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**President: Mr. Rüdiger von WECHMAR**  
(Federal Republic of Germany).

**Expression of sympathy in connexion with the recent earthquake in Italy**

1. The PRESIDENT: Before we take up the agenda for this afternoon, I should like, on behalf of all members of the General Assembly, to extend to the Government and people of Italy our deepest sympathy on the tragic consequences of the earthquake which has devastated many communities in the southern part of that country.

2. With members' permission, I shall read the telegram which, as President of the General Assembly, I have sent to Mr. Forlani, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic:

"In the name of the General Assembly of the United Nations, I wish to express our deepest sympathy to the Italian people on the consequences of the earthquake which has devastated southern Italy. We have been profoundly moved by the scope of this catastrophe, and I take this opportunity to extend our support to the Government and people of Italy. Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration."

3. I feel certain that all the nations represented in this hall support the views expressed in that message.

4. Mr. LA ROCCA (Italy): Mr. President, I have asked to speak to convey the deep appreciation of my Government and delegation for the expressions of solidarity that you were so kind as to offer on behalf of the General Assembly in the tragedy which has plunged my country into mourning. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General and to all those who wished to communicate directly their sympathy in our sorrow. I should also like to thank all United Nations bodies and the various non-governmental organizations for the support they have offered so promptly to the Italian authorities in order to provide international assistance. In this tragic moment of grief for my country, the solidarity of the international community is a great comfort to all Italians.

## AGENDA ITEM 74

**Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (*concluded*):\***

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
- (b) Future meetings of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: report of the Secretary-General;
- (c) Status of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: report of the Secretary-General;
- (d) Status of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of *Apartheid*: report of the Secretary-General

## REPORT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE (A/35/590)

5. The PRESIDENT: Members will recall that the Rapporteur of the Third Committee introduced the report of the Committee on agenda item 74 [A/35/590] at the 63rd plenary meeting but that voting on the recommendations of the Committee was postponed because the report was not available in all working languages.

6. I invite members to turn their attention to the recommendation of the Third Committee in paragraph 16 of the report.

7. Draft resolution I is entitled "Status of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination". The Third Committee adopted that draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 35/38).*

\* Resumed from the 63rd meeting.

8. The PRESIDENT: Draft resolution II is entitled "Status of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of *Apartheid*". A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:* Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Kampuchea, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

*Against:* None.

*Abstaining:* Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malawi, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

*Draft resolution II was adopted by 98 votes to none, with 24 abstentions (resolution 35/39).<sup>1 2</sup>*

9. The PRESIDENT: Draft resolution III is entitled "Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination". The Third Committee adopted that draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 35/40).*

## AGENDA ITEM 78

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Refugees: report of the High Commissioner

REPORT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE (A/35/650)

REPORT OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE (A/35/656)

10. Miss OBAFEMI (Nigeria), Rapporteur of the Third Committee: I have the honour today to introduce

<sup>1</sup> The delegations of Bangladesh, Burma, Ghana, Haiti, Nepal, Peru, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Somalia subsequently informed the Secretariat that they wished to have their vote recorded as having been in favour of the draft resolution.

<sup>2</sup> The delegation of Canada subsequently informed the Secretariat that it wished to have its vote recorded as an abstention.

the report of the Third Committee on agenda item 78 [A/35/650].

11. The report contains a summary of the proceedings at the seven meetings at which the Third Committee discussed the item, together with the relevant chapter of the report of the Economic and Social Council [A/35/3/Add.2]—item 12—pertaining to specific cases of providing assistance to refugees; the relevant draft resolutions were considered by the Committee when it took up consideration of the remaining chapters of that report allocated to it for consideration. Under item 78 the Committee considered three draft resolutions: two of these draft resolutions, relating to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, were submitted as parts A and B and are contained in draft resolution I. Draft resolution I was adopted without a vote.

12. The third text, entitled "International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa", is submitted as draft resolution II. The Committee also adopted draft resolution II without a vote.

13. Draft resolutions I and II are contained in paragraph 15 of the report of the Third Committee's report. They are both recommended for adoption by the General Assembly.

*Pursuant to rule 66 of the rules of procedure, it was decided not to discuss the report of the Third Committee.*

14. The PRESIDENT: The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Third Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

15. The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 15 of its report. Draft resolutions I A and B, entitled "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", were adopted by the Third Committee without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*Draft resolutions I A and B were adopted (resolutions 35/41 A and B).*

16. The PRESIDENT: Draft resolution II is entitled "International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa". The report of the Fifth Committee on the administrative and financial implications of that draft resolution is contained in document A/35/656.

17. The Third Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I consider that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 35/42).*

18. The PRESIDENT: In deciding to convene the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, the General Assembly has just adopted a highly important decision on one of the most crucial problems facing mankind.

19. On 14 November, when I had the privilege of addressing the UNHCR pledging conference,<sup>3</sup> I stressed the dramatic and tragic plight of millions of refugees all over the world. I said that, while it is not always possible to resolve the grave problems leading

<sup>3</sup> See A/AC.204/SR.1.

to refugee situations, we should at least assist in remedying some of the unfortunate consequences.

20. As you all know, in our time, more than a half of the world's refugees population can be found in Africa. The African States have responded to refugee situations with understanding and generosity by accepting millions of homeless and destitute people, in accordance with their long standing tradition of hospitality. That alone is a most commendable and significant contribution to the cause of refugees. However, many of those countries facing the refugee influx are among the ones least equipped to bear the burden; some are the poorest among the least developed countries in the world.

21. The magnitude and complexity of the refugee problem in Africa warrants a vigorous and continuing effort and commitment on the part of the international community. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in conformity with his humanitarian mandate, continues to respond to the ever growing refugee problem in Africa. But the resources need to be commensurate with the demands of the situation.

22. It is for those reasons that it has been decided to convene the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa on 9 and 10 April at Geneva. A major objective of the Conference will be to obtain further resources to enable the African countries to meet the already strenuous responsibility of hosting several million refugees. The Conference will also provide an occasion to heighten the awareness of the international community—Governments and public opinion also—to the plight of refugees in Africa.

23. The African countries have demonstrated much international solidarity, fraternity and generosity by opening their doors to vast numbers of refugees. The international community as a whole should assume the responsibility of assisting them and the High Commissioner in their efforts to help the African refugees build a new and more secure life. I know that the High Commissioner, whose Office has been entrusted with the duties of the secretariat of the International Conference, attaches the greatest importance to ensuring the success of the Conference, which the President of the General Assembly is planning to attend personally.

24. Finally I should like to convey the regrets of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Poul Hartling, who has just returned to Geneva from an extended mission and is unfortunately unable to attend this launching of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa.

25. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Before dealing with the subject under consideration, I wish to take this opportunity to express to the delegation of Italy my warmest and deeply felt sympathy on the occasion of the most tragic earthquake that has struck southern Italy and caused such terrible loss of life and human suffering. I have sent a cable to Mr. Arnaldo Forlani, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, and I take this further opportunity to express my sorrow and to request that my heartfelt condolences be conveyed to the suffering people of southern Italy. The United Nations stands ready to render to

the Government of Italy whatever assistance it may desire in these tragic circumstances.

26. I welcome the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly on the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. That decision, which is most timely, helps to focus attention on this urgent problem in all its broader dimensions. The international community needs to be made aware of the nature and extent of the assistance required for the care and welfare of the refugees in Africa, as well as the type of support which should be afforded to the countries which have provided asylum.

27. It is sometimes difficult to grasp the tragic plight of people who are obliged to flee their homelands and to seek refuge in other countries. The great emotional stress which they suffer, the despair of an uncertain future, the concern for the family and relatives left behind—those are problems common to all refugees no matter what part of the world they come from. Whatever the reason that caused them to flee—whether it be persecution, social upheaval, war, or famine—our common humanity demands that they be given all possible help.

28. In 1970 the number of refugees in Africa was estimated at three quarters of a million; in 1980, 10 years later, it has increased to around 5 million. That is a staggering increase. Africa now accounts for more than half of the total world refugee population. Equally alarming is the fact that most of this increase has taken place in the past two years. On many occasions I have drawn attention to this situation and have called upon the international community for generous contributions to support the efforts of the High Commissioner for Refugees as well as the countries of asylum. The care, protection and welfare of refugees is a humanitarian responsibility which the international community cannot and must not neglect.

29. The assistance required for African refugees demands that we accord priority to this problem and keep it under active and continuing review. We must not for a moment lose sight of the large and increasing number of people involved, the magnitude of their suffering and the heavy burden which the situation has imposed on the frail economies of the countries of asylum. The majority of those countries belong to the group of least developed ones. The presence of tens of thousands of refugees in their territories has taxed to the limit their inadequate social and economic infrastructures. In many cases it has resulted in a reduction of services and facilities for their own populations.

30. I pay a tribute to those countries for the remarkable sacrifice they have made in the name of humanity. However, we cannot and should not expect them to carry the burden alone. A responsibility rests upon all States Members of the United Nations to share the burden. The African refugee programmes deserve more sympathy, understanding and support than they have received so far, although I recognize the important contribution which many Governments and international and non-governmental agencies have made.

31. The refugee situation has also been of prime concern to the Organization of African Unity [OAU],

with whose leaders I had an opportunity to discuss the matter when attending the seventeenth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held at Freetown in June. At its request [see A/35/463 and Corr.1, annex I] and that of the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1980/55, I explored the possibilities of convening an international pledging conference to focus attention on the African refugee situation and to mobilize the necessary assistance in support of programmes for the rehabilitation and resettlement of those refugees. I am pleased that my recommendation that such a conference be held at Geneva on 9 and 10 April next year has now been adopted by the General Assembly.

32. It is most important that the Conference discuss ways and means of assisting the refugees and of strengthening the capacity of the countries of asylum. As part of the preparations for the Conference, I have asked the High Commissioner for Refugees, in close co-operation with the competent United Nations agencies and bodies, to ensure that an adequate and concerted information and publicity programme, which will bring out the conditions and needs of refugees in Africa, is launched without delay.

33. I am mindful of the fact that, while we should do our utmost to maintain and improve the care of refugees, we must not neglect the prime question of what can be done to resolve their tragic predicament. It is most important that every endeavour should be made to ensure their voluntary repatriation to their home countries. I am glad that that has taken place in several cases in Africa, although not on a scale that will end the problem. In situations where voluntary repatriation is not possible, arrangements need to be made for the settlement of the refugees in other countries prepared to accept them.

34. It is not intended to have the Conference devote itself to the political aspects of the refugee situation. The Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, which was held in Arusha in May 1979, established an excellent framework for dealing with such questions. It would certainly promote the interests of refugees and lead to greater understanding and co-operation if the Arusha recommendations could be implemented. The care and protection of refugees is undoubtedly a matter of human rights and all countries should be encouraged to abide by the relevant international instruments and conventions.

35. It is my hope, therefore, that all Governments will continue to support the efforts of the High Commissioner by granting asylum to those seeking refuge, scrupulously observing the principle of *non-refoulement*, considering accession to international instruments to protect refugees and observing the principle of voluntary repatriation.

36. I would conclude by reiterating my appeal to all Member States and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for the maximum amount of assistance to be given to African refugee programmes so that refugees in Africa can be assured of the care and support which they deserve.

37. The PRESIDENT: There is also a request dated 24 November 1980 that the Assistant Secretary-General of the OAU be given an opportunity to make a statement at this juncture.

38. May I consider that, taking into account resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965, by which the General Assembly granted observer status to the OAU, the Assembly accedes to that request?

*It was so decided.*

39. The PRESIDENT: I therefore call on the Assistant Secretary-General of the OAU.

40. Mr. ONU (Organization of African Unity): Members are assembled today to focus their attention on a human tragedy which is world wide but which presents enormous problems for Africa. The tragedy we are talking about is the refugee situation in Africa. We should like the Assembly to bear in mind that, of the almost 10 million refugees in the world, half are in Africa. We are here to appeal to the conscience of mankind so that more can be done for those unfortunate people, who, through no fault of their own and out of fear for their safety, have had to seek sanctuary in unfamiliar environments beyond their national frontiers.

41. It has been suggested that an examination of the root causes of the refugee situation in Africa should be made so that the problem could be tackled at the root. An in-depth study of this question was one of the features of an international conference on refugees: the important Arusha Conference of 1979. The recommendations of that Conference not only aim at alleviating the plight of the refugees, but also have as an objective the mitigation of the refugee problem in Africa.

42. Although we may go on theorizing about the problem in order to discover a lasting solution, we have not come here to talk about why Africa has such a large number of refugees. We should do well to establish our priorities by thinking about how best we can meet the immediate needs of those refugees. The present level of assistance to African refugees is geared only to saving them from starvation and not to enabling them to live the normal life of human beings.

43. Those refugees' bleak future of economic marginality, cultural disorientation and shattered hopes is common knowledge to international organizations which deal with refugee problems, but those of us who are here can imagine what it is like to be a refugee if we pause for a moment and put ourselves in their shoes. Of the 5 million refugees in Africa half are children who, like women refugees, are particularly vulnerable to hardships of whatever form in refugee situations. Schools for children's education, hospitals for the sick, and work to eke out a living are like a mirage to those refugees, who because of the inadequacy of the assistance can think of nothing else but how to stay alive.

44. This alarming situation has been a matter of continuous concern among States members of the OAU. Apart from establishing a bureau within the secretariat of the OAU to deal with the questions of placement, education and resettlement of African refugees, many African States, in keeping with the African tradition of being one's brother's keeper, have resettled millions of refugees at the risk even of dislocating their economies. But those States are shouldering a burden which is too much for them to

bear. Our preoccupation here should be how to participate in the sharing of that burden.

45. The Arusha Conference, which was sponsored by the OAU and UNHCR in the search for a lasting solution to the refugee situation in Africa, produced a number of important recommendations. Chief among the specific recommendations was the appeal to States members of the OAU to translate the principle of burden-sharing into real action. During the months of September and October of this year, 1980, three OAU missions were undertaken to a number of African countries with the aim of getting those countries to share some of the refugee burden which, unfortunately, is the lot of a few African countries. A considerable number of commitments and pledges in terms of offers of resettlement and educational opportunities, as well as material assistance have been made by many of the African States which were visited.

46. The magnitude of the African refugee problem is, however, now such that it is beyond the capacity of African States to cope with it without international assistance, in spite of Africa's abundant goodwill and the efforts it has exerted to care for those hapless individuals. Assistance to refugees is a humanitarian act. The international community has the humanitarian responsibility of helping to share the refugee burden in the same way as it responds positively to calamities and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods or droughts, for there is no calamity as tragic as that of being a refugee.

47. International organizations, and especially UNHCR, with which the OAU has excellent relations, have done and are still doing what they can with the meagre resources available to assist African refugees. Nevertheless, a situation in which the sum of \$50 per year is expended on each refugee outside Africa and a mere \$22 per year is spent on each African refugee is, to say the least, grossly unfair and discriminatory. It is obvious that the UNHCR can disburse only whatever it receives from donor countries for specific groups of refugees, and no more.

48. This alarming unfavourable ratio can be reversed if more donors come to the scene to help. The traditional donors which have been helping the OAU and UNHCR to cope with Africa's refugee problems deserve our gratitude for the service which they are rendering to Africa in this regard. We believe that, with their intimate knowledge of the refugee situation in Africa, they are more than convinced that the enormous needs of African refugees call for increased assistance. But we do not believe that the traditional

donors are the only ones that feel concerned over this intractable problem. There are many countries represented here that have the means and the capacity to assist the refugees. We call on them to join the traditional donors in this noble cause.

49. In the hope that the international community would appreciate the gravity of the refugee problem in Africa and do something about it, the OAU, meeting at Freetown, called upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations in collaboration with UNHCR and the OAU to organize a pledging conference in support of African refugees.

50. Preparatory work for that conference has been completed by a co-ordinating committee composed of the representative of the OAU, the United Nations and UNHCR, and 9 and 10 April 1981 have been set aside to give everyone the opportunity to demonstrate their international solidarity at Geneva by providing the means to tackle this humanitarian problem. It is important that that co-ordinating committee should continue to direct all arrangements for the conference in order to ensure its success. We thank the Secretary-General for the support and encouragement which he has given consistently for the holding of such a conference, and we wish to express our appreciation for the understanding and co-operation which UNHCR, in particular, and the United Nations in general, have shown in this matter.

51. Africa also notes with appreciation the encouraging and prompt response of the international community at the pledging conference for assistance to refugees from South-East Asia—the boat people—in pledging within two days the sum of \$190 million for their assistance. Refugees are refugees no matter where they come from, and all of them need help. If the international community can do so much for about 350,000 refugees, then in the name of common humanity, the OAU calls upon the international community to recognize the emergency nature of the African refugee situation and to give assistance to the 5 million refugees in Africa who are crying out for help.

52. Africa is calling on nations of goodwill the world over to come to Geneva and be counted. The OAU and its Secretary-General, Mr. Edem Kodjo, who for unavoidable reasons cannot be here today, will be eternally grateful to all those who respond to this clarion call.

*The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.*