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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 320th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva  
on Wednesday, 8 October 1980 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BIRIDO (Sudan)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

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

GENERAL DEBATE (A/AC.96/INF.160) (continued)

1. Mr. BOOH (Observer for Cameroon) said that it had become commonplace for governments to express concern over the alarming increase in the number of refugees throughout the world, but very little decisive action was taken to deal with the root causes of a phenomenon degrading to human dignity. The economic component of the refugee problem could not be ignored, for it was no accident that the largest concentrations of refugees were to be found in Africa, Asia and Latin America, continents which had been bled white by centuries of foreign political and economic domination. The widespread poverty in those continents produced social tensions which in the normal course of events led to violent crises that generated refugees. Consequently, along with its laudable efforts to deal with natural and man-made disasters, the international community must mobilize its immense material and intellectual resources, while there was still time, to promote progress in the North-South dialogue, fairer international economic co-operation and the conditions for true social peace throughout the world.

2. If solutions were not found soon, many countries might find themselves in the same situation as his own, which had to shelter 100,000 refugees although the resources it needed for its own economic and social development effort were already very limited. No sooner had Cameroon completed repatriation of over 20,000 refugees from Equatorial Guinea with the help of UNHCR, than it had been faced with a new influx of refugees from Chad. As the High Commissioner stated in his report (A/AC.96/577/Add.2, paragraph 22), there were no indications of an early return of those refugees to their country of origin.

3. Despite the generous hospitality of the people of Cameroon, the presence of so many refugees constituted an economic burden that was hard to bear and a growing security-risk. That was why his Government had appealed to the international community for assistance on 2 April 1980 and it had been comforted by the response of the French Government, the authorities of the European Economic Community, UNHCR, ICRC and many other governments and humanitarian organizations.

4. He wished to express his Government's profound gratitude for the valuable assistance being provided by the High Commissioner to the refugees in Cameroon. The recent visit of the Director of the Assistance Division had made possible better assessment of the refugees' needs, better co-ordination of assistance activities on the spot and therefore better chances of success for the UNHCR programme. His Government welcomed the fact that UNHCR had already taken steps to continue the programme of aid to refugees from Chad in 1981.

5. In concluding, he reiterated his Government's appeal to the international community to give sustained and increased attention to the tragic plight of the refugees from Chad, who urgently required an adequate education and health infrastructure and deserved the same attention by the international community as other refugees. Africa, the continent which had the largest number of refugees, should have equitable representation in the decision-making and management organs of UNHCR.

6. Mr. BLIX (Sweden) said that the number of refugee emergencies had increased alarmingly during the past year. The best and most humane way to eliminate them was through political action: Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea, peaceful settlement of the conflicts in the Horn of Africa. The responsibility for the emergencies weighed heavily on the States which failed to provide the necessary political solutions. As a result of their failure, some 10 million people were now the concern of the High Commissioner, a figure which did not include millions of people displaced inside countries plagued by famine or internal strife, for example four or five million Ethiopians, or half a million Ugandans, or the two million refugees in the Middle East supported by UNRWA. The consequences of political conflict were being borne by people who had little or no say in the formation of the policies which affected them fundamentally.

7. Quick action, ample resources, flexibility and co-ordination were needed to provide large numbers of people with immediate adequate relief. It was encouraging to note the response of United Nations and voluntary agencies to many of the emergencies which had arisen in the past few years. However, their response must be co-ordinated and that was why Sweden had introduced a resolution at the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1980, requesting a review of the emergency assistance work carried out within the United Nations system during the past decade. Sweden would continue to press for better co-ordination to ensure effective and flexible utilization of the resources available. His Government was prepared to continue informal consultations with other concerned governments and with organizations on the question of which of the existing United Nations agencies should be responsible for co-ordination of disaster relief within the United Nations. In the field, however, the best co-ordinator might be the receiving country itself.

8. On the matter of fund-raising, he stressed the need for more equitable burden-sharing. Substantially larger sums were needed and he urged all nations represented in the Committee to make greater efforts to meet the cost of refugee flows. Moreover, the financial preparedness of donor countries to respond to appeals for emergency relief could also be improved. Sweden had introduced a special emergency item in its budget for development assistance which had enabled it to respond to appeals with a minimum of delay and he was sure that the High Commissioner would welcome such budgetary flexibility in as many donor countries as possible.

9. With regard to personnel resources, he said that the United Nations system was such that it had no qualified personnel standing by to deal with disaster situations at short notice; it sought solutions on an ad hoc basis. His Government, like the Swiss Government, had established a disaster relief unit with experienced personnel which could be made available to the United Nations at any time. Elements of that unit had assisted UNHCR in relief work in Thailand and Somalia and it would also be available for assistance in the future. Given the urgent need for qualified personnel to implement United Nations-based emergency relief, other governments might consider establishing similar units.

10. Material resources, such as aircraft and other means of transport were also needed at short notice. The French delegation had made some interesting comments in that regard at the special session of the General Assembly. Large-scale transport operations should no longer be improvised; the international community should be

ready to organize them at any time. Governments must also be prepared to deliver food, medicine, tents and blankets at short notice. Pre-disaster planning at the national and international level was essential and the Swedish Red Cross had made a substantial contribution to such planning in the developing countries.

11. UNHCR would have a major role to play in pre-disaster planning and its workload was regrettably likely to continue to increase, as its budget had in recent years. His Government shared the concern expressed by other delegations and welcomed measures taken by the High Commissioner to improve the effectiveness of the Office and to institute arrangements for the exchange of information with member States. Normally, UNHCR planned refugee programmes which were implemented by governments or voluntary agencies. Recently, however, it had become increasingly operational and its field staff must be strengthened. More technical expertise was required at UNHCR headquarters in such areas as procurement, nutrition, transport, water and health, and improvement was needed in project performance evaluation.

12. Sweden contributed to many disaster relief schemes and refugee assistance programmes. Some 650 million Swedish crowns, approximately \$US150 million, had been allocated for such purposes during the fiscal year 1980/81. That represented about 13 per cent of Sweden's entire budget for development assistance. In response to the increasing demands, his Government was considering a further increase in its allocations to emergency relief for the coming financial year.

13. In view of the seriousness of African refugee problems and the growing food shortages in many African countries, Africa had been the main recipient of Swedish disaster relief and refugee assistance funds. The massive efforts made in South East Asia had given positive results despite the difficulties involved. It was to be hoped that the constructive trend would continue and that the people of Kampuchea would at last be given a chance to cultivate their own land in peace. His delegation supported the High Commissioner's repatriation programme for that area.

14. It was disquieting that the budget estimates for 1980 for Asia still exceeded those for Africa by over \$US 100 million, despite the far higher numbers of African refugees. Obviously, solutions to different refugee problems involved different costs, but it should be a fundamental principle that all refugees deserved the same kind of international attention. One reason why that had not been practicable in the past was that donors tended to earmark their funds for the groups which most aroused public opinion. Donors should try to distribute the limited funds more equitably, despite the uneven treatment of the various refugee situations in the press. His Government intended to increase its unearmarked contribution to the general programme of UNHCR in the coming year.

15. As to the question of protection, he said that the basic principles developed within the Committee of the Whole on Protection in recent years were of fundamental importance and had served as guidelines for the preparation of Sweden's new aliens act. It must be stressed that, in the case of requests for extradition, refugees must never be deprived of the protection against refoulement hallowed in the 1951 Convention. The guidelines on voluntary repatriation proposed by UNHCR and further developed during discussions would contribute to the safety of refugees in process of repatriation. The best possible ways and means must be sought to save and protect individual refugees and ease the burden of the States which had been subjected to a

mass influx of refugees. As stated in the report of the High Commissioner, voluntary repatriation and regional solutions were always preferable to resettlement in a country far away from the original ethnic and cultural environment of the refugee. However, when such solutions were not possible, the world community must be ready to open its doors. The present situation in Latin America and South East Asia proved the need for further commitments to the resettlement of refugees. He reaffirmed Sweden's support for the High Commissioner's efforts in that respect. The Swedish selection missions in South East Asia had given priority to handicapped refugees and other people who had found it difficult to obtain resettlement and he urged other countries to apply similar criteria in order to avoid a grave residual problem in the South East Asian refugee camps. The workshop on integration and resettlement had offered a fruitful exchange of experience and his delegation hoped that similar arrangements would be made in the future.

16. It should not be forgotten that there were some brighter aspects in the generally dark picture. In Bangladesh, UNHCR had been able to close down its office during the past year, and in Zimbabwe it was co-ordinating an important programme for repatriation and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons. Finally, despite the difficulties and political problems inherent in every refugee situation, UNHCR was there to express the readiness of the international community to extend its assistance to refugees in distress, who, it must be borne in mind, were the concern not only of the High Commissioner but also of all member States.

17. Mr. GHALIB (Observer for Somalia) noted that it was the second time his Government had considered it necessary for him to attend a session of the Executive Committee in order to give the international community first-hand information on the seriously deteriorating circumstances of the refugees in Somalia. At the beginning of 1979 there had been 120,000 refugees and displaced persons in camps in Somalia, but by the end of that year some 475,000 had occupied 21 camps in various regions. In 1980, the influx had continued and when the High Commissioner visited Somalia in September, there had been some 800,000 refugees in 32 camps. An average of 1,000 people per day were still arriving in the camps. The number of refugees living outside the camps and struggling to stay alive was about the same or perhaps even greater. The flow of refugees into Somalia was not expected to abate in the near future. Projections for refugee needs in Somalia in 1980 had proved generally inadequate, and he urged the Executive Committee to bear that in mind when deciding upon the budgetary projections for Somalia for 1981.

18. His Government had stressed the need for measures to ensure the self-reliance of refugees. The findings of the United Nations inter-agency mission had been thoroughly researched and its recommendations were comprehensive and sound, particularly the emphasis on longer-term infrastructural development and the definition of the most immediate food, medical and accommodation needs. The mission had formulated an assistance programme, based on an estimated average of 640,000 refugees in camps in 1980, which called for over 135,000 metric tons of food commodities and non-food assistance amounting to \$US 40.7 million.

19. After reviewing the action taken by the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner and the Economic and Social Council since February 1980, he noted that aid continued to be received and pledged, and hard work and dedication were being demonstrated, not only by the increased activities of UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, but also by over 21 voluntary agencies. His Government was deeply grateful for such generous assistance, but it was nevertheless inadequate in view of the colossal refugee problem now facing Somalia.

20. That problem, aggravated by the displacement of persons in the wake of natural disasters, had seriously jeopardized the country's construction and development and left it with depleted resources and a burden which it could not face without greatly increased external assistance. A serious fuel crisis was preventing the delivery of food supplies to the refugee camps with their total population of over 800,000, and food stocks in several camps were already exhausted. Without immediate action, tens of thousands of refugees would die.

21. In addition to immediate relief measures, more lasting solutions had to be sought and he therefore welcomed the establishment of a UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions. At the same time, he hoped that the international community would show solidarity and an increased willingness to share the burden.

22. His delegation also supported the measures taken by the High Commissioner to face the growing demands of his Office, including the Policy, Planning and Research Unit, the Emergency Fund and the establishment of a regional co-ordinator. Somalia itself had taken similarly motivated measures and had established a Research Unit on Emergencies to assist its National Refugee Commission, and hoped that the newly-established UNHCR training unit would also train national staff directly engaged in refugee work in countries of asylum.

23. Finally, he welcomed the proposal for the establishment of a working group on financial and administrative aspects, provided that it remained an open-ended body.

24. Mr. ASSEDRI (Uganda) said that more realistic and effective steps to stop the trend towards increasing numbers of refugees in many parts of the world could be taken only by removing the causes of the problem, which meant creating stability where disorder existed. He acknowledged the efforts of the international community, through UNHCR donor countries and international agencies, to find durable solutions for refugee problems. The decrease in the Indo-Chinese refugee case-load reported by the High Commissioner and the successful voluntary repatriation to their homelands of large numbers of African refugees were encouraging in that respect. His delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's efforts to strengthen direct contacts, through consultative and informal meetings, with concerned Governments and international agencies with a view to increasing their involvement and commitment in finding solutions. It also supported the establishment of a Policy, Planning and Research Unit and of an Emergency Unit.

25. Turning to the problems of his own country, he noted that war had once again made victims of refugees who had achieved a reasonable level of self-sufficiency, and a substantial financial and material contribution to the Reconstruction and Restoration Programme was required in order to prevent them from becoming a lasting burden to UNHCR and to Uganda. Because of a delay in getting the Programme started, many refugees were drifting into urban centres in search of better facilities and services. That was producing an emergency situation and he had appealed to the Executive Committee to support the High Commissioner's request for the restoration of services in Uganda's refugee settlements. He also thought that the proposed allocation of \$ US 500,000 for reconstruction and restoration should be revised upwards in the light of prevailing costs.

26. His Government appreciated all of the assistance provided by the international community to alleviate the continuing need of the Ugandan people. The majority of Ugandan refugees wishing to do so had already returned home and had joined their compatriots in the task of reconstruction and rehabilitation, but the country continued to face food shortages because of poor crops and drought. Uganda therefore renewed its appeal to the international community for continued support. With the achievement of political, economic and social stability in the country, it was expected that the remaining Ugandans abroad would accept the Government's standing invitation to return and be reabsorbed into their communities.

27. In conclusion, he said that his delegation supported Sudan's appeal to refocus world attention on Africa and thought that the proposed pledging conference on behalf of African refugees was a step in the right direction.

28. Mr. TRAN HOAN (Viet Nam) reiterated his Government's view that the refugee problem had to be viewed as a purely humanitarian one which should not be exploited for political or other purposes. It was in that spirit that his Government and the UNHCR had signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Orderly Departure from Viet Nam. The object of that Memorandum was to reduce the suffering of the refugees as well as the burden on the countries of the region. It was extremely unfortunate that its implementation was being greatly retarded by countries hostile to Viet Nam that had sought in every way to hinder and limit departures in the manner prescribed in the Memorandum, and had even encouraged people to leave illegally. The United States and certain other Western countries, for example, had made admission much simpler, if not unconditional, for refugees who left Viet Nam illegally than for those who left legally. Efforts were also being made, through military threats by the United States and provocations by a neighbouring country, to intimidate refugees and encourage them to leave Viet Nam illegally, with a view to discrediting his country and mounting a lying propaganda campaign against it.

29. Another problem which concerned his country was that of the Kampuchean refugees. He deplored the fact that the only authentic and legitimate representative of the Kampuchean people, the Revolutionary People's Council, was still not represented at the meeting to express its view on the subject while the so called "representatives" of the genocidal regime of Pol Pot had still not been banished. Viet Nam supported the four-point proposal of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, which called for: Co-operation between Kampuchea and Thailand and the international organizations to tackle the refugee problem with a view to reducing the burden on Thailand and contributing to peace and stability in the region; creation of favourable conditions to enable the Kampuchean refugees in Thailand to find asylum in other countries; start of negotiations to solve the problem of repatriating Kampuchean refugees in Thailand; and establishment of camps for Pol Pot partisans far from the frontier. In accordance with the norms of international law concerning neutrality, the armed ~~armies~~ <sup>forces</sup> of Pol Pot and other reactionary forces seeking refuge in Thailand should be disarmed and placed in special camps far from the areas of conflict. They could not be regarded as refugees and should not be assisted in returning to Kampuchea to pursue their activities hostile to the Kampuchean people.

30. The Revolutionary People's Council of Kampuchea was prepared to engage in discussions with international organizations to ensure that aid to the country should be provided as effectively as possible, with due regard for the country's independence

and sovereignty. Humanitarian aid must, however, not be used to encourage Kampucheans to become refugees or to undermine peace and stability in the frontier area. Lastly, such aid should be the subject of an agreement between international organizations and the Kampuchean authorities.

31. The above proposal was just and reasonable and would restore stability to the region as well as peaceful relations between Thailand and Kampuchea. Viet Nam therefore hoped that Thailand would respond positively to it and that the Office of the High Commissioner and other international organizations would not allow international aid to be used as a weapon against the Peoples' Republic of Kampuchea.

32. Viet Nam appreciated the assistance it had received from the international community in overcoming the problems born of 30 years' of war and a series of natural disasters. It proposed that UNHCR should continue to implement the still uncompleted programmes begun in 1979 and 1980 and that for the immediate future it should complete the \$10 million aid programme concluded between Viet Nam and UNHCR in July 1980 aimed at helping the 35,000 Kampuchean refugees still in Viet Nam to resettle in third countries.

33. Mr. SANZE (Observer for Burundi) praised the excellent work done by the High Commissioner and his staff, and welcomed the dialogue instituted with the African delegations and the increasing volume of credits allocated to Africa.

34. He stressed the heavy burden borne by the countries receiving and resettling refugees, noting the legal, economic, political, social and administrative complications involved. His country, which had in the past given refuge to more than 100,000 refugees, and still sheltered some 50,000 of them, had a vivid experience of their problems. Despite Burundi's unenviable position as one of the least developed countries, the superhuman efforts it had expended in recent years to provide aid and asylum to refugees had received little compensation in the way of additional allocations from UNHCR and the international community. It was, nevertheless, continuing to do its utmost for the long-term resettlement of refugees, and as a result of his delegation's description of their pressing needs at the preceding session of the Executive Committee, an amendment to document A/AC.96/572 had been adopted for the inclusion in the UNHCR programme of a relief project in the Cankuzo region. While greeting with thanks the High Commissioner's decision to grant funds for the construction of a hospital in that region, he urged the need for a further allocation for the other aspect of the programme, namely the building of a school.

35. The mass exodus of refugees from African countries, a legacy of their former colonial status, called for the holding of an international conference to deal with their problems and to awaken the conscience of humanity to their tragic fate. He also urged that the funds allocated to the African continent under the UNHCR general programmes should be proportionate to the needs of the 5 million refugees. In addition, he advocated the employment by the relief organizations of more Africans, both at headquarters and in an operational capacity, since they were more cognizant of conditions in that continent. In that connection, he welcomed the Tanzanian delegation's invitation for the holding of the Executive Committee's next session in Africa, so as to enable delegations to see conditions for themselves.



36. He favoured the creation of a working group on financial and administrative aspects, provided its terms of reference were clearly set out, its membership was not unduly large, and its composition reflected the diversity of United Nations Membership.

37. Mr. AKRAM (Observer for Pakistan) paid tribute to the way in which the High Commissioner had utilized the limited resources at his disposal and said that he shared the concern expressed by other representatives at the rapidly deteriorating refugee situation, in Africa, Indo-China and South West Asia. The growing dimensions of the tragedy required an urgent and effective response by the international community since it was clear that the resources of the countries of first asylum and of international relief agencies had been strained to the limit. The most urgent objective for the current session of the Executive Committee was therefore to seek ways and means of mobilizing adequate resources to augment the capacity of UNHCR and other international agencies to respond to the refugee problem.

38. In accordance with the principle of non-refoulement, his Government was providing asylum to an escalating influx of Afghan refugees. Refugees were currently arriving at a monthly rate of 60 to 70 thousand and over the past year their number had increased from 1,085,000 to 1,150,000, which constituted the largest single concentration of refugees in the world. He feared that if current trends persisted, the dimensions of the problem would grow even further.

39. He expressed his gratitude to all those who had helped to ameliorate the plight of the Afghan refugees, in particular UNHCR, and said that his Government was currently doing everything possible within its limited resources. It was providing each refugee family with a subsistence cash allowance and meeting the administrative costs of the various services required, as well as the heavy cost of inland transport.

40. Assistance extended by UNHCR since September 1979 amounted to \$US 26.4 million. The present committed assistance up to December 1980 was based on the requirements of 500,000 refugees, while the actual number was more than double that figure. UNHCR had proposed to raise the basis of calculation from 500,000 to 900,000 and to increase the allocation for the period ending 1980 to a total of \$US 52.3 million.

41. At the existing rate, the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan was likely to reach the figure of 1.7 million by June 1981 and it was estimated that for the period July 1980 to June 1981 the cash allowance for the refugees would require \$US 78,848,485 while inland transport would cost about \$US 1,010,000. His delegation was confident that the growing magnitude of the problem would be taken into account by the Executive Committee and donor countries as well as by other international agencies.

42. While it would continue to provide relief and shelter as required, his Government earnestly desired that conditions should be created within Afghanistan which would enable the refugees to return voluntarily to their country of origin.

43. In spite of the burden it was already shouldering, his country was conscious of its responsibilities towards the welfare of refugees in other parts of the world and within its limited means had contributed to the relief

of refugees in Africa and Indo-China. In view of the general consensus that voluntary repatriation was the best solution to any refugee situation, he earnestly hoped that concerted efforts would be made to evolve solutions to the underlying political problems responsible for the exodus of masses of refugees.

44. Mr. ADUGNA (Observer for Ethiopia) said that since 1978 his country had been faced with the serious problem created by some 2.4 million displaced persons, including many orphans, widows, and destitute and disabled persons who required urgent assistance. In 1978, the High Commissioner had launched an appeal for the Horn of Africa and he gratefully acknowledged the assistance which Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti had received as a result of that appeal. Unfortunately, that regional approach had not been repeated despite the growing numbers of returnees in need of relief and rehabilitation. It must be remembered that the appeal had related to only 150,000 displaced persons. More recently, Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/54 had appealed to the international community to find ways and means of mobilizing urgently humanitarian assistance for displaced persons and voluntary returnees in Ethiopia, and an inter-agency mission had visited war-affected regions of Ethiopia in July 1980 to assess the extent of the problem. A UNHCR mission had also visited Ethiopia to discuss the use of the predetermined allocation of \$US 1 million for returnees. That allocation was pitifully inadequate to meet the requirements of the 110,000 returnees, the needed relief assistance for whom was estimated at \$US 86 million plus 8,000 tons of high-protein food and edible oils.

45. In accordance with the conclusions of the 1979 Arusha Conference, his Government had discussed with the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of Djibouti the repatriation and resettlement of refugees, and had agreed on the principle of voluntary repatriation. A proclamation on the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees in the Republic of Djibouti had been issued on 16 June 1980 and a similar proclamation was being prepared for those in the Sudan. Already, some 200 people had been sent to Ethiopia by UNHCR and many thousands had returned. There was a need to assess the question of returnees honestly and systematically and he appealed to the High Commissioner to work closely with his Government, without preconceived ideas, in the proper planning and organization of repatriation and rehabilitation measures. While sympathizing with the additional burden which the problem of displaced persons had placed on the resources of UNHCR, he emphasized that the misery and destitution of displaced persons and returnees was at least as great as that of refugees and deserved a speedy response. The problem of refugees and displaced persons should be handled in a fair and equitable way on a regional basis, and he appealed to the Executive Committee to assist the High Commissioner to follow up his three missions to Ethiopia with action in favour of displaced persons and returnees and to ensure the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/54.

46. His delegation fully supported the Tanzanian representative's proposal for the holding of the next session of the Executive Committee in Arusha.

47. Mr. FREER-JIMENEZ (Observer for Costa Rica) said that Costa Rica had traditionally been a country of refuge for the persecuted and was required, by its very constitution, to grant asylum to political refugees. Now the refugee problem had acquired a magnitude beyond the capacity of any individual State and required concerted action by the international community. Existing legal institutions and machinery were, however, inadequate to deal with the problem.

Thus, UNHCR had had to be guided in its work not only by the 1951 Convention but by numerous General Assembly resolutions adopted on an empirical basis. It was necessary to correct that state of affairs by expanding and improving international humanitarian law, either within the framework of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol or by the adoption of a Convention on Territorial Asylum as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 3456, of 9 December 1975.

48. In his delegation's view, such new instruments should provide a fuller definition of terms and concepts: clarification of the rights and duties of States with regard to asylum; fuller powers for the Office of the High Commissioner and more flexible procedures for the exit, transport, first asylum and resettlement of refugees. Moreover, there must be fundamental recognition of the fact that responsibility for refugees and displaced persons rested not only with a particular State but with the entire international community. The right of a State whose economy and social and political stability might be threatened by an influx of refugees to obtain substantial help from the international community, and the duty of the latter to provide it, must be recognized. Such help should not depend on occasional "humanitarian crusades" or be limited to immediate transport and resettlement costs but must include long-term programmes which would also benefit the local population. However controversial, the political aspects of refugee problems should be discussed in the appropriate forums of the United Nations.

49. With reference to the adoption of new legal instruments, he recalled that in 1974, at the suggestion of the Executive Committee, the General Assembly had invited a group of experts to draft a convention on territorial asylum and had convened a Plenipotentiary Conference, which had been held in 1977. Although that Conference had been unable to complete its work, it had succeeded in drafting three important articles and had approved a final recommendation to the effect that efforts for the adoption of a Convention on Territorial Asylum should be continued. He therefore suggested that the Executive Committee might renew its request to the General Assembly to convene another conference for that purpose.

50. So far as his country's action on behalf of refugees was concerned, it had, with the help of UNHCR, established a model agricultural colony designed to become an economically self-sufficient unit capable of receiving 1,000 refugees. Other countries, also, had room for such resettlements and might be induced, if bold and imaginative plans were drawn up, to receive thousands of displaced persons.

51. Costa Rica would continue to co-operate with the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Refugees, ICEM and members of the Executive Committee in finding solutions to the refugee problem throughout the world.

52. Mr. FARAH ABANEH (Observer for Djibouti) said that the continued growth in numbers of refugees was disquieting; as soon as conditions became settled in one region, a new refugee situation occurred in another. The largest numbers of refugees were in the African continent; in the Horn of Africa alone there were over two million refugees and displaced persons. The appointment by the High Commissioner of a special co-ordinator for that region, therefore, was a timely initiative.

53. In Djibouti, refugees were now equal in number to 12 per cent of its own population - an enormous burden for a country which was one of the world's poorest and which, moreover, had been stricken by drought for the past two years. Djibouti would be overwhelmed by the problem without the valuable aid of UNHCR and the international community in providing and co-ordinating assistance for the immediate needs of the refugees, most of whom were women, children and old people. The resources provided were nevertheless insufficient, and refugee assistance programmes should be at least commensurate with the level of needs as noted by the interagency mission which had visited Djibouti in June 1980 and whose report, unfortunately, was not yet published.

54. Djibouti had decided to establish, with the collaboration of the High Commissioner, a transit centre where refugees could receive basic job-training and food assistance. Because of the limited scope for settling refugees in Djibouti, however, it was necessary to prepare their resettlement in third countries. Many refugees, for example, were of urban background or were English-speaking and therefore unable to continue their education or find work in Djibouti; they were thus liable to become an unemployed, alienated group and, as such, a threat to social stability. Therefore, his delegation appealed to Governments and international agencies to share the burden. His Government was grateful to Egypt, the United States and other countries which had agreed to take some refugees.

55. Djibouti observed the major international legal instruments governing refugees, and had adopted legislation for their implementation. It felt that protection was as vital as material assistance, and regarded voluntary repatriation, under suitable conditions, as the best solution to the refugee problem. As a result of talks between the Ethiopian and Sudanese Governments with UNHCR participation, Ethiopia had declared an amnesty for refugees; the measure would be followed up in the light of the relevant international instruments.

56. His Government warmly thanked UNHCR and all the agencies which had joined in the humanitarian task of assisting refugees. It firmly believed, however, that the real solution to the problem was to deal with root causes; in that connexion, President Hassan Gouled had recently launched an appeal for efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict in the Horn of Africa.

57. Mrs. DA ASSUNÇÃO VAHEKENI DO ROSÁRIO (Observer for Angola) said that the continuing conflicts and tensions in various countries, and the struggle against exploitation, were constantly increasing the number of refugees and displaced persons, particularly in Africa and Asia. Great efforts had been made by UNHCR, governments and non-governmental organizations to overcome the refugee problem, and the Executive Committee, at its current session, should carefully consider what further methods and mechanisms were needed.

58. Angola was one of the countries greatly affected by the problem. During the struggle against colonial domination, millions of Angolans had been forced to leave their country, which was still the victim of attacks by the South African racist régime, seeking to overturn the victory won and weaken the basis of the Namibian people's struggle for national independence. As a result of measures taken by the late President Neto and subsequently by President Dos Santos, millions of Angolan exiles had been repatriated, but many had not yet been able to return. For that purpose, a tripartite commission, consisting of Angola, Zaire and UNHCR, had been formed in September 1980; it was to be hoped that the commission would be given all possible support.

59. Many refugees from other African countries were still on Angolan territory, and the Angolan authorities were doing their best, despite all difficulties, to give them asylum. A country of asylum had a duty not only to provide food, medicine and shelter to refugees but also to promote their integration. Therefore, consideration of a Fund for Durable Solutions should be an important part of the Executive Committee's deliberations at its current session. Essential as such measures were, however, the refugee problem could not be overcome except by measures against those régimes which forced people to flee their country.

60. Angola was ready to join with other governments and organizations in contributing to measures to improve the living conditions of refugees, particularly in Africa. Angola had acceded to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, which would henceforth apply to those of its citizens forced to leave the country during the wars of independence - citizens whose repatriation would depend largely on the co-operation of UNHCR at international level and OAU at regional level.

61. Her delegation thanked all the organizations which, together with UNHCR, had provided assistance to Angola. It endorsed the proposal that Arusha should be the venue for the Executive Committee's thirty-second session.

62. Mr. GUNA-KASEM (Thailand), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, contrary to the allegations made by the representative of Viet Nam, Thailand was merely a spectator to the conflict in Kampuchea and its activities were confined to humanitarian attempts to alleviate suffering. Assertions that armed Kampuchean elements were being tolerated on Thai soil were unfounded, as the representatives of many impartial relief agencies in the field could testify.

63. The proposals referred to by the representative of Viet Nam had of course been studied by all the ASEAN Governments, whose response was a matter of public record. In accordance with generally accepted international practice, Thailand could not have dealings with a puppet régime. The problem of the refugees from Kampuchea could not be finally resolved until all foreign forces had been withdrawn from that country.

64. Mr. DABIRI (Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the seizure of the United States hostages, to which the United States representative had earlier referred (A/AC.96/SR.319, para. 48), had stemmed not from an act of the Iranian Government but from action taken spontaneously by Iranian citizens in reaction to long-felt repugnance at past misdeeds. The Iranian Government had from the outset done all possible to seek a peaceful solution to the problem, and the Iranian Parliament would shortly be taking a decision in that connection. The Executive Committee's tasks were difficult enough, and its time should not be occupied with matters unrelated to them.

65. Mr. AL-ANI (Observer for Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the so-called refugees from Iraq referred to by the Iranian delegation (A/AC.96/SR.319, para. 10) were Iranians whom the Iraqi authorities had been obliged to expel from Iraq on account of the unrest and public danger they had caused. In dealing with them, however, no humanitarian effort had been spared. The Executive Committee was not the forum in which to discuss the conflict between Iran and Iraq. He would therefore limit himself to referring to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Iraq in the United Nations General Assembly on 4 October 1980.

66. Mr. AMERI (Iran) said that in view of the lateness of the hour he reserved the right of his delegation to reply to the statement of the Observer for Iraq, if necessary in writing.

67. Mr. LIANG Yufan (China), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the remarks made earlier in the meeting by the representative of Viet Nam constituted an unwarranted and politically motivated attack which would deceive no one. While most countries were seeking means to alleviate the refugee problem, Viet Nam was a country largely responsible for it. It was high time for that country to comply with the relevant General Assembly resolution, by withdrawing the troops it had on the soil of other countries and ceasing to export refugees.

68. Mr. SUONG SIKOEUN (Observer for Democratic Kampuchea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the presence in Kampuchea of over 250,000 Vietnamese troops and some 50,000 advisers represented a threat to peace and security and destroyed the credibility of the Vietnamese representative's remarks.

69. Mr. EL BESHIR (Sudan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his Government stood ready to render all assistance to the Ethiopian Government in any efforts for the voluntary repatriation of refugees. Unfortunately, however, the influx of refugees was still growing, and the Sudanese Government was not aware of any substantial number of repatriations.

70. Mr. ADUGNA (Observer for Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he regretted the implications of the Sudanese representative's remarks; repatriations were taking place, and some had been reported that very day. The two countries' Heads of State had recently signed a protocol on the subject; and Ethiopia remained ready to collaborate with the Sudan and with UNHCR at all times in order to deal with the problem.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.