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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations
made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its
thirty-second session on the evaluation of the Office of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the "Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-second session on the evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", dated 20 March 1996. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices.

[20 March 1996]

ANNEX

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations
made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its
thirty-second session on the evaluation of the Office of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on an in-depth evaluation.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has made a concerted effort to follow through on the recommendations of CPC. Progress is reported on new approaches to international protection and the search for durable solutions, external relations strategies, budgetary questions and emergency response capacity. In regard to some recommendations such as those relating to non-governmental organizations, progress has been somewhat mixed. In a few instances, because of external circumstances, there is little progress to report or a different approach has been taken to that recommended.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	4
II. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	4 - 17	4
A. Internally displaced persons	4 - 5	4
B. Early warning	6 - 9	5
C. Human rights	10 - 12	7
D. Promotion of refugee law	13 - 17	8
III. PROGRAMMATIC, ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS ...	18 - 57	9
A. Regional approaches	18 - 20	9
B. Inter-agency cooperation	21	10
C. Non-governmental organizations	22 - 26	10
D. Programming and administrative controls	27 - 30	12
E. Emergency preparedness and response	31 - 33	13
F. Training	34 - 38	14
G. Public information	39 - 44	16
H. General and special programmes	45 - 46	17
I. Fund-raising	47 - 48	18
J. Multi-year planning	49	19
K. Administrative needs and costs	50 - 52	19
L. Strategic planning	53 - 54	20
M. Staffing	55 - 57	21

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-third session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the in-depth evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (E/AC.51/1993/2). Being in general agreement with the main thrust of the report, namely, to strengthen the functions of protection and search for durable solutions and to delegate further operational responsibility for assistance and, bearing in mind the necessity that UNHCR should function within its mandate, the Committee endorsed the report and its recommendations. 1/

2. The Committee decided that the report and the section of the CPC report dealing with it should be transmitted to the Executive Committee of UNHCR for its consideration and action. In 1993, at its forty-fourth session, the Executive Committee reviewed the recommendations of the in-depth evaluation and requested the High Commissioner to keep the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection and the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters informed of the progress in the implementation of the recommendations. 2/ The High Commissioner has kept the two Subcommittees regularly informed of the progress in the implementation of the recommendations; and an overview of UNHCR efforts in this regard was presented to the Executive Committee, at its forty-sixth session, in 1995. The presentation of the present report follows the breakdown by subcommittees. In section II, the report reviews the implementation of recommendations that relate primarily to international protection - questions considered at the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection; and section III addresses recommendations on programmatic, administrative and financial matters - questions mainly considered at the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

3. The present triennial review, conducted to determine the extent to which CPC recommendations on in-depth evaluations had been implemented, has been greatly facilitated by the comprehensive monitoring done at UNHCR. As was the case with past triennial reviews, the present report is based on a review of the relevant documentation, information submitted by the units concerned and interviews for clarification and verification purposes.

II. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

A. Internally displaced persons

Recommendation 1, Population displacements not covered by international instruments: In situations of displacements of populations not covered by international instruments, UNHCR should have an advisory role for protection issues with the organizations involved in operations of relief and assistance. In such situations, when prompt and adequate assistance is not provided by any other international organization, UNHCR should seek the necessary authority to provide the protection and assistance needed.
(E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 12)

4. The current policy vis-à-vis internally displaced persons should be seen in the context of the arrangements in the United Nations system for coordination of humanitarian activities; it is set out in General Assembly resolution 49/169 of 23 December 1994. The High Commissioner's inter-office/field office memorandum of 28 April 1993 on "UNHCR's role with internally displaced persons" is consistent with recent conclusions of the Executive Committee of UNHCR and with General Assembly resolutions, and it continues to provide the basic framework for UNHCR action. On criteria for involvement, the memorandum makes a distinction between situations of internal displacement presenting a clear link with activities that UNHCR undertakes in fulfilment of its mandate and situations where the link with mandated activities is not present. The former situations include assisting internally displaced populations mixed with returnee populations, or preventing the risk of cross-border spilling of the internal displacement. In the latter situations, UNHCR may consider getting involved to attenuate the causes of internal displacement. In both cases, UNHCR's activities would normally be supplementary to overall political and/or humanitarian efforts of the United Nations.

5. The question of the internally displaced continues to be considered in a range of forums: the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; the Commission on Human Rights; and the Executive Committee of UNHCR. In recent years, UNHCR involvement in population displacements not covered by international instruments has taken place within an inter-agency framework, as in Tajikistan and Rwanda. For UNHCR, an important aspect in the United Nations inter-agency consultation concerning internally displaced persons is to assign the responsibility for their protection, where necessary. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Internally Displaced Persons, established in 1993, focused first on clarifying concepts. The Task Force now reviews potential or actual situations of displacement, and it seeks to reach consensus on the most appropriate division of labour.

B. Early warning

6. Recommendation 2 of the in-depth evaluation focused on UNHCR's role in drawing attention to potential displacements of populations. This recommendation is also related to the subject of early warning, an issue taken up in greater detail in recommendation 8.

Recommendation 2, Catalytic political role of UNHCR: Working in cooperation with the political authorities of the United Nations and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, UNHCR should bring to the attention of the relevant intergovernmental bodies information on situations which could give rise to displacement of populations. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 14)

Recommendation 8, UNHCR focal point on early warning: UNHCR should establish a focal point exclusively in charge of research on early warning questions, including the development of indicators of impending displacements of population, with access to all existing information within UNHCR. The focal point should develop guidelines for UNHCR staff on gathering and reporting relevant information. The UNHCR focal point should coordinate its activities with the focal points of other United Nations

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departments and agencies within the framework proposed by the Organizational Committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). In this context, UNHCR will actively participate, alongside other concerned organizations of the United Nations system, with the newly instituted consultations mechanism on early warning on flow of information on mass movement of populations, under the aegis of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 26)

7. UNHCR currently participates in initiatives within the United Nations system to establish an early warning system that will provide the humanitarian agencies with information regarding the potential for flows of refugees and displaced persons. These efforts are being coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The UNHCR focal point on early-warning matters is the Chief of the Centre for Documentation on Refugees, who represents UNHCR in United Nations system-wide deliberations. Within UNHCR, the Centre, which was established some 10 years ago, acts as the information resource arm of the Office. It provides users with a broad and relevant collection of refugee literature, and legal and country of origin information. This information, now available over the Internet, is also shared with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and its Humanitarian Early Warning System. In addition, UNHCR is actively participating in discussions in relation to another inter-agency database, namely, ReliefWeb. At present, there are gaps in the United Nations system-wide reporting to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs; information relevant to the concerns of UNHCR from countries where the Office is not present may not be conveyed to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. There is as yet no single coherent international mechanism for information collection, verification and exchange.

8. The UNHCR programme of database creation and development was, for some years, focused on the areas of refugee law and literature. More recently, it has begun to concentrate on the situation in the countries of origin of refugees and on root causes. With respect to sources of information, UNHCR is using publicly available material. Such material, provided it is gathered and used on the basis of coherent standards, has the advantage of being open to review and verification. Although the Office has regular internal reporting channels, it is not principally an information-gathering, reporting or monitoring agency. UNHCR's initiatives relate specifically to the needs of the Office, in the light of its statutory obligations.

9. In establishing early warning and early response mechanisms, UNHCR has to address ways in which to link operational information from field offices to policy planning. With this in mind, the Centre for Documentation on Refugees, in January 1996, was relocated within the Office of the Assistant High Commissioner in charge of policy planning and operations. The challenge, on the information management side, is to ensure that those who need "early warning" receive what they need to take informed decisions for early actions. Further dissemination and sharing of such information with others is important. Since 1992, UNHCR has used the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to bring situations to the attention of intergovernmental bodies; more involvement of other departments, such as the Department of Political Affairs, is needed to reach the decision makers.

C. Human rights

10. Recommendation 3 recognizes that human rights violations are a factor in many coerced departures and addresses the question of the need for greater linkages between UNHCR and the human rights initiatives and mechanisms of the United Nations system. The recommendation states:

Recommendation 3, Human rights aspects of refugee situations: UNHCR and the Centre on Human Rights should establish joint mechanisms to ensure that: (a) refugee situations emanating from human rights violations are brought to the attention of the Commission on Human Rights, and appropriate action is proposed to it; and (b) advisory services and technical cooperation aimed at improving the implementation of international covenants and agreements on human rights, including monitoring and reporting mechanisms, adequately address the human rights of refugees and asylum-seekers. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 15)

11. Collaboration with the human rights initiatives and mechanisms of the United Nations system is an increasingly important aspect of UNHCR international protection activities, especially its preventive and solution oriented efforts. UNHCR participates in the regular inter-agency meetings convened by the Centre for Human Rights. In 1994, UNHCR stated that, in addition, the Office hoped "to finalize a memorandum of understanding, which would cover many of the elements referred to in the in-depth evaluation and its recommendations, with the Centre. This memorandum would include provisions for collaboration in staff training, the participation of resource persons from UNHCR, the Centre, and other organizations in seminars and educational activities, and increased consultations regarding the preparation and dissemination of human rights materials" (EC/1994/SCP/CRP.4, para. 20). The memorandum of understanding has not yet been finalized. On 8 March 1995, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 1995/88 on human rights and mass exoduses, in which, inter alia, it invited all human rights mechanisms of the United Nations to seek information and report on problems in mass exoduses of populations or in their voluntary return home. It also requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to pay attention to situations that cause or threaten to cause mass displacements and to address effectively such situations through emergency preparedness and response mechanisms.

12. UNHCR continues to seek to strengthen its cooperation with the human rights bodies of the United Nations. UNHCR attends meetings of the Human Rights Committee in an observer capacity and follows the work of other treaty bodies, notably the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee against Torture. UNHCR collaborated closely with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, resulting in extensive coverage of the situation of refugee women in her first report to the Committee on Human Rights. UNHCR, in the light of its own experience of introducing gender guidelines into its programmes, is actively assisting the Centre for Human Rights in its own work on the gender aspects of human rights.

D. Promotion of refugee law

13. Pointing to the mandated responsibility of UNHCR to consolidate and expand the legal framework governing the status and rights of refugees, the evaluation took up the issue of integrating promotion of refugee law into UNHCR country programmes.

Recommendation 18, Refugee law at the country level: Activities on refugee law promotion should be included in UNHCR country programmes. The implementation of these activities should be part of the function of field protection officers. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 38)

14. The Office organizes refugee law and protection courses for government officials and implementing partners and other non-governmental organizations. A number of training activities have been organized jointly with regional bodies, other international organizations and non-governmental partners. UNHCR is gradually developing a network of regional coordinators for refugee law (promotion and training) in selected field offices as part of its promotional endeavours.

15. Since 1993, the implementation of training programmes has been uneven. The programmes are well developed in a number of countries while in others they lack continuity. As a consequence of the staff rotation policy, there are cases of long periods of vacancy between two protection officers, and working relations with local partners are difficult to maintain. Also, UNHCR presence in a country is by definition temporary; building networks of interested partners that would have the needed expertise would provide a more stable base for the promotion of refugee law. Noting that UNHCR has too few protection officers with legal backgrounds to cover all situations that present difficult protection problems, the in-depth evaluation emphasized the importance of collaboration with academic institutions.

Recommendation 19, Collaboration with academic institutions: UNHCR should designate a focal point/research manager to facilitate collaboration with academic and research institutions for purposes of enhancing the promotion of refugee law and the dissemination of the fundamental principles of refugee protection. A world survey of research and academic institutions and organizations in areas of interest to refugee issues should be conducted, perhaps by an academic centre in collaboration with UNHCR. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 39)

16. Through a project completed in 1995 involving the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, UNHCR has established a pilot network of 20 higher education institutions in Africa and Asia and is supporting their efforts to initiate or develop teaching and related research in refugee law and/or other areas of refugee studies, such as international relations, anthropology, sociology and development. A crucial challenge within this strategy will be to broaden the support base for these institutions by involving institutions in the North that have developed refugee expertise.

17. In the latter part of 1994, UNHCR, with the financial support of the Ford Foundation, commissioned a study to look at the Office's research needs and

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strategies, and to propose means of improving organizational research management; this project was related to the ongoing efforts of UNHCR to enhance its policy-making capacity. As part of the project, a preliminary database of research contacts was established in the Centre for Documentation for Refugees. The study observed that UNHCR had no central research section, and no organization-wide research committee that could define a common agenda. For research, the Office had to rely heavily on external resources; that required careful management to develop a constructive dialogue between practitioners and academics that could further critical knowledge about refugees. In 1995, at its forty-sixth session, the Executive Committee called "upon the High Commissioner to explore ways to integrate its activities in the areas of documentation, research, publications and electronic dissemination". 3/

III. PROGRAMMATIC, ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

A. Regional approaches

Recommendation 4, Regional approaches to durable solutions: UNHCR should encourage all countries involved to explore regional approaches to durable solutions of problems causing refugee situations. Such approaches would normally involve some or all of the following elements: the legal mechanism of tripartite commissions; plans containing commitments related to basic principles of refugee law and humanitarian assistance; close collaboration between UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development agencies in the context of a joint support unit; and the eventual withdrawal of UNHCR from any operational responsibility. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 16)

18. The subject of comprehensive and regional approaches to refugee problems was considered in depth by the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection in May 1994. Among the examples of comprehensive approaches considered were: the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA), the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia and Mozambique. In the course of 1994, UNHCR launched a process to develop a comprehensive approach to the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and relevant neighbouring States.

19. UNHCR no longer has any operational responsibilities in the CIREFCA process. In Tajikistan, the hand-over of certain UNHCR responsibilities to other agencies, after a year of negotiation, took place in late 1995. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) took over material assistance and social reintegration functions. In Mozambique, it was only late in the UNHCR reintegration operation that it proved possible to develop concrete links with other programmes.

20. In 1995, a joint UNDP/UNHCR review of CIREFCA entitled "CIREFCA: An Opportunity and Challenge for Inter-Agency Cooperation" examined a number of issues of relevance to inter-agency cooperation. This study observed that "effective cooperation should build on complementarity in types of activity, modes of operation and length of commitment with roles, responsibilities and

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comparative advantages identified at an early stage of an operation", with a word of caution against "measures which may diffuse the specific mandates and competencies of agencies, experience from CIREFCA and others have rejected a linear conceptual approach to the continuum from relief to development". The study suggested that UNDP and UNHCR together with other agencies should agree on a coherent policy and strategic approach in operations where humanitarian, developmental and political issues are interdependent; and that UNHCR should make use of the proposed strategy for an early planning of a smooth phasing out of humanitarian activities. "CIREFCA and other more recent post-conflict situations raise the fundamental question of the relevance of a clear-cut distinction between funding for emergency relief and development when the two problems converge"; it is also suggested that an intermediate category be introduced for "post-conflict recovery". In order to include development agencies in the continuum from emergency relief to development, joint ventures are under way with United Nations agencies and the World Bank.

B. Inter-agency cooperation

Recommendation 5, Cooperative arrangements in assistance to refugees: The present effort to clarify areas of specialization and complementarity among agencies of the United Nations system and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), leading to cooperative arrangements along the lines of the UNHCR-World Food Programme (WFP) agreement, should be continued. Cooperative arrangements should be put into effect as soon as possible with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (water supply, sanitation), the World Health Organization (WHO) (coordination of health sector in large programmes), and IOM (logistics, support to reinsertion, information in country of origin). (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 18).

21. In November 1993, UNHCR completed an evaluation of the status of current cooperative relations with the various United Nations agencies. UNHCR continues to develop action oriented agreements with sister agencies. In mid-1995, a memorandum of understanding was signed with UNFPA. Negotiations with UNICEF have been concluded and a memorandum of understanding was signed in mid-March 1996. Regular discussions take place with IOM on a range of operational questions.

C. Non-governmental organizations

22. The important role of non-governmental organizations as implementing partners of UNHCR is the subject of a further recommendation.

Recommendation 6, Role of non-governmental organizations: The UNHCR electronic directory (roster) of non-governmental organizations active in refugee matters should be completed as a matter of priority, and regularly updated. This database should include an assessment of each non-governmental organization's capacity and prior performance. UNHCR should formalize agreements with suitable non-governmental organizations in the areas of legal support, advocacy, and refugee rights monitoring; such

agreements should include a clear definition of responsibilities and roles.
(E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 19)

23. An electronic directory has been established and is regularly updated. The Office is taking steps to assure a more professional relationship with non-governmental organizations; however, it does not believe that it is appropriate that the directory, open to public access, should include an assessment of non-governmental organizations' capacity and performance. A database recording the emergency stand-by capacity of some 30 non-governmental organizations became operational in March 1996. However, it is not for public access and it contains judgements of capacity rather than performance.

24. To streamline and decentralize its operations, UNHCR is giving more responsibilities to its field representatives. These representatives select implementing partners; they have been provided with a set of criteria to take into consideration for the selection of partners and with instructions to strengthen managerial control of these partners. Information on implementing partners available at or researched by headquarters units is useful to field representatives to apply criteria such as previous ability demonstrated by the prospective partner to deliver the assistance needed. It should be noted that recommendation 6 of the in-depth evaluation addresses aspects of the electronic roster that are to be used by UNHCR for the management of operations. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that information on the capacity and performance of implementing partners needs to be analysed and stored centrally for easy consultation by UNHCR staff; this can be built into the more formalized evaluation system for non-governmental organizations and other operational partners considered by UNHCR.

25. In 1995, at its forty-sixth session, the Executive Committee expressed serious concern about the observations of the Board of Auditors, in particular those relating to continuing problems in regard to the lack of adequate managerial control by UNHCR of programmes implemented by its partners. ^{4/} On the Board observations, UNHCR commented that the Office made every effort to select implementing partners who met the exacting criteria contained in UNHCR manuals; very often, however, UNHCR had little choice in the more remote field locations (A/50/704, annex, para. 10). The subject of non-governmental organizations has been scheduled for extensive consideration by the Standing Committee of UNHCR in the course of 1996.

26. As part of its efforts to enhance its partnership with non-governmental organizations, UNHCR, early 1993, initiated the comprehensive Partnership in Action (PARINAC) process, designed to facilitate closer collaboration between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations. The 1994 Oslo Plan of Action represents the synthesis of proposals that had emerged during the PARINAC consultation process (see A/AC.96/832). The Plan of Action stressed that transparency and accountability remained the underlying principles of the non-governmental organization-UNHCR partnership, which called for close UNHCR-non-governmental organization communication and coordination of actions, and recommended, in particular, that UNHCR should help provide non-governmental organizations with appropriate training, financing, institution-building and transfer of skills in view of its demands for a more efficient and effective performance of its partners. To assist in the implementation of the

recommendations in the Plan of Action, UNHCR has appointed focal points in the regional bureaux, responsible for operational relations with non-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organization focal points in most offices in the field. In order to further the partnership with non-governmental organizations in the implementation of assistance projects, non-governmental organizations have been involved in discussions leading to the formulation of country operation plans in the various UNHCR field offices. Partnership in the implementation of assistance projects entails non-governmental organization resource contributions to the various projects.

D. Programming and administrative controls

Recommendation 7, Strengthening field audit and management: The Internal Audit Division should be strengthened in order to allow the audit of each UNHCR country programme every other year, or at the assumption of duties of a new representative. UNHCR should establish a multidisciplinary team of management specialists; this team should visit field programmes to provide assistance for the strengthening of management systems in place, to advise on the quality of the leadership and management of human resources, and to assist staff in ensuring that the programme objectives are being met. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 21)

27. An annual audit plan is prepared by the Audit and Management Consultancy Division in consultation with UNHCR. The section of the Division dedicated to the internal audit of UNHCR has been strengthened; the posts of this section are funded by UNHCR. In 1995, 21 UNHCR country programmes were audited and in 1996 a minimum of 27 programmes will be reviewed by auditors. However, additional posts would be needed to achieve the target in recommendation 7.

28. Within the broad objective of strengthening UNHCR's management capacity, the Executive Committee, at its forty-fifth session, approved the creation of the post of Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Service for UNHCR. This Service, which incorporated an already existing Central Evaluation Section, became operational in March 1995.

29. A number of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of UNHCR programmes have been taken. In April 1993, the High Commissioner established a Working Group on Programme Management and Operational Capacity. The Working Group found that budgetary and financial controls measured effectiveness by the extent to which funds had been spent, with insufficient attention to the usefulness of the assistance provided.

30. The Working Group recommended increased decentralization, recognizing that there was a need to ensure that field offices had the capacity to manage their programmes and control resources effectively; broader delegation to the field required a corresponding increase in the accountability of representatives. Follow-up to the findings of the Working Group is under the responsibility of a Steering Committee, chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner, established on 5 October 1994. Attention is now being given to the rationalization and simplification of administrative processes. UNHCR is also strengthening its cadre of administrative and finance officers for field duties, and exploring

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ways to provide more support to field staff by increasing electronic access to administrative information and guidelines. Among other measures to enhance efficient programming by field offices, UNHCR is developing workload indicators for determining staffing requirements.

E. Emergency preparedness and response

Recommendation 9, Emergency operations: In each emergency situation, one senior administrative officer with full authority to commit resources should be appointed to provide administrative support in the field to the Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 28)

Recommendation 10, Funding of the Emergency Preparedness and Response system: The Emergency Preparedness and Response System (EPR) put into place in 1992 should be funded by Governments at the requested levels to enable UNHCR to conduct proper responses to emergencies. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 28)

Recommendation 11, Stand-by arrangements: Stand-by arrangements similar to those with the Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils should be developed at the regional level with national relief organizations. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 29)

31. With the establishment in 1994 of an administrative support capacity in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section of UNHCR, it has been possible to ensure that personnel trained in all aspects of administration are included in the emergency teams. With regard to administrative support, the administrative officer or the head of the emergency response team receives limited authority to enter into commitments from the country representative or chief of mission, in countries where there is already a UNHCR presence, or, where this is not the case, from headquarters.

32. The staff costs of emergency response are now covered under UNHCR general programmes. Operations are charged initially to the Emergency Fund; on receipt of funds, in response to a given special appeal, the Emergency Fund is reimbursed.

33. The question of expanding stand-by arrangements at the regional level with national relief organizations has been studied. There are various limitations to the number of stand-by arrangements UNHCR can enter into: the Office does not want to underutilize those it already has; moreover, there are costs involved in setting up and maintaining any stand-by arrangement. After a review of the cost-effectiveness of having such arrangements in every region, it was decided to foster cooperation with national relief organizations at the regional level in other ways, such as the provision of regional emergency training and contingency planning to non-governmental organization partners, government partners and UNHCR staff.

F. Training

34. In 1992, the High Commissioner established a Task Force on Training to study ways in which training could more effectively assist UNHCR in carrying out its mission. The UNHCR Task Force report and its recommendations were reviewed by the Senior Management Committee of UNHCR in June 1993 and broadly endorsed. Most of the recommendations have now been incorporated in the UNHCR career management strategy. The strategy integrates staff appraisal and staff development systems, and establishes a framework to support both individual and organizational career planning. The strategy was formulated in 1994; its testing phase ended early 1996. The Staff Development Section of the UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management centrally coordinates staff training. As part of the career management strategy project, in particular in order to facilitate staff development, UNHCR budgets for training are to be decentralized to field offices.

Recommendation 15, Training of UNHCR staff: All new staff members should be given appropriate induction/orientation training and briefing, with priority to those being assigned to the field. Similarly, all staff members assigned to new functions should receive appropriate training prior to assuming their new functions. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 35)

Recommendation 16, Strengthening the UNHCR training functions: A training steering committee should be established under the chairmanship of the Deputy High Commissioner to develop UNHCR policy on training and to monitor its implementation. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 36)

Recommendation 17, Information for training management and monitoring: Information on training activities indicating the numbers of people trained, the nature of the training, and the affiliation and functions of the trainees, should be maintained regionally and centrally to ensure accountability and to meet proper management requirements. All training activities of UNHCR should be subjected to regular end-of-training evaluations. Follow-up evaluations, six months to one year after the training, should be conducted for samples of trainees and activities. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 37)

35. Although the number of training programmes has increased since 1993, not all priority training envisaged in recommendation 15 has been carried out. As part of the career management strategy, there are plans to provide, across the organization, essential training related to job functions. A Training Advisory Board bringing together heads of units at headquarters with key training responsibilities was constituted and met for the first time in October 1995. The Board will be responsible for defining an overall strategy on training and will recommend annual training priorities.

36. The Staff Development Section is responsible for maintaining organizational statistics on training. However, statistics on training are still not maintained accurately; field offices do not report their training activities regularly to headquarters. One of the roles of the Section is also quality control; this role is discharged by both types of evaluations recommended by the in-depth evaluation. Field training coordinators are responsible for the

implementation of the yearly training plan at their field office; however, when coordinators are transferred during the course of a calendar year and not replaced, the training plan may not be implemented. Another consequence of the rotation policy is that the skills and expertise of training coordinators are not always utilized as they may be transferred to posts that do not include a training function.

Recommendation 12, Collaboration in training: UNHCR should collaborate more extensively with non-governmental organizations, including academic centres specialized in refugee matters, in designing, implementing and funding its training activities. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 33)

Recommendation 13, Training of national operational partners: UNHCR should support an increase in formal training of national operational partners by implementing partners with extensive experience and sufficient expertise. This support could be partly through an on-the-job training format, and partly through using training kits prepared by UNHCR. Such enhanced training activities, complemented by collaboration between implementing partners during project implementation, would contribute to building up the institutional capacity of the host country. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 33)

Recommendation 14, Cooperation with United Nations agencies in training: Cooperation between UNHCR and other agencies in the field of training, ranging from exchange of information and comparing experiences to undertaking joint training efforts, should continue to be developed informally, particularly in view of increased inter-agency operational collaboration. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 34)

37. UNHCR acknowledges that, to tap the experience and skills of other organizations in particular areas, existing cooperation of UNHCR with others in the area of training will need to be expanded. A few organizations have training activities on subjects of relevance to the UNHCR mandate, sometimes using training materials prepared by UNHCR; however, there is no information on the scope of training carried out by these organizations. The use of experienced implementing partners themselves to help train national non-governmental organizations in a given country is, to date, not widespread. In recent years, this approach has been developed mostly in relation to the UNHCR gender training programme, "People-oriented planning".

38. Within the United Nations system, UNHCR participates in the work of several groups where joint training initiatives are agreed upon. UNHCR participates in the seminars organized at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Centre at Turin for senior United Nations field representatives. A joint UNHCR/WFP training programme is being developed from the currently independent training programmes of both agencies. Another training programme involving inter-agency cooperation is that on security awareness, which has been developed by UNHCR in close consultation with the United Nations Security Coordinator.

G. Public information

Recommendation 20, Distribution Unit: UNHCR should establish a unit with responsibility to distribute and, where appropriate, merchandise all dissemination products and publications, to coordinate activities of outside contractors concerned, and to collect fees and contributions generated by the products and publications. The unit can be started by regrouping existing resources at present scattered among several sections. Any additional resources required by substantial new activities should be supported from revenues. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 42)

39. A fully-computerized Distribution Unit is now functioning in the Public Information Section of the Office and is responsible for the distribution of publications and marketing of public information products. Revenues generated by public information sales since 1 January 1994, are being used to support new activities. However, the Distribution Unit does not distribute materials produced in other sections of the Office as recommended.

Recommendation 21, Response to media: At headquarters, UNHCR should adopt a more streamlined procedure for internal clearance of public information materials and develop and maintain a separate database for electronic fact sheets, with on-line access provided for accredited media correspondents, as well as UNHCR staff who must respond to media inquiries. In the field, in the absence of public information officers and of UNHCR staff representatives, UNHCR staff should be encouraged to play a public information role when the need arises, under general guidelines established by headquarters. A brief segment of training courses for UNHCR staff should be devoted to responding to the media. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 46)

40. Arrangements have been made through the Division of External Relations for the prompt clearance of all press releases; these arrangements have considerably streamlined the clearance process. Electronic fact sheets on major operations of UNHCR are now available over the local area network (LAN) computer system to all staff members at headquarters and to some in the field. Field staff not yet served by the LAN receive the fact sheets on a regular basis via telex. These fact sheets are also available through the Internet.

41. Public information training tools are now in all branch offices. These provide detailed guidelines on dealing with the press. New UNHCR staff members are offered training sessions with public information and given this material. New public information guidelines were recently prepared (January 1995) for field offices.

Recommendation 22, Public information officers: Public information field personnel should work under the supervision of Public Information, Geneva, and within the framework of the UNHCR public information strategy. In duty stations where there is a pressing need for greater public awareness of refugee issues or potential for fund-raising, public information officers should be assigned in a manner that ensure the necessary continuity with the media. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 47)

Recommendation 23, Public awareness campaigns: UNHCR public awareness campaigns should be designed around local perceptions and carried out in close collaboration with local UNHCR staff, country/national committees or other local organizations as appropriate. (E/AC/51/1993/2, para. 49)

Recommendation 24, Collaboration with the Department of Public Information: Collaboration between UNHCR and the Department of Public Information should be developed further. For example, the Department of Public Information electronic communication link with United Nations information centres should be used systematically to disseminate the content of UNHCR weekly briefings; UNHCR should prepare presentations for the periodic briefings of United Nations information centre directors organized by the Department of Public Information, with sufficient advance notice being given by the Department of Public Information to UNHCR. A joint UNHCR/Department of Public Information task force should be set up to explore new avenues of cooperation, including the possibility of a common UNHCR/Department of Public information strategy. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 49)

42. UNHCR has established a network of public information officers, all experienced in working with the media. There are currently about 30 such officers in 25 field offices. The public information officers, while under the direct supervision of the various country representatives, are also responsible to the Chief of Public Information, Geneva.

43. Public awareness campaigns have recently been undertaken in some 15 countries, all adapted to local perceptions. The benefit of having National Committees to work with such campaigns has been recognized. Currently, such committees exist in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany and Spain.

44. A liaison officer with a public information background was appointed to the UNHCR Liaison Office in New York in November 1993; a close working relationship exists between the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General and UNHCR. Cooperation between the Department of Public Information and UNHCR has focused on the development of materials on specific themes.

H. General and special programmes

Recommendation 25, Coverage by the Pledging Conference: In order to permit a more comprehensive review by the Executive Committee and coverage by the Pledging Conference, the allocation of activities between the categories of general programmes and special programmes should be adjusted every three years by the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters to reflect significant changes in the strategic orientation of UNHCR. A much greater proportion of activities concerned with voluntary repatriation should come under the category of general programmes, in particular such aspects of repatriation as preparation, promotion and movement. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 55)

45. The relationship between general and special programmes has been, of late, the subject of extensive deliberations. There has been a continuing concern on

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the part of some delegations as to the validity of the distinction between general and special programmes and the governance of the Executive Committee, particularly over special programmes. At the forty-fifth session of the Executive Committee, it was decided to undertake a review of a range of issues related to budgets, fund-raising, transparency and governance. 5/

46. Following informal consultations on budgetary questions and conclusions adopted by the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters in June 1995, the Executive Committee decided 6/ that:

(a) Any UNHCR budget structure should have as its objectives the following:

- (i) Transparency, accountability and managerial control;
- (ii) The necessary flexibility to address emergency situations and unexpected changes to programmes;
- (iii) Assured funding of statutory activities;

(b) Further streamlining of the UNHCR budget structure should be undertaken bearing in mind the objectives set out above, so that in a single, coherent budget structure there is a clear indication of overall needs, as well as of needs at the country level, for other programmes and headquarters;

(c) The group of stabilized, statutory activities that constitute the general programmes should be a funding priority. A commitment to their full funding would be facilitated by a process of dialogue in which the High Commissioner explained the rationale used for the inclusion of the various activities within the annual programme component of the general programmes.

I. Fund-raising

Recommendation 26, External relations strategies for fund-raising: The role of the units in the External Relations Division should be reviewed so as to maximize their contributions to fund-raising activities. A strategy for the involvement of donors, and non-governmental organization and United Nations system partners, in needs assessment, the drafting of appeals, and in other ways, should be developed and become standard practice. Additional resources should be allocated to fund-raising activities. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 55)

47. At the end of 1993, there was a full review of the external relations policy of the Office, and the role and responsibilities of the Fund Raising Service and the other sections in the Division of External Relations. The Service now undertakes regular, internal strategic planning sessions which are closely followed up. Much of its planning looks at how to increase support from donors through closer relations and involvement of UNHCR, both at headquarters and in the field. As a part of this overall strategy, the Service undertakes regular projections of likely future funding to permit regular modifications of UNHCR's approach to donors.

48. The review of the UNHCR external relations policy also covered UNHCR links with non-governmental organizations and the rest of the United Nations system, and how better to bring their resources to bear, both directly and indirectly, on UNHCR operations. UNHCR and other United Nations agencies have also worked with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to address such issues as needs assessments and the preparation of consolidated appeals in complex emergencies.

J. Multi-year planning

Recommendation 27, Selective multi-year project planning: In order to increase donor support for medium- and long-term programmes, UNHCR should adjust its programming practices to encourage multi-year project planning. For example, where regional plans of action include medium- and long-term activities, as in the Comprehensive Plan of Action, associated multi-year project plans should be developed. Field staff should be trained and given support to formulate such multi-year project plans. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 55)

49. The new emphasis on strategic planning that characterizes the report of the Working Group on Programme Management and Operational Capacity (see para. 29 above) will underline the important role that multi-year projects could have in achieving certain programme objectives. The report stated that regional package agreements, multi-year planning with solutions in view, and proactive cooperation with a greater range of partners were the approaches that should - and indeed did - lead to the determination of truly viable and durable solutions. Multi-year planning would not apply to emergency operations, but would be relevant in preventive activities as well as in some UNHCR assistance in institutional capacity-building. By adjusting its programming practices in those fields from short-term to medium-term, UNHCR would achieve a more integrated and complementary approach with developmental organizations. For example, in the CIS countries, UNHCR intends to establish four to five year programmes, jointly with IOM.

K. Administrative needs and costs

50. It will be recalled that article 20 of the statute of UNHCR states that no expenditure other than administrative expenditures relating to the functioning of the Office of the High Commissioner should be borne on the budget of the United Nations. Hence, in theory, the question of UNHCR administrative expenditure has important implications for the UNHCR share of United Nations regular budget funding. Recommendation 28 of the in-depth evaluation addressed the question of administrative needs and costs:

Recommendation 28, Survey of growth in administrative needs and preparation of proposal for funding of administrative costs: UNHCR should, in the context of its classification of activities/categorization of posts, and in consultation with the Department of Administration and Management, undertake a study of its administrative needs. The study should show how the administrative needs of UNHCR have grown with the expansion of

international protection and assistance activities in the past four years, and pinpoint administrative requirements which are of a recurring nature. The administrative needs demonstrated by the study should then be translated into post and/or administrative overhead requirements. The study and its conclusions should be presented to the General Assembly through the Executive Committee of UNHCR and the Economic and Social Council so that it could receive the priority attention needed. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 55)

51. In this context, section I, paragraph 36, of General Assembly resolution 48/228 A of 23 December 1993 should be recalled, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to review the existing arrangements for regular budget and extrabudgetary funding for UNHCR, taking fully into account the increased demand upon the Office since 1989, and if necessary to submit proposals to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session through the appropriate intergovernmental bodies.

52. UNHCR, after consultation with both the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters, developed a methodology for the categorization of its posts. UNHCR posts have been divided between two broad categories, namely those related to programme delivery and administrative support. The two definitions of type of posts were applied to the UNHCR staffing table. These new staffing tables, as well as the related tables on staff and non-staff costs, were part of the documentation presented to the Executive Committee at its forty-fifth session.

L. Strategic planning

Recommendation 29, Strategic planning: A small group should be established in UNHCR to make recommendations on strategic planning to the High Commissioner and the Senior Management Committee. The Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters should be informed of decisions on the establishment of strategic planning in UNHCR by the end of 1993. These decisions should also be reflected in subsequent revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 56)

53. Effective 1 January 1996, the post of Assistant High Commissioner was established. The Assistant High Commissioner assists in the formulation of UNHCR policies, in initiating and developing strategies to facilitate the discharge of the High Commissioner's mandate, and in exercising oversight of the implementation of such strategies in the relevant organizational units in UNHCR.

54. In a related development, but also linked to the need of the Office to have access to informed, objective, strategic policy advice, the High Commissioner created an Informal Advisory Group, made up of 14 prominent experts. The Group is expected to provide the High Commissioner with a broad perspective on international trends, and potential causes and areas of conflict that might provoke population displacements or are critical in the search for solutions.

M. Staffing

Recommendation 30, Emergency staffing arrangements: In emergency situations, when all the capacity for redeployment of administrative staff within UNHCR has been exhausted, UNHCR should deploy staff on secondment from United Nations agencies, to assume administrative and managerial functions. Rosters of such agency staff should be developed by regions. Such secondment may require one week's training in refugee matters; this training should be made a prerequisite of placement on the roster. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 57)

55. UNHCR has established both internal and external stand-by arrangements to meet the need for emergency staffing. Among these arrangements is an internal reserve pool of seven administrative staff members who are on stand-by for deployment to emergency operations as a priority. Within the Division of Human Resources and Management, a Recruitment and Career Management Section was established in 1994 to provide staff in a timely manner to replace emergency teams, as well as to assure staffing for ongoing emergency operations (e.g., the former Yugoslavia) and special operations (e.g., Mozambique).

56. A very limited number of staff from other United Nations agencies have been seconded to UNHCR operations to perform administrative functions. Nevertheless, UNHCR, in its recruitment drives has made contacts with other United Nations agencies to identify as large a pool of potential recruits as possible. One important development is the use of staff seconded from Governments and non-governmental organizations. Such staff are brought under UNHCR jurisdiction as consultants without remuneration.

Recommendation 31, Recruitment: UNHCR should develop, preferably as part of a strategic planning document, a medium-term recruitment strategy that takes into account the scale and nature of its current and likely future responsibilities; this strategy should include systematic review of sources of suitable personnel and the building up of a roster of candidates available for recruitment. The Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters should be informed of policy decisions concerning the recruitment strategy by the end of 1993. (E/AC.51/1993/2, para. 58)

57. Currently, a roster, mostly of applications sent to UNHCR, is maintained to fill vacancies through external recruitment. A few recruitment missions have been organized; more are planned to improve geographical representation and gender balance. The publicity in countries where these missions are taking place could have been more targeted to the sources of suitable personnel. What is being stressed in UNHCR recruitment efforts is the operationality of UNHCR and its increasing "front-line" role in conflict situations, which often means that UNHCR duty stations entail hardship conditions and separation from families. The Office is reviewing its recruitment strategy in the context of the career management strategy project (see para. 34 above). In this context, all aspects of internal placement and external recruitment are being reviewed jointly; in particular, improvements to the rotation system and to career planning are being sought.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/48/16), part I, paras. 24-29.

2/ Ibid., Supplement No. 12A (A/48/12/Add.1), para. 22.

3/ Ibid., Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/50/12/Add.1, para. 19 (m).

4/ Ibid., para. 21 (h).

5/ Ibid., Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/49/12/Add.1), para. 24.

6/ Ibid., Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 12A (A/50/12/Add.1), para. 22.
