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held on

Wednesday, 18 November 1981

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland)

later: Mr. ESQUIVEL (Costa Rica)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES  
(continued) (A/36/3/Add.22, A/36/61, 66, 77, 82, 111, 113 and Corr.1, 118, 152,  
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- (a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (A/36/12 and Add.1; A/C.3/36/L.58)
- (b) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/36/316; A/C.3/36/L.56)

1. Mr. KHARMA (Lebanon) said that the High Commissioner, both in his report and in his statement to the Committee, had highlighted the magnitude and complexities of refugee problems and had drawn attention to the new influxes of refugees resulting from conflicts, tension and violence. His delegation shared the awareness, expressed by other delegations, of the growing dimensions of the refugee situation and the ever-increasing responsibilities of UNHCR to respond swiftly and effectively to the pressing humanitarian needs of refugees. The refugee problem had assumed a universal character and, consequently, had become a universal responsibility to which the international community had, by and large, been responding in recent years.

2. The results of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) were yet another expression of international solidarity and had made an enormous contribution towards aiding both the refugees in Africa and the countries of asylum. He hoped that the High Commissioner would continue to participate in the follow-up to the conference, and that the international community would maintain the momentum thus created in providing assistance to refugees in Africa that was commensurate with the magnitude of problems in a continent where half the world's refugees were located and where the countries of asylum were among the least developed. However, the problems of refugees in Africa could not be solved within a two-year period; and delegations should therefore seriously consider the possibility of convening a follow-up conference in 1983.

3. International protection was still the High Commissioner's primary task; and he welcomed the important developments that had occurred in that area. Asylum had been granted more widely and the peremptory nature of the principle of non-refoulement had been repeatedly reaffirmed. In addition, greater importance had been attached to promoting the concepts of international protection. In that connexion, he drew attention to the close co-operation which existed between UNHCR, the Council of Europe and the Organization of African Unity, and which had produced remarkable results for the protection of refugees. One of the most significant achievements in that regard had been the wider definition of the word "refugee" which figured in the OAU Convention on Refugees and had been accepted by various groups of jurists and legal experts outside the region and, recently, by the Group of Experts on Temporary Refuge in Situations of Large-scale Influx, which had been convened by the High Commissioner at the request of the Executive Committee in April 1981.

4. Despite those encouraging developments, certain areas of the world had

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(Mr. Kharma, Lebanon)

witnessed serious disregard of the principles of international protection. Many violations of the principle of non-refoulement had been registered. Infringements of the physical safety of asylum-seekers and refugees in various parts of the world, including abduction, unjustified detention and disappearance, called for continuing attention from the international community. The tragedy of the boat people, who fell victim to pirate attacks, also required an urgent response.

5. Because of the magnitude of refugee situations, the nature of the activities of the High Commissioner's Office had undergone a definite change in recent years. The concept of assistance had acquired broader parameters, since it was no longer confined to immediate material relief to refugees, but had gradually evolved to include socio-economic short-term and medium-term plans of assistance to refugees — plans which were considered necessary to enable them to attain self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency was viewed essential in the search for lasting solutions to the refugee problem.

6. In seeking permanent solutions, for example through resettlement or repatriation, the High Commissioner's Office was dependent on the will of the Governments concerned to accept or to refuse such solutions. It was obvious that the choice of the final decision in that regard was a sovereign right of the countries concerned. However, it was important to differentiate between the principle of non-refoulement and the concept of acceptance of refugees in the context of a permanent solution. His delegation believed that the search for lasting solutions to refugee situations must not jeopardize the right of refugees to return to their homeland. In that spirit, his Government supported the principle of the repatriation of refugees and considered it to be the only acceptable permanent solution. Permanent settlement and local integration were not acceptable: they did not represent a genuine solution, because they implicitly jeopardized the sacred right of repatriation and might induce refugees to abandon that right. Therefore, his delegation wished to express reservations regarding chapter IV, section 7, of the High Commissioner's report (A/36/12) which referred to UNHCR activities in Lebanon, pending the submission of further clarifications by the Assistance and Protection Divisions of UNHCR. He also requested that the above-mentioned reservations should be fully reflected in the summary record of the present meeting.

7. The influx of large numbers of refugees had imposed a severe strain on countries of asylum — some of which lacked the basic infrastructures to cope with refugee needs — and had required increased financial and technical inputs from UNHCR. For the same reason, intensified co-operation with other organizations in the United Nations system and with non-governmental bodies had also become necessary. To meet all those obligations and to respond swiftly and efficiently to the needs of refugees, the High Commissioner had undertaken to strengthen the management of UNHCR by establishing a new structure, which had been endorsed by the Executive Committee at its thirty-second session. The Executive Committee had also called upon the High Commissioner to introduce a new recruitment policy to achieve the widest possible geographical representation at all levels of UNHCR's staff, and thus to reflect the universal scope and nature of UNHCR activities, which were no longer confined to Europe. His delegation noted satisfaction that the High Commissioner had already begun to apply the new recruitment policy.

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8. Ms. RADIC (Yugoslavia) said that her delegation had always attached importance to the refugee problem which, in its manifestations and consequences, was a humanitarian problem but whose causes were deeply rooted in the instability and conflicts which the international community experienced only too frequently. The refugee problem was now universal: it had extended to almost all parts of the world and, in some instances, affected entire regions and millions of innocent people, who had been uprooted from their homeland, separated from their families and subjected to deprivation and suffering.

9. It was encouraging to read in the report of the High Commissioner that there had been favourable developments in the solution of refugee problems by the most appropriate means, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration in the country of first asylum or resettlement in third countries. However, such durable solutions were not possible in all cases, and alternative measures must be considered and implemented.

10. The contributions made by UNHCR to the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women and the International Year of Disabled Persons were timely and useful. Such activities deserved the Office's continued attention.

11. One important event in relation to the problem of refugees had been the convening of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. Yugoslavia had taken great interest in that Conference and participated actively in it. The Conference had been a successful one and the momentum which had been generated should be maintained in future in order to respond in the best possible way to the seriousness of the situation. Her country's delegation to the Conference had announced a contribution amounting to some \$78,000.

12. Mr. BONGSALY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the statement to the Committee by Mr. Poul Hartling, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, together with his annual report (A/36/12) and the reports of the Secretary-General on the subject, clearly illustrated the extent and complexity of the refugee problem in various regions of the world. It was also clear from those reports that the rate of increase in the number of refugees between the beginning of 1980 and March 1981 had been considerably higher than in the previous year. The efforts made by the High Commissioner to mobilize international assistance for the refugees deserved full recognition.

13. His delegation noted that, when the Western press referred to the problem of refugees from the three countries of Indo-China, it presented an exaggerated picture which was far worse than the reality. Sometimes the articles concerned were tendentious, since they reflected only the statements of refugees without trying to understand the real policy of the Governments of the countries of origin. In that connexion, it was necessary to point out that the majority of the persons in question had left the country because they were unable to accept the new realities which prevailed there; and because they hoped to find a more comfortable life abroad. The Government of his country had done everything humanly possible to keep them from leaving. In spite of its limited financial and economic resources, it had tried unceasingly to help all sections of the population and encourage them to remain in the country so that they could take part in its reconstruction and in the rebuilding of an economy whose foundations had been completely destroyed by the war.

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

14. Laos, which had experienced 30 years of war and feudal government, was now in a difficult economic situation; and, with all the consequences of the past, it could not remedy that situation from one day to the next. Time was needed to achieve that objective. His country was a small one with 3.5 million inhabitants, and was one of the least developed countries. It therefore needed all its human resources for national reconstruction.

15. His Government had made it clear to the High Commissioner during his visit to the country three years previously that all refugees from Laos, except for some leaders of the former régime who had been condemned by the people's courts, could return to their homeland — if they so desired — without any fears for their security. From the fourth quarter of 1980 onwards, a large number of nationals of Laos who had abandoned the country as a result of the deceitful propaganda of imperialism and international reactionaries, had begun to return to their homeland. Thanks to the assistance of the High Commissioner and his own Government's co-operation, various groups of refugees who had been in Thailand had been able to return to the country. In application of the principle of voluntary repatriation, his Government had accepted hundreds of repatriate families.

16. Between 1976 and 1980, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had generously helped his country to carry out various projects to resettle persons displaced by United States Air Force bombing during the war, and repatriates returning from the refugee camps in Thailand. For a land-locked country such as Laos, however, execution of the High Commissioner's assistance projects — as of development projects — depended to a great extent on the problem of transport both within the country and from outside it, and on the possibility of obtaining vital supplies. The solution of those problems was not possible without the honest and sustained bilateral co-operation of a neighbouring country on which those facilities depended to a great extent. His Government hoped that the country in question would in future display, to a greater extent than in the past, that spirit of co-operation which such a highly humanitarian endeavour required and deserved.

17. The refugees who were to be repatriated, both those in camps and those recently arrived in the country, were encountering certain difficulties. Those of his fellow countrymen who had left the country had sold all their property in order to obtain ready money which would enable them to live in refugee camps in Thailand while awaiting resettlement in a third country. On their return to Laos, they came with empty hands; and the short-term assistance accorded by UNHCR was therefore insufficient to enable them to become independent. Consequently, it would be desirable for UNHCR to continue its assistance to those repatriates at least until two harvest seasons had elapsed. With regard to the repatriation effort organized by UNHCR, it had been observed that in the third quarter of 1981 many refugees had been unable to return to their country as envisaged by UNHCR, owing to threats and pressures from certain elements who laid down the law in the refugee camps and were opposed to his Government's policies.

18. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that the High Commissioner was

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

prepared to continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of all his fellow countrymen who were currently in the refugee camps in Thailand and in other countries, and to expand the programme of material assistance for those who had been repatriated, so that their integration into Laotian society could be accelerated. As in the past, his Government would contribute to the best of its ability to the joint missions with UNHCR to the provinces where the refugees were located.

19. Mr. Esquivel (Costa Rica) took the Chair.

20. Mr. SIBAY (Turkey) remarked that developments in recent years had increased the sufferings of millions of people who had been obliged to leave behind their homes, belongings and livelihood, especially in Asia and Africa where there had been massive displacements of people fleeing from persecution, war and hunger which had forced some Governments to allocate an ever-increasing portion of their scarce resources to the solution of problems created by that situation.

21. In spite of that gloomy situation, however, some positive developments had also taken place during the past year, as had been noted in the sections of the report and of the statement of the High Commissioner concerning the voluntary repatriation of refugees, especially to Zimbabwe, and the steps taken to guarantee the physical safety of refugees. UNHCR deserved commendation for its valuable achievements in that respect, and for the reunification of refugee families as described in its report.

22. Turkey, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of UNHCR, had always tried to encourage, facilitate and contribute to its work, and noted with satisfaction UNHCR's intention to conduct a study of the managerial methods of the Office with the assistance of the Administrative Management Service.

23. The sad realities of the current period were not likely to change in the near future, and UNHCR's problems were likely to get worse. A constant review of the managerial practices of the Office was therefore necessary in order to allow for increased contacts between it and Member States.

24. Miss MANGAZA (Zaire) said that the scope of the refugee problem was such that concerted action must be taken at the level of the international community with a view to solving them. To that end, the process of seeking means of restoring the fundamental rights of the refugees must be continued and, in that connexion, the international community had already adopted the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Convention relating to Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa.

25. With regard to refugees in Africa, the convening in Geneva of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, from 9 to 10 April 1981, had been the logical result of the efforts made by the international community in its desire to find a solution to the problems of refugees. The objectives of that Conference had only been partially met because,

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(Miss Mangaza, Zaire)

while it was acknowledged that the world was already aware of the special situation of refugees in Africa, it was no less true that technical and financial assistance continued to be insufficient in relation to the accumulated obligations and additional burden which the presence of refugees implied for the economies of the asylum States.

26. In the report of the High Commissioner (A/36/12) it was acknowledged that in accordance with the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner, one of the basic functions of the High Commissioner was to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees. The scope of that function had been subsequently extended by the General Assembly in various resolutions. Her delegation believed that the voluntary repatriation formula was an ideal solution to the problem of refugees. The President of Zaire had applied that principle to promote the mass and voluntary repatriation of Zairian refugees. In that connexion, mention should be made of the establishment of a tripartite commission comprised of UNHCR, Angola and Zaire whose task was to facilitate the repatriation of Angolan and Zairian refugees to their respective countries.

27. As a result of its history and geography, Zaire was one of the countries of the African continent that was faced with the problems of both refugees and repatriated persons and, despite its economic and social problems, Zaire was taking steps to face the problems raised by the presence of refugees in its territory. Those activities were being carried out at three levels, namely, reception, protection and assistance to refugees and their integration.

28. Refugees who had found asylum in Zaire were well received there and enjoyed full legal protection and some advantages normally reserved for nationals. On the other hand, refoulement measures had never been adopted against persons who had sought asylum in Zaire. It went without saying that each refugee was obliged to refrain from any political or military activity which might jeopardize the good relations existing between his country of origin and Zaire.

29. Finally, her delegation recalled that the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid down that human beings without distinction as to race, colour or religion should enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms. In line with those principles, efforts were being carried out in Zaire to provide African refugees with all material, financial and moral support.

30. Mr. PRASITH (Democratic Kampuchea) acknowledged the success of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. Even though the people of Kampuchea had had to make enormous sacrifices in their fight against Vietnamese invasion, they had made their modest contribution to their brothers in Africa.

31. The entire world agreed that the main causes of the aggravation of the situation of refugees were foreign armed aggression and invasions which were followed by the installation of puppet and oppressive régimes. It was undeniable that the cessation of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, the Soviet invasion of

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(Mr. Prasith, Democratic Kampuchea)

Afghanistan, South African aggression against neighbouring African countries and the occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories would facilitate the work of UNHCR and reduce current tension which threatened international peace and security.

32. Following the Vietnamese invasion of 25 December 1978, there had been about 15,000 Kampuchean refugees abroad, especially in Thailand. That number, one year after the Vietnamese invasion, had increased to 119,000 at the end of 1979 and 147,000 at the end of 1980. After the departure of a number of refugees for third countries and the voluntary repatriation of about 10,000, some 118,000 had remained in Thailand. Thanks to the humanitarian policy of the Government of Thailand and UNHCR, the situation of those refugees had improved, even though it was still unstable.

33. In addition to the Kampuchean refugees in Thailand, there were Kampucheans in southern Viet Nam who had been taken there by withdrawing Vietnamese troops following the failure of their invasion in December 1977 and January 1978. Subsequently, it had been learned that the Hanoi expansionists had exploited those refugees unmercifully. Thus, they had succeeded in transforming hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese citizens into so-called "Kampuchean refugees" in southern Viet Nam and had sent them to form Vietnamese settlements in Kampuchea with international assistance for the so-called "repatriation of refugees".

34. The so-called Vietnamese settlements in Kampuchea were a specific aspect of the refugee problem. The Hanoi authorities expelled Kampuchean peasants from their lands and villages in the fertile regions of Kampuchea and replaced them with Vietnamese on the pretext of "repatriation of Kampuchean refugees". Those settlements, with more than a half million Vietnamese nationals, constituted the first stage in the plan for the total integration of Kampuchea in the Vietnamese empire within a few generations.

35. The problem of Kampuchean refugees called for some comments. In the first place, while it should be stated that the lot of those refugees had improved slightly, they still lived in very precarious conditions and depended completely on international humanitarian assistance. Secondly, it was obvious that hundreds of thousands of Kampucheans in the country had not benefited at all from the humanitarian assistance intended for them because the Vietnamese forces had appropriated it. If international humanitarian assistance was to reach the Kampuchean population anew, it was necessary for the relief to be delivered to the Government of Democratic Kampuchea or the Red Cross in Kampuchea or even directly to the population.

36. Finally, his delegation drew attention to the cynicism demonstrated by the delegation of Viet Nam in its intervention in the Committee. The representative of Viet Nam had been brazen enough to speak on behalf of the Kampuchean people and to express compassion for the unspeakable sufferings endured by the people of Kampuchea which were due solely to the invasion of their country by 250,000 soldiers and 50,000 civilian agents of the Vietnamese régime in Phnom Penh. If the Vietnamese were truly concerned about the fate of the Kampuchean people, they should allow them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and ensure

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(Mr. Prasith, Democratic Kampuchea)

that living conditions in Viet Nam did not force their own people to flee in desperation to the sea, thus contributing to the destabilization of the countries of the region and increasing the burden which the international community had to bear.

37. Mrs. EJEZIE (Sierra Leone) said that the international community must do its utmost to solve the refugee problem which sometimes stemmed from the denial of basic human rights. The Government of Sierra Leone had done as much as possible to alleviate that problem which, in Africa, had reached enormous proportions. To that end, it had offered citizenship to refugees even though it also encouraged voluntary repatriation to their countries of origin.

38. The two root causes of the refugee problem were the persistence of racial discrimination and oppression in South Africa and Namibia and intra-African conflicts. In addition, the majority of refugees, especially African refugees, were women, children and the aged.

39. When speaking of refugees, two important factors must be borne in mind: the hardships suffered by the refugees themselves and the burden imposed on host countries by the presence of a refugee population. Consequently, the assistance of the international community should be aimed, initially, at meeting the basic needs of the refugees and, secondly, at helping them, at a later stage, to help themselves, particularly in cases in which repatriation could no longer be envisaged. In no case should conditions of over-dependence be created.

40. The delegation of Sierra Leone, while thanking States and voluntary organizations which had contributed generously at the Pledging Conference, was disappointed at the lack of response from States which had hitherto called themselves friends of Africa. The people of Africa regarded their refugee problem as humanitarian, not political or ideological. As the representative of Sweden had pointed out, there was an imbalance in the allocation of funds, since the estimates for 1982 provided for Africa to receive less than half the amount set aside for South-East Asia, although Africa had twice as many refugees and displaced persons. She appealed to countries which tended to earmark their contributions to leave it to the High Commissioner to decide how best to use the funds.

41. Mr. DOUGLAS (United States of America) said that he was pleased to note that for the first time in four years there had been no new refugee crisis.

42. There were four main aspects of the refugee problem. In the first place, all Governments must maintain their commitments under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Those instruments recognized the special obligations of asylum States and the destabilizing effects of refugee flows.

43. Secondly, the international community must maintain its support of UNHCR and its programmes and activities, since the obligations of asylum States were a serious strain on their economies. It was therefore essential for UNHCR to persist in its efforts to carry out its mandate effectively.

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(Mr. Douglas, United States)

44. Perhaps the most important aspect was the need for all countries to address themselves to the root causes of refugee flows and to persist in seeking solutions. Refugee flows were not caused by chance; they were generated by deliberate or negligent acts of Governments. In the past few years the international community had seen cases of Governments proclaiming their adherence to the principles of peace and social and economic justice, while forcing entire ethnic groups or internal political opponents to flee as refugees.

45. It was for the responsible members of the international community to find just solutions for the conflicts which generated so much human misery; that was why the United States Government continued to support the role of the Special Rapporteur for the study concerning human rights and massive exoduses and the initiative of the Special Political Committee on international co-operation to avert new flows of refugees.

46. The success of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa was gratifying. The Conference had made the international community aware of the efforts of the African nations in providing asylum for refugees and sharing their resources, land, social services and other amenities with them, to the extent that their resources permitted. His Government had pledged the sum of \$285 million for 1981 and 1982 for assistance to refugees in Africa.

47. With regard to Asia, six years after the establishment of new communist régimes in Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea, the Indo-Chinese refugee situation continued to be a major international problem. Some of the countries of asylum had recently instituted policies of humane deterrence and it was essential that the concept should be implemented in a sensitive manner consistent with countries' obligations under the international instruments concerning refugees.

48. Voluntary repatriation might offer a solution to the problem of the Kampuchean refugees, as it had in the case of Laos. Other solutions to the refugee problem in South East Asia must be sought, in addition to resettlement in third countries. It was to be hoped that a solution would be found which would enable Vietnamese to depart without risking their lives at sea. Meanwhile, until solutions had been found to the problems of the region, it was essential for all resettlement countries to maintain their commitments in co-operation with the Office of the High Commission and other bodies.

49. The Afghan refugees in Pakistan now constituted the largest single refugee population in the world and their number was steadily increasing. Although the people and Government of Pakistan had been extremely generous, the influx of such a large number of persons placed severe strains on the country. The United States Government was assuming its share in sustaining the programme carried out by UNHCR, in co-operation with the Government of Pakistan, for dealing with the problem of Afghan refugees who had had to leave their country to escape foreign occupation.

50. In the western hemisphere, neighbouring countries, in particular Honduras, had received the majority of refugees from El Salvador. His Government had contributed over 25 per cent of the funds for which UNHCR had appealed in order to assist displaced persons of the region and had also contributed to other programmes

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(Mr. Douglas, United States)

to assist displaced persons remaining in El Salvador. It was essential for international assistance to be maintained.

51. He reaffirmed his country's support for UNHCR and its commitment, in co-operation with the international community, to solving the refugee problems.

52. Mr. KOFA (Liberia) said that he had noted with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General in document A/36/316, in which the results of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held at Geneva in April 1981, were evaluated. The magnitude of the refugee problem, especially in Africa, had brought out even more clearly the need for concerted action by the international community, not only to provide subsistence for the refugees but also to help them to become self-supporting. He was pleased to note from the report of the High Commissioner that there had been some favourable developments in the refugee situation. He noted with particular interest that the OAU/UNHCR Working Group established in 1980 was conducting a constructive examination of questions relating to the legal protection of refugees in Africa. The entry into force of the European Agreement on Transfer of Responsibility for Refugees and the Inter-American Convention on Extradition prohibiting the extradition of refugees to countries where they might be subjected to persecution were major contributions to the formulation of the principles concerning the treatment of refugees.

53. Mr. VERKERCKE (Belgium) said that the international protection of refugees was one of the essential tasks of the international community. What was needed was a proper international law on refugees.

54. The work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection and the Executive Committee was a move in that direction, since it facilitated the preparation of common principles and guidelines concerning the protection and status of refugees which, if applied by Governments, would substantially improve the situation of refugees. It would be useful if the High Commissioner would keep the Sub-Committee regularly informed on their implementation.

55. The steady increase in the number of States acceding to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol was encouraging. However, States must all take the necessary legislative and administrative action to ensure effective application of those instruments. The High Commissioner could play an important part in that respect, and also in endeavouring to persuade States which had made their accession subject to reservations, to withdraw them progressively.

56. Work on the protection of refugees at the regional level was extremely valuable since it enabled protective measures to be better adapted to particular situations in different regions. Regional decisions must be compatible with the functions of UNHCR and be based on the fundamental principles governing its activities, namely, non-refoulement, granting of rights under the 1951 Convention and the precise definition of the term "refugee". In connexion with the last point he wondered whether giving the term a broader meaning in Africa than in the rest of the world was good legal practice or whether it might not be preferable for the concordance of the definitions of the term to be studied by a group of legal experts.

(Mr. Verkercke, Belgium)

57. Voluntary repatriation was a durable solution to the refugee problem; it had great advantages and should be given greater attention. It had, however, some short-comings, such as international control of the voluntary nature of the repatriation, the political and social instability of the country of origin and the lack of adequate safeguards. It was also important for UNHCR to encourage States to help refugees to acquire new nationalities on the lines of the example set by Tanzania.

58. Mrs. KHAN (Bangladesh) recalled that in the past, Bangladesh had given asylum to many refugees. In 1979 some 200,000 Burmese had crossed the frontier and taken refuge in Bangladesh. The Governments of Bangladesh and Burma had concluded an agreement with the aim of bringing about the voluntary repatriation of those refugees. By late 1979, all the Burmese refugees had returned to their homes. Her delegation was convinced that voluntary repatriation was the most effective way to deal with the refugee problem.

59. The African continent continued to be the region with the largest number of refugees. Millions of Africans had had to leave their homes because of the brutality of the South African régime and to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Similarly, thousands of Africans had been compelled to abandon their homes in various parts of Africa for reasons beyond their control. The Arusha Conference of 1979, whose conclusions had been adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU held at Nairobi in 1979 and the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa held at Geneva in 1981 had served to promote international action and mobilize additional resources in behalf of the refugees.

60. Her delegation shared UNHCR's concern about the problems of asylum, non-refoulement and protection of the human rights of the refugees. It was the solemn and primary duty of every State to protect minorities, including refugees, and to guarantee their complete safety. International law and conventions prohibited all States from expelling their nationals or taking any action that might result in their flight to foreign countries.

61. Mrs. YONG FATIMAH (Malaysia) said that her country had maintained close relations with UNHCR in recent years, particularly since 1975, when the floods of refugees in South-East Asia had begun. More than 100,000 Vietnamese refugees had reached the shores of Malaysia, and action had had to be taken to ensure their survival until such time as they could be resettled in countries of asylum; that had resulted in enormous economic, social and security problems. But thanks to the co-operation of UNHCR and the assistance of various countries, it had proved possible to bring the situation under control.

62. More than 10,000 Vietnamese refugees still remained in Malaysia awaiting final resettlement in other countries. It was a matter of concern that six years after the end of the war in Viet Nam, refugees continued to flow to neighbouring countries. She hoped that UNHCR, the Government of Viet Nam and the countries of asylum would seek ways to speed the implementation of the orderly Departure Programme, established in 1979 to ensure that those Vietnamese who wished to leave their country would not have to resort to illegal methods.

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(Mrs. Yong Fatimah, Malaysia)

63. The magnitude of the refugee problem required still greater efforts on the part of the international community to support the activities of UNHCR. Despite their merit, the assistance programmes carried out by UNHCR and other international agencies could not by themselves constitute a complete solution to the refugee problem. It was essential to find lasting solutions, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. But the most important factor in reaching a lasting solution was the elimination of the underlying causes that gave rise to the outflow of refugees, a factor that was beyond the competence of UNHCR. It was the duty of the international community to find such lasting solutions.

64. Mr. AL-NASSANI (Oman) felt that despite the High Commissioner's efforts to guarantee social and humanitarian protection to refugees and provide them with food, shelter and health services, the refugee problem would not be solved so long as there were continued flows of displaced persons from such places as Kampuchea, Afghanistan, Namibia, South Africa and the Horn of Africa, as well as flows of other persons who sought to return to their homelands.

65. Foreign intervention against States and assaults upon their sovereignty and independence posed an even more complicated problem. The massive exodus of refugees to neighbouring countries constituted an obstacle to the economic development of those States and to the prosperity and well-being of their peoples. UNHCR should redouble its efforts to find lasting solutions to the refugee problem, and countries with sufficient economic resources should also contribute to relieving the suffering of the refugees.

66. His Government attached special importance to the problem. For that reason, it had participated in the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held at Geneva in 1981, and had contributed five times as much as in the preceding year to activities in behalf of refugees in Africa. It would spare no effort to assist the United Nations in finding lasting solutions aimed at restoring the freedom, independence and dignity of refugees throughout the world.

67. Mr. O'Donovan (Ireland) resumed the Chair.

68. Mr. PHEDONOS-VADET (Cyprus) welcomed the fact that in the exercise of its functions, the Office of the High Commissioner was actively collaborating with other agencies of the United Nations system and with regional intergovernmental organizations outside the system. In that connexion, he stressed the role of the Council of Europe, especially with regard to the protection of refugees.

69. It had been repeatedly asserted in the Committee that no lasting solution to the problem of refugees and displaced persons could be found until there were no more wars and war situations in the world. So long as warfare continued to be used as a means of imposing the will of the stronger, the flow of refugees and displaced persons would continue to be a sad phenomenon of the present age.

70. The delegations that had spoken had referred to Afghan, Kampuchean and Angolan refugees and had named neighbouring countries as responsible for those exoduses. But no one had named Cyprus's neighbour, which had caused the uprooting and

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(Mr. Phedonos-Vadet, Cyprus)

expulsion of one third of the island's population. He reminded members of the Committee that the aggressor against Cyprus was called Turkey. It should be pointed out to those still interested that one third of the population of Cyprus had been brutally expelled from their homes and that because of Turkey's actions, not a single displaced Cypriot had yet returned to his home.

71. Mr. BOUFFANDEAU (France) said that for some time, displacements of refugees had taken on unaccustomed proportions and had created, in many cases, a need to take urgent and multiple measures of assistance. That work demanded of the international community a more profound consideration of the roots of the evil, as well as a more extensive and equitably shared assistance effort. Therefore France had voted in 1980 in favour of resolution 35/41, in which the General Assembly had urged the international community to intensify its support for the activities of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

72. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa had provided participants with an opportunity to express their solidarity and to offer substantial additional resources, which had helped to solve the problems of refugees in Africa and to give relief to African States which had thus far carried out in an exemplary manner the duties imposed on them by humanitarianism and solidarity.

73. Aware of the gravity of the situation of refugees throughout the world and of the urgent need to provide them with assistance, his Government was firmly determined to redouble its efforts, in so far as its means permitted, especially to facilitate the reception and reintegration of refugees. He pointed out that for 1982, France had increased its contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner by 50 per cent over its 1981 contribution and that his Government had adopted a decision to accept 1,500 persons from South-East Asia every month, as well as 100 handicapped refugees accompanied by their families.

74. But it must also be borne in mind that much remained to be done. In that perspective, his delegation assured the High Commissioner of the co-operation of French authorities for the intensification of his mission and of the activities in behalf of refugees which were being carried on with the aid of other United Nations agencies.

75. The proliferation of needs and of the petitions addressed to UNHCR, and the diversity of the problems which had to be solved, sometimes raised problems of co-ordination between the various competent bodies of the United Nations, especially in urgent cases. In order to co-ordinate the humanitarian activities of the United Nations, there was no need to create new bodies; what was needed was to establish flexible mechanisms, at the international level and on the scene, to deal with emergency situations. It should be borne in mind that during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, his delegation had submitted a text which had met those concerns and which was currently being considered in the Second Committee.

76. In conclusion, he reaffirmed the importance attached by his delegation to the provision of regular and detailed information on budgetary matters to the Governments

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(Mr. Bouffandeau, France)

of contributing countries, in order that they might know in the most complete detail how the credits they were making available to the High Commissioner were being used.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

77. The CHAIRMAN reminded representatives that the deadline for submitting draft resolutions on items 12, 129, 138 and 30 and for the closure of the list of speakers on those items was 6 p.m., Friday, 20 November.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.