



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 53rd MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. de ARANA (Peru)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.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. Sir Anthony PARSONS (United Kingdom) said that when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had been set up nearly 30 years previously, it had been regarded as a temporary organization, concerned mainly with refugees in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Currently, it was estimated that there were about 16 million refugees and displaced persons throughout the world, of whom over 9 million were the direct concern of UNHCR. In Africa alone, there were some 5 million refugees. Nevertheless, it was in Africa that one of the few bright spots in the refugee situation had been witnessed during the past year when the refugees from Zimbabwe had been able to return to their homes as a result of the negotiated political settlement. The United Kingdom had made a substantial financial contribution to that repatriation programme, but it was vital that Zimbabwe should receive generous international aid to be able to reabsorb the returned refugees and the many thousands of other displaced persons.
2. Elsewhere in Africa, there had been little easing of the refugee problem. The Government of Somalia estimated that in that country alone there were over 1.2 million refugees. There were many refugees in Djibouti as well. There again, the United Kingdom was contributing substantially to emergency relief programmes. The refugee problem in the Sudan was also very serious and the United Kingdom had pledged additional assistance at the International Conference on Refugees held at Khartoum in June 1980.
3. The situation in southern Africa and in parts of western Africa had also given rise to refugee outflows to neighbouring countries. It was in that general context that a proposal had been made for the organization of an international conference on assistance to refugees in Africa. His delegation believed that such a conference could be valuable in drawing international attention to that question.
4. In Asia, there had been a modest improvement in the plight of refugees from Cambodia. However, there had been an enormous influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan and Iran as a result of the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan. The United Kingdom had already contributed generously towards the relief of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.
5. The situation of refugees from Viet Nam continued to give cause for concern. Some two fifths of those "boat people" were in Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom was grateful to UNHCR for its continuing assistance to that territory and also to other countries which had helped in the resettlement of those refugees.

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(Sir Anthony Parsons, United Kingdom)

6. The United Kingdom was greatly concerned at the scale of the refugee problem currently facing the world. Its contributions to the general programme and to special appeals amounted to date to nearly \$18 million. It had also contributed about \$7 million to refugee support programmes mounted by agencies other than UNHCR. The United Kingdom's resources were limited, however, and his delegation therefore urged all countries in a position to do so to contribute as generously as possible. He noted that there was one group of developed countries which contributed little or nothing to UNHCR.

7. The United Kingdom also played as full a part in resettlement as was consistent with its limited physical capacity. For example, it had accepted 10,500 Vietnamese refugees and a further 3,000 would be arriving in the next few months. The United Kingdom's capacity to absorb refugees was very limited, however, and it therefore supported the plea made at the meeting of Heads of State and Government held at Venice, in June, that the burden should be shouldered more widely.

8. With regard to the protection of refugees, his delegation believed that accepted standards of international behaviour governing non-refoulement, asylum for people whose lives were in danger, and the obligation to save life at sea, must be reasserted. It was not enough to try to alleviate refugee problems after they had arisen; the causes of refugee outflows, which were almost always conflict and gross violations of human rights, must be eliminated.

9. Lastly, with respect to the co-ordination of refugee assistance and other related humanitarian assistance, his delegation was, in principle, in favour of moves to improve the existing machinery for coping with large-scale international refugee problems and would support practical proposals for more systematic interagency co-ordination.

10. Mr. GÜRAKAN (Turkey) said that, as was reflected in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/35/12), the unfortunate trend towards an increasing number of refugees throughout the world had remained unchanged during the period covered by the report. Despite the efforts made to find solutions to the problem of refugees, their numbers continued to increase in almost every area of the world and their living conditions were further deteriorating. In Africa there were mass movements of people fleeing from persecution, war and famine. Over 1 million people had fled from Afghanistan to neighbouring countries, mainly to Pakistan. There had been a massive influx of Kampuchean refugees into Thailand, and a steady stream of refugees were leaving Viet Nam by boat.

11. The fact that the largest number of refugees was concentrated in the developing countries created additional difficulties for both the refugees and the host countries.

12. At the same time, some positive developments had taken place. In various parts of Africa, notably in Zimbabwe, and also in Latin America and Asia, a large number of refugees had returned to their countries of origin with the assistance of UNHCR and the co-operation of the countries concerned. It should also be noted

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(Mr. Gürakan, Turkey)

with satisfaction that, thanks to the generous response of the international community, the UNHCR programmes for 1979 had been fully financed.

13. So far, international measures to cope with the refugee problem had been aimed mainly at reducing human suffering, but it was necessary to stress the need to deal effectively with the root causes of the problem in order to find over-all and lasting solutions. In the meantime, it was the duty of the international community to alleviate the humanitarian problems of refugees, taking into consideration the over-all situation of refugees in the world. The interest shown in a particular situation should depend neither on the political nature of the cause that produced it nor on the publicity that the event received. In that respect, his delegation drew attention to the need to focus greater attention on Africa which, owing to the aggressive policies of racist régimes, currently had more refugees than any other part of the world. His Government fully supported the recent initiatives for the convening of a pledging conference on refugees and viewed those initiatives as a sign of the growing concern of the international community about the plight of the peoples of Africa.

14. Lastly, it was essential that the implementation of assistance programmes should not be hampered by political considerations, since the refugees themselves would be the first to suffer.

15. Mr. PELLETIER (Canada) said that the situation of refugees around the world was becoming increasingly tragic. Despite improvements in some areas, the over-all number of refugees had continued to grow, particularly in regions where the problem was already very serious. Although some progress had been made in the African continent, for example in Zimbabwe, the flow of refugees in the Horn of Africa was increasing and the pressures on the regional infrastructures were becoming intolerable. Many refugees in South-East Asia continued to hope for a lasting solution. In Pakistan, the number of refugees from Afghanistan was over a million. Although the situation in South America was less serious, it was still disturbing.

16. Confronted with that situation, efforts of international solidarity, although significant, were grossly inadequate. Moreover, it was unreasonable that a small number of countries, always the same ones, should continue by themselves to provide the \$1,000 million and the 300,000 permanent resettlement places that would be needed in 1981 to cope with the problem. The refugees could be helped only if all nations and international organizations combined their efforts; but those efforts must also be better co-ordinated if they were to be fully effective. It was vital for every United Nations body involved in humanitarian assistance to be able to participate fully in keeping with its own role and accumulated experience.

17. It was in any case not enough to attack the symptoms of the disease; all available means must be used to prevent it. The sole, and at the same time the best, truly lasting solution to the refugee problem around the world was still to eliminate the underlying causes. The rapid and constant increase in the number of refugees had also occasioned a considerable growth in UNHCR's activities and an enormous increase in its financial requirements. His Government had always given

(Mr. Pelletier, Canada)

unqualified support to the High Commissioner. That commitment was reflected at the individual level, as well as in official policy. Between January 1979 and the end of 1980, Canada would have resettled 60,000 refugees from Indo-China under a special programme, at an approximate cost of \$200 million from public and private sources. It had also constantly supported the general and special programmes of UNHCR through its contributions, which amounted to \$5 million in the current year. His Government would accept 16,000 refugees from all around the world in 1981. Its contribution to UNHCR programmes would be announced at the Pledging Conference.

18. Mrs. BAJPAI (India) said that the problem of refugees was very serious and required the urgent attention of the international community. India had always lent its support to humanitarian efforts on behalf of refugees on the basis of its tradition of providing succour to those seeking refuge in its territory. India's own experience had made it deeply aware of the kind of social, economic and humanitarian problems that were generated by refugee situations, and it was also aware that the best way of handling such situations was to concentrate on humanitarian relief measures, emphasizing not the political but the humanitarian and social aspects of the problem.

19. While the problem of refugees had to be dealt with in an integrated and systematic manner, special attention had to be paid to the needs of especially vulnerable sections of the refugee population, particularly women and children.

20. India had been providing material assistance within the limitations of its resources through UNHCR and other international organizations, as well as bilaterally. For example, it had contributed 6 million rupees' worth of assistance to the relief effort in Kampuchea co-ordinated by UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross. In addition, it had provided 3 million rupees' worth of rice and medicines in the form of bilateral aid. It was also providing assistance for refugees in Africa and intended to continue doing so. It was encouraged to read in the report of the High Commissioner (A/35/12) that, now that Zimbabwe was an independent State, it was possible to co-ordinate efforts to provide the assistance needed by the people returning to that country.

21. The task of UNHCR was a difficult one, and the success of its humanitarian efforts depended upon the goodwill and co-operation of the international community. Her delegation hoped that the international community would continue to live up to its responsibilities and obligations, as it had in the past.

22. Mr. DYRLUND (Denmark) said that a distressingly regular feature of the modern world was the existence of political and religious refugees and of persons displaced by wars and political upheavals. It was estimated that some 250 million people had fled from their countries during the current century. The problem was unfortunately continuing to grow in magnitude, particularly in Africa and Asia, creating major social and economic problems for the countries of asylum.

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(Mr. Dyrland, Denmark)

23. The growing numbers of refugees in recent years had led to a considerable increase in the responsibilities of UNHCR which was crucially dependent on financial support from Governments. He wished to stress once again that the work of UNHCR should be humanitarian and social in nature, and entirely non-political. There could be no doubt that the consequences of massive outflows of refugees and the resulting hardship for people in the States concerned had increased the demand that the political aspects of the problem should be studied. The problem certainly merited serious consideration by the United Nations. Nevertheless, his country would oppose any step that might jeopardize the High Commissioner's ability to carry out the humanitarian tasks assigned to him.

24. The unprecedented growth in the number of refugees had led to a considerable expansion in UNHCR activities and had caused some administrative and planning problems for the office. His delegation was pleased that the High Commissioner had already taken steps to adjust to the situation, and pledged his Government's support for those endeavours.

25. His Government supported the idea of increasing the emergency fund and of allowing greater use to be made of it in individual emergency operations. The problem of emergency operations was linked with the broader task of improving the co-ordination and administration of United Nations humanitarian assistance. Denmark, which had been a sponsor of the recent Economic and Social Council resolution on international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations, was prepared to assist in further deliberations on the matter, and, in that regard, was awaiting the report of the Secretary-General on the ways and means by which the United Nations system had carried out its role of co-ordinating and implementing humanitarian emergency assistance. It was essential to make the best possible use of the human resources that existed in the United Nations bodies concerned so as to avoid duplication of work and leave no area unattended. His delegation was in favour of maintaining the leading role of UNHCR in emergency situations involving refugees.

26. Africa still remained the region of the world with the largest number of refugees and displaced persons. The figure of 5 million refugees mentioned by the High Commissioner was indeed staggering. One of the most serious refugee situations continued to be in the Horn of Africa and in the Sudan. Owing to the fact that the refugee problems which existed in those countries were interrelated to a certain extent, it would seem expedient to maintain a regional approach. His Government welcomed the endeavours of the High Commissioner in that regard, including the appointment of a special co-ordinator for UNHCR's activities in that region. It was gratifying to note that there had also been developments of a very positive character, such as the voluntary repatriation of refugees which had taken place in the wake of Zimbabwe's independence. At the request of the Government of Zimbabwe, UNHCR had been given the responsibility of co-ordinating, in an initial phase, the humanitarian assistance programme

(Mr. Dyrlund, Denmark)

for the returnees and those displaced as a result of the years of conflict. His Government had granted 19 million Danish kroner to Zimbabwe in humanitarian and educational assistance in 1980, mainly for repatriation and resettlement, and had reserved an additional 10 million Danish kroner to be granted to Zimbabwe in 1981. Denmark was conscious of the need for greater attention to be paid to the plight of refugees in Africa, and therefore had co-sponsored Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/55 on the situation of refugees in Africa, which had requested the Secretary-General in co-operation with UNHCR and OAU to convene an international pledging conference for refugees in Africa.

27. The problems of refugees and displaced persons in Asia continued to be very serious, and his Government had made several contributions to the activities of UNHCR following special appeals concerning Kampuchea and Afghanistan. The arrival of 60,000 boat people in the last year in South-East Asia still required attention. Resettlement of those refugees remained the best solution. His Government had found the workshop on integration of refugees from Indo-China in countries of resettlement very useful. During the past year, Denmark had taken an active part in the settlement programme and, in offering to refugees from various regions of the world a new home in Denmark, it had given special attention to the handicapped and other particularly vulnerable cases. He reiterated the willingness of his Government to seek financial means to support specific projects that aimed at resettling refugees in developing countries in order to contribute to more permanent solutions which would undoubtedly be beneficial to the host country. The implementation of specific measures to solve the problem of women refugees was important not only because of the large number of women refugees but also because of the pivotal family role played by women. His Government therefore attached great importance to the recommendations on women refugees and displaced persons adopted at Copenhagen in the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women and in special resolutions.

28. The present refugee situation had resulted in a drastic increase in expenditure for UNHCR activities, which put a heavy burden on the benevolence of all donor countries.

29. Denmark's contribution to the general programme amounted in 1980 to some \$US 3 million, i.e., more than twice its ordinary contribution in 1979, and his Government intended to increase its contribution in 1981. The same applied to its special contributions to UNHCR. After adding Denmark's contribution to special appeals concerning Kampuchea, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, Sudan, Chad, Zimbabwe and other countries, his country had so far given some \$US 8 million to UNHCR in 1980, which constituted only a part of its total expenditure on behalf of refugees.

30. The responsibility for giving the High Commissioner the means to act effectively rested upon the international community in its entirety and thus upon all Governments. Denmark was ready to continue to carry its part of the responsibility.

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31. Mrs. GU (China) said that the problem of refugees had reached its most serious point since the Second World War. In the Middle East, millions of Palestinians had become homeless refugees as a result of Israel's policy of aggression and expansion. On the African continent, where the number of refugees was the largest, the situation was very grave. In southern Africa, the life of the refugees was extremely tragic as a result of persecution by the South African racist régime. In the Horn of Africa, the Sudan and some other African countries, thousands of refugees were living in dire misery. UNHCR had done much useful work in those regions, and her delegation supported the efforts of the High Commissioner and other international bodies to assist the African refugees. Her delegation was also in favour of convening the envisaged international pledging conference for refugees in Africa and expected the conference to contribute positively to the solution of the problem of African refugees.

32. In Indo-China, the bloody war of aggression was still continuing in Kampuchea, creating millions of refugees. After a temporary slow-down, the flow of the boat people across the ocean had once again increased sharply in the first half of 1980. In southern Asia, over a million Afghan refugees had gone into exile after the Soviet armed invasion of Afghanistan.

33. At present, the presence of refugees had spread to every continent of the world. In 1979, the number of refugees throughout the world totalled over 10 million. Their number was constantly growing, and their problems were becoming more and more acute. The worsening of the refugee problem had seriously wrecked the political, economic and social life of many regions. Such a serious situation merited the close attention of the United Nations and the international community.

34. China had, to date, accepted over 250,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, and the Chinese Government had spent an equivalent of close to \$US 500 million for their relief and resettlement. At the meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held in Geneva in July 1979, her Government had announced that it would accept an additional 10,000 Indo-Chinese refugees. UNHCR and the Government of China had initiated joint refugee relief projects, which were being carried out satisfactorily. Her Government had joined actively in the various efforts of the international community to assist refugees and had made numerous contributions in cash and kind. Her delegation had actively participated in the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia in July 1979 and the International Meeting on Humanitarian Assistance and Relief to the Kampuchean People held in May 1980 in Geneva. In the view of her delegation, the refugee problem was not a purely humanitarian question; it had a political cause, and the problem must be tackled from two sides. One was the concerted effort of the international community to increase its humanitarian assistance in order to alleviate the sufferings of refugees. However, humanitarian assistance alone could not solve the refugee problem. In recent years, various international conferences had been held to consider assistance to the Indo-Chinese refugees. The UNHCR budget had increased *many-fold year after year*, but it was still not enough to meet the needs of the increasing number of refugees. The fate of the Kampuchean refugees was another case in point. Despite the efforts of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the refugees, the aggressors not only continued to create more refugees but also sabotaged the humanitarian efforts of the international

(Mrs. Gu, China)

relief organizations. The stark reality was that the flow of refugees could not be checked unless the root cause was eliminated. Therefore, the only way for the international community to solve the problem of Indo-Chinese and Afghan refugees was to take concerted action to force the aggressors to withdraw, immediately and unconditionally, all their troops from Kampuchea and Afghanistan in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

35. At the 52nd meeting of the Committee, the representative of Viet Nam had attacked China with groundless fabrications and slander. Everyone knew that it was the Viet Nam war of aggression against Kampuchea, and Viet Nam's reactionary internal policy against its people and national minorities, that had caused the exodus of the refugees, although the representative of Viet Nam had attempted to shift the responsibility of his Government's crimes to China.

36. Mr. ALMOSLECHNER (Austria) said that his Government would continue its support for the activities carried on by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. His delegation had noted with special interest the High Commissioner's remarks about the question of co-ordination and management of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance. During the past year, the international community had once again shown its readiness to deal effectively with the refugee problem. Much had been accomplished as a result of efforts by the countries of first asylum, the recipient and donor countries, and the international humanitarian organizations.

37. In addition to its position as a country of first asylum, Austria had joined in the efforts deployed with respect to the refugees from Indo-China and had resettled several thousand refugees from that region. His country had also contributed financially to a number of refugee programmes in various parts of the world.

38. The international humanitarian organizations, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration and their dedicated staff deserved all praise for their efforts to cope with the refugee problems. In view of the difficult conditions in which they worked, special emphasis should be placed on planning, programming, implementation and control. A constant dialogue was thus necessary between the countries of first asylum, the recipient and donor countries and the international organizations working in that field.

39. His delegation had noted particularly the remarks contained in the High Commissioner's report concerning refugee rights and the need to improve them, and it emphasized the importance of securing respect for the basic principles of asylum and non-refoulement. His delegation also expressed its satisfaction with the results of the Copenhagen Conference and with the Committee's work on the question of refugee women, which had been dealt with in a draft resolution introduced by Australia, of which his country was a sponsor.

40. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Co-ordinator of the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO), who had led an interagency mission to Ethiopia to ascertain the situation of the displaced persons there and assess their needs.

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(Mr. Adugna, Ethiopia)

41. Ethiopia's policy on the problem of refugees was strictly guided by the principles of the Geneva Convention of 1951, the United Nations Protocol of 1967 and the Organization of African Unity Convention of 1969 on the specific aspects of refugees in Africa. The CAU Convention, which was an important regional complement to the existing international instruments, recommended that refugees should not be used for subversive and terrorist activities, that States should prohibit refugees residing in their territories from attacking any other State member of the OAU or engaging in any activity likely to cause tension among member States, and that voluntary repatriation of refugees or their resettlement in the country of asylum was the best long-term solution to the African refugee problem. The same principles and recommendations were reiterated in the Arusha Declaration of 1979. His country considered that the first step forward in providing viable solutions to the refugee problem in Africa would be the ratification of those important international and regional instruments by all States.

42. It would be remembered that following the conflict in the Horn of Africa in 1977-1978 and pursuant to resolution 1978/39 of the Economic and Social Council, the High Commissioner had issued an appeal for humanitarian assistance to the refugees and displaced persons in that region; unfortunately, it had not obtained the hoped-for results, for a number of reasons.

43. The violation of Ethiopian territorial integrity and sovereignty in 1977 had resulted in the displacement of nearly 2.4 million people, whose repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement were beyond Ethiopia's means. The Government had therefore appealed to the international community for urgent humanitarian assistance in its programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1980/8, had requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with UNHCR, to assess the extent of the problems faced by Ethiopia and mobilize urgent international humanitarian assistance for that purpose. In that connexion, he expressed his appreciation of the appeal launched that day by the Secretary-General and his hope that the international community would respond promptly and generously. Ethiopia was now faced with a situation in which there was an increasing number of returning refugees. In that respect, the High Commissioner had recently pledged a sum of \$1.3 million for a six-month period for the rehabilitation of some 10,000 returning refugees and it was hoped that repatriation and resettlement would be completed before the expiry of the six-month period.

44. Imbalances in assistance between regions and countries must be rectified. The representative of Sweden had rightly pointed out that although there were more refugees and displaced persons in Africa, allocations for refugees in Asia exceeded those for Africa by \$100 million. Political considerations should not influence the response of the international community to the problems of refugees and displaced persons.

45. Apart from attending to the needs of a significant number of refugees from neighbouring countries, Ethiopia had 2.4 million war-displaced persons needing assistance. Those persons were to be found in three administrative regions of the country which had been visited by three different UNHCR missions. The three missions from the Office of the High Commissioner and the visit by the High Commissioner himself had confirmed the deplorable conditions of the displaced

(Mr. Adugna, Ethiopia)

persons in Ethiopia and the report of the interagency mission (E/1980/104) stated that Ethiopia was the country with the lowest per capita official development assistance. The minimum requirements in food, clothing, medicines, reconstruction and so forth were given in detail in the report and deserved a proper response from the international community if self-reliance and rehabilitation were to be achieved in respect of returning refugees and displaced persons in Ethiopia. It must be remembered that while speeches full of good intentions were being made, millions of individuals were struggling for survival.

46. The initiative taken by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the High Commissioner to hold a pledging conference in support of refugees in Africa was commendable and his delegation supported it within the framework of ratification of the conventions and adherence to the principles to which he had referred earlier.

47. Miss VOURAKIS (Greece) said that the proliferation of tensions and conflicts in many parts of the world had brought about an unceasing increase in the number of refugees and created situations requiring urgent action by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It was encouraging to note that the international community, realizing the gravity of the situation, had made substantial amounts of money available to the High Commissioner; however, the refugee problem was increasingly serious and was becoming almost universal in scope. It was therefore necessary constantly to increase the funds available.

48. Greece, as a member of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, was particularly concerned with refugee questions and had always, to the extent possible, responded to appeals made to Governments to **increase** their financial and material contributions.

49. It was encouraging to note the progress that had been made with regard to voluntary repatriation in Africa, a region with an enormous number of refugees and with serious problems of poverty and famine. The Arusha Conference had produced positive results and would help improve the situation of African refugees.

50. The situation in Latin America had improved somewhat, but efforts must be made to integrate refugees and reunite families. In that regard, her delegation wished to stress the constructive role played by the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration in facilitating the return of refugees and their effective rehabilitation.

51. Although the situation of refugees in Asia had improved somewhat as a result of the 1979 Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, it was still critical and no solution had been found. Mention should also be made of the Pledging Conference held in November 1979 in New York and the international meeting held at Geneva in May 1980 to deal with the problem of humanitarian assistance to Kampuchea, which was threatened by starvation and extermination.

52. Her delegation had noted with concern the aggravation of the situation in Cambodia, where tensions persisted and the problems of poverty and starvation were

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(Miss Vourakis, Greece)

becoming more serious despite efforts to alleviate them. Greece wished to associate itself with those who had appealed to the parties concerned to put an end to that situation. The restoration of peace and stability in the region was essential if the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was to be able to implement humanitarian aid programmes and save the people of Kampuchea.

53. The Government of Greece granted to countries of first asylum the necessary guarantees to allow for the immediate disembarkation of refugees at the first port of call; it was therefore unfortunate that several countries in the region should have adopted an often restrictive and inflexible attitude. Furthermore, the granting of resettlement guarantees for refugees rescued at sea often presented problems for a country such as Greece, where there was a marked disproportion between its large merchant marine and its limited capability for granting asylum and permanent resettlement. In that respect, it must be stressed that the guarantees given to countries of first asylum by flag States were real, since if the refugees did not proceed to other countries for permanent resettlement the flag State was required to give them asylum. Her delegation believed the problem should be studied carefully on the basis of a realistic assessment of the resettlement capabilities of small maritime countries. It reiterated its appeal to the High Commissioner to seek practical solutions to the question and devise procedures to facilitate the immediate disembarkation of refugees rescued at sea and their rapid departure for third countries.

54. The increase in the number of hotbeds of conflict and sources of influxes of refugees had highlighted the importance of the role of the High Commissioner in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees and underscored the need for the High Commissioner to hold frequent consultations with members of the Executive Committee. Her delegation was in favour of holding such consultations and believed that the Executive Committee should participate actively and directly in the organization and management of the various programmes undertaken by the High Commissioner with a view to providing him with the necessary support, particularly in terms of financial co-ordination.

55. Her delegation wished to stress the important role played by the High Commissioner in co-ordinating humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons in Cyprus. That participation had been a decisive factor in alleviating the sufferings of the Cypriot refugees and would continue to be indispensable as long as those refugees were unable to return to their homes under safe and honourable conditions.

56. The year that was now ending had been characterized by events which had created new waves of refugees; thousands of persons had abandoned their homes and their countries in search of asylum to escape persecution, foreign domination, starvation and even death. The international community could not be content with remedying the consequences of that overwhelming problem or passively recognizing the increasingly diversified, complex and multidimensional work of the High Commissioner; it must also attack the problem at its roots and work to find radical and lasting solutions.

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57. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines) said that in a world besieged by crises and tension refugees were often the objects of political, economic or social considerations. It was precisely for that reason that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was to be commended for the measures it had taken to alleviate the refugees' plight by improving their living conditions, safeguarding their rights and trying to ensure for them a better and more stable existence. However, one office could not handle the needs of millions of refugees, and international participation and co-operation were required. The refugee problem could be solved only through co-ordinated action, at the national and international levels, by countries, international organizations and the public and private sectors. Only thus would it be possible to improve the situation of refugees and, in time, to eradicate the problem.

58. The two regions of major concern to the High Commissioner and the international community were Africa and Asia. The report of the High Commissioner (A/35/12) showed that financial obligations in Africa in 1979 had amounted to a total of \$71.7 million under the High Commissioner's General and Special Programmes and that total obligations in Asia for 1979 had amounted to \$162.6 million.

59. At the international level the rejection at the frontier of refugees seeking asylum who were thus obliged to return to hostile territory was a regrettable development of the greatest importance. The principle of non-refoulement was directly related to the protection of refugees and also to the principle of asylum, but although many States followed a policy of liberal admission of arrivals, some nations refused to grant even temporary asylum, exposing the refugees to danger and sometimes even death.

60. In southern Africa the threat to the refugees' physical safety had taken the form of bombing attacks, incursions across borders and other forms of harassment. Unjustified detention, including torture, on the grounds of illegal entry had also been reported; those charges of illegal entry were particularly unwarranted since asylum seekers had no recourse but to enter a country through any available channel.

61. The expulsion of refugees, a prevalent practice in some States, should be considered as a last resort, to be adopted only if national security or public order was imperilled. The economic and social rights of refugees should also be protected during their stay in the country of asylum.

62. Fortunately, continued consultations between the Office of the High Commissioner and different Governments had led to an attenuation of those negative developments, and the most heartening positive development to date was the increased number of voluntary repatriations, which was unanimously viewed as constituting the most desirable solution to the refugee problem. It was also a positive development that in such countries as Burma, Zimbabwe, Zaire and Nicaragua large-scale reunification of separated families had been possible.

63. In the Philippines, the arrival of 3,000 refugees in 1978 had led the Government to become more actively involved in the problem, and in 1979 it had offered a processing centre in Morong, in the Bataan peninsula, to relieve other

(Mr. Moreno-Salcedo, Philippines)

countries in South-East Asia of the burden constituted by the refugees who had landed on their shores. Under an agreement with the Office of the High Commissioner, the Government of the Philippines would accept a maximum of 50,000 refugees during the third stage of its programme. There were currently 21,778 refugees in the Philippines, divided into three categories: 3,800 refugees who had arrived in small boats or who had been picked up on the high seas; 17,000 refugees who were receiving asylum while they were in transit to third countries, and 978 transit cases who were lodged temporarily at the Fabella Centre in metropolitan Manila. The Philippines, as a developing nation, lacked the necessary infrastructure and resources to accommodate asylum seekers, and acted only as a processing centre. The United States, Australia and Canada would absorb the bulk of the refugees seeking permanent settlement. The United States, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and Australia were the major financial contributors to the annual budget of the Morong processing centre.

64. The escalation of the refugee problem had led to an increase in the responsibilities of the Office of the High Commissioner, and also to the need for the international community to respond to the problem continuously and positively. There was thus increasing co-operation between UNHCR and other United Nations bodies such as UNICEF, WFP, ECA, UNDP, WHO and UNESCO, which were participating in various programmes and areas of assistance. At the same time the Office maintained close ties with ASEAN, OAU, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, the European Economic Community and the League of Arab States. Public information had played a major role by maintaining regular contact with the various communication media in order to keep all countries informed of UNHCR activities and campaigns and to ensure dissemination of information to government and voluntary agencies. These activities should be continued and increased so that the world would never forget the misery and needs of millions of refugees.

65. His delegation would support any relevant resolution designed to improve the lot of refugees throughout the world and to solve the problem.

66. Mr. ATTUMI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the UNHCR report (A/35/12) reflected the continuing deterioration in the situation of refugees throughout the world and the growing difficulties of the work of the Office. However, there was no doubt about the excellent humanitarian work UNHCR was carrying out, despite the difficulties of all kinds, natural and artificial, that it had to face.

67. His delegation considered that the work done by UNHCR during the past year to avoid duplication and give priority to co-ordination of aid programmes was an effective and constructive step in consolidating those programmes and in the co-operation between the Office and the specialized agencies.

68. With respect to chapter VII of the High Commissioner's report, on assistance activities - counselling, education, resettlement and the handicapped, he welcomed the Office's work concerning the treatment and rehabilitation of the handicapped, particularly since the United Nations had proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. He had no doubt that UNHCR would make an important contribution to the activities of the International Year.

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(Mr. Attumi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

69. Although the number of refugees had increased everywhere in the world, the African continent accounted for over half the total figure, and his delegation accordingly thought that special importance should be given to that region. In Africa refugees were living in deplorable conditions in that context it should be noted that the Pan-African Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, held in Arusha, Tanzania, in May 1979, was particularly important, since it threw into relief the real situation of those refugees. The recommendations of the Conference should help to solve the problems of refugees in Africa, and it was clear that those problems arose mainly from a lack of the necessary funds. Consequently his delegation attached special importance to the holding of international conferences on aid to African refugees, and hoped that the international community would respond positively and generously to proposals by such conferences.

70. Mr. ABDEL-RAHMAN ABDALLA (Sudan) said that UNHCR had adopted a number of measures to enhance the performance and capacity of the Office, so that it could respond effectively to frequent emergencies and to the problem posed by the growing number of refugees. The High Commissioner had reaffirmed, in his statement, that he was ready to take concerted action with the agencies concerned in order to strengthen the United Nations capacity to provide humanitarian aid. His delegation welcomed the effort being made to co-ordinate humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, but it wished to emphasize the importance of the leading role and area of competence of UNHCR. The Office had accumulated a wealth of experience in the past three decades in the provision of assistance to refugees, and that would facilitate the efforts of the United Nations to secure the necessary co-ordination in humanitarian assistance and the optimum use of the aid provided by the international community.

71. The refugee situation in Africa was very serious despite the efforts of the international community and the various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and other international bodies. In 1979, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 34/61 on the situation of African refugees, in which, inter alia, it had called upon the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies to assist the High Commissioner in giving the widest possible dissemination of information on the plight of the African refugees. His delegation regretted that very little action had been taken to implement that resolution. For that reason, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity had decided, in its resolution CM/Res.814 (XXXV), that there was a need for an international pledging conference for African refugees. His delegation commended the High Commissioner on the important role he was playing in the preparation and organization of such a conference. It wished to emphasize, however, the importance of the publicity programme to focus attention on the objectives of the conference, on the serious situation of the African refugees and on the need to create a greater awareness of their plight. His delegation further suggested that the African countries of first asylum should be provided with necessary technical assistance so that they could prepare the relevant information and programmes for the conference.

72. In 1979, his delegation had announced that 1980 would be the "Year of the Refugee in the Sudan". That had been prompted by the large influx into the Sudan

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(Mr. Abdel-Rahman Abdalla, Sudan)

of refugees, who now totalled about 0.5 million. The climax of that initiative had been the international conference on refugees held at Khartoum in June 1980, which had examined the documents submitted by his Government on plans and strategies to solve the problems of the refugees in the Sudan. The conference had supported the policy objectives of his Government in its efforts to accommodate all refugees in settlements equipped with essential services and to launch long-term programmes for the training of refugees and for the integration of refugee settlements into the adjacent areas, with a view to the consolidation of services and the maintenance of harmonious relations between the refugees and the local population. The participants in the conference had expressed their readiness to provide the Sudan with financial and material assistance so that it could continue to provide necessary services to the refugees.

73. The Sudan was pleased to note that its efforts to assist the refugees had been supported by various regional and international bodies. Among the various examples of that support were the resolutions adopted by the Organization of African Unity, the General Conference of UNESCO and the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

74. His delegation appreciated the remarks made by the High Commissioner in introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees in the Sudan (A/35/410). It wished to record its gratitude to the interagency mission which had visited the Sudan in June 1980, and to draw to the attention of the Third Committee the findings of the mission contained in document A/35/410. The mission had pointed out that the serious economic constraints, together with the Government's heavy external debt, made it difficult for the Government to provide normal social services to its own population, much less extend additional services to a large number of refugees. It had therefore recommended that the international community should support the efforts of the Sudanese Government.

75. His delegation considered that the UNHCR assistance programmes for Africa, and for the Sudan in particular, were inadequate. The Sudanese Minister of Internal Affairs had recently expressed his concern over the modest assistance programmes allocated to the Sudan and had stated that the refugee situation had been recently aggravated by a large new influx of refugees in extremely difficult conditions, most of them women and children. Furthermore, the situation was aggravated by problems resulting from drought in some parts of the Sudan and floods in other parts. For those reasons, the Sudan hoped that the High Commissioner would review as early as possible the assistance programmes for the Sudan. In that connexion, it was pleased to note that the Executive Committee, at its most recent session, had recommended that the High Commissioner should consider increasing the assistance programmes allocated to Africa, in particular the Sudan and other countries of the region.

76. Mr. WHEELDOW (Australia) said that with an annual budget of around \$500 million, UNHCR had become a major international agency, seeking to solve the immense and tragic world-wide problem of refugees. In some parts of the world, the refugee situation threatened to destabilize the international order and undermine the social fabric of countries which had no responsibility for the situation in which they found themselves. Although the activities of UNHCR were becoming more extensive, it was important that its traditional humanitarian preoccupations should be assiduously safeguarded.

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(Mr. Wheeldow, Australia)

77. In view of the ever-increasing responsibilities of UNHCR, which now included the co-ordination of voluntary repatriation and the establishment of programmes for the reception, initial relief and rehabilitation of refugees returning to their home countries, it was necessary to re-examine traditional practices and procedures.

78. Australia believed that a problem affecting over 9 million people must be seen as an international problem, and that greater joint efforts, in co-operation with UNHCR, were needed in order to share the growing burden of that problem. A new concept of temporary refuge should be developed in the international law relating to the protection of refugees. Large-scale emergencies calling for concerted humanitarian action required the harnessing of the resources of the United Nations in an efficient and co-ordinated manner.

79. Most refugee situations were a product of political instability, and it was incumbent upon the United Nations to help to alleviate the conditions that caused mass exoduses of people. In that connexion, Australia took note of the resolution adopted by the Commission on Human Rights on human rights and massive exoduses.

80. Australia had responded to the contemporary refugee situation in various ways: to date it had resettled about 42,000 Indo-Chinese refugees; in the period 1980-1981, it would receive an additional 19,500 refugees, 14,000 of them from Indo-China. It looked forward to greater co-operation from Viet Nam in implementing the departure arrangements proposed by UNHCR and the major resettlement countries.

81. In the financial year 1979-1980, Australia's assistance for refugee relief through various channels had amounted to \$A 18 million. Australia's contribution to UNHCR would increase from \$A 3.78 million in 1980 to \$A 4.62 million in 1981. The 1981 contribution would not be earmarked for the Indo-Chinese refugee programme. At the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, Australia had co-sponsored the resolution on the convening of an international conference on refugees in Africa, since it was mindful of the immense problems affecting them.

82. Australia attached the highest importance to the work of UNHCR and to the need to maintain the essentially humanitarian character of its activities.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.