

UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/SR.338
22 October 1981

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 338TH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 19 October 1981, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairmen: Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

VOLUNTARY FUNDS ACCOUNTS FOR 1980 AND REPORT OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS
(agenda item 6) (A/AC.96/591 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1)

1. Mr. HOMANN-HERIMBERG (Director, Administration and Management Division) said that the accounts, as set forth in document A/AC.96/591, had been submitted in the form agreed with the auditors. The document contained two statements and nine schedules showing a breakdown of contributions by Governments and details of obligations under the General Programmes and the Special Programmes. It would be seen that total income, excluding sums carried forward, amounted to \$466 million, of which 85 per cent came from contributions in cash or kind by 90 Governments and 5 per cent from contributions from private sources. The remainder came from interest and various other sources. Schedules 1 and 2 showed in detail total contributions for 1980. Total obligations amounted to \$497 million, an increase of 84 per cent compared with 1979. Schedule 3 showed a detailed breakdown of expenditure, of which more than half was on the Annual Programme and the Emergency Fund. Schedules 6 and 7, on the status of obligations, showed that those liquidated were much higher in 1980 than in previous years.
2. In connection with the auditing of the accounts, he drew the attention of the Committee to the steps taken by UNHCR with regard to certain points raised by the Board of Auditors (A/AC.96/591/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1). He had already submitted his comments on the matter in annex B to the report of the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/600).
3. Mr. SAHM (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his Government made substantial financial contributions to various organizations and he had noted that accounts were audited in different ways from one organization to another. In UNHCR the accounts were not audited in conformity with the practice followed in the Federal Republic of Germany and he hoped that the system used by UNHCR would be improved.
4. Mr. HOMANN-HERIMBERG (Director, Administration and Management Division) said he realized the problem raised by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany. When it approved the programme proposed for 1982, the Executive Committee had also decided to strengthen the internal auditing of accounts concerning voluntary funds.

STATUS OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND OVER-ALL FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR 1981 AND 1982
(agenda item 8) (A/AC.96/592 and Corr.1 (English only), A/AC.96/598)

5. Mr. VOLPING (Director, External Affairs Division) said that in 1981 expenditure financed by voluntary funds would be approximately \$460 million, 8 per cent lower than in 1980. In the light of the important pledges announced during the general debate, total funds available for the 1981 General Programmes amounted

to \$349 million, compared with a target of \$365 million. There was also a shortfall of \$10 million under some 1981 Special Programmes; although such programmes were fewer than in previous years they nevertheless constituted an important element of UNHCR's over-all activities and UNHCR therefore hoped that they would continue to receive the support needed.

6. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa had produced excellent results and at present UNHCR had available, or would have available, \$227 million out of the \$572 million pledged at the Conference. However, needs under UNHCR programmes for Africa in 1981 and 1982 were \$310 million, \$83 million more than the pledges announced during ICARA.

7. It was estimated that \$421 million would be required for the General Programmes and Special Programmes in 1982, despite a continuing decrease in the Special Programmes. Experience had shown that unforeseen needs invariably arose during the year and for planning purposes it would be wise to foresee financial requirements in 1982 at a level similar to that of 1981.

8. The General Programmes would constitute a high proportion of total expenditure in 1982 and donors should take into account two points in particular. Firstly, although the General Programmes were of fundamental importance to the refugees concerned, their nature was such that they often failed to arouse keen interest on the part of Governments, the media or the public. They did not lend themselves to a special appeal and it was therefore especially important that they should be fully funded by normal annual contributions. Secondly, it was vitally important that adequate funds - approximately 50 per cent - should be available at the beginning of the programme year. In that case, UNHCR could provide the necessary assistance rapidly and effectively. Otherwise, the implementation of plans was delayed and priority had to be given to care and maintenance programmes to the detriment of programmes oriented towards the search for durable solutions.

9. He therefore urged Governments to take appropriate measures so that, at the Conference to be held in New York on 20 November 1981, sufficient pledges could be announced to enable the High Commissioner to implement the 1982 General Programmes as approved by the Executive Committee.

10. On behalf of UNHCR, he wished to thank all donors, and more particularly Governments that had considerably increased their contributions. He hoped that the relations between UNHCR and donors would continue to be strengthened so as to assist the latter in making plans to meet the fluctuating and often unpredictable demands of refugee situations. UNHCR would continue efforts to improve the exchange of information with donors, for whom - it was well aware - the increased needs constituted a heavy burden.

11. Mr. HESSEL (France) said that, when reference was made to financial contributions to UNHCR, there was a tendency to use the word "donor", which might lead to an unwarranted distinction being made among the various Governments bearing heavy responsibilities towards refugees. For example, the figures in UNHCR documents showed that France's contribution to UNHCR expenditure as such was small. However, the major proportion of France's expenditure on refugees was spent on resettlement of a large number of persons in France. To an even greater extent, that was also true in the case of many African countries, which bore the heavy burden of coping with mass influxes of refugees.

12. It was a genuine example of co-operation and mutual aid. While gratitude was due to those countries that made large voluntary contributions, the help given by countries that took in refugees should also be recognized.

13. The figures shown in the report on the status of contributions to voluntary funds underlined the need to strengthen the High Commissioner's means for taking action. A distinction should be drawn between the various organizations in the United Nations system; UNHCR held a special place because it could only function if the High Commissioner and his colleagues provided a strong impetus. Countries should support them, have faith in them and, at the administrative and personnel levels, afford them the means to carry out the heavy responsibilities they had to bear.

14. Mr. EKBLOM (Finland) said that details provided by the Director of the External Affairs Division concerning the results of ICARA were encouraging and the Executive Committee should specifically draw attention in its report to the scope of the efforts made by the international community on behalf of African refugees.

15. With regard to the payment of contributions to the budget, his delegation considered that, where budgetary practices so permitted, countries should remit the contributions announced as soon as possible and preferably as from the month of January. For its part, UNHCR should try to organize its assistance activities so that greater attention was paid to the dates on which it could expect to receive the contributions pledged.

16. The CHAIRMAN invited the Director of the Administration and Management Division to introduce the note on the financing of UNHCR's administrative costs (A/AC.96/598), which the Executive Committee had before it in connection with item under consideration.

17. Mr. HOMANN-HERIMBERG (Director, Administration and Management Division) said that considerable progress had been made in the discussions between the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning the apportionment of the administrative costs of UNHCR between the United Nations regular budget and UNHCR's voluntary funds.

18. In the High Commissioner's view, the United Nations regular budget's contribution to the functioning of UNHCR represented much more than a mere sum of money. It was an embodiment of the principle of equitable sharing among all members of the international community of the burden of helping refugees.

19. Mr. HESSEL (France) thanked the Director of the Administration and Management Division for the efforts made to induce his colleagues in the United Nations secretariat to agree to re-examine the question of the apportionment of UNHCR's administrative costs, for the relevant portion of the regular budget had altered to UNHCR's disadvantage in recent years.

20. His delegation thought that the Executive Committee might state in its report that it supported the current negotiations and sincerely hoped that they would lead to a satisfactory outcome.

21. Mr. McPHAIL (Canada) said that his delegation endorsed the proposal made by the representative of France to include a statement in the Executive Committee's report expressing support for continuation of the negotiations between the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner on the question of apportionment of UNHCR's administrative costs. It was essential that the problem, which had been in abeyance for so long, should be properly solved as soon as possible.

22. However, the States members of the Executive Committee also had a role to play in that respect. When the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General reached agreement, the representatives of those States would have to endorse the proposals submitted to them in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. The members of the Executive Committee should therefore be duly informed of the progress of negotiations between the United Nations Secretariat and UNHCR.

23. The CHAIRMAN said it was his understanding that the members of the Executive Committee wished to accept the recommendation made by the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in paragraph 6 of his report (A/AC.96/600) to take note of document A/AC.96/598 and to transmit it to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and to the General Assembly in the hope that quick action might be taken.

24. It was so decided.

25. The CHAIRMAN informed members that, in accordance with the decision taken by the Executive Committee in 1980 and endorsed by the General Assembly, the Financial Rules for Voluntary Funds administered by the High Commissioner had been amended. The High Commissioner could now allocate from the Emergency Fund an amount not exceeding \$10 million annually, provided the amount for one single emergency did not exceed \$4 million during any one year. Under the Annual Programme and the Refugee Education Account, he could also, pending the receipt of the contributions, enter into obligations up to the total amount of unconditional governmental pledges, and up to one-half of the total amount of conditional governmental pledges and firm pledges from organizations of established repute.

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 9)

26. Mr. RODRIGUEZ NAVARRO (Venezuela) said that his country would soon be ratifying the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and it had always paid great attention to humanitarian problems, particularly the refugee problem. For example, at the end of the Second World War it had taken in a large number of refugees from Europe who had started a new life in Venezuela.

27. In 1981, the Congress of the Republic had agreed to increase Venezuela's contribution to the International Committee of the Red Cross by \$US 80,000. Venezuela also helped to finance the Intergovernmental Committee for Migrations and in 1981 its contribution had amounted to \$US 84,000.

28. His delegation had carefully studied the documents submitted to the Executive Committee and supported the proposals concerning adjustment of UNHCR's structures to the changing situation. It also endorsed the remarks made by the representative of France concerning the various forms of aid to refugees.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.