



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 55th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria)
later: Mr. NORDENFELT (Sweden)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 78: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES:
REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one month of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

80-57496

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/35/SR.55
1 December 1980
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: - SPANISH

/...

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES: REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued) (A/35/3/Add.21, 12 and Add.1, 68, 73, 84, 154, 169, 239, 255, 275, 292, 328, 353, 354, 374, 441, 457, 469, 594; A/C.3/35/L.47, L.51, L.52)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/35/149, 303, 360 and Corr.1-3, 409, 410, 502, 606; A/C.3/35/L.45/Rev.1, L.46/Rev.1, L.48, L.49, L.50)

1. Mr. ABBA ALI (Nigeria) said that in the past year the task of the High Commissioner had continued to increase in two specific spheres. On the one hand there was the great movement of refugees in South-East Asia arising from the situation of Kampuchea. On the other hand, the refugee situation in Africa had remained very serious and, although it was a problem without parallel, seemed to go almost unnoticed. The increased military activities of the apartheid régime of South Africa had not only increased the number of refugees but had resulted in grave danger to the lives of those refugees who had been settled in camps in and outside the territories under the jurisdiction of the racist régime. Many African States, notably the front-line States, which themselves being developing countries could hardly bear the burden imposed by refugees, continued to shoulder the heavy responsibility of receiving more of them. Fortunately, following the historic victory of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe culminating in its freedom and independence, many Zimbabwean refugees had returned home. But their problems were not yet over, and the Government of Zimbabwe would have to request help and assistance.

2. The Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, convened in May 1979 in Arusha on the initiative of OAU, had been an important development with respect to the problem of refugees in Africa, although it had not received the publicity it had deserved. The objectives of the Conference had been to review and evaluate the refugee situation in Africa and the legal, social, economic, institutional and financial aspects of the problem faced by refugees in African countries with a view to proposing solutions. Two recommendations of the Conference were of particular relevance: firstly, the stress placed on observance of the principle of non-refoulement; secondly, the emphasis on the strengthening and development of institutional arrangements for burden-sharing within the framework of African solidarity and international co-operation. Those two recommendations touched upon the core of the mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees, namely, protection and assistance.

3. His delegation believed that the concept of burden-sharing must be embraced by the international community with respect to the refugee problem world-wide. That implied the provision of increased assistance to refugees. By and large, African countries had adhered to the principle of non-refoulement and had been willing not only to grant refugees the right of first asylum but almost always also to accord the privilege of permanent settlement. A refugee population of some five million

/...

(Mr. Abba Ali, Nigeria)

according to the High Commissioner was bound to place a strain on the internal resources of a continent in the throes of development. The High Commissioner should indicate the needs which called for priority assistance.

4. His delegation welcomed the initiative, embodied in OAU and Economic and Social Council resolutions, to explore the possibilities of holding at the ministerial level a pledging conference for refugees in Africa, and hoped that many delegations would announce generous contributions. His country would always be willing to do its best to co-operate with the High Commissioner in the humanitarian task which he had undertaken. Following the events in Chad, a large number of refugees had arrived in Nigeria and his Government had provided them with the necessary facilities and assistance. In addition, his Government regularly contributed to the High Commissioner's programme.

5. Mr. DAULTANA (Pakistan) said that the problem of refugees had assumed monumental proportions. Over 15 million human beings had been forced by circumstances, mostly due to political repression, to flee their homes and become refugees. His delegation felt sure that the international community shared the concern of the High Commissioner and was prepared to continue its efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the refugees.

6. One of the most important aspects of the military intervention in Afghanistan had been the massive exodus of Afghans to the neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Iran. In Pakistan alone there were over 1.2 million Afghan refugees, and the Government estimated that the figure might increase further. The problem, which had arisen in 1978, had become more acute following the military intervention in 1979. As a result, in addition to the Afghans who had taken refuge in Pakistan, about 300,000 had sought shelter in Iran. That meant that one out of every 10 Afghans, or 10 per cent of the population of Afghanistan, fell within the category of "refugee". Pakistan had given asylum to the Afghans out of purely humanitarian considerations and in spite of its own serious economic difficulties. In 1979 his country had been forced to seek assistance from the international community, and it appreciated the positive response to its appeal. UNHCR had sent two missions to Pakistan during 1979 to discuss the details and the modalities of assistance. So far UNHCR had provided assistance amounting to over \$50 million for the Afghan refugees. His Government was also grateful for the generous contributions received from several Member States and from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Pakistan hoped that conditions would soon enable the Afghan refugees to return to their homes. However, the influx of Afghan refugees and their maintenance was placing an immense burden on its economy.

7. The High Commissioner had reported on the problem of refugees in Zimbabwe, Somalia, the Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia and other parts of Africa and in South-East Asia. According to the High Commissioner, in Africa alone there were over 5 million refugees. His delegation was confident that the international conference on assistance to refugees in Africa would serve as a catalyst for the efforts of UNHCR and the Governments concerned to ameliorate the conditions of those refugees. The situation of refugees in Indo-China continued to be of grave concern and called for

/...

(Mr. Daultana, Pakistan)

a greater effort on the part of the international community to supplement the humanitarian role of the UNHCR.

8. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner that, while UNHCR must deal strictly and solely with the humanitarian aspects of the refugee problem, the international community must seek a solution of the root causes of the problem. His delegation therefore attached great importance to resolution 30 (XXXVI) of the Commission on Human Rights, asking the Secretary-General to report on the phenomenon of mass exoduses, and hoped that greater attention would be paid to that aspect of the problem.

9. Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand) said that the activities of the High Commissioner, and also of other United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP and UNDP, had played an invaluable role in helping millions of uprooted people in various parts of the world. Their involvement, together with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and all the donor countries, ICRC and other non-governmental organizations, in international humanitarian programmes had significantly reduced the suffering of millions of refugees and displaced persons. If a neighbouring country was poor, the burden on its economy caused by an influx of refugees was staggering. There were also security, political and other problems. The case of Thailand was a good example. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of Indo-Chinese displaced persons and a similar number of Kampuchians had in turn displaced over 200,000 Thais. Durable solutions to the refugee problem must therefore be sought and its root causes eliminated.

10. His delegation whole-heartedly supported the proposal to convene a conference on assistance to refugees in Africa and considered that in Africa as well as in other parts of the world voluntary repatriation could provide a durable solution to refugee problems. It was gratified to learn that operations had commenced and were progressing for the repatriation of refugees to Zimbabwe, Zaire, Equatorial Guinea and Uganda, and in Latin America the return of Nicaraguan refugees to their homeland was a welcome example of voluntary repatriation. In Asia, there had been the repatriation of Burmese refugees from Bangladesh and the voluntary repatriation of 9,000 Kampuchians from Thailand, under the supervision of the Office of the High Commissioner, and of a group of 65 Lao displaced persons also from Thailand.

11. In South-East Asia, the problem of refugees and displaced persons remained very serious. In Thailand, there were now 120,000 Indo-Chinese displaced persons, over 150,000 Kampuchians in refugee centres, almost 7,000 Vietnamese boat people and several thousand displaced persons and illegal entrants from other neighbouring countries. It was therefore very important that the efforts of the international community to assist Indo-Chinese refugees should be continued and that safe areas should be established for those who might wish to return to their homeland. There was also a need for all States, particularly the countries of origin, to help refugees at sea by trying to reduce the flow of such refugees and to reduce the risks at sea and, above all, to co-operate with the countries of first refuge. A laudable example had been set by certain countries, such as the Nordic countries, in guaranteeing resettlement for the refugees saved at sea.

/...

(Mr. Kasemsri, Thailand)

12. In the case of refugee children, particularly unaccompanied minors, the task of tracing parents or elder relatives must be continued, as the principle of family reunion was generally recognized. Pending the tracing of relatives, the children must be cared for and provided with certain amenities. In Thailand, Her Majesty the Queen, in her capacity as Honorary President of the Thai Red Cross, had established a centre for such children, in co-operation with UNHCR and ICRC.

13. In the report on the thirty-first session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, mention was made of the need for some measures to effect better preparedness and co-operation by what might be called the international humanitarian system. It was equally important to attack the root causes of the refugee problem, which must be addressed by the appropriate forums entrusted with political functions. His delegation believed that countries of origin should be encouraged to co-operate in order to relieve the burden which they had, knowingly or otherwise, created for other countries and for the international community as a whole. His delegation was also gratified to note that UNHCR had established an Emergency Unit in his Office and that he was prepared to play a leading role in the United Nations system with regard to emergency situations within his mandate and to continue to co-ordinate assistance in voluntary repatriation cases.

14. His delegation was convinced that Governments understood and appreciated the non-political nature of the functions of UNHCR; accordingly, whenever criticisms of the High Commissioner's role arose, countries should review their own intentions and try not to politicize matters to the detriment of UNHCR's humanitarian concerns.

15. Miss MAIRIE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that the refugee problem had become one of the most worrying questions of the times because of the dimension it had assumed, particularly in third world countries. The African continent, already beset with so many development problems, must in addition face the problem of refugees resulting from political and military conflicts and from the instability caused by the hegemonistic rivalries of which the third world was the object. It was therefore not surprising that, according to estimates by the Secretary-General, Africa now had a record number of some 5 million displaced persons. The majority of those people condemned to live in precarious conditions were from the weakest segments of society - women, old people and children.

16. The United Republic of Cameroon, a traditionally hospitable country, had never spared any effort to provide the best living conditions for refugees. To mention only those who had also had access to employment in both the public and private sectors on an equal footing with Cameroonian nationals, people from the sister countries of Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, the Sudan and Guinea had always enjoyed freedom of movement in the United Republic of Cameroon. And, with particular reference to refugees from southern Africa, South Africa and Namibia, the Cameroonian Government had opened the doors of its educational and vocational training establishments to them through the granting of scholarships.

/...

(Miss Mairie, United Republic of Cameroon)

17. The persistence of the tragic and bloody conflict in Chad, with its accompanying miseries, sufferings and afflictions, had placed the United Republic of Cameroon in a critical situation. More than 200,000 Chad nationals, mostly women, children and old and disabled people, had arrived in the United Republic of Cameroon by every means. In a matter of days the population of Kousseri, a small village across the Chari River from Ndjamena, had increased from 10,000 to more than 100,000. In such an area, in the heart of the Sahel, the problems of accommodation, health, food and in particular water which that created for the United Republic of Cameroon could easily be imagined.

18. For the relief of those people, the Cameroonian Government had taken emergency measures and had approved a long-term assistance programme. It had established a national refugee emergency relief committee and a provincial committee to perform co-ordinating and centralizing functions. In addition, the Government had started a dynamic assistance programme for housing, health, enrolment of children in schools, water supply and electrification in the areas where the refugees were living. The United Republic of Cameroon had not hesitated to release large amounts from its budget for that programme but, because of the great needs of the refugees, it had had to appeal to international solidarity.

19. She paid tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who in April 1980, in view of the critical situation, had sent a special mission headed by Mr. Maxime Zollner, UNHCR's Director of Assistance Programmes, to verify on the spot the magnitude of the problem. As a result of that mission, the High Commissioner had granted the United Republic of Cameroon a first allotment of \$500,000 and had released a sum of \$7 million for Cameroon for the rest of 1980. She also thanked all countries, specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other humanitarian organizations which had responded to the appeal for aid.

20. Finally, she was pleased to note, on behalf of her delegation, the growing interest of the international community in the refugee problem. The United Republic of Cameroon, for its part, would fully support all actions aimed at eliminating one of the plagues which most seriously affronted human dignity.

21. Miss MANGAZA (Zaire) said that the refugee problem required the support of the entire international community for the efforts of UNHCR, whose report showed how alarming it had become.

22. In view of the fact that there were now some 5 million refugees in Africa, OAU and most of the African States recognized and applied the liberal principles of asylum set forth in the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, adopted by OAU in 1969. That Convention embodied the fundamental principle of non-refoulement and included important provisions regarding the definition of "refugee", "asylum" and "voluntary repatriation".

23. The Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, held at Arusha in May 1979, had emphasized the difficulties faced by the African continent in solving the problem of refugees and the need to elaborate a global assistance programme for refugees.

/...

(Miss Mangaza, Zaire)

24. At the most recent OAU summit Conference, great attention had been paid to the problem of refugees in Africa and a resolution had been adopted appealing for support for the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and for assistance to the countries of asylum.

25. The Republic of Zaire was at present accommodating more than 300,000 refugees and sharing its modest resources with them in the name of human solidarity. Referring to the refugee problem, the Chairman of the delegation of Zaire had stated in the General Assembly on 26 September that Zaire had sheltered thousands of people who had fled neighbouring countries during their struggle for independence. He had noted, however, that a new category of refugees had emerged, namely, common criminals who enjoyed abroad the status of refugees.

26. Voluntary repatriation had been a great success in Zaire, and 190,000 Zairians had returned following the amnesty declared by the President of the Republic in 1978. His delegation thanked UNHCR for its co-operation in that connexion and for extending the voluntary repatriation programme until the end of 1980.

27. The Republic of Zaire welcomed the efforts made by UNHCR to assist the refugees from Kampuchea, to which the Conference held in Geneva in May 1980 had contributed. A political solution must be found to the Kampuchean problem, in addition to the provision of humanitarian assistance. Zaire supported all activities aimed at furnishing humanitarian assistance to the Kampuchean people.

28. Miss LEE (Singapore) said that among all the refugee situations in the world the largest number of refugees, currently estimated at 5 million, were found in Africa, placing a heavy social and economic burden on the countries of first asylum. The problem was particularly serious in the Horn of Africa, where in one country, Somalia, there were an estimated 1.5 million refugees, of whom 850,000 were now living in camps. In view of the magnitude of the problem, her delegation welcomed the proposal to convene an International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. It hoped that the principle of voluntary repatriation would be respected and used in the same way as in the case of Zimbabwe for other refugees and displaced persons.

29. In Asia, the number of Afghan refugees, who had begun to flow into Pakistan during the spring of 1979, had risen to more than 700,000 by April 1980, and that figure had now reached 1.2 million, according to the High Commissioner. Every effort should be made by the international community to continue to pay urgent attention to helping alleviate the sufferings of the Afghan refugees and the heavy burden to the host country, Pakistan.

30. In South-East Asia, where the magnitude of the refugee problem had reached alarming proportions, producing an emergency situation in 1979, the timely response of the Secretary-General and UNHCR and the co-operation of the international community, especially following the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held at Geneva in July 1979, had led to a significant

/...

(Miss Lee, Singapore)

improvement in the situation of the so-called "boat people". Nevertheless, as the High Commissioner had pointed out in his statement, over 60,000 "boat people" had arrived in various Asian countries during the past 12 months. International organizations and the Governments of the United States, Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, other members of the European Economic Community and other countries of Western Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand, had responded generously to the appeal made by the countries of first asylum. But the problem was far from resolved, and her delegation continued to urge the resettlement countries and other countries which were in a position to do so to increase the number and rate of intake of Indo-Chinese refugees who were still crowding the camps of the already populous countries of first asylum in South-East Asia.

31. As to Kampuchea, Sir Robert Jackson, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, noted in document A/35/502 that Kampucheans inside Kampuchea and in the holding centres in Thailand, and the affected Thais, would continue to need assistance, and the situation of border conglomerations of displaced persons would continue to require special attention. The number of Kampuchean civilians currently living in holding centres in Thailand was about 200,000, while another 1.5 million Kampuchean civilians depended on assistance and relief from the Thai side of the border. According to some authoritative sources, food sent across the border from Thailand had probably saved more than 1 million people in western Kampuchea from mass starvation. However, the report of the Special Representative also drew attention to the general lack of security in the border areas; her delegation therefore reiterated ASEAN's call for the stationing of United Nations observers on the Thai side of the border in order to observe the situation along the border and to ensure that only civilian Kampucheans obtained international relief aid. Safe areas, under United Nations supervision, should also be established in western Kampuchea to ensure the safety of civilian Kampucheans encamped near the Thai-Kampuchean border and enable Kampuchean refugees in Thailand who wished to return to their homeland to do so freely and to settle in the safe areas after having gone through the procedures established by UNHCR.

32. In that connexion, she thanked the Secretary-General for the initiative he had taken to alert world public opinion and for the measures he had adopted to co-ordinate more effectively the work of the agencies. Her delegation requested the Secretary-General to continue to use his good offices to accelerate even further the achievement of those objectives and urged the international community to ensure the continuation of relief programmes to help lighten the burden on Thailand.

33. Mr. ABAWI (Afghanistan) said that his Government drew a clear distinction between real refugees and those who were engaged in provocation, subversive activities and armed aggression against the national democratic revolution and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Even though those anti-revolutionary elements of Afghanistan were described by some neighbouring countries as "refugees", their stay abroad could not in any way be described as

(Mr. Abawi, Afghanistan)

humanitarian, since their main objective was to create panic and fear among people, carry out armed attacks and kill innocent people. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan possessed documentary evidence confirming the support given by certain circles to those elements.

34. In addition, it was evident that centres had been set up in certain imperialistic countries to help those groups of mercenaries. It was therefore necessary to advise a number of international organizations not to be influenced by those destructive elements since they would otherwise be supporting their subversive activities instead of helping to stabilize the situation and consolidate peace in the region.

35. The genuine refugees were those who had left the country because of the atmosphere of oppression and fear created by the fascist Government of Hafizullah Amin before 27 December 1979. The Revolutionary Council and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan had already made their position clear in a statement which had been issued as document A/35/154, of 26 March 1980. On 26 January 1980 Mr. Babrak Karmal, the Prime Minister of Afghanistan, had announced that all clergymen, religious scholars and tribal leaders who had left Afghanistan could return to the country, and that their full freedom and immunity would be guaranteed, their usurped property returned and their freedom of activity ensured if they did not take any action against national or State interests, territorial integrity or national independence. A similar statement had been made by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan on 18 February 1980, which showed that the Afghan authorities were ready to co-operate sincerely in helping the true refugees to return to their homes and hoped that international assistance would be confined to real refugees and not to elements engaged in subversive activities.

36. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that the mandate of the High Commissioner currently extended to nearly 5 million persons throughout the world, of whom more than half were children under 16 years of age, while it appeared that the world population of refugees had reached 11 or 12 million persons. That increasingly tragic situation was reflected every year in the report of the High Commissioner, which confirmed the humanitarian role of UNCHR and revealed the pattern of growing demands on UNHCR which in turn reflected the tragic events that were continuing to occur in the world.

37. In the opinion of her delegation, the current situation should be described as "catastrophic", and while there was no doubt that the African continent was the most seriously affected by the refugee problem, the drama of refugees was more spectacular in Asia, where almost 1 million Afghans and between 1 and 2 million Indo-Chinese had become refugees in the space of a few months, joining the millions of "boat people" whose fate was one of the most shameful pages in recent history. Similarly, the recent influx of "boat people" from Cuba had been a reminder to many that earthly paradises were only a utopia.

/...

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

38. Despite positive developments, such as the return of 660,000 refugees to Zimbabwe after independence, it had to be recognized that the number of refugee programmes was still increasing rapidly and that they only partially met the needs imposed by circumstances. It was not possible to forget the people who were fleeing from the Ogaden to take refuge in Somalia, whose number had reached 1,300,000, and who ran the risk of dying if they were not helped in time. The increasing difficulties of the 530,000 refugees in the Republic of Zaire and of the 500,000 refugees who had arrived in the Sudan, from various countries could not be overlooked either.

39. At the same time, the work accomplished by UNHCR was admirable. Thanks to the increase in its human and financial resources, it had been able to help more than 25 million refugees, mostly Africans and Asians, since 1951.

40. Nevertheless, some people wondered if there was not a certain imbalance in the assistance provided, to the detriment of African refugees. In that connexion ~~they~~ they referred to the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held in July 1979 and pointed out that nothing similar had been done even at the most difficult moments of the exodus of African refugees. It was therefore gratifying that the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1980/55, had requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the High Commissioner, to consult the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity on appropriate ways and means of convening an international pledging conference for refugees in Africa.

41. The Moroccan delegation was aware that UNHCR gave special attention to the international protection of refugees in terms of their legal status and of the principle of non-refoulement, and supported the conclusions of the Executive Committee of the Programme of UNHCR at its thirty-first session. As in the past, his delegation considered that the search for permanent solutions to the refugee problem should be one of the basic pillars of UNHCR policy, in accordance with the aims indicated by Mr. Hartling himself when he had said that the best solution for refugees was voluntary repatriation and that, where that was not possible, the best alternative was permanent settlement in first country of asylum.

42. Mr. OTUNNU (Uganda) said that his delegation appreciated the problems confronting the High Commissioner, since for a long time Uganda had had to receive refugees from neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, the Sudan and Zaire. With the help of United Nations agencies, the Government of Uganda had been able, despite its limited resources, to resettle some of those refugees.

43. During the Fascist dictatorship of Amin, many Ugandans had left the country. There had also been a drought in the northern region of Karamoja which had led to the displacement of many Ugandans and the disruption of their traditional ways of life. Recently the country had been invaded by the remnants of Amin's soldiers, and the resulting fighting had led to the displacement of many people who had fled the war areas. Uganda had thus had to cope with a large-scale problem of rehabilitation and resettlement. A Ministry of Rehabilitation had been established. The problem of the rehabilitation of displaced persons was still immense, and Uganda needed increased material and financial assistance from the international community.

(Mr. Otunnu, Uganda)

44. His delegation considered that the plight of refugees could be eased if there were consultations between their countries of origin and their host countries. Uganda had accordingly already initiated consultations with neighbouring countries.

45. As to the Ugandans who had fled the country during the war of liberation, bona fide refugees were welcome to return, but it should not be forgotten that some of the refugees had committed acts of genocide before fleeing, and must therefore be brought to justice.

46. His delegation appreciated the inadequacy of UNHCR'S financial resources, but considered that the resources available should be disbursed equitably among the regions, with regard for the magnitude of the problem in each region. General Assembly resolution 34/61 reflected the inadequacy of assistance to African refugees, and efforts should be made to rectify that anomaly.

47. Mr. Nordenfelt (Sweden) took the Chair.

48. Miss AKAMATSU (Japan) said that during the past 12 months the world had witnessed new tragedies which had compelled innocent people, especially women and children, to abandon their homes and seek asylum in neighbouring countries. At the same time, there had been favourable developments in some regions, such as Zimbabwe. After the proclamation of independence there, UNHCR had conducted operations during the first two months of 1980 facilitating the voluntary return to Zimbabwe of some 220,000 persons from Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia. Another favourable development on the African continent was the progress achieved in the voluntary repatriation operation in Zaire. In Asia, the successful completion of operations in Bangladesh had resulted in the repatriation of some 187,000 refugees to their country of origin. However, those encouraging circumstances should not divert attention from the continuing plight of millions of refugees on the African continent or from the tragic developments that had resulted in an increased number of refugees in Asia.

49. Although considerable progress had been achieved, it was imperative that the international community should continue to respond to the desperate needs of millions of innocent people. As to the refugee problems in Asia, Kampuchean were continuing to flee to neighbouring countries, mainly Thailand. Partly because of its geographical situation, Japan was profoundly concerned about the refugee situation in Asia, and recognized that it seriously affected the peace and stability of the region.

50. The Japanese delegation was gravely disturbed by the serious problem of the situation of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs had recently visited Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan and had been impressed by the difficulties of the tragic situation. The Government of Japan had sent a survey mission to identify specific measures for Japanese relief operations, and hoped that other countries and international bodies would co-operate in assistance activities in that region.

/...

(Miss Akamatsu, Japan)

51. The importance which Japan attached to the activities of UNHCR was reflected in its active participation in the work of the Executive Committee, and in its substantial contribution to UNHCR assistance programmes. Japan's contribution had amounted to 24 per cent of the total contributions by all Governments in 1979, and 29 per cent of those made between 1 January and 31 March 1980.

52. The Government of Japan had been progressing with its preparations for accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

53. In conclusion, she said that her delegation was fully aware that the refugee problem could be solved only by attacking the problem at its roots, which were often of a political nature. However, the humanitarian character of UNHCR was a valuable quality, which should be maintained intact. She also wished to stress the importance of co-ordination, particularly in emergency operations to provide assistance for people who had recently been forced to flee their homeland. Lastly, in view of the limited amount of funds available for the large number of refugees all over the world, every effort should be made to appeal to potential contributors to join that humanitarian and truly worthy operation.

54. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) said that his Government supported the continuing efforts of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to assist refugees, and firmly believed that there could be no durable solution to that human tragedy as long as certain Governments persisted in the application of inhuman policies of repression, racism, denial of the right to self-determination, and other vicious forms of persecution against innocent men, women and children who were forced to flee their homelands to seek refuge in other areas. His Government believed that international pressure should be brought to bear on such régimes to terminate all such unjust practices and persistent violations of human rights.

55. His delegation welcomed the success obtained in dealing with the refugee situation in Zimbabwe. It also noted with approval the efforts to assist the the victims of apartheid who had taken refuge both in front-line States and in other countries, and shared the High Commissioner's concern over Namibia and the worsening situation on the borders of Chad. His delegation commended the proposals to explore the possibility of holding an international pledging conference for aid to refugees in Africa. The conference would surely prove of vital importance, and his Government welcomed the expected participation not only of all members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but also of the traditional donors to UNHCR African refugee programmes.

56. The Horn of Africa was the scene of one of the most serious of the world's refugee problems, and the international community had shown growing concern over the continuing influx of refugees into Somalia. Since January 1978, when the attention of the High Commissioner had first been drawn to the problem, the number of refugees in Somalia had dramatically increased, and the problem had become one of regional and international importance. On 11 September 1979, the Somali

/...

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

Government had been obliged to declare a state of national emergency, and had made a wide appeal for international assistance. On 11 February 1980, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had appealed for generous assistance to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees in Somalia. Thus far, the response of the international community had proved barely enough to avert the disastrous human tragedy that would otherwise have occurred. The valuable co-operation of the United Nations agencies concerned had proved crucial in containing the situation.

57. The vulnerability of the refugees had been demonstrated recently by the danger posed to their existence by the fuel shortage that Somalia had experienced immediately after the outbreak of hostilities in the Arabian Gulf. Somalia was host to a larger number of refugees, frequently undernourished or sick and sometimes even injured, than any other country. The whole development budget had had to be scrapped to deal with the problem. As the Vice-President of Somalia had recently pointed out to the High Commissioner, the country no longer had any resources left with which to be generous.

58. As though that were not enough, Somalia was also faced with natural catastrophes, actual and potential, in certain parts of the country, due to the prolonged drought. In February 1980, the average number of refugees arriving each day over a period of two weeks had been 3,500. Currently, more than 1,000 a day were arriving on average, a third of them children under six and 90 per cent women and children. A number of surveys of camps had been carried out, the results of which had revealed the prevalence of infectious diseases, particularly tuberculosis and malaria. It should be noted that most of those diseases were susceptible to vaccination or would be minimized by improved personal and environmental hygiene, clean water and sufficient food. Wells must be dug and water purified. The rapid transmission of diseases in the camps increased the risk of epidemics.

59. In July 1980, the Economic and Social Council had expressed concern over the dramatic increase in the refugee population in Somalia. Nevertheless, it continued to increase. The number of refugees in camps had risen to 850,000 and the Government of Somalia estimated that the total, including those scattered in the cities, towns and countryside, was more than one and a half million. In August 1980, the Economic and Social Council had decided that the High Commissioner for Refugees, in co-operation with various United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, should render the greatest possible assistance to the Governments of the Horn of Africa. It was imperative that that assistance should be not only maintained but increased.

60. The Government of Somalia was especially concerned over the probable situation in 1981 with regard to food pledges and requirements for camps during the first six months of the year. It was feared that there would be a shortfall of 74,720 metric tons of food-stuffs. Given that the Government and Somali people were in no position to make up that deficit, the situation could have serious consequences.

/...

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

61. With regard to medicines, equipment and supplies, the situation remained urgent. The Ministry of Health of the Government of Somalia was closely observing the needs of the refugees and co-ordinating offers of assistance. However, funding continued to be the main constraint.

62. The poor conditions of the roads in the areas in which the refugees were concentrated revealed the need for international assistance in the transport sector. The Government of Somalia appreciated the offers received from, among others, the Federal Republic of Germany, the European Economic Community and UNHCR, but the matter remained of the utmost urgency since Somalia did not have enough transport to move either the refugees or the food and water they needed, particularly bearing in mind the serious drought situation.

63. Projections of refugee numbers, both in and out of the camps, and of world inflation trends were essential for the revision of requirements for clothing, blankets, utensils and equipment. The delegation of Somalia was aware that UNHCR was keeping them under constant review, and was also reviewing requirements for shelter and construction.

64. Few of the areas in which the camps were located had much agricultural potential, although the Government was giving priority attention to converting the camps to self-supporting communities by providing the necessary services. The Government of Somalia attached particular importance to refugee education, and the Ministry of Education was making plans to provide schooling for 200,000 refugee children by 1985/86.

65. In addition to its literacy programmes, and bearing in mind the large female population of the camps, the Government, in co-operation with UNICEF, had initiated classes in family life and day care.

66. Under Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/53, the Secretary-General and UNHCR had been requested to submit an updated report on the current refugee situation in Somalia to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session. The Secretariat had not yet submitted that report, but the High Commissioner had travelled to the region to obtain first-hand knowledge of the problem through contacts not only with the Government but also with refugee individuals and groups in the camps. The delegation of Somalia hoped that UNHCR would keep the situation under review and submit comprehensive, detailed and updated reports. It also urged the Secretary-General to send a multiagency review mission to Somalia to make a further appraisal of the refugee situation and the magnitude of the assistance required, as provided in Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/53.

67. Turning to assistance to displaced persons in Ethiopia, he referred to document A/35/360 and its three corrigenda. Somalia had not stressed the root causes of the refugee problem, because it was the humanitarian side of the problem which was of concern to the Third Committee. Document A/35/360 had a somewhat curious history; when it had first been considered at the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council, many delegations had raised serious objections. In due course the report had been made available to the General Assembly. Corrigendum No. 3 had appeared only two days previously. The delegation of Somalia

/...

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

would ask for a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances surrounding that corrigendum, which had certainly not appeared without justification.

68. Broadly summarized, the report sought assistance for relief, rehabilitation and settlement, before proceeding to propose what amounted to an over-all development plan, involving railways, trunk roads, airports, docks, etc. for the Ethiopian Empire State, including the annexed area of Eritrea, and in particular for the three provinces to which attention had already been drawn by such bodies as Amnesty International, on account of gross and repeated violations of human rights.

69. The observation of the mission that displaced persons within Ethiopia came from one of the poorest regions in the world, subject in recent years to repeated droughts, was true and gave the lie to the propaganda claims of Ethiopia that the so-called violation of Ethiopian territorial integrity and sovereignty in 1977 had given rise to the displacement of nearly 2.4 million persons.

70. The truth was that the indigenous peoples of the colonized regions to the south and east of Abyssinia proper had risen against colonial oppression. The pronouncements of the Ethiopian Derg itself were evidence of the total neglect of the conquered areas. On 12 September 1974, the Derg had said that the empire was "an abyss of economic, social and political problems" and even the current programme of the so-called National Democratic Revolution admitted that "nationalities on border areas and those scattered over various regions have been subjected to special subjugation for a long time". The Ethiopian Head of State still spoke correctly of "Ethiopia's oppressed masses", as could be seen from the press release of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations dated 12 September 1978.

71. Mr. DERESSA (Ethiopia), speaking on a point of order, chided the representative of Somalia for trying to teach the Committee how documents should be prepared, and for insulting Ethiopia, using an invented name for that country. He would reserve his right of reply until the end of the meeting.

72. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) believed that he was acting in accordance with the rules of procedure: there was a document which had been distributed and he was referring to the content of that document, which concerned his country, and was doing so to facilitate the identification of the areas of which he was speaking, and also to help to determine the root causes of the situation of the so-called displaced persons in Ethiopia.

73. While it might be argued, as it was in the Mission's report, that the "programme of relocation and concentration of rural people in viable settlements appears to be the only long-term constructive solution to prevent famine", that was very different from attempting to alter long-standing ethnic distributions and balances by the compulsory transportation and resettlement of people from elsewhere, as was occurring in the three provinces on which the report concentrated.

/...

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

74. What donors were currently being asked to fund was the ongoing resettlement, often involuntary, of northern farmers on lands which rightly belonged to the oppressed Oromo, Somali and other peoples. In the few locations in which schools, churches and hospitals were being built, they were intended for the Abyssinian settlers and not the true inhabitants of the region. It was as if the United Nations were being asked to finance the continuing dispossession of the true African owners of South Africa or to support colonial settlement elsewhere in Africa, which, happily, had been ended by the proper implementation of the right of colonial peoples to self-determination.

75. The report on the assistance activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for 1978-1979 merely stated that there were "an estimated 10,900 refugees living in Ethiopia". It added that assistance had also been provided to people displaced within Ethiopia and particularly in the provinces of Bale and Sidamo, where "the authorities had recently estimated that there were, respectively, some 500,000 and 230,000 displaced persons". More than \$7 million had been voted.

76. The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for 1979 (A/34/12, para. 90) noted that "the estimated number of refugees in Ethiopia at the end of 1978 had remained at around 10,900", and that there were "displaced persons in the Ogaden region, estimated at approximately 500,000". The report also stated that "in his appeal for humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa, the High Commissioner had included a programme, valued at \$5,075,000, designed to assist some 30,000 most needy displaced families (approximately 150,000 persons) to resettle".

77. By July 1980 the figures reported by the United Nations mission had changed dramatically. The mission had spent only a few days in Ethiopia - a very large country with poor communications and very difficult terrain - and had clearly had no alternative but to accept the figures supplied by the Government, according to which between 2.1 and 2.4 million people had been affected by the conflict and drought and needed help. It was necessary carefully to examine Ethiopia's motives and intentions against the background of the true situation. The United Nations mission had reported that the Ethiopian authorities were asking the world community to provide them with a large fleet of tank trucks, but it should be noted that the majority of those requested were of the largest type, well suited to military use. There was, moreover, photographic evidence that supplies of milk, for example, supplied by EEC and voluntary agencies and intended for refugees and displaced persons had been found abandoned in Ethiopian trenches and fortifications temporarily overrun by EPLF forces in Eritrea. For those reasons the Ethiopian Government's request for relief food shipments for displaced persons to be co-ordinated with other food consignments could only be received with scepticism.

78. An Atlas of Ethiopia had been published in Addis Ababa, compiled by Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam, map 49 of which revealed that the population of much of the area in question was less than 3 persons per square mile. It was obvious that the repressive and merciless régime in Addis Ababa was seeking to

/...

(Mr. Osman, Scmalia)

hoodwink the countries of the international community into providing logistical support for the wars it was waging not just in Hararghe, Bale and Sidamo but also in Arssi, Tigrai and other areas. Those wars lay at the root of the whole problem of displaced persons and refugees throughout North-East Africa.

79. In addition to the tank trucks, the Addis Ababa régime had requested 60 lorries and 36 Land Rovers, mostly of the 10-seater type, whose troop-carrying capacity was obvious. However, it was with regard to the section on air transport that his Government had the gravest misgivings. The United Nations mission reported that Bole Airport in Addis Ababa had been used beyond its capacity, resulting in damage to the runway. That was certainly credible, bearing in mind the arrival of hundreds of Antonov 22s and Tupolev 76s with their deadly cargoes of the implements of modern warfare and destruction. Since 1977 that foreign intervention on a massive scale had led to damage, disability, terror and death on an unprecedented scale in Africa. Now it appeared that the bill for that outrage was to be passed on to the international community.

80. The sum requested for Gode Airport, situated far from Addis Ababa in the occupied areas, exceeded \$11 million. That sum was almost five times the sum requested for Addis Ababa, although it was intended for an underpopulated area with less than 3 inhabitants per square mile. The Ethiopian Government's own map confirmed the total absence of natural produce that could be exported from Gode. What possible purpose could there be in improving that remote airstrip? The answer was clear: the "need" for an advanced air base from which to terrorize the innocent Oromo and Somali peoples in the surrounding occupied provinces and from which to launch even more aggressive air attacks against Somalia's cities and towns.

81. His Government therefore considered that, apart perhaps from relief assistance - with appropriate guarantees relating to its exclusive use for humanitarian purposes - it was difficult to accept that the sections of the report (A/35/360) on development fell within the context of rehabilitation and the proper humanitarian response to the emergency needs of displaced persons. The report should, therefore, be rejected, along with corrigendum 3.

82. Mr. DERESSA (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, asked why the representative of Somalia had spoken at such great length and why, in discussing a humanitarian question he had used the occasion to read out pro-Somali propaganda, which was, moreover, full of inaccuracies. The High Commissioner had said that there were 350,000 refugees in Somalia, whereas the representative of Somalia had indicated a higher number in order to obtain more assistance. There was no way of verifying the accuracy of the number given by the Government of Somalia; his Government wondered why no steps were being taken to check whether Somalia's appeals for assistance were motivated by political considerations that had little to do with humanitarian considerations and whether the assistance received was in fact being forwarded to the refugees or the funds were being used for political purposes to destroy the very people for whose assistance it had been sought.

/...

(Mr. Deressa, Ethiopia)

83. The entire population in the so-called refugee camps was made up of women and children. Citing The New York Times of 3 November 1980, he said that the young men in the refugee camps had been recruited for military service. He also cited a report prepared by the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate in September 1980 stating that officials of the High Commissioner's Office had said the figures given by the Government should be accepted as official and as the basis for their plans and appeals. Ninety per cent of the people in the camps were women and children and very few young men remained. The refugees often said that the men were either fighting in the Ogaden or had died in earlier battles. The donor organizations did not know that the food that they provided went to governmental bodies and that the armed forces of Somalia received the food intended for refugees. His Government had drawn that to the attention of all the Governments and international organizations represented at Addis Ababa, including the Office of the High Commissioner. Military adventures in the region were unwittingly being supported by a well-intentioned international community.

84. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia), speaking on a point of order, noted that the right of reply was limited to 10 minutes.

85. The CHAIRMAN said that that was a recommendation made by the Officers of the General Assembly and had never been applied. If Somalia wished to make a formal request for its application, he would take the necessary measures to that end.

86. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) formally requested that the rule in question should be applied. He requested the presence of the Legal Counsel because he considered that the rules of procedure had been violated.

87. Continuing his statement in exercise of the right of reply, he said that the international community was well represented in Somalia and that governmental and intergovernmental agencies had verified the situation of the refugees in the country. Various missions had visited Somalia, under the auspices of the High Commissioner and even of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and had exhaustively verified the refugee situation in Somalia, as also its magnitude and seriousness. The same could not be said of the interagency mission that had visited Ethiopia and, after spending six days there, had prepared a report citing figures that lacked any real foundation.

88. The delegation of Ethiopia had referred to stability and peace in the region, as if Ethiopia were working to achieve those objectives, but the fact was that the basic cause of the presence of refugees from Ethiopia was that they had been driven from their homes and displaced as a result of the reign of terror imposed by the Ethiopian régime on the population. Anyone who wished to verify those facts could refer to the Amnesty International report which made reference, inter alia, to the "red terror" brutally applied by the Ethiopian régime in 1977, 1978, 1979, and even at the present time. The report also referred to arbitrary political detention, summary executions, killings, the public display of executed prisoners and systematic torture.

89. Furthermore, there was the matter of the intervention by foreign forces

/...

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

invited by the Ethiopian régime and the matter of mercenary forces operating in the area, which also constituted an element of the deplorable situation. Did that mean that Ethiopia was working for peace and stability in the region?

90. With regard to the report of the interagency mission that had visited Ethiopia and of which the delegation of that country seemed not to be aware, it would appear that the Government of Ethiopia was in fact requesting the international community to underwrite the entire Ethiopian national budget, with the exception, presumably, of defence expenditures, for which a protecting Power was already assuming responsibility. It was clear to his delegation that Ethiopia's policy was to create a desert and call it peace, and he wondered what was being done with the income generated by coffee exports if it was not being used to purchase arms on a scale unprecedented in an African country. It should also be asked why the war and destruction were continuing in Eritria, in Tigre and in Ogaden. Was it Ethiopia's intention to make Somalia seem responsible for that as well?

91. With regard to the journalistic information cited by the representative of Ethiopia in his earlier statement, it should be remembered that what journalists wrote in newspapers did not always correspond to the facts, whereas the entire international community could verify the reality of what was happening in the region.

92. After a procedural discussion in which Mr. DERESSA (Ethiopia), Mr. OSMAN (Somalia), Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) and Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) participated, Mr. NEUMANN (Office of the Legal Counsel) said that the Committee was master of its own procedures with regard to the handling of procedural motions.

93. Mr. DERESSA (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that all parts of Somalia were arid and dry and that a disaster could very likely occur if it did not rain in the spring. Ethiopia did not wish such a tragedy to befall its brothers in Somalia and agreed that assistance should be provided to that country but could not agree that such assistance should be used for destructive purposes.

94. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) said that Ethiopia's economic problems were due not to the reasons set forth by the representative of Ethiopia but rather to the purchase of arms. The Ethiopian Government oppressed its people, which lived under a régime of terror without precedent, a situation aggravated by interventionist policies whose goal was to establish a base in Ethiopia for imperialism, driving the population of the region in the process.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.