



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 52nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria)

later: Mrs. de ARANA (Peru)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES: REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued) (A/35/12 and Add.1; A/35/3/Add.21; A/35/68, 73, 84, 154, 169, 239, 255, 275, 292, 328, 353, 354, 374, 441, 457, 469, 594; A/C.3/35/L.45)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/35/149; A/35/360 and Corr.1 and 2; A/35/409; A/35/410)

1. Mr. KHARMA (Lebanon) said that the unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons during the past year had presented the international community with an unparalleled challenge and had almost exhausted the resources of international assistance bodies. His delegation paid a tribute to the donor countries which had generously responded to the appeals of UNHCR for additional funds, and also to Governments which had agreed to apply the internationally accepted rules of asylum and non-refoulement.
2. He recalled the magnitude of the task being carried out by UNHCR for the protection and welfare of the refugees of South-East Asia and of the tangible results of the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held in July 1979, particularly in respect of new possibilities for resettlement, increased pledges of financial contributions, offers of resettlement in the region and refugee processing centres.
3. His delegation was concerned about the serious plight of African refugees and the difficulties experienced by the countries of asylum which, for the most part, were among the least developed of the developing countries. Urgent action was required on the part of the international community. UNHCR was continuing to implement the recommendations and conclusions of the Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa; the relevant decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its two sessions in 1980, and the reports of the missions sent to study specific situations of African refugees. The decision of the Executive Committee of UNHCR at its thirty-first session calling for a substantial increase in assistance programmes for Africa were an expression of international awareness of and solidarity with the problems of African refugees. His delegation hoped that an international pledging conference for African refugees would be held in 1981.
4. UNHCR had provided continuous aid and assistance to Lebanon; the total value of UNHCR programmes in Lebanon from 1975 to 1980 was \$6.5 million. He wished to convey to the donor countries, UNHCR and assistance bodies the deep gratitude of the Government and the people of Lebanon.
5. The need for international action to alleviate the sufferings of refugees was increasingly pressing and much still remained to be done. His delegation hoped that all members of the international community would contribute generously to UNHCR in order to provide it with the necessary resources to carry out its humanitarian task.

(Mr. Kharma, Lebanon)

6. His delegation was aware of the need for operational co-ordination among international assistance bodies because of the scope and complexity of the problems posed by the tragedy of refugees throughout the world. Co-ordination among international assistance bodies would enable them to carry out their duties more effectively and further strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to provide humanitarian assistance. At the same time, it was important to define the competence of each assistance body and entrust it with the tasks corresponding to its mandate.

7. Miss SPERO (United States of America) said that her Government was a staunch supporter of UNHCR. That support was based on the humanitarian convictions of the people, a very large percentage of whom were the descendants of individuals who had sought refuge in the United States from religious and political persecution or the ravages of war. Moreover, another growing proportion of her country's population, having recently lived through the horrors of the refugee experience, had arrived in the United States as refugees, often with the help of UNHCR. The Refugee Act of 1980 established a firm legal and political basis for American assistance and welcome to refugees; it reaffirmed the traditional United States policy of responding to the urgent needs of refugees for asylum, care and resettlement, including admission to the United States of groups of special humanitarian concern, and reaffirmed United States policy of encouraging all nations to provide assistance and resettlement opportunities to the fullest possible extent. In the fiscal year 1981, United States expenditure for refugees would range around \$2 billion; that included funds for care for refugees in camps in several continents, for resettling refugees in the United States and for assistance to refugees who had entered the country in recent years.

8. In recent years, the number of refugees had multiplied at a startling rate; hundreds of thousands of people had been uprooted by the invasion of foreign armies in Kampuchea and in Afghanistan and additional hundreds of thousands had escaped, been expelled or left their countries because harsh, repressive and totalitarian régime in closed societies would not tolerate them either as dissident individuals or as members of despised, feared and unwanted religious or ethnic groups.

9. Her delegation believed that the results of the thirty-first session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR would be of great significance in shaping the future work of UNHCR, and perhaps also of other organizations concerned with international humanitarian assistance. It whole-heartedly endorsed the decision of the Executive Committee emphasizing the leading responsibility of UNHCR in emergency situations involving refugees, supported the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the Emergency Fund be increased to \$10 million, and welcomed the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Budget and Finance.

10. Tragic situations arose which might be outside the mandate and were certainly beyond the means of UNHCR alone; Kampuchea had been such a situation and some aspects of the developing problem in the Horn of Africa might constitute another. Her delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's readiness to help improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of the action of United Nations bodies and other

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(Miss Spero, United States)

competent organizations in emergencies involving refugees and displaced persons. The accelerating response of the international community to such situations had been most gratifying. It was commendable that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination was seeking to develop its own recommendations for improving co-ordination. Her delegation was optimistic that UNHCR and other concerned agencies would prove flexible enough to institute effective co-operation through their own initiatives and action including, where necessary, the strengthening of their own capacities to respond quickly and effectively in emergency situations.

11. In the face of one of the great human tragedies of all time, the virtual extermination of the entire Khmer people, the international community, by its generosity, and United Nations bodies, by their willingness to work together, had halted starvation in Kampuchea and averted a tragedy of historic proportions. Since Kampuchea was not yet self-sufficient in food, there was still an urgent need for international assistance, and her delegation called upon all participating agencies to maintain their efforts and to continue their co-ordination.

12. As a result of the Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, the international community had become increasingly aware of the magnitude and complexity of the tragic problems faced on the African continent. The Executive Committee of UNHCR had reached several significant decisions on the subject and her delegation had noted with approval the priority accorded to situations in Africa by the High Commissioner in his statement to the Committee. Her delegation continued to support the call for a world conference on African refugees and was gratified that UNHCR was working closely with the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General to ensure the success of such a conference.

13. It was especially important to focus attention on the largest and most vulnerable segment of the refugee population, women and children refugees. Her delegation reaffirmed the importance of draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.21 on refugee and displaced women.

14. Refugee situations required a humanitarian response untempered by political considerations. The UNHCR had been able to operate successfully in all areas of the world precisely because the High Commissioner had insisted on keeping humanitarian and political considerations completely separate. At the same time, it had been noted by the United States representative to the Executive Committee that the international community must recognize that the protection of human rights and of international peace demanded the condemnation of any State which decided to make part of its population a charge on its neighbours and on the world as a whole.

15. The United States reaffirmed its commitment to co-operate with UNHCR and the international community in resolving the massive refugee problems which plagued the world.

16. Mrs. NGOC DUNG (Viet Nam) commended UNHCR on the intensive activities it had carried out to help displaced persons in South-East Asia.

17. Although the large numbers of people who had left Viet Nam in recent years were commonly referred to as refugees, in the vast majority of cases, they were illegal economic emigrants seeking to flee from a country devastated by war and economic blockade and under constant threat of invasion from its giant neighbour in which the enormous task of reconstruction would require great sacrifice for many years to come. The exodus of illegal emigrants was one of the serious consequences of the severely destructive American war, a series of natural calamities, and the short-lived but murderous Chinese aggression in 1979. The individuals who left included officials of the former régime, staff employed by the American war machine, privileged persons, and the unemployed. They also included Vietnamese of Chinese origin who, when China had unleashed war against Viet Nam through the intermediary of the Pol Pot clique, had been torn between loyalty to their country of origin and loyalty to their country of adoption and had chosen to leave. Her Government recognized that there were lofty humanitarian reasons for organizing the legal, orderly and safe departure of such persons, and had co-operated with UNHCR in that respect. Following the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, her Government had honoured its commitment to prevent the illegal exodus and had co-operated actively with UNHCR in organizing legal departures.

18. Despite recent press reports about so-called new waves of refugees which Viet Nam was allegedly encouraging, it was well known that her Government was continuing to strengthen its land and sea frontiers, and was prosecuting the organizers of illegal departures. However, it was not easy to police a coastline of over 3,000 kilometres and to stop the hostile imperialist and expansionist circles which were systematically inciting people to leave the country.

19. Peking, Washington, Tokyo and their allies had mobilized the information media to wage a shameful campaign against Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea about the so-called refugee problem. Those countries, which had never shown concern for the millions of refugees elsewhere, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, were not motivated by humanitarianism. Although they constantly proclaimed their concern about the "boat people", it was Western, and particularly United States circles, which had obstructed plans for the orderly and safe departure of those emigrants. The United States authorities were still according privileged treatment to the "boat people" while legal immigrants had to go through long and complicated formalities and a high proportion were turned down by the immigration authorities. It could only be concluded that the United States encouraged emigrants to choose the perilous course of illegal departure, particularly since the Voice of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation and Australian Radio assured them that they would be rescued on the high seas. The United States Seventh Fleet, under the pretext of carrying out rescue operations, had approached the Vietnamese coast, thus seriously threatening Viet Nam's security and creating tension in the region.

20. Three waves of refugees had left Viet Nam in 1954, 1975 and 1978 respectively, in each case after the colonialists, imperialists and expansionists had been totally defeated in their wars of aggression. The United States was now actively

(Mrs. Ngoc Dung, Viet Nam)

working to increase the flow of refugees because it wished to demonstrate that people were fleeing from the new socialist régime. The Peking authorities were following a similar course so as to have a pretext for conducting a political campaign discrediting Viet Nam, pursuing a policy of war against Viet Nam, and encouraging their allies to follow a strategy aimed at the economic and political encirclement of Viet Nam. They invented gross calumnies about the so-called export of refugees, using the same method they had used to fabricate cynical accusations against their own countrymen during the Cultural Revolution. Washington and Peking also drew upon refugees to recruit mercenaries, particularly among former officers and soldiers of puppet régimes whom they trained in special camps and then sent back to countries in Indo-China to be used in subversion networks.

21. Her delegation welcomed the efforts made by the international community in a spirit of solidarity to assist the courageous people of Kampuchea in rebuilding its nation. Despite great difficulties, Viet Nam, together with the other socialist countries, had provided extensive assistance to the Kampuchean people in nearly all spheres of the economy. In 1979-1980, that assistance amounted to a total of \$118 million, including assistance in kind.

22. The humanitarian assistance operations organized by the United Nations, with generous contributions from many countries, had been of great value and the combination of bilateral and multilateral assistance had been extremely effective. The special assistance provided to Kampuchean refugees in Thailand had helped to improve their situation. Nevertheless, it was regrettable that humanitarian assistance had often been abused for political purposes. It was no secret that the remnants of the Pol Pot and Sosen armies and their training camps were being sustained and equipped with funds from international assistance. Once trained, those armed elements, under the cover of assistance activities for refugees, entered Kampuchea to carry out sabotage operations. Their sanctuaries were concealed by crowds of women and children refugees taken hostage by the Pol Pot followers to provide legal cover for their activities.

23. Those responsible for carrying out the programmes of assistance must abide by the Geneva Convention on Refugees and if those individuals wished to benefit from international assistance for refugees, they must be disarmed and must fulfil the criteria required to qualify for refugee status. Unfortunately, humanitarian assistance was contributing to chaos and black market operations in the frontier regions of Thailand and Kampuchea. In other cases, it had been used to encourage people to leave their countries and swell the army of refugees where they were exploited by profiteers. The international community was entitled to demand an end to those abuses of humanitarian aid for political purposes for they were contrary to the objectives of that aid and to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

24. The most effective measures liquidating the problem of refugees in South-East Asia should be those aimed at uniting efforts to ensure that the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea and other countries of the region enjoyed peace, security and normal conditions so that they could devote themselves to the peaceful task of reconstruction. They should be designed to provide economic assistance to the

(Mrs. Ngoc Dung, Viet Nam)

peoples of the region to enable them to rebuild their economies, improve standards of living and thus, dissuade them from leaving. They should contribute to the implementation of the decisions of the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia and honour commitments and agreements concluded by UNHCR with Viet Nam on the organization of orderly and safe departures of people wishing to leave their countries.

25. Viet Nam firmly supported the programmes of assistance of UNHCR to help refugees in all continents, particularly Africa and the Arab territories. Her Government wished to assure UNHCR of its active co-operation in the humanitarian activities of the Office and called upon it to take a clear position in cases where assistance for refugees was used for the purpose of interfering in the internal affairs of States.

26. Mr. VONGSALY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/35/12) described the efforts made by the High Commissioner to mobilize the international community to assist refugees. The outcome of those laudable efforts had been the repatriation of many refugees and displaced persons in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the improvement in their living conditions.

27. Since 1974, the Lao People's Democratic Republic had benefited from UNHCR assistance in resettling persons who had fled the bombings during the second Indo-China war. However, problems had been encountered in the effort to restore those persons to normal life. They could not yet return to farm their land because, in some regions, the fields and rice paddies were still mined and, as a result of the two natural disasters which had struck his country in 1977 and 1978, many lives had been lost, and almost 90 per cent of the rice harvest had been destroyed.

28. His Government had taken numerous measures to solve the problem, including the elaboration of two agreements with UNHCR for its assistance in obtaining necessary equipment for resettling displaced persons and for the construction of two irrigation networks. He thanked UNHCR and various countries which had rendered assistance to his country. In spite of its economic and financial difficulties, the Lao People's Democratic Republic had decided to triple its contribution to UNHCR.

29. Some delegations seemed to place the blame for the exodus of refugees on the country of origin, completely ignoring the profound causes of that phenomenon. He explained that Lao citizens who had left their country to seek refuge abroad fell into seven categories: (1) officials of the former régime who had been convicted by people's courts and were fleeing justice; (2) persons who had lived at the expense of society, such as nouveaux riches, warlords, and proprietors of opium dens; (3) foreign businessmen from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Thailand among others, who had come to live in the Lao People's Democratic Republic during the 1950s and who had left because they could no longer reap scandalous profits; (4) officers and soldiers from the "special forces" of Vangpao, recruited and supported by the

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(Mr. Vongsaly, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

United States CIA; (5) persons who had a smattering of Western culture, who felt out of place in their own country and were unwilling to sacrifice their selfish interests for the common good; (6) persons who did not wish to adapt to conditions in the new hard-working, socialist society and who left the country because they were lured by deceitful propaganda about the comfortable life abroad; (7) young people and ethnic minority members who fled in order to escape being drafted into the army.

30. Clearly his Government could not be held responsible for the exodus of such persons, who had left the country of their own free will. On the contrary, his Government had done all that it could to prevent them from leaving the country. There was irrefutable proof that the staff of certain embassies in Vientiane had participated in encouraging and organizing the flight of such persons. All Lao refugees, whether in refugee camps in Thailand or living permanently in the United States, France, Australia, Canada or elsewhere, except for the 34 persons sentenced in absentia by people's courts, could return to their country with no fear for their safety. During the last two years, his Government had welcomed approximately 100 families of Lao refugees who had returned from Thailand. With the help of UNHCR, his Government had devoted a sizable sum of money to financing the shipment of rice and the construction of a hospital for their use. In 1980, two additional groups of refugees had been received and a third group was soon to be repatriated. That clearly showed the deeply humane policy adopted by his Government with regard to Lao refugees.

31. The Lao People's Democratic Republic had given asylum to thousands of Kampucheans who had fled their country to escape the policy of genocide practised on a large scale by the criminal gang of Pol Pot-Ieng Sary. In collaboration with UNHCR, his Government had furnished the refugees with the means of subsistence and all other necessary assistance. Moreover, it would honour the expressed wishes of those who wanted to return to their country, and had already taken measures to facilitate their repatriation. His delegation had not reported that fact to the international community for two reasons: first, the Lao people were deeply humanistic and did not seek to exploit distress and human suffering for political ends, and second, the refugee problem was a strictly humanitarian one and, as such, it could only be resolved satisfactorily provided there was no political interference.

32. Mr. SCHLINGEMANN (Netherlands) said that, according to the report of UNHCR, the number of refugees, with all the problems that connoted, was increasing dramatically. The Netherlands Government was equally concerned over all refugee situations, whether in Asia, Africa or elsewhere, and held that the international community should pay the same attention to all refugees everywhere and allocate its assistance accordingly.

33. There was a growing awareness that refugee problems formed part of a much broader range of problems, which ranged from individual cases of refugees to large-scale mass exoduses of people and groups of people who were moving for purely economic reasons. The refugee problem could not be isolated from other major

(Mr. Schlingemann, Netherlands)

problems such as poverty and unemployment. There was a need to investigate the roots of those problems with a view to discussing and deciding upon preventive measures for the future, including forms of international developmental co-operation.

34. There was also a need to strengthen the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance within the United Nations system to allow for more effective response to emergency situations and to strengthen the system's capacity to assist Governments in achieving durable solutions. The Economic and Social Council was giving full attention to the question of co-ordinating humanitarian assistance within the United Nations system and, in doing so, was taking into account the need to deal with refugee questions and related problems against the background of development. The High Commissioner should actively participate in that undertaking with a view to placing his refugee programmes in the mainstream of development activities within the United Nations system.

35. The scope of UNHCR refugee programmes should remain limited to the initial phase of humanitarian assistance. The increasing complexity and extension of UNHCR programmes and activities required adequate arrangements for the maintenance and strengthening of channels of communication and information procedures so as to ensure a sustained high level of response from Governments and the international community. His delegation hoped and expected UNHCR to continue the practice of calling ad hoc meetings for exchange of views on the latest developments in refugee situations and on the increasing demands upon the Office. The international community should be regularly supplied with information, preferably through quarterly progress reports on Programme performance and the disbursement of funds, particularly with respect to the most serious refugee situations in the world. There should be a continuous review for purposes of strengthening institutional arrangements and management capacity. His delegation therefore welcomed the establishment of a policy, planning and research unit and whole-heartedly supported the intention of the High Commissioner to reinforce the management of his Office in the areas of programme implementation, project evaluation and co-ordination.

36. Another consequence of the further dispersion of refugees and the increase in their number and their problems had been the enlargement of the membership of the UNHCR Executive Committee and the intensification of the debates during its sessions. There was a need for more thorough preparation and organization of future meetings of the Executive Committee. The ad hoc convening during its last session of an informal working group on financial, administrative and management aspects of the Programme of UNHCR had proved to be a good initiative. His delegation regretted that the United Nations had departed from the basic philosophy that the core of the regular staff of UNHCR should be financed from regular budget funds, and it hoped and expected that the proposal by the Executive Committee to solve that problem would be endorsed and fully implemented.

37. Mr. URIARTE (Chile) said that his delegation was concerned that the refugee problem had been aggravated by a number of distressing developments requiring urgent action by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

conflicts and tension, notably in Africa and Asia, had given rise to new major influxes of refugees in addition to the existing refugee caseload, already considerable, which had continued to occupy UNHCR's attention. In that framework, it was significant that refugees had been repatriated in Zimbabwe. The problem of refugees and displaced persons in Asia continued to be of major concern to the Office, with new and more acute situations developing, notably following the influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan, and as regarded the position of Kampuchean outside their country of origin.

38. The Government of Chile had contributed to the search for solutions to those problems by providing financial assistance to various agencies which, along with UNHCR, were developing programmes for refugees and displaced persons. Chile had also been represented in such international meetings as the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia.

39. Assistance from UNHCR to Chile was basically designed to enable Chilean family members to be reunited with heads of families who had fled the country and settled elsewhere, a task which, as UNHCR had recognized had been accomplished with the collaboration of the Chilean Government. His delegation would continue to support UNHCR and would announce a specific pledge at the Pledging Conference.

40. Mr. BERGTHUN (Norway) said that it was clear from the Report that the burden placed on UNHCR had continued to increase and that, unfortunately, the means placed at its disposal by Governments to remedy the situation continued to be insufficient.

41. The highest number of refugees was to be found on the African continent. His delegation strongly supported the efforts of the High Commissioner in that area to assist the countries which had refugees thrust upon them, often in very difficult circumstances. The contribution of African States continued to be remarkable, particularly in providing local settlement opportunities in the countries of first asylum. It was especially noteworthy that the Government of Tanzania, in co-operation with UNHCR, was currently naturalizing 36,000 refugees. Another positive achievement was the large-scale repatriation of Zimbabwean refugees. His Government was fully aware of the very serious situations existing in the Horn of Africa, in parts of Kenya, the Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Chad. A special effort was urgently needed to alleviate the refugee situation in Africa, and his Government therefore welcomed the initiative of holding an international conference on assistance to refugees in Africa.

42. In Asia, the over-all picture had changed during the last year, and the situation in Pakistan and Thailand urgently required the attention of the international community. It was with much concern that Norway had noted that the number of refugees in South America was increasing considerably, but the number of refugees needing resettlement outside the continent seemed limited.

43. He noted with satisfaction that a few new countries had started contributing to UNHCR over the last year; it was disappointing, however, that many States did not contribute their fair share; 10 countries accounted for more than 90 per cent of government contributions. He recommended early pledging of non-earmarked contributions.

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(Mr. Bergthun, Norway)

44. The situation in the field of protection was now less acute than in 1979. The mass refoulement of asylum-seekers in certain areas had ceased, new States had acceded to the Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol, and important work had been done in several regions to ensure respect for the basic principles of international law on refugees and their implementation by means of adequate procedures for determining refugee status and granting asylum. However, pirate attacks on refugees at sea and armed fighting in refugee camps were new and deeply disturbing phenomena which called for special attention and adequate counter-measures. He paid a tribute to the non-governmental organizations for their work on refugees and hoped that the co-operation between UNHCR and those organizations would continue in the future.

45. Ms. RASI (Finland) said that the plight of uprooted persons in different countries rightly deserved close attention and an urgent response by the international community. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland had stated that the responsibility of the international community did not absolve the States that had created the problem, as refugees were the product of either external aggression or internal oppression.

46. The continent of Africa was still the region of the world with the greatest number of refugees, and their plight had been aggravated by famine resulting from prolonged drought. The Economic and Social Council had adopted several resolutions on refugees and displaced persons in the Sudan and other countries in the Horn of Africa. Its action testified to an increasingly universal recognition of the serious humanitarian problem in that part of the world. On the other hand, her delegation did not wish to underestimate the importance of the considerable increase in the numbers of refugees in other parts of the world, primarily in South-East Asia and Latin America.

47. Her delegation welcomed the UNHCR-assisted repatriation of Zimbabwean refugees to their homeland. Voluntary repatriation and regional solutions were always preferable to resettlement in a country far away from the original ethnic and cultural environment of the refugees. Another encouraging development was that the UNHCR had been able to wind up its activities successfully in Bangladesh. It was essential, for purposes of mobilizing continuing and increasing support for the High Commissioner and his Programme, that all the positive results achieved were fully recognized and widely publicized.

48. The international protection of refugees was one part of UNHCR's mandate which did not seem to arouse international interest. Her delegation continued to hope that more countries would accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees, to which Finland was a party.

49. Finland supported the Economic and Social Council resolution aimed at improving co-ordination and management of United Nations emergency assistance. The Government of Finland continued to support UNHCR as the central institution designed to alleviate the human suffering of refugees and displaced persons. It therefore intended to increase substantially its regular contribution to UNHCR and

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(Ms. Rasi, Finland)

its preparedness to respond without delay to new emergency situations. Several non-governmental organizations, church organizations and the trade union movement in Finland were making an invaluable contribution, both as fund-raisers and as implementing agencies for refugee programmes.

50. Mrs. de Arana (Peru) took the Chair.

51. Mr. KBAIER (Tunisia) said that in recent years, the problem of refugees had become a matter of great concern to the international community, particularly the countries directly concerned, because of its growing dimensions. The increase in the number of refugees was not without repercussions on the economy of both the country of origin and the receiving country. As clearly indicated by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/35/1), considerable strain was imposed on the fragile economies of countries that received large numbers of refugees. The international community should therefore redouble its efforts to meet the situation for it was assuming global dimensions.

52. No durable solution of the refugee problem could be found unless the root of the evil was attacked by reducing tensions and eliminating the breeding grounds of crisis, which existed to some extent throughout the world and particularly in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In view of the urgency of the problem, his delegation, which in a few days would announce its contribution to UNHCR, appealed for rapid and effective action to improve the lot of the 10 million refugees in the world.

53. With nearly 5 million refugees, the African continent was faced with a special emergency. It was therefore natural to mobilize additional resources for the benefit of African refugees. In that context, the convening of an international conference for assistance to African refugees was a welcome initiative which could lay the groundwork for a more effective strategy. Finally, it was essential to continue to alert public opinion through information activities to the tragedy of the refugees in Africa, Palestine and South-East Asia with a view to obtaining more support for UNHCR in carrying out its dual function of protection and settlement of refugees.

54. Mr. GEORGES (Haiti) said that the problem of refugees was one of the paradoxes of the present era of great technological achievements and one of the challenges of the twentieth century. The world was witnessing a human tragedy in which millions of men, women and children, fleeing conflicts, tensions or starvation, left their countries of origin in search of a better life. The international community, in particular, voluntary organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and UNHCR, had already done much to ease the suffering of those millions of human beings. However, the world would not find a definitive solution to the problem of refugees through expediency or international generosity. The problem should be faced courageously by identifying its causes. The international community should co-ordinate its efforts in a sincere desire to eliminate them.

(Mr. Georges, Haiti)

55. His delegation believed that the solution of the refugee problem lay in a genuine commitment to the establishment of the new international economic order. Most refugee migrations resulted from tensions and conflicts created in certain States by stronger States and from the imposition of political hegemony.

56. In the specific case of Haiti, the problem was an economic one. With an area of 20,000 square kilometres, three quarters of which were mountainous, and a population of more than 6 million, or about 216 inhabitants per square kilometre, the results of development were bound to be meagre despite the efforts made. In addition, development was undermined by natural obstacles such as a land space of which only 16 per cent was cultivatable, a virtually barren subsoil and seasonal hurricanes. It was regrettable that Haiti's situation had been the subject of insinuations and frankly malicious interpretations. Its problems should be assessed on the basis of economic factors, for people often left poor or less developed regions and fled towards developed ones in search of remunerative work and a higher standard of living. The most favoured States had an interest in participating constructively in solving the refugee problem. In the long run, they might well encounter similar problems, in view of the unforeseeable socio-economic implications of the influx of refugees.

57. Obviously, the solution to the problem implied responsibility on the part of the countries of origin and the host countries. The latter, and particularly the developed countries, should therefore act by establishing industries in the least developed countries and promoting productive activities which would employ the poor and keep them at home. His delegation appealed to all countries to assist in that endeavour because all were responsible to some degree for a definitive solution of the problem of refugees.

58. Miss RADIC (Yugoslavia) said that the increasing numbers of refugees throughout the world, especially in Africa, called for new and urgent large-scale action by UNHCR, greater understanding and humanitarian assistance on the part of the entire international community and co-operation and aid from individual Governments. In the period under consideration, there had been commendable progress in voluntary repatriation of refugees to countries of origin and in reuniting families. Her delegation had been pleased to learn that five more States had acceded to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. It shared the concern of the High Commissioner that nearly half the membership of the United Nations, including a number of countries which were confronted with large-scale refugee problems, had not yet acceded to either the Convention or the Protocol and deplored the practice of refoulement by some Governments. The number of refugees throughout the world clearly illustrated the scope of the phenomenon and the need for sustained and concerted international humanitarian assistance. At the same time, the international community should continue to strive to eliminate the causes of the problem.

59. Her delegation wished to refer specifically to paragraph 334 of the report of the High Commissioner (A/35/12), which contained a reference to the resettlement in Australia of three refugees from Yugoslavia. Her delegation was surprised to find

(Miss Radić, Yugoslavia)

that reference in the report when it was common knowledge that there was no need for anyone in Yugoslavia to become a refugee since people were free to leave the country at any time. Her delegation believed that individual cases like those mentioned, especially of individuals coming from countries with wide open borders, as was the case in Yugoslavia, might not always deserve mention in the reports of the High Commissioner.

60. Yugoslavia highly respected and supported the activities of UNHCR and would continue to do so in future. It recognized the need for broad international support for those activities. Yugoslavia was a party to all the major legal instruments relating to human rights including the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and fully respected its international obligations under those instruments.

61. Mr. Garvalov (Bulgaria) resumed the Chair.

62. Miss KEKEDO (Papua New Guinea) said that while her delegation was pleased to note the increased contributions to UNHCR and the tireless work of the High Commissioner, it was disappointed at the deteriorating situation of refugees throughout the world. It was deplorable to note that there were still instances in which Governments denied basic human rights to their citizens despite the many appeals and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Papua New Guinea appealed to the international community to condemn those Governments and to urge them to take prompt and effective action to respect the dignity of their citizens.

63. Her delegation was pleased to note that UNHCR had continued to maintain its impartiality and its conviction that humanitarian and social aspects of emergencies involving refugees should be kept distinct and separate from political activity.

64. The area of most concern to Papua New Guinea was the problem of refugees in the developing world, where resources to meet those problems were scarce and host countries, already burdened with the need to care for their own population, had to share the little they had when confronted with a sudden influx of refugees. While it was right to provide care for refugees, the root causes of the refugee problem must be eliminated and the problem must be attacked at its source. That task required the full participation and co-operation of all Governments and the United Nations itself.

65. The problem was a complex one and was deeply rooted in colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Unless the developed nations began to realize the damage they had done there would be no solution. They must withdraw all military assistance to States that used it against their own citizens.

66. Papua New Guinea was concerned about the security implications along the Thai/Kampuchean border and it was for that reason that it whole-heartedly endorsed General Assembly resolution 34/22. The Secretary-General was to be commended for his continued efforts to bring Viet Nam and Thailand to the conference table to discuss their differences. Her delegation also commended the efforts of many

(Miss Kekedo, Papua New Guinea)

Member States and organizations to relieve the plight of those refugees. It shared the view that donors of aid to Viet Nam should consider diverting their assistance to the resettlement and rehabilitation of Indo-Chinese refugees.

67. The refugee situation in Pakistan was similar to that in Thailand in that innocent people had no choice but to flee their homeland because of invasion by a neo-colonialist Power of a small independent State in open violation of international law. It was encouraging to note that UNHCR was reassessing the nature and form of assistance to be given to the 1.5 million refugees in Pakistan. Papua New Guinea believed that where possible, assistance to refugees should be of a kind that would eventually enable them to become self-reliant.

68. It was commendable that neighbouring African countries had given temporary asylum to Zimbabweans until their homeland was liberated. It was also gratifying to note the humanitarian programmes being carried out by Member States, especially those in the Horn of Africa and the Sudan, to help improve the conditions and well-being of refugees. Papua New Guinea welcomed the initiative embodied in resolutions of the Organization of African Unity and the Economic and Social Council for the convening of an international pledging conference for assistance to refugees in Africa.

69. Resettlement of refugees should not be the end of the responsibility of the international community. There should be some mechanism whereby Governments of resettlement countries could report to UNHCR on problems encountered in integrating refugees in a new society. It was encouraging to note that some resettlement countries were already providing that information. In seeking a solution to the problem of refugees, Papua New Guinea would endorse any movement to bring the conflicting parties to a conference table and to bring about the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of independent States.

70. Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the continuing efforts of the High Commissioner and reaffirmed the need to sustain the financial resources of UNHCR in order to enable it to carry out its responsibility. Those responsibilities were a major challenge because the refugee problem was not limited to any one continent, but had become an international dilemma. As a result of developments such as wars and political uprisings, the world situation and its political repercussions obliged the international community to view the refugee problem from the humanitarian, economic and even political points of view. The humanitarian services rendered by UNHCR to alleviate the sufferings of refugees were highly appreciated by all Member States of the United Nations.

71. The report of the High Commissioner also showed that the African continent bore the greatest refugee burden and reality dictated that it should be allocated a greater share of resources, especially since the countries involved were developing countries. His delegation was therefore gratified that, in January 1980, the High Commissioner had convened a meeting of Permanent Representatives of African States at Geneva to exchange views on developments in refugee situations in Africa of concern to him and on the evolution of the relevant programmes. His delegation

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

also supported the convening of an international conference for assistance to African refugees in April 1981 at Geneva and hoped that it would be attended at the ministerial level. It appealed to all States to take part and to contribute positively to its success. His delegation also noted with satisfaction that successful voluntary repatriation had been carried out in Africa as a result of Zimbabwe's attainment of independence. In that connexion, his delegation shared the views of the High Commissioner that the best solution was voluntary repatriation to countries of origin.

72. Attention should also be paid to the suffering of Asian refugees, a problem which had become worse since the events in Afghanistan and the resulting flight of many citizens of that country to Pakistan, including children and the elderly. The matter should be of concern to the international community because it had increased the problems of UNHCR, which had to supply basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and health care to increasing numbers. The situation in Kampuchea was a complex one and his delegation viewed favourably the role of Thailand in that regard. The international community was aware of the additional burden which developing countries must bear in such situations and his delegation welcomed the positive results outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia in 1979. It also welcomed the positive results of the repatriation of refugees to Bangladesh.

73. The tragedy of refugees was of concern to all because it required increased efforts on the part of the international community to protect people deprived of one of their most fundamental human rights. Asylum was the same no matter where it was given because it was intended to ease human suffering. His delegation therefore hoped that all Member States would continue to assist UNHCR in continuing its humanitarian efforts.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.