAU for the work of the Executive Committee and the High Commissioner.

21. Observers from the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) made statements on behalf of their movements which expressed appreciation for assistance provided to refugees under their auspices by UNHCR and other donors. They also hoped that aid would continue to be forthcoming until the time when these people were able to return to their homelands.

22. In general, and in the particular context of the refugee situation in Africa, many speakers advocated a greater and more sustained effort in the field of public information to bring about a wider awareness on the part of the international community.

23. On behalf of his Government, the Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania issued an invitation to his colleagues to hold the thirty-second session of the Committee in Arusha. Following informal consultations during the session, this invitation will be the subject of further study with reference to a subsequent session of the Committee.

24. It was agreed that the High Commissioner must be provided with the level of resources commensurate with his task, and in this respect speakers representing the traditional donor countries called once again for a more universal participation and financial involvement in UNHCR's programmes; this would result in more equitable burden-sharing. In this connection, several speakers pointed out that the involvement of their authorities was subject to the scrutiny of legislative bodies.

25. Throughout the debate representatives and observers described the efforts pursued by their Governments, both nationally and internationally, for the benefit of persons of concern to the High Commissioner. Speakers also took the opportunity to highlight areas where their Governments required additional assistance from the international community. Amongst the speakers figured His Excellency, the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe. His country, following its recent accession to independence and admission to the United Nations, was represented for the first time, in an observer capacity, at a session of the Executive Committee.

26. Numerous tributes were paid to the invaluable participation of intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system, as well as of voluntary agencies and other non-governmental bodies, in the international humanitarian effort in favour of refugees and displaced persons. Some speakers also expressed the view that all available resources and the full potential of organizations and other sources in the private sector had not yet been tapped.

27. The Chairman conveyed to the Executive Committee a message received from the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In this message, the Secretary-General referred to events in the Middle East and paid tribute to the High Commissioner for his unceasing efforts on behalf of refugees throughout the world. Through the Executive Committee, he invited the international community to consolidate and increase their support for the actions of UNHCR and to provide UNHCR with the assistance required in its noble and difficult task.

28. Observers from the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) made statements concerning their organizations' activities in the humanitarian field, their efforts in co-operation with UNHCR and the further application of their work to refugee situations. They assured the Committee of their organizations' continuing desire to provide the fullest support for the work of the High Commissioner and of their willingness to contribute to the search for the best co-ordination in the interests of maximum efficiency and the most effective use of resources. Success along this avenue could be of the greatest benefit to those seeking to secure resources, such as UNHCR, and to those needy persons in whose interest the resources were provided.

Decisions of the Committee

29. The Executive Committee:

A

(a) Expressed appreciation of the introductory statement of the High Commissioner in which he had reviewed, inter alia, the major refugee situations that had either developed or substantially increased in magnitude since the previous session of the Committee;

(b) Noted with deep concern the widening scope and intensity of the refugee problem in a number of regions in the world;

(c) Noted with great concern the continuing occurrence of large-scale movements of uprooted individuals and groups seeking refuge from man-made disasters and expressed the view that the root causes of refugee situations required urgent consideration in appropriate international fora;

(d) Reaffirmed the fundamental humanitarian character of the High Commissioner's activities for the benefit of refugees and displaced persons;

(e) Urged the High Commissioner to continue to seek the best and most effective use of resources made available to him, took note of the measures already taken by him to adapt his Office to new and changed circumstances, commended him for the establishment of a Policy Planning and Research Unit and an Emergency Unit and requested him to include in his report to the thirty-second session of the Executive Committee an account of the work of these Units;

(f) Expressed appreciation of the continuing contacts and dialogue which the High Commissioner had maintained with members of the Executive Committee and urged the High Commissioner to strengthen these contacts as well as to continue to seek the advice of member States by calling informal meetings and to take up either general problems concerning administrative, financial management and programme management questions, or particular problems of concern to all members or to groups of countries;

(g) Decided to establish on an experimental basis, for the current session, a working group, open to all member States and to representatives of observer States wishing to participate, which, guided by the discussion of the Committee in plenary session, would address itself to the administrative, financial, management and programme management aspects of the Committee's work under items 5, 7 and 8 of the agenda, and would report to the Executive Committee in plenary session;

(h) Welcomed the steps already taken in follow-up to the recommendations of the Arusha Conference on the situation of refugees in Africa which was held in May 1979, called upon all States to provide the utmost support for the envisaged international pledging conference for refugees in Africa, and noted that consideration was being given to the holding of a preparatory meeting or workshop prior to the pledging conference for refugees in Africa and that it was suggested that Arusha be considered as one of the possible venues for such a preparatory meeting or workshop;

(i) Greatly welcomed the repatriation of erstwhile Zimbabwean refugees and noted with satisfaction that the High Commissioner was co-ordinating a United Nations humanitarian assistance programme for the initial settlement and rehabilitation of returnees and displaced persons in Zimbabwe;

(j) Stressed the importance of maintaining the resettlement momentum for both boat and land cases in South-East Asia and urged all Governments to provide added opportunities for durable solutions to these refugees;

(k) Expressed appreciation for the actions taken by the High Commissioner in providing relief to refugees in South-West Asia and called upon all Governments to provide adequate and timely assistance to refugees in this area and to seek early and durable solutions to the problem;

(l) Reaffirmed the importance of effective public information to increase awareness of refugee situations among the international community and urged the High Commissioner to continue his efforts in that direction, in particular with regard to Africa;

(m) Paid tribute to the invaluable co-operation and humanitarian assistance provided by other organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, voluntary agencies and other non-governmental bodies in favour of refugees and displaced persons.

B

(a) Recalled that UNHCR had increasingly been called upon to undertake large-scale humanitarian actions in emergency situations involving refugees and displaced persons;

(b) Stressed the importance of the co-operation between UNHCR and other bodies in the United Nations system concerned with such situations;

(c) Emphasized the need for more effective co-ordination among the United Nations bodies concerned with man-made emergencies and with other organizations that can contribute to meet them;

(d) Reiterated its conviction that the human and social aspects of emergencies involving refugees must be kept distinct and separate from the political activities of the United Nations concerned with the root causes of such emergencies, and that they should therefore be handled by a body that can clearly be seen to be purely humanitarian and social and entirely non-political;

(e) Emphasized accordingly the leading responsibility of the Office of the High Commissioner in emergency situations which involve refugees in the sense of its Statute or of General Assembly resolution 1388 (XIV) and its subsequent resolutions, 1/ and where necessary in the initial assistance towards the rehabilitation of such refugees upon their voluntary return to their home country, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3143 (XXVIII) and subsequent resolutions; 2/

(f) Welcomed the High Commissioner's readiness to bring his Office's contribution to improving the co-ordination and effectiveness of the action of United Nations bodies and other relevant organizations in emergencies involving refugees and displaced persons who find themselves in refugee-like situations, and to continue to play his role in meeting such emergencies;

(g) Noted with satisfaction the measures already taken by the High Commissioner to improve his Office's capacity to respond to emergencies, and his intention to continue vigorously to strengthen its action in this field.

1/ 1499 (XV), 1673 (XVI), 1959 (XVIII), 2294 (XXII), 3143 (XXVIII) and 34/60.
2/ 3271 (XXIX), 3454 (XXX), 31/35, 32/67, 33/26 and 34/60.

SECTION III - INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

(Item 4 of the agenda)

30. Introducing the working document (A/AC.96/579), the Director of Protection stated that despite various marked improvements since the Committee's thirtieth session, there were still a number of matters which gave rise to serious concern. There had again been cases where the fundamental principle of non-refoulement had been disregarded, where the personal safety of refugees had been endangered and where refugees and asylum-seekers had been subjected to acts of physical violence, including pirate attacks at sea. In many areas, States were only willing to admit refugees on a purely temporary basis and asylum-seekers were generally treated as illegal immigrants and for this reason were exposed to serious disadvantages.

31. There was, however, an increasing understanding of the need for refugees to be treated in accordance with basic international standards. There had been further accessions to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and to the 1967 Protocol and further States had recently adopted measures with a view to implementing the provisions of these instruments. There had also been positive developments in regard to international protection in the regional context, such as the Round Table of Asian Experts on International Protection held in Manila in May 1980, the follow-up to this and to the 1979 Arusha Conference on the situation of refugees in Africa, and contact with the Organization of American States, the Arab League and the Islamic Conference. The action taken by the Council of Europe in matters of international protection also called for special mention. Encouraging results - as described in document A/AC.96/INF.162 - had also been achieved in regard to the dissemination of refugee law, but outstanding problems in the field of international protection called for a reaffirmation of the basic principles and standards established in this field.

32. In the ensuing discussion the fundamental importance of the Office's function of international protection and of the various principles established in this field was recognized. This applied in particular as regards the principle of non-refoulement which was considered by several speakers as having acquired the character of a peremptory rule of international law.

33. Various negative developments in the field of international protection were noted with serious concern. These related to incidents involving the forcible return of refugees to their country of origin and cases in which refugees and asylum-seekers had been the victims of physical violence and criminal attacks, notably in the South China Sea. Several representatives mentioned the question of military attacks on refugee camps in southern Africa and the necessity for effectively protecting refugees against such attacks and for assisting the victims, a subject which needed to be further considered.

34. The increase in the number of States parties to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol was generally welcomed. An announcement by the observer of Angola in the General Debate that the authorities of her country had taken the necessary steps to accede to the Convention and to the Protocol was noted with special satisfaction as were announcements by other representatives that accession by their respective countries was under active consideration. It was however regrettable that only about half the member States of the United Nations had so far become parties to the Convention or to the Protocol.

35. The importance of national measures to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Protocol was strongly emphasized. A number of representatives stressed the importance of procedures for determining refugee status and of the guarantees which such procedures provided for asylum-seekers. The procedures existing in two countries were described by their respective representatives, one of whom expressed the wish that a description of the procedure in his own country be included in the next revision of document A/AC.96/INF.152. Several representatives, however, pointed out that the procedures in their countries were being misused for immigration purposes, a practice which threatened to undermine the protection afforded by such procedures to genuine asylum-seekers.

36. Several representatives made reference to the usefulness of the Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for the Determination of Refugee Status issued by UNHCR pursuant to a request made by the Executive Committee at its twenty-eighth session. A number of Governments had submitted comments on the Handbook which it was hoped would be taken into account when a new version was prepared.

37. The importance of naturalization as a desirable solution to refugee problems was stressed by two representatives in the course of the General Debate. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania informed the Committee that with the financial assistance of UNHCR, some 36,000 refugees had just been naturalized in his country. The procedure for such naturalization had been facilitated by only requiring heads of families to submit a naturalization request and to pay reduced naturalization fees.

38. Several representatives mentioned the useful role which UNHCR had played and should continue to play in advising Governments on measures which could be taken by them to implement the provisions of the international refugee instruments and in regard to the application of established principles of international protection by States which had not yet become parties, especially in areas where new refugee situations existed. There was general recognition of the need for the Office - in view of the increased range of its protection activities - to be provided with the necessary protection staff in order to be able effectively to carry out its protection functions in various parts of the world.

39. Reference was also made to the need to adapt existing rules or procedures - or to formulate new rules - to meet new refugee problems in different areas. It was however emphasized that the development of new concepts should not in any way undermine the effective application or detract from the fundamental character of the established principles of international protection.

40. The special problems of international protection which might arise in situations of large-scale influx were mentioned by a number of speakers. It was generally considered that in view of their complex nature such problems could usefully be studied further in connection with the examination of temporary refuge as proposed by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection.

41. It was recognized that many problems relating to international protection could be effectively dealt with in a regional or subregional context. The holding of the Round Table of Asian Experts in Manila in April 1980 and the important recommendations adopted by the Round Table in regard to international protection and to piracy attacks on asylum-seekers at sea were welcomed. So also was the information provided by the Director of Protection that the recommendations on legal questions adopted by the Arusha Conference on the situation of refugees in Africa were being followed up by the Office in close co-operation with the Organization of African Unity. The detailed examination of various international protection problems within the Council of Europe and the positive results achieved were also noted with satisfaction.

42. In the course of the General Debate, the problem of the disembarkation of asylum-seekers rescued at sea was mentioned by several representatives who considered that the present practice whereby the disembarkation of asylum-seekers was normally made conditional upon the availability of a time-limited resettlement guarantee by the flag State should be reviewed. One representative drew attention to the over-all decrease in the numbers of asylum-seekers at sea and considered that emphasis should now be placed on the responsibility of the country of the first port of call.

43. There was unanimous agreement that the work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection was of special value in strengthening the basic principles established in the field of international protection and in facilitating the further development of refugee law. The Sub-Committee's conclusions were considered by one representative to have brought about a substantial improvement in the application of the international refugee instruments and of generally recognized principles. The publication of the Sub-Committee's conclusions in the form of a Compendium was greatly welcomed.

44. As regards the type of questions to be examined by the Sub-Committee in the future, several representatives believed that it should appropriately concern itself with general problems of international protection which were of current concern at the universal level. One representative stressed that consideration of such questions by the Sub-Committee could usefully be supplemented by parallel efforts in a regional context.

45. There was unanimous approval of the conclusions adopted by the Sub-Committee at its fifth meeting. As concerns the Sub-Committee's future work programme, various suggestions were made regarding the subjects which could, as appropriate, be placed on its agenda. It was noted that the report of the group of experts which would be convened to examine temporary refuge would be referred to the Sub-Committee for consideration at its next meeting. This would provide an opportunity of discussing the various protection problems arising in situations of large-scale influx.

46. One representative considered that the question of the implementation of the 1951 Convention in regard to the economic and social rights of refugees could appropriately be examined by the Sub-Committee, as could the question of the obligations of refugees vis-à-vis their country of asylum. There was general agreement that the agenda for meetings of the Sub-Committee should only include a limited number of items so as to enable these to be thoroughly discussed during the time available. The wish was expressed by a number of representatives that the proposed agenda of the Sub-Committee's meetings should be established and communicated to Governments in due time.

47. At the close of the discussion, the Committee adopted the following conclusions which included those recommended by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection.

Conclusions of the Committee

48. The Executive Committee:

(1) General

(a) Noted that while a measure of progress had been achieved in regard to international protection since the Committee's thirtieth session, there were a number of serious problems which still remained unresolved;

(b) Noted with appreciation the work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection as representing an important contribution to improving the legal situation of refugees;

(c) Stressed the fundamental importance of the principles established in regard to international protection and the need for these principles to be scrupulously observed in refugee situations existing in different areas of the world;

(d) Stressed further that while there was a need to develop legal concepts relating to international protection in the light of the special conditions prevailing in different regions, this should not detract from the absolute character of the fundamental principles already established in this field;

(e) Expressed serious concern that there were still cases in which the fundamental principle of non-refoulement had been disregarded or in which refugees had been exposed to physical danger or violence.

(f) Reiterated its condemnation of inhuman military attacks on refugee camps in southern Africa and the need for effective protection and humanitarian assistance to be accorded to the victims of such attacks;

(g) Noted that while an increasing number of States had become parties to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and to the 1967 Protocol, there was an urgent need for further States to accede with a view to the provisions of these instruments acquiring universal application;

(h) Noted with appreciation that further States had adopted measures to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Protocol, especially as regards procedures for determining refugee status, and stressed the need for increased co-operation between Governments and UNHCR in this matter;

(i) Recognized the value of examining problems of international protection in a regional context with a view to arriving at appropriate solutions;

(j) Noted with appreciation the work of the Round Table of Asian Experts which met in Manila from 14 to 18 April 1980 and the Declaration on the International Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Asia and the Declaration on Pirate Attacks on Refugees and Displaced Persons adopted by the Round Table.

(k) Reiterated the importance of promoting a wider knowledge and understanding of refugee law in increasing the effectiveness of international protection, and noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in this matter as described in document A/AC.96/INF.162;

(l) Recognized the need - in the light of its increased range of activities in the field of international protection - for the Office to be provided with the necessary protection staff to enable it effectively to carry out these functions in various parts of the world.

(2) Problems of extradition affecting refugees

(a) Considered that cases in which the extradition of a refugee or of a person who may qualify as a refugee is requested may give rise to special problems;

(b) Reaffirmed the fundamental character of the generally recognized principle of non-refoulement;

(c) Recognized that refugees should be protected in regard to extradition to a country where they have well-founded reasons to fear persecution on the grounds enumerated in Article 1(A)(2) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees;

(d) Called upon States to ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is duly taken into account in treaties relating to extradition and as appropriate in national legislation on the subject.

(e) Expressed the hope that due regard be had to the principle of non-refoulement in the application of existing treaties relating to extradition;

(f) Stressed that nothing in the present conclusions should be considered as affecting the necessity for States to ensure, on the basis of national legislation and international instruments, punishment for serious offences, such as the unlawful seizure of aircraft, the taking of hostages and murder;

(g) Stressed that protection in regard to extradition applies to persons who fulfil the criteria of the refugee definition and who are not excluded from refugee status by virtue of Article 1(F)(b) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

(3) Voluntary repatriation

(a) Recognized that voluntary repatriation constitutes generally, and in particular when a country accedes to independence, the most appropriate solution for refugee problems;

(b) Stressed that the essentially voluntary character of repatriation should always be respected.

(c) Recognized the desirability of appropriate arrangements to establish the voluntary character of repatriation, both as regards the repatriation of individual refugees and in the case of large-scale repatriation movements, and for UNHCR, whenever necessary, to be associated with such arrangements;

(d) Considered that when refugees express the wish to repatriate, both the government of their country of origin and the government of their country of asylum should, within the framework of their national legislation and, whenever necessary, in co-operation with UNHCR take all requisite steps to assist them to do so;

(e) Recognized the importance of refugees being provided with the necessary information regarding conditions in their country of origin in order to facilitate their decision to repatriate; recognized further that visits by individual refugees or refugee representatives to their country of origin to inform themselves of the situation there - without such visits automatically involving loss of refugee status - could also be of assistance in this regard;

(f) Called upon governments of countries of origin to provide formal guarantees for the safety of returning refugees and stressed the importance of such guarantees being fully respected and of returning refugees not being penalized for having left their country of origin for reasons giving rise to refugee situations;

(g) Recommended that arrangements be adopted in countries of asylum for ensuring that the terms of guarantees provided by countries of origin and relevant information regarding conditions prevailing there are duly communicated to refugees, that such arrangements could be facilitated by the authorities of countries of asylum and that UNHCR should as appropriate be associated with such arrangements;

(h) Considered that UNHCR could appropriately be called upon - with the agreement of the parties concerned - to monitor the situation of returning refugees with particular regard to any guarantees provided by the governments of countries of origin;

(i) Called upon the Governments concerned to provide repatriating refugees with the necessary travel documents, visas, entry permits and transportation facilities and, if refugees have lost their nationality, to arrange for such nationality to be restored in accordance with national legislation;

(j) Recognized that it may be necessary in certain situations to make appropriate arrangements in co-operation with UNHCR for the reception of returning refugees and/or to establish projects for their reintegration in their country of origin.

(4) Temporary refuge

(a) Reaffirmed the essential need for the humanitarian legal principle of non-refoulement to be scrupulously observed in all situations of large-scale influx;

(b) Recalled the conclusions on the question of temporary refuge adopted by the Executive Committee at its thirtieth session and, in particular:

(i) that in the case of large-scale influx, persons seeking asylum should always receive at least temporary refuge; and

(ii) that States which, because of their geographical situation or otherwise, are faced with a large-scale influx, should as necessary and at the request of the State concerned receive immediate assistance from other States in accordance with the principle of equitable burden-sharing;

(c) Took note of the extensive practice of granting temporary refuge in situations involving a large-scale influx of refugees;

(d) Stressed the fundamental importance of the provisions of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, and of the 1967 United Nations Declaration on Territorial Asylum and the need for constant advice by UNHCR on the practical application of these provisions by countries exposed to a large-scale influx of refugees;

(e) Stressed the exceptional character of temporary refuge and the essential need for persons to whom temporary refuge has been granted to enjoy basic humanitarian standards of treatment;

(f) Recognized the need to define the nature, function and implications of the grant of temporary refuge;

(g) Considered that the practice of temporary refuge had not been sufficiently examined and should be further studied, particularly in regard to (i) procedures for the admission of refugees, (ii) their status pending a durable solution, (iii) the implications of temporary refuge for international solidarity, including burden sharing;

(h) Decided to request the High Commissioner to convene as soon as possible a representative group of experts to examine temporary refuge in all its aspects within the framework of the problems raised by large-scale influx and to provide the group with all possible assistance.

(5) Protection of asylum-seekers at sea

(a) Noted with grave concern the continuing incidence of criminal attacks on refugees and asylum-seekers in different areas of the world, including military attacks on refugee camps and on asylum-seekers at sea;

(b) Expressed particular concern regarding criminal attacks on asylum-seekers at sea in the South China Sea involving extreme violence and indescribable acts of physical and moral degradation, including rape, abduction and murder;

(c) Addressed an urgent call to all interested Governments to take appropriate action to prevent such criminal attacks whether occurring on the high seas or in their territorial waters;

(d) Stressed the desirability for the following measures to be taken by Governments with a view to preventing the recurrence of such criminal attacks:

- (i) increased governmental action in the region to prevent attacks on boats carrying asylum-seekers, including increased sea and air patrols over areas where such attacks occur;
- (ii) adoption of all necessary measures to ensure that those responsible for such criminal attacks are severely punished;
- (iii) increased efforts to detect land bases from which such attacks on asylum-seekers originate and to identify persons known to have taken part in such attacks and to ensure that they are prosecuted;
- (iv) establishment of procedures for the routine exchange of information concerning attacks on asylum-seekers at sea and for the apprehension of those responsible, and co-operation between Governments for the regular exchange of general information on the matter;

(e) Called upon Governments to give full effect to the rules of general international law - as expressed in the Geneva Convention on the High Seas of 1958 - relating to the suppression of piracy;

(f) Urged Governments to co-operate with each other and with UNHCR to ensure that all necessary assistance is provided to the victims of such criminal attacks;

(g) Called upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other interested organizations actively to seek the co-operation of the international community to intensify efforts aimed at protecting refugees who are victims of acts of violence, particularly those at sea.

SECTION IV - UNHCR FUND FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS

(Item 6 of the Agenda)

49. The Secretary of the Executive Committee, in his capacity as Deputy Director of External Affairs and Secretary of the Working Group referred to below, introduced the High Commissioner's Note on the Establishment of a Fund for Durable Solutions (document A/AC.96/533). He emphasized that if the Fund, with the help of the international community, should begin operations, it would fill a void felt by many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He pointed to the generosity of developing countries which, despite their own meagre resources, had accepted for integration on their territories large groups of refugees and displaced persons and had made available to them land, infrastructure and services. It was the intention of UNHCR to design projects, within the context of the Fund, that could be dovetailed with standard economic and social activities and enable sizeable groups of refugees to participate in the life of the host country. The Fund would enable UNHCR to enter into multi-year commitments vis-à-vis low-income countries and would thus be complementary to the General Programmes, these being subject to annual programming and budgeting.

50. The Deputy Director recalled that the Executive Committee had approved the concepts and objectives of the Fund and had designated a Working Group to study the modalities of its operation.

51. UNHCR encouraged other international organizations to assume responsibility for those components of refugee assistance falling within their field of competence. The Deputy Director singled out the successful co-operation between the World Food Programme and UNHCR, the former having expressed its willingness to consider requests for the provision of food to refugees assisted through the Fund. Contacts with the World Bank and UNDP regarding possible participation in Fund projects, although encouraging in principle, had shown serious practical constraints. UNHCR also planned to pursue the matter with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), regional banks and UNICEF. However, in view of the pre-defined terms of reference of these and other financing organizations, as well as other limitations, the Fund would have to be a viable proposition in its own right.

52. The Deputy Director also informed the Committee that the massive financial support that had initially been expected was not forthcoming. It had thus not been possible to commission feasibility studies, let alone implement actual projects. He called on the international community to provide the Fund with the support necessary to promote effective durable solutions.

53. The Chairman of the Working Group on the UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions, referring to its report (document A/AC.96/582), fully endorsed the statement of the Deputy Director as accurately reflecting the situation and developments relating to the Fund. He informed the Committee of the Working Group's support for the objectives of the Fund and expressed regret at the insufficient financing. The Chairman favoured the involvement of the Fund in conjunction with other sources; he questioned, however, the desirability of the Fund assuming total responsibility for projects which do not command other sources of backing. In view of the sound justification for the Fund, he proposed that the door be left open for the launching and expansion of its activities.

54. The dominant majority of speakers favoured continued efforts to launch activities within the framework of the Fund and expressed hope that appropriate support would be forthcoming. Some speakers felt that, pending a sound financial base, the Fund should be more pragmatic in scope. Two representatives suggested that initially the Fund concentrate on one or two clearly-defined projects and that consultations with interested Governments be pursued in the light of the results obtained. One member felt that Fund projects should be integrated in the economic development process of host countries. Some speakers expressed the conviction that the Fund could contribute towards redressing the imbalance between the assistance provided in Africa and elsewhere. Two speakers said that their Governments might contribute financially after taking time to consider the matter further. With the exception of one representative, who was of the opinion that the Fund would not offer real advantages and that the concept could therefore be abandoned, a consensus emerged that the Fund should be maintained with a view to proving its utility.

Decision of the Committee

55. The Executive Committee:

(a) Recalling the concept and objectives of a UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions outlined in document A/AC.96/569 and approved in principle at the thirtieth session of the Executive Committee;

(b) Taking note of the recommendation of the Working Group on the UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions (document A/AC.96/582) that the decisions taken at the thirtieth session, together with the paper of the Working Group, enable the High Commissioner to establish the Fund and begin operations;

(c) Requested the High Commissioner to continue his efforts, for a further year, to mobilize the necessary support;

(i) to facilitate, inter alia, the resettlement of major groups from countries of first refuge that are not in a position to integrate such groups permanently; and

(ii) to facilitate long-term local integration of major groups in countries where such integration without outside assistance would constitute an intolerable strain on local economies;

(d) Called on the international community to provide concrete support to the High Commissioner in his endeavours to promote durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons, and urged in particular Governments, international organizations, voluntary institutions and private donors to make available funds, commodities and specialized services;

(e) Invited the High Commissioner to initiate a limited number of feasibility studies in order to produce plans of operation which might induce an increased willingness on the part of Governments to contribute to the Fund;

- (f) Called on the High Commissioner, further contributions permitting:
- (i) to undertake feasibility studies and produce plans of operations;
 - (ii) to initiate projects that would predominantly be financed from other sources;
 - (iii) to commit complementary resources for project components not otherwise covered and forming part of wider schemes undertaken in co-operation with other international sources of assistance, notably other organizations within the United Nations system;
 - (iv) if no other assistance were forthcoming, to provide the support necessary for the planning and implementation of durable solutions;
 - (v) to cover administrative costs.

SECTION V - UNHCR ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

(Item 7 of the agenda)

56. In introducing the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1979-80 and on the proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1981 (document A/AC.96/577 and Addenda 1 and 2), the Director of Assistance recognized that the recent increase in the size of UNHCR's programmes had created problems for the Office which now had to be resolved with a view to ensuring the most effective use of available resources. He went on to review areas requiring a particular effort in order to improve the services provided for the benefit of refugees. He also drew the Committee's attention to the report on the contributions made by UNHCR towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Arusha Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa (document A/AC.96/581).

57. The Director of Administration and Management addressed the administrative aspects of UNHCR activities with particular reference to document A/AC.96/577 and Addenda 1 and 2, and to the growth in demands on UNHCR and the administrative measures necessary to meet those demands.

58. The Chairman of the Working Group established on an experimental basis made a statement in the course of the General Debate relating to the group's examination of various aspects of the activities detailed in document A/AC.96/577, its Addenda and other documents. The contents of this statement, which are reproduced as part of document A/AC.96/587, deal, *inter alia*, with the Report of the Board of Auditors, "administrative infrastructure", the forecasting of UNHCR's requirements and the related question of response to emergency situations, staffing requirements and the financing of UNHCR's administrative costs; and are reflected in the specific portions of this report on these matters. Several delegations, after noting that the Working Group had produced useful results, recommended that the Executive Committee decide that, in principle, such a sub-group should be established for the thirty-second session with terms of reference and agenda to be determined through consultation prior to the beginning of that session.

59. The High Commissioner took the opportunity to refer to measures to improve his Office's performance and the co-ordination of its actions with other bodies. He said that he was persuaded that a complete structural reorganization of UNHCR at the present time would be counterproductive, rather was he convinced that a better approach lay in the strengthening, adaptation and improvement of the existing basic structure. The High Commissioner said that he believed that appreciable progress had been made already. Nevertheless, further action was required, including reinforcement at the senior management level. Preliminary discussions had been held with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) which had expressed understanding for the need for the strengthening and adaptation of his Office.

60. With particular reference to staffing, many speakers from African countries were firmly of the view that the post of Co-ordinator for the Horn of Africa and the Sudan, given the gravity of the situation in that area, should be continued and be placed on an equal level with a similar post with responsibilities for South-East Asia. One representative thought that it would be useful to include in the document on assistance activities a clear explanation of the difference between General Programmes and Special Programmes.

61. In general comments on UNHCR's assistance activities much attention was devoted to the programmes for Africa. Many speakers voiced once again their opinion that Africa, the continent with the largest number of persons of concern to the High Commissioner and with some of the gravest humanitarian situations in the world, should receive a commensurate proportion of the total available resources. A higher level of assistance in Africa would relieve to some extent the financial, social and economic burdens which host countries had been bearing for many years. Besides, it would truly ensure equality of treatment for the persons of concern to the High Commissioner throughout the world. The traditional concept of brotherly hospitality proved once again prevalent throughout the continent, but it was becoming a great strain on countries which were among the lowest income countries in the world. Speakers expressed the hope that the proposed programmes in certain African countries could be revised upwards, where appropriate, to accurately match the reality of specific situations. Some representatives urged the High Commissioner to review the problem of displaced persons, including uprooted persons inside their own country, particularly those in the Horn of Africa and Thailand.
62. The High Commissioner and the Director of Assistance took the position that individual country programmes would be reviewed in the course of the year and if allocations proved insufficient they could be increased from the Programme Reserve or supplemented from other sources.
63. One representative, supported by other speakers, expressed the view that although voluntary repatriation was widely considered to be the best solution to refugee situations, many groups of refugees were not likely to repatriate, or at any rate not within the foreseeable future. In these circumstances it was appropriate that UNHCR should plan for a suitable level and kind of assistance. Another representative said that the large numbers of refugees involved in many situations made it inevitable that UNHCR would find it essential to consider improvements to local infrastructure as part of its legitimate assistance activities.
64. As in the course of the General Debate, representatives and observers from countries in various parts of the world made statements outlining their own efforts on behalf of refugees. They also mentioned their contributions to the work of UNHCR and to other bodies engaged in international humanitarian assistance. They expressed deep gratitude to UNHCR, donor countries and organizations for the aid provided to meet the demands of refugee situations existing in their countries.
65. The Representative of Morocco referred to the situation of persons actually in camps in Tindouf and the surrounding region. The Representative of Algeria spoke of the situation of refugees from the Western Sahara in south-western Algeria.
66. As the Committee proceeded with its examination of the assistance programmes and while speakers addressed particular aspects concerning specific countries, the representative of Iran indicated that, for the first time, his Government would be seeking international assistance for refugees as the requirements had finally exceeded the level which could be met from national resources.
67. Observers from the European Economic Community (EEC), UNESCO, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the World Food Programme (WFP) took the opportunity to make statements on the contributions made by their organizations to the over-all humanitarian effort and to the work of UNHCR in particular, and assured the High Commissioner of their organizations' readiness to strengthen further the existing working relationships with his Office.

68. Under this item of the agenda the Executive Committee also examined a report on the resettlement of refugees (document A/AC.96/580), which was introduced by the Chief of the Counselling, Education and Resettlement Section of UNHCR. Some speakers commended the High Commissioner for his activities in the field of resettlement and paid tribute to the Chief of the Counselling, Education and Resettlement Section, who was shortly to retire after 25 years with UNHCR. The High Commissioner was urged to continue to devote to this important aspect of his mandate the attention it rightly deserves.

Decisions of the Committee:

69. The Executive Committee:

A

(a) Took note with satisfaction of the progress achieved by the High Commissioner in the implementation of his General and Special Programmes in 1979 and in the first months of 1980 as reported in document A/AC.96/577;

(b) Took note of the allocations made by the High Commissioner from his Emergency Fund during the period 1 July 1979 to 30 June 1980;

(c) Took note of the High Commissioner's continuing efforts to improve project implementation and fully endorsed the High Commissioner's endeavours in respect of project evaluation as described in paragraph (xiv) of document A/AC.96/577;

(d) Took note with appreciation of the observations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as submitted in document A/AC.96/585;

(e) Approved the proposals set out in paragraphs (a) to (i) of Schedule "A" of the Introduction to document A/AC.96/577, as amended by the proposals contained in Addendum 2 to the same document;

(f) Recalled that the proposals approved in (e) included a recommendation to the General Assembly that it authorize the High Commissioner to allocate from the Emergency Fund up to \$10 million annually for refugee emergencies for which there is no provision in the Programmes approved by the Executive Committee, it being understood that the amount made available for one single emergency should not exceed \$4 million in any one year and that the Fund should be maintained at not less than \$4 million;

(g) Mindful of the principle of equitable treatment for all the persons of concern to the High Commissioner throughout the world, and taking note of the concern expressed by many speakers with regard to UNHCR's assistance activities in Africa and to the burden borne by the countries of that continent, requested the High Commissioner to keep these activities under constant review;

(h) Recommended to the High Commissioner that, within available funds, he consider increasing substantially the assistance programmes allocated to Africa, in particular in the Horn of Africa, the Sudan and Burundi, taking into account the obvious needs expressed by the countries concerned and the proposals which were supported by many delegations. In assessing the situation, priority and special consideration should be given to these least developed countries in Africa, in view of their urgent and specific needs. In respect of other African countries, due regard should be taken in their respective cases in order to enable them to cope sufficiently and efficiently.

(i) Noted with appreciation the High Commissioner's appointment of a Co-ordinator for the Horn of Africa and the Sudan, and recommended that the post be at a level corresponding to the gravity and the complexities of the situation.

B

(a) Recalled its decision made during its twenty-seventh session, contained in document A/AC.96/534 (paragraph 119 B (c)) requesting the High Commissioner "to undertake discussions with the Governments with a view to the speedy implementation, in accordance with the usual policy of his Office, of permanent solutions, including voluntary repatriation and durable settlement";

(b) Recalled the statements made by the chairmen of the twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Executive Committee expressing their hope for further progress with a view to bringing about durable solutions to this problem, and looking forward to seeing the High Commissioner continue his efforts in this respect;

(c) Recalled that voluntary repatriation constitutes the most appropriate solution for refugee problems;

(d) Took note of the report of the High Commissioner concerning the humanitarian action which was his concern in the Tindouf region;

(e) Requested the High Commissioner to continue his programme of humanitarian assistance and at the same time to continue and undertake discussions with the Governments with a view to the speedy implementation, in accordance with the usual policy of his Office, of permanent solutions including voluntary repatriation and durable settlement;

(f) Requested the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee during its next session on the results of his efforts.

C

(a) Noted with interest the report on the resettlement of refugees set forth in document A/AC.96/580;

(b) Appealed to countries of potential resettlement to admit those refugees who are in need of resettlement in the absence of any other appropriate durable solutions and to apply liberal admission policies to that effect;

(c) Requested the High Commissioner to assist in developing sound socio-economic programmes for the integration of refugees to be resettled in countries without previous experience in this domain;

(d) Commended Governments admitting handicapped refugees and those participating in the resettlement of emergency cases and urged other resettlement countries to open their doors to handicapped refugees;

(e) Commended the High Commissioner for organizing a Workshop on the Integration of Refugees from Indo-China in countries of resettlement and requested the High Commissioner to examine the best method to provide both for a collection and for an international exchange of materials on the integration of Indo-Chinese refugees.

D

(a) Noting, with appreciation, the information provided by the High Commissioner in document A/AC.96/581, fully endorsed the action taken by him towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Arusha Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa;

(b) Requested the High Commissioner to continue his close collaboration with the Organization of African Unity in the speedy implementation of the recommendations and to report on further progress made at the thirty-second session of the Committee.

E

(a) Took note of the report of the Chairman of the Working Group on financial and administrative aspects (document A/AC.96/587);

(b) Appreciated the work done by the Working Group established on an experimental basis for the current session, which had addressed itself to the administrative, financial, management and programme management aspects of the Committee's work, and commended the High Commissioner's intention to ensure further consultation with the Executive Committee and to provide more information on these aspects;

(c) Decided in principle that some body similar to the Working Group on general financial, administrative and management aspects should be convened next year either shortly before or during the thirty-second session of the Executive Committee, the precise modalities to be arranged later in consultation between the High Commissioner and the Bureau of the Executive Committee in the light of views expressed by members of the Committee;

(d) Noted with appreciation the measures already taken by the High Commissioner to adapt his Office to meet the demands consequent on the marked increase in the volume and complexity of his activities;

(e) Welcomed the intention of the High Commissioner to reinforce, in consultation with the States members of the Executive Committee, the senior management level of his Office, particularly in the areas of programme implementation and control, of project evaluation and of co-ordination within and outside the United Nations system.

F

Recalling the major escalation in recent years of the demands made on UNHCR and the consequent increase in UNHCR's administrative costs,

(a) Took note of the information contained in Addendum 1 to document A/AC.96/577 and of the references thereto in the report of the ACABQ (A/AC.96/585);

(b) Endorsed the proposal for a survey to be conducted jointly by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to formulate recommendations for the allocation, on a proper basis, of financial responsibility for UNHCR's administrative costs between the regular budget of the United Nations and UNHCR voluntary funds.

SECTION VI - FINANCIAL QUESTIONSA.. Status of contributions and over-all financial situation for
1980 and 1981

(Item 8 of the agenda)

70. In introducing the report on the status of contributions and the over-all financial situation (document A/AC.96/578), the Director of External Affairs informed the Committee that, against the 1980 revised General Programmes target of some \$299 million, total funds available to date amounted to some \$275 million, leaving a shortfall of some \$24 million.

71. Concerning the 1981 General Programmes target of almost \$335 million approved by the Executive Committee, the Director urged Governments to make early and firm contributions to the High Commissioner. In this way, with some 50 % of total requirements available at the beginning of the programme year, the approved programmes could be implemented as planned in a cost-effective manner. Geographical earmarking of contributions provoked an imbalance in programme implementation. If sufficient unearmarked pledges were not available on 1 January 1981, it would be necessary to put into effect a restrictive obligation plan, of which the refugee would be the direct victim and which would adversely affect programme costs and planning.

72. The Director reviewed the nature of, and need for, the UNHCR Special Programmes and urged that the requirements of such programmes be taken into account by Governments when considering the over-all level of their contributions to UNHCR. He also recalled that UNHCR's over-all financial requirements would be in the region of \$500 million in 1980 and that the same amount might well be required in 1981.

73. In conclusion, he assured the Committee that, in response to the magnitude of requirements and to the legitimate concerns of donors, UNHCR was constantly attempting to improve the quality of its relationships with donors. An effort was also being made to increase the number and level of contributions to UNHCR through either new sources of funding or increased levels of contribution from the existing sources.

74. During the course of the session a number of Governments made reference to the present and future level of their voluntary contributions towards the High Commissioner's Programmes. Some Governments made it known that they would increase their contribution for 1981.

Decision of the Committee

75. The Executive Committee:

(a) Took note of the report submitted by the High Commissioner on the Status of Contributions to UNHCR Voluntary Funds and of the over-all financial requirements for 1980 and 1981 (document A/AC.96/578);

(b) Noted with appreciation the generosity of those Governments and non-governmental organizations which had responded to the financial requirements of the High Commissioner's Programmes and expressed the hope that additional funds would be made available to ensure the full financing of the 1980 programmes;

(c) Recognized that the increased requirements of the UNHCR General Programmes in 1981 called for a corresponding increase in financial support from the international community and to this end invited donors to maintain a level of contribution commensurate with the increased requirements;

(d) Reaffirmed the universal character of the refugee problem in the world and the need for more widespread financial support within the international community for the programmes undertaken by the High Commissioner;

(e) Requested and encouraged the High Commissioner to pursue all appropriate means to obtain the necessary contributions to ensure full financing of the 1981 programmes;

(f) Urged Governments and others either to make contributions or to increase the level of their contributions to UNHCR thus giving tangible support to the humanitarian pursuit of durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons;

(g) Urged Governments of all States Members of the United Nations, on the occasion of the annual Pledging Conference to UNHCR to be held in New York in November 1980, to announce substantial, firm pledges of contribution to the UNHCR programmes for 1981 thereby enabling the High Commissioner to begin implementation of the planned programmes in January 1981 in a balanced and cost-effective manner;

(h) Urged Governments and others to make, to the maximum extent possible, un earmarked contributions to the 1981 General Programmes to enable the High Commissioner to implement those programmes in the geographical scope and volume approved by the Executive Committee.

B. Voluntary funds accounts for 1979 and report of the Board of Auditors

(Item 5 of the agenda)

76. The Director of Administration and Management referred to the extensive discussions and explanations already provided by the High Commissioner in the Working Group on financial and administrative aspects in relation to documents A/AC.96/576 and Addendum 1 and A/AC.96/584.

77. The accounts as usual consisted of two statements supported by nine detailed schedules covering General Programmes and all Special Programmes. Income in 1979 totalled \$350,219,000, of which 90% was contributed by Governments; expenditure came to \$270 million, with more than 60% pertaining to the Annual Programme and the Emergency Fund. To implement assistance measures some 1,400 projects had to be established in 1979 and this expansion was likely to require additional accounting equipment.

78. Having welcomed the opportunity to provide extensive explanations on the Report of the Board of Auditors during the review by the Working Group, the High Commissioner concurred that audit was a very important management tool and that it needed to keep pace with the growth and complexity of UNHCR's activities. The need to strengthen internal audit was receiving full attention.

Decision of the Committee

79. The Executive Committee:

(a) Took note of the accounts for the year 1979 and the report of the Board of Auditors thereon (document A/AC.96/576);

(b) Took note of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in respect of the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors on the financial reports and accounts of the voluntary funds administered by UNHCR for the year ended 31 December 1979 (document A/AC.96/576/Add.1);

(c) Concurred with the proposed amendments to articles 6.3 and 8.2 of the Financial Rules for Voluntary Funds administered by the High Commissioner (document A/AC.96/584).

ANNEX

OPENING STATEMENT MADE BY THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER TO THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S
PROGRAMME AT ITS THIRTY-FIRST SESSION ON 6 OCTOBER 1980

Mr. Chairman,

I should like to begin by extending my warm congratulations to you on your election; I am very pleased that our deliberations will be taking place under your guidance. I should also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur.

Mr. Chairman, for many years now we have been witnessing a profoundly disquieting process. Year after year, the refugee problem has gained in intensity and complexity, as if there could be no limit to the trend. Emergency situations calling for rapid and sustained action by my Office are occupying a growing place in our daily work. The past year has been no exception.

It was a year ago precisely - during the thirtieth session of the Executive Committee - that we first received news of a substantial increase in the number of Kampuchean in Thailand. The Royal Thai Government asked UNHCR to start a major assistance programme. At the same time, even larger numbers of Kampuchean were arriving in the frontier zone. The international community was mobilized within a few weeks as the problem grew in scale, and was specifically invited to address the issue at a Pledging Conference organized by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and held in New York on 5 November. You are familiar with the course of events and with the fact that the United Nations system launched and implemented a large-scale assistance programme for Kampuchean in their country, in the border area and outside. UNHCR was given the responsibility for those outside Kampuchea, and the problem is still among our priority concerns.

In Pakistan, there has been a precipitous and substantial increase in the number of refugees over the year, necessitating a major revision of the programmes initially envisaged. According to the Government of Pakistan, these refugees now number 1,150,000. This involves for UNHCR a large-scale programme requiring constant attention, a major deployment of personnel both in Islamabad and in two provinces, and the co-ordination of the immense efforts being made by a very large number of organizations, within and outside the United Nations system.

Concurrently, special attention has had to be paid to the situation in the Horn of Africa and the Sudan, where problems of vast proportions, not all falling within the purview of UNHCR, were studied by the United Nations system as a whole, through inter-agency missions. The situation evoked special interest in the Economic and Social Council, which at its spring and summer sessions adopted resolutions inviting various United Nations bodies to provide assistance and stressing the need for support and aid from the international community. Most of the countries concerned are severely affected by the drought. The number of refugees and displaced persons constitutes a humanitarian problem of vast proportions. In Djibouti, refugees account for approximately 12% of the total population. In Ethiopia, while the programme launched by UNHCR in 1973 for displaced persons - within the framework of the Horn of Africa appeal - has continued until this year, the authorities have now drawn UNHCR's attention to the growing numbers of returnees in need of various forms of relief and rehabilitation. A UNHCR mission has been assessing the situation in co-ordination with the authorities.

In the Sudan, the presence of an estimated 441,000 refugees requires a growing effort on the part of UNHCR, which participated in the inter-agency mission four months ago and assisted in the organization of the International Conference on Refugees convened in Khartoum by the Sudanese Government from 20 to 27 June. In Somalia, the number of refugees has increased considerably over the year and the Government estimates that there are now some 300,000 refugees living in camps. As far as my Office is concerned, this means co-ordinating, at the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a most extensive programme covering 32 camps situated in various regions throughout the country, acting in very close co-operation with the authorities, the United Nations system and the non-governmental organizations. The aim is to provide immediate relief, to help improve infrastructure, and to ensure self-sufficiency for the refugees.

In another region of Africa, the arrival of refugees from Chad, particularly in the United Republic of Cameroon, also required the organization of an emergency programme, which is still in progress at the present time.

Also in the case of positive developments - and the independence of Zimbabwe is a most gratifying example - my Office is called upon to take measures on a very large scale. A humanitarian assistance programme was set up to provide for the initial settlement and rehabilitation of 660,000 persons. At the request of the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, UNHCR was given responsibility for co-ordinating a programme, limited in time, which covers repatriated persons, many of whom have returned under the auspices of UNHCR, and persons who had been displaced within the territory.

I have mentioned so far some of the most conspicuous problems of the last twelve months, those that required a fresh or considerably increased effort from the international community and from UNHCR, but they represent only part of our activities. There are also a number of situations that are not in the news, either because they occur in the context of events that are not in the forefront of world politics, or because the number of refugees involved is small, or as a result of the many factors that determine whether or not a problem arouses international interest and comes to wider public attention. Moreover, some problems, while not solved, simply slip out of the news, usually because they are gradually overshadowed by more recent events or because there is a change in dimension. I am thinking in particular of the boat people, of whom more than 64,000 - still a considerable number - have arrived in South-East Asia since last October. Although approximately 175,000 boat people have been permanently resettled in host countries since we met last year, the efforts needed for that group are far from being over. Pirate attacks - a matter for the deepest concern, which I have often voiced - continue to be perpetrated against these people in their fragile boats. Efforts are also needed to find solutions for the land cases still in camps in Thailand. As long as resettlement continues to be the main solution for boat and land cases in South-East Asia, it is of fundamental importance that the resettlement momentum be maintained and that, once resettlement quotas are exhausted, they should be renewed. In this connection, may I mention how grateful I was to learn that admission to the United States of refugees from Indo-China will be maintained at 168,000 for the fiscal year 1981.

I realise, of course, that once the refugees have been admitted to resettlement countries the latter must deploy considerable efforts to ensure their proper integration. Even in the most generous resettlement countries, problems are numerous and difficult to overcome. It is with this in mind that, at the request of some governments, we organized a workshop in Geneva last week on the integration of Indo-Chinese refugees in their countries of resettlement. I am happy to say that many delegations - governmental and non-governmental - attended, and I believe that the resulting exchange of experiences was found to be very productive and promising.

My Office must, of course, make every effort to see solutions through to the end. While UNHCR must bring energies and resources to bear on a large scale in order to meet emergencies, the international community must also be able to count on UNHCR to continue its other work in situations that may be less conspicuous, but that are equally deserving, if purely humanitarian criteria are applied.

The over-all task of UNHCR has thus increased substantially. This is self-evident as regards material assistance activities, and is equally true in the fundamental field of protection. Efforts to ensure the practical observance of the principles of asylum and non-refoulement, the constant search for improving refugee rights at the individual, national, regional or universal level, have continued to require an intense activity. The link itself between protection and assistance work is growing tighter. The protection task has become world-wide and, in a number of situations, also of an emergency nature.

Nearly three decades have now elapsed since the establishment of UNHCR, which, notwithstanding its universal mandate, initially concentrated its efforts in well-defined geographical areas, mainly Europe. Its task grew with the proliferation of refugee problems in all continents. In any new situation, the task has remained entirely humanitarian and non-political. The ultimate goal is clear: to achieve, for the persons of concern to UNHCR - in their new countries of asylum - living conditions and rights as close as possible to those of the nationals.

The documents circulated to you reveal substantial progress, and, behind the facts and figures, they show that in one year very large numbers of human beings were able to rebuild an existence that might perhaps have lost its meaning for them when they had to leave their home countries.

The results achieved are encouraging and justify hope for the future. I do not want to list them here, they appear in the documents. I should like to focus on the way UNHCR endeavours to meet the growing demands, and the difficulties encountered.

Mr. Chairman, the number of major new situations with which we have been faced during the last few years, and the ensuing growth of the Office, has, only naturally, brought a number of problems for UNHCR, both internally and externally. The problems are perceived by the Office, and we are actively pursuing the necessary ways and means of adjusting to our undesirable but nevertheless necessary growth. I think we have already obtained some results; but we are fully conscious of the room left for improvements, in particular, in our own performance, in the co-ordination of our action with others within and outside the United Nations system and in our communications with the outside world, including the members of the Executive Committee. I propose, therefore, to offer some comments about each of these areas.

First, our performance - and especially our capacity for response to emergencies. The frequency of emergencies of concern to UNHCR and their impact on our day-to-day work have increased considerably. In each emergency, the priority is to save lives and to alleviate hardship. But adjustments of procedures and structures must not be overlooked, as the mechanism for response must be constantly kept under review and can always be improved. However, any necessary changes in procedures or structures must be gradual: response to emerging and evolving problems must not cause dislocation.

Several measures have been implemented since October 1979, when we had our last session. Shortly thereafter, I decided on the establishment of a Policy, Planning and Research Unit, which has now been in function for several months. This Unit draws on expertise within UNHCR but also has recourse to outside consultants; it helps provide

the capacity for a formal consideration of fundamental issues of concern to UNHCR. Evaluating and advising on policies and strategies, research and long-term planning to the extent feasible, are among the main functions of the Unit, which is open to all ideas that could increase the Office's effectiveness.

Another step that has been taken is the recent setting-up of an Emergency Unit, specifically to help develop UNHCR's emergency preparedness and to support the various key sectors of my Office where action is needed when an emergency arises. The Unit should help UNHCR to act faster and to be better prepared. It is a small Unit, the staffing of which may be reviewed in the light of experience gained. Both Units I have mentioned are attached directly to my Office.

As part of our efforts to improve our response to new situations and to provide swift and adequate emergency relief, we are recommending an increase in the Emergency Fund. Given the magnitude of many of the recent new refugee problems, the present provisions for use of the Emergency Fund have proved simply inadequate. This would hopefully reduce the need for special appeals.

As part of our more general search for improved management techniques, our Electronic Data Processing Unit is now fully operational. This has made it possible to set up computer programmes, mainly relating to the boat people in South-East Asia. As I have already said, the boat people problem is far from being solved, and computer assistance is proving very useful in resettlement and in the tracing of relatives. In a second phase, we are now extending electronic data processing to a number of administrative and financial areas.

Also discussed last year and now being implemented are our training activities. Indeed, a very important requirement for the sound management of the expansion of our work is to have our staff properly trained. Thus, in early 1980, training facilities were created with a view to providing basic orientation as well as training to newly-recruited Professional and General Service staff, both at Headquarters and in the field.

Action in an emergency also involves, however, specialized knowledge that is not available within the Office and cannot always be made available from other agencies at very short notice. Accordingly, we have decided to recruit, and to keep on our staff as long as the Office is involved in major emergencies, a few experts in fundamental fields such as nutrition, sanitation and basic health, who would be available immediately when we become involved in a new emergency, and then for providing expert guidance to our staff in the field.

Mr. Chairman, as regards the all-important problem of co-ordination and management of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, I have paid the closest attention to the statements made by several delegations during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, as well as to the resolution entitled "International efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations". The Secretary-General of the United Nations also commented on the problem in his annual report on the work of the United Nations, presented to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly. He stated that "it is abundantly clear that the Organization is going to continue to be faced with practical emergencies, sometimes on a very large scale, where as a matter of human necessity and conscience it has to act and where the circumstances urgently require that the United Nations provide the leadership that is necessary to avert unspeakable tragedy". The Secretary-General further called for "organization, co-ordination, united policies and co-operative forward planning" to ensure "full success and the optimum use of the assistance provided by the international community". I need hardly say that I entirely subscribe to these views.

If the international community is to have the tools to meet these challenges, we, in the United Nations system, need to be sure that our areas of competence do not overlap, nor leave any gaps.

I shall confine myself to this question seen from the UNHCR vantage point. In this respect, may I briefly recall the evolution of UNHCR's sphere of activity throughout the years. My Office's original mandate is clearly defined in its Statute, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1950. It covers persons outside their country who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted. That mandate remains unaltered and entirely valid, and still applies today to a large number of situations in which my Office is called upon to act. Gradually, however, in response to events and in recognition of the expertise acquired by UNHCR, the international community, particularly through the United Nations General Assembly, has empirically and progressively assigned it other tasks, which have brought about a substantial broadening of my Office's concerns. To begin with, there was the concept of good offices, introduced for the first time by the General Assembly as far back as 1957. In later years, at the end of situations of internal or external conflict or the achievement of independence by a particular country, UNHCR has been called upon not only to co-ordinate large-scale voluntary repatriation, in line with its original mandate, but also to establish programmes for the initial rehabilitation of the returnees in their countries of origin. Also, UNHCR has increasingly been entrusted with responsibilities for persons displaced as a result of conflicts or radical political, social or economic changes in their countries. The institutional basis for this evolution is to be found in successive resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which - with the Statute - should guide our involvement in emergency situations.

If the emergency situation relates to refugees under my mandate, UNHCR is, of course, automatically I would say, prepared to play the leading role in conformity with the mandate vested, by the General Assembly, in my Office since its inception. In the case of voluntary repatriation - a highly welcome trend, which has developed on a large scale this last decade - UNHCR has been called upon to co-ordinate the return, reception, initial relief and rehabilitation measures for the returnees. The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its successive resolutions on the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has specifically referred to returnees as a group of concern to UNHCR. I am certainly prepared to continue playing the co-ordinating role in such cases.

With regard to displaced persons, the question is more complex and it is difficult to give general guidelines on how to tackle a specific situation. Displaced persons may be uprooted within their countries or cross an international border, and the causes for uprooting may be natural, man-made, or both. It may sometimes be impossible to isolate the various causes. As in all human problems, clear-cut situations are not frequent, and a streamlining of responsibilities may not prove to be an easy exercise. UNHCR stands ready to continue to take its share in helping those uprooted following man-made disasters. So far, an ad hoc system has prevailed, and the category of displaced persons has been appearing now for several years in General Assembly resolutions on UNHCR's activities.

Having talked of the United Nations system, I wish, of course, to mention also the non-governmental organizations. Their role in the reception, relief, orientation and integration of refugees is well known, and full co-operation with them is essential. The benefits they bring to refugees are considerable. My Office is aware of this at all times, and I should like to express to them my gratitude once again and to

emphasize their importance in the system as a whole. The same applies to such organizations as the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, which are so effective in helping to solve problems in their respective fields.

Mr. Chairman, the question of our external relations is of primary importance. First and foremost, there is an imperative necessity to maintain the most fluid and constructive contacts with governments. Whether governments take in refugees in small or large numbers, contribute financially to the solution of refugee problems or take any other measures to help refugees, their support - which adds up to a universal gigantic effort - is indispensable and a lack of support on their part would have the most adverse consequences.

Developing countries include most of the world's countries of first asylum. While refugees can - or rather should - become a valuable asset for the host countries, the fact remains that they are often a burden initially, particularly when they arrive in large numbers in a country facing economic and development difficulties of its own. Hospitality extended in these circumstances is all the more valuable.

Those countries that contribute to UNHCR programmes also face increasing demands. If we take one aspect alone, i.e. UNHCR's financial requirements, we see that our total expenditures amounted to less than \$US 25 million seven years ago, while they are expected to reach \$US 500 million in 1980, and probably a similar - hopefully not higher - amount in 1981. I am deeply appreciative that, in the face of such high demands, the needs have so far been met.

Direct contacts with governments have always been maintained by the Representatives I have in a large number of countries, as well as by myself and my colleagues on the occasion of our official missions. We have, however, also been looking specifically into the ways by which contacts between the members of the Executive Committee and UNHCR could be strengthened at the Geneva level. During the year, positive steps have been taken in this direction as we have felt it increasingly necessary to give information on the progress of our activities between the Executive Committee sessions. Following the wish expressed last year by a number of distinguished delegates from African countries, contacts with African States have also been developed in Geneva, where twice this year I called informal meetings of Permanent Representatives of African States accredited to the United Nations Office here. These gatherings have equally proved most fruitful and I certainly intend to continue to have them. In this context, one important subject of dialogue will be the convening of an International Pledging Conference for Refugees in Africa. I have greatly welcomed the initiative recently taken by African Governments to explore the possibilities of holding such a Conference. My Office is prepared to play an active role, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the OAU and ECOSOC, in ensuring a successful Conference, and we are already working towards this end. I know that I can count on the support of this Committee in achieving this objective.

Informal meetings of Permanent Representatives in Geneva of States members of the Executive Committee, as has been customary for years now, have continued. We had two such meetings, one in January, one in June, during which I tried to give, in a concise form, the fullest possible account of our work and progress at the time. Smaller ad hoc meetings have also been held as necessary, and information, in the form of periodic letters, has been given on the situation of our main programmes. I think that we can further improve the nature and the frequency of the information we give the members of the Committee on our activities, particularly on our new programmes when we

appeal for **your** support, on their implementation and necessary modifications. Conversely, we find it most important to have the guidance and advice of Executive Committee members, with whom we seek to maintain the best and most constructive dialogue.

We are, of course, always glad to give information - of a general nature or, more specifically, on fundamental aspects of our programmes - to any country or group of countries that may so request. A number of delegations may believe that more should be done than at present. I would express the wish that, in our search for suitable formulae, we remain more pragmatic than formal in our approach.

A feature of recent years has been the great increase in the interest shown in the refugee problem by the world's media and public opinion. This is an important source of support for the refugees, which we must take fully into account. During the year, we have stepped up our public information activities. New films have been produced - one of which, reviewing the last decade of our work, has just been issued and will be shown to you during this session. Teams of international journalists concerned by refugee matters have travelled to a number of African countries. One team will soon be going to Asia, and a two-day journalists' seminar on refugees will be held in November in Latin America. Additional efforts have been made to provide printed material, for example in connection with the Africa Refugee Day on 20 June last, and on UNHCR's activities during the last decade.

Mr. Chairman, these are the thoughts I wished to share with the Committee, both on the problems we have met and on our efforts and our determination to solve them. These last years have been marked by a considerable growth of the refugee problem, entailing rapidly growing demands on governments, a substantial increase in our involvement and, as a consequence, an unprecedented increase in the size of the Office. In this situation I wish to express my sincere thanks to the governments, and in particular to members of the Executive Committee, for their unfailing support, which is both a daily and a long-term encouragement in my task. I am aware that those who give us their support wish to pay increased attention to the way in which we are fulfilling the task entrusted to us by the international community. I shall be happy to respond, since a constructive dialogue can only prove beneficial to the refugees. I am therefore very much looking forward to our discussions.

In closing, I feel that I must not forget to mention all the individual efforts of people throughout the world, often completely anonymous, who assist refugees in distress by offering funds, goods and human kindness. The hospitality offered by one human being to another, by one family to another, are so many building blocks in the fragile edifice of international solidarity with the uprooted. The ultimate goal of this solidarity is to give refugees a new hope, a new existence and, above all, a new dignity. When human dignity is violated, refugees are created; when refugees are helped, human dignity is restored.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.