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THIRD COMMITTEE
43rd meeting
held on
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at 11 a.m.
New York

UN/DA/CONFLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 43rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CALERO RODRIGUES (Brazil)

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18 November 1982

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

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that several documents under agenda item 12 dealt with problems of refugees and were related to the Office of the High Commissioner since, in most cases, those documents had been the result of inter-agency collaboration. The documents in question were "Assistance to refugees in Somalia" (A/37/419), "Humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti" (A/37/420), "Humanitarian assistance to refugees in the Sudan" (A/37/519), "Situation of refugees in the Sudan" (A/37/178), and "Assistance to student refugees in South Africa" (A/37/495). He suggested that the content of the documents might be discussed during the present debate, which would preclude the need for their formal introduction under item 12. Decisions on any draft resolutions concerning those documents would be taken at the time of the consideration of agenda item 12. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt that procedure.

2. It was so decided.

3. The CHAIRMAN announced that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on agenda items 91 and 92 had been extended to 17 November at 1 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/37/3 (Part II, chaps. III and IX), A/37/12 and Add.1, A/37/84, A/37/178, A/37/324, A/37/419, A/37/420, A/37/431, A/37/438, A/37/495 and Corr.1, A/37/505, A/37/519, A/37/522, A/37/557)

(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

(b) QUESTION OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

(c) ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

4. Mr. FERGUSON (Australia) said that the number of refugees and displaced persons in the world totalled some 8 to 10 million and constituted one of the world's most important and complex humanitarian problems. UNHCR had a vital humanitarian role to play in affording protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, in helping to provide them with immediate assistance and in seeking permanent solutions to their problems. It was also the first line of defence for individual countries in coping both with individual asylum-seekers and with the consequences of mass flows across their borders. Positive developments in 1981 had included the continuing reduction in required expenditures, an increase in the number of countries which had acceded to international instruments on refugees, and progress in the elaboration of regional instruments. Refugee identification procedures in a number of countries, including his own, had been improved, and limited progress had been made in securing the voluntary repatriation of

(Mr. Ferguson, Australia)

refugees in some parts of the world. There had also been a drop in the number of people seeking asylum in South-East Asia. His delegation was pleased to note the initiation of a programme for the suppression of piracy in Asian seas, undertaken by the Government of Thailand under accord with UNHCR and in co-operation with a number of other countries.

5. On the negative side, however, new problems had arisen and circumstances had worsened in other areas, notably in Europe and Central America. There had been an unfortunate increase in the incidence of refoulement. The situations in Africa and South-West Asia and the massacres in refugee camps in Lebanon continued to give cause for concern.

6. Unfortunately, it was clear that refugee problems would remain a lasting feature of the international scene. As Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs had said in a plenary meeting, the Office of the High Commissioner needed the assurance of an ongoing mandate, so that it could plan for longer-term activities. The time had come to establish the Office on a continuing basis.

7. UNHCR was facing greater challenges than ever before and would have to place continued emphasis on organizational efficiency. It should be flexible in its operations in order to respond to the needs for which it had been created. The current mandate had proved effective, and there was no need to change it.

8. Although the issues dealt with by UNHCR were frequently political in origin, it must remain humanitarian in nature and should not become politicized. Its primary role was protection; it was not, and should not be, an additional aid agency.

9. The most difficult refugee problem in recent years had been the mass flows of people from their homelands into neighbouring States. The pattern of mass flows had raised one special difficulty, namely, the definition of what constituted a refugee. His delegation was glad to note that UNHCR had been giving increased attention to that important matter. Australia had been assisting refugees and other displaced persons through settlement and the provision of food assistance and other material aid. However, the few countries affording either temporary refuge or resettlement could not be expected to give the same treatment to everyone who claimed to be a refugee. It was important to make distinctions between refugees, displaced persons and migrants, since each category demanded a different approach.

10. Although the High Commissioner could not act in a political capacity, a good deal more should be done, through his Office and internationally, to promote durable solutions to the problem of refugees and displaced persons. The recent UNHCR Executive Committee meeting had agreed to an Australian proposal to include an item in durable solutions in the agenda for all subsequent sessions.

11. UNHCR could play an active role in promoting the best durable solution, voluntary repatriation, which entailed encouraging Governments to receive returning refugees without hindrance and encouraging refugees themselves to avail themselves of repatriation to their homelands. The second form of durable solution was

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(Mr. Ferguson, Australia)

resettlement, either in countries of first refuge or in third countries. Regrettably, most of the recent large-scale flows of refugees had been to countries whose capacity to offer resettlement in any significant degree was limited. Resettlement had taken place primarily in a small group of third countries, among them, was Australia, which had accepted large numbers of refugees for permanent resettlement. Under new arrangements, his country would consider for resettlement any person who could demonstrate that he was a refugee, and it would also consider under normal migration arrangements persons other than refugees who met the Government's criteria. His Government had initiated a refugee programme for Latin America. In the preceding financial year, Australia had contributed \$49 million in assistance to refugees and displaced persons around the world, much of that amount being given in the form of food grants to Africa and Pakistan.

12. While many States had made it clear that they could not individually and unconditionally grant permanent resettlement to all requesting it, States had been prepared to accept scrupulous adherence to the principle of non-refoulement. The granting of at least temporary refuge in circumstances of mass influx was a practice which should be widely encouraged. The few States which had generally borne the initial impact of a mass inflow and the equally few States which had provided resettlement opportunities to hundreds of thousands of refugee-seekers should no longer have to bear the burden alone.

13. At the initiative of his Government, the Executive Committee of UNHCR had in 1979 initiated an exhaustive discussion on temporary refuge. There had been widespread and growing endorsement of the need to accept temporary refuge as a logical prelude in many cases to the discovery of a durable solution. His delegation welcomed the Executive Committee's decision to attach importance to the practice of temporary refuge in current arrangements. It was to be hoped that the High Commissioner would develop proposals covering the application of the principle of international solidarity to the countries called upon by circumstances to bear the burden of providing temporary refuge. Further work would have to be done in defining the classes of persons who should be entitled to temporary refuge, the degree of protection to be offered, the nature of durable solutions and the scope of international burden-sharing.

14. His delegation had welcomed the admirable initiatives taken by the Federal Republic of Germany and Canada on the question of massive exoduses and presented at the General Assembly and in the Commission on Human Rights respectively. It also believed that the study by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan was a useful document which should be carefully considered by the group of experts on flows of refugees.

15. Ms. ELMIGER (World Health Organization) said that she wished to compliment the information on collaboration between UNHCR and WHO in a wide range of activities which was contained in the report of the High Commissioner.

16. The two organizations had collaborated closely in the establishment of a list of essential drugs for refugees; the WHO/UNHCR standard pre-packaged kits of drugs had been assembled by UNHCR and were now accepted as the universal emergency health

(Ms. Elmiger, WHO)

kit. They also had jointly prepared a manual on the health problems of refugees and had organized an annual course on refugees' health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The exchange of information and the sharing of responsibilities with regard to the health needs of refugees at refugee settlements were essential elements in their co-operation.

17. WHO had collaborated with UNHCR in Cyprus by providing health advice on the establishment of the General Hospital at Larnaca, which would serve a population that included a large number of refugees. WHO had also been instrumental in the procurement and provision of health supplies and services to the population in North Cyprus.

18. UNHCR had been financing WHO assistance activities relating to the provision of emergency health supplies for refugees. WHO had participated in the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and would continue to participate actively in the follow-up of that Conference.

19. WHO and UNHCR had jointly appointed senior health co-ordinators for refugees in Thailand, in Pakistan and in Somalia and a nutritionist for refugees in Pakistan.

20. Mr. FARAH DIRIR (Djibouti) said that in the past few decades, internal and external conflicts had given rise to new flows of refugees in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. The problems of those refugees did not end when they obtained asylum, as they often found themselves in an environment in which they still had to struggle for the most basic necessities. Although many countries generously received them, those countries could very seldom provide relief and rehabilitation because of existing social and economic difficulties. It was imperative to strengthen the capacity of the asylum countries to cope with the refugee situation and to assist in meaningful voluntary repatriation of the refugees as well as to co-operate in efforts aimed at averting new flows of refugees.

21. One half of the world's refugee population lived in Africa. Efforts to mobilize the financial, technical and material resources needed for refugees in African countries had led to the convocation at Geneva in April 1981 of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, at which the international community had expressed deep concern over the plight of refugees in Africa and its willingness to maximize the resources needed to solve the refugee problem.

22. The Republic of Djibouti, as one of the asylum countries in Africa, had taken in over 50,000 refugees, the majority of whom had been registered and rehabilitated in the Ali Sabieh and Dikhil refugee camps. Although Djibouti was grateful for the assistance provided by many organizations and Governments, more assistance was needed to improve conditions in those camps. Outside the camps, a considerable number of unregistered refugees had been given shelter by local families and gradually integrated into the local community. At the same time, a large number of registered and unregistered refugees, who had been reluctant to remain in the camps, had become vagrants in urban areas and posed considerable social and

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(Mr. Farah Dirir, Djibouti)

security risks. Efforts had been made by the National Assistance Committee for Refugees and Disaster Victims to find ways to assist the urban refugees through rehabilitation and settlement programmes in countries of second asylum.

23. The refugee situation in his country had been aggravated by a long drought, which had displaced one third of the total population. The Government had no alternative but to accommodate the displaced victims in about a dozen temporary camps scattered throughout the country. Although some relief assistance had been provided to them, it was far from adequate.

24. Short-term and long-term resettlement and integration programmes were required for both the refugees and the drought-displaced victims. The Government had endeavoured to remedy the situation through a plan of diversified projects in agriculture, fishing, animal husbandry, handicrafts and vocational training. Those projects must be combined with programmes designed to improve the country's capacity to cope with the situation.

25. He expressed his appreciation to the Secretary-General, who, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had played an important role in reviewing the present refugee situation in Djibouti, as reported in document A/37/420.

26. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia), speaking in his capacity as Ethiopia's Commissioner for Relief and Rehabilitation, said that national efforts towards improving the plight of refugees and displaced persons in Ethiopia had received growing sympathy, understanding and assistance from the High Commissioner and his staff. His Government supported the continuation of the Office of the High Commissioner and hoped that its approach would be flexible enough to enable the High Commissioner to respond to emergency situations as they arose and to carry out programmes that would facilitate more durable solutions to the problem.

27. It was gratifying that a growing number of States had acceded to international instruments relating to refugees and that there were several important instances of voluntary repatriation, which was the best solution to the problem. One of the basic functions of UNHCR was to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

28. If a durable solution to the problem was to be found, the question must be totally depoliticized and approached from a humanitarian point of view, and all States must observe the standards set by international and regional instruments relating to refugees, including adherence to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations pertaining to non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

29. With regard to the programme of assistance to returnees in Ethiopia, which had been approved by the Executive Committee of UNHCR in 1981, the groundwork of the settlement and rehabilitation projects had been completed. In its capacity as an operational partner, the League of Red Cross Societies had established a good working relationship with his Government. While 150,000 Ethiopians had returned to their country, the project continued to require further assistance. The amnesty

(Mr. Adugna, Ethiopia)

law for returnees from Djibouti had been extended to November 1984. A tripartite meeting of concerned governmental authorities of Ethiopia and Djibouti and officials of UNHCR would soon take place to initiate the process of voluntary repatriation. His Government was prepared to do its utmost to enable all Ethiopians to be repatriated to their homeland on a voluntary basis.

30. His delegation continued to believe that the international community should show the same concern to displaced persons as to refugees, since their plight was no less urgent. There were more than 17 million displaced persons in the world, as compared to an estimated 10 million refugees. No meaningful solution to the problem of refugees could be achieved without a parallel concern for displaced persons.

31. He recalled that at the request of his Government and in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/54 of 24 July 1980, an inter-agency mission had visited the Ethiopian administrative regions of Bale, Sidamo and Harrarghe. The report of the Secretary-General on assistance to displaced persons in Ethiopia, contained in document A/35/360 and Corr.1-3, stressed that massive and immediate aid should be provided in order to alleviate the suffering of the displaced persons and specified the type of assistance needed. However, the aid received from the international community had been minimal.

32. While his country was grateful to Governments and voluntary agencies which had responded to its appeal, the response had been inadequate. His country had done its utmost to mobilize domestic resources with a view to rehabilitating the 2.4 million war-displaced Ethiopians, but its limited resources were not equal to the task.

33. It was important to ensure an equitable distribution of assistance to countries and regions, for an imbalance in assistance could be the cause of new flows of refugees. While the appointment of a co-ordinator for the Horn of Africa was commendable, the necessary means and funds must exist to implement programmes. He stressed that the assistance his Government had been receiving had not been commensurate with its needs.

34. Mr. SISOWATH SIRIRATH (Democratic Kampuchea) said it was obvious that the war of aggression and occupation carried out in Kampuchea for nearly four years by the Hanoi authorities, backed by Moscow, constituted the fundamental cause of the problem of Kampuchean refugees. So long as that root cause persisted in the form of occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnamese forces, it would be hopeless to find any definitive solution to the problem. The case of Kampuchea, which showed that the influx of refugees was a result of foreign aggression and intervention, also applied to the situation of several million refugees in southern Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan, the Horn of Africa and other regions.

35. The world had come to recognize that the influx of refugees, particularly in third-world countries, posed serious problems for countries of first asylum and for the entire international community. Countries of first asylum, such as Thailand,

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(Mr. Sisowath Sirirath, Democratic Kampuchea)

Pakistan, Sudan and Somalia, had to face severe economic and financial burdens and other internal problems. In the face of those difficult situations, the international community had deployed very commendable efforts, through various international conferences, to mobilize relief assistance on behalf of the unfortunate victims. Despite that effort, the situation of refugees throughout the world had not improved, and today they numbered nearly 12 million.

36. In Kampuchea, Vietnamese policy was aimed not only at plundering natural resources and diverting humanitarian aid intended for the Kampuchean population to feeding Hanoi's war of aggression and occupation but also at driving out the Kampuchean population so as to annex the country as an integral part of the great Viet Nam, the Indo-China Federation. The Vietnamese occupation forces had expelled Kampuchean peasants from their rich lands and villages and had installed several hundred thousand Vietnamese settlers in their stead. The Hanoi authorities claimed that there were some 300,000 Khmer refugees in South Viet Nam, but in fact those so-called refugees were Vietnamese nationals who had lived in Kampuchea and had left voluntarily at the request of the Vietnamese authorities. The Hanoi authorities had sent them back to Kampuchea as settlers and had now demanded \$15 million in international aid. The international community and UNHCR should be very cautious about Vietnamese manoeuvres aimed at obtaining financial assistance for the implementation of their policy of aggression and expansion in South-East Asia.

37. His delegation wished to express its gratitude to the friendly peace-loving and justice-loving countries that had decided to continue sending humanitarian relief to the Kampuchean refugees living in Thailand and along the Thai-Kampuchean border. That relief contributed to the national survival of the people and nation of Kampuchea.

38. It was well known that the Hanoi authorities were pursuing a policy of repression and expulsion of their own nationals in order to confiscate their belongings and extort their money, thereby putting a heavy burden on the countries of the region. As a result, the flow of "boat people" continued. With regard to Kampuchean refugees, the only remedy was to force the Hanoi authorities to respect and implement the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that connection, he reminded the Committee that the General Assembly had just adopted resolution 37/6 on the situation in Kampuchea by an overwhelming majority. Similarly, at its thirty-third session, the Executive Committee of UNHCR had condemned Viet Nam for its expansionist policy in South-East Asia, the root cause of the influx of refugees in the region.

39. Mr. MANGAYA YANGE (Zaire) said that distrust in international relations had led to armed conflicts which embodied all the conditions for new mass flows of populations from the affected regions to more secure and livable areas. The resulting increase in the number of the homeless led to unforeseen expenditures for the Governments of countries of asylum which, as States parties to various international legal instruments concerning refugees and displaced persons, had an obligation to comply with those instruments, especially the provisions prohibiting

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(Mr. Mangaya Yange, Zaire)

refoulement of persons in danger or in search of shelter. As the report of the High Commissioner stated, more than 12 million human beings had become refugees living in conditions that defied comprehension. The great majority of those individuals lived in what was pejoratively called the "Southern Hemisphere". The Governments of the countries in that part of the world, which was already shaken by a multiplicity of socio-economic difficulties, had to bear the heavy burden of meeting the basic needs of nearly all refugees and displaced persons.

40. Africa, the cradle of ancient civilization, sheltered more than 5 million refugees. The growing number of refugees in the continent and the attendant socio-economic burdens borne by the African States of asylum had led the General Assembly, in resolution 35/42, to convene the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. Despite widespread support at all levels for the objectives and goals of that conference, its only achievement had been to make the international community aware of the serious problems of African refugees. Efforts to obtain the necessary funds for priority projects had been hampered by difficulties, particularly the lack of precision on the part of donor countries concerning the pledges made at ICARA. Despite those pledges, the amounts allocated as supplementary assistance to African Governments amounted to only \$166 million for a refugee population estimated at 5 million persons. That state of affairs could nullify the enormous efforts and sacrifices made by African countries in behalf of refugees.

41. His delegation was concerned about another aspect of the foreign aid requested by developing countries for at least a partial solution of their social problems. A number of economically strong countries, during the Fifth Committee's consideration of the item relating to the scale of assessments, had threatened to reduce their contributions to social bodies if their financial contribution to the 1984-1985 budget was increased. Such a threat, if carried out, would be contrary to the spirit of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2160 (XXI), would compromise the implementation of programmes in behalf of refugees and would endanger the lives of thousands of human beings. International solidarity must be more active, as it had been at the end of the Second World War, when millions of human beings had survived thanks to assistance from the international community.

42. While Zaire had the capacity to absorb great masses of population, it was a developing country whose socio-economic structures were subject to the hazards of a difficult international situation, a fact which reduced the national capacity to receive and shelter refugees. From the earliest years of the independence of African States, Zaire, a State party to various international treaties, covenants and conventions for the protection of refugees, had always received those homeless people without refoulement and had accorded them facilities for education and socio-economic development which other countries reserved solely for their own nationals. However, today his country found that its good intentions had brought it serious difficulties. UNHCR agricultural programmes in rural areas were not accessible, and were bringing no benefit, to Zairian peasants; a review of UNHCR's assistance policy therefore seemed necessary. His delegation believed that in order to avoid any climate of animosity in the relations between refugees and the indigenous population, UNHCR should, in co-operation with UNDP, extend that type of social programme to include the latter community.

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(Mr. Mangaya Yange, Zaire)

43. An increase in the number of refugees on Zaire's eastern border had disturbed life in the border villages, where 25,000 Zairians had seen their goods stolen and their crops destroyed. His delegation invited UNHCR to give due attention to that situation, which required urgent intervention. He hoped that UNHCR would take note of the serious concerns he had mentioned and would also intensify its assistance for the implementation of the community village programme undertaken by his Government in behalf of refugees.

44. Lastly, his delegation invited donor Member States to take to heart the problem of the African refugees and to demonstrate a solidarity through which appropriate and lasting solutions for their socio-economic concerns could be found.

45. Ms. RASI (Finland) said that since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had indicated that he would be prepared to continue his difficult task, she took pleasure in announcing her Government's support for him.

46. The plight of refugees in various countries was grave and required urgent action from the international community as a whole. The responsibility of the international community did not, however, absolve the States that had created the problem, because refugee flows resulted from either internal oppression or external aggression.

47. The fundamental feature of UNHCR's work was its non-political character. Help to refugees was humanitarian and non-political, even though refugee problems were by definition political ones. The international community should do its utmost to remove the root causes of those problems.

48. Today, the refugee situation in the world was geographically, economically, socially and legally different from what it had been at the time of the establishment of UNHCR. Refugee problems had become more complex and global, and UNHCR had had to determine who was a refugee and what was the distinction between the social and the economic problems posed by a refugee situation. Her delegation believed that UNHCR had always been able to find answers to those questions within the framework of its mandate. Accordingly, her delegation was in favour of extending the mandate in its present form, which had proved useful and flexible in different refugee situations throughout the years.

49. Although the overall refugee situation had worsened during the past year, some positive results had been achieved, particularly in the field of the voluntary repatriation of refugees in Africa and in Latin America. If conditions permitted, voluntary repatriation was the best solution for the refugee problem. Regrettably, however, some Governments were adopting an increasingly restrictive approach in granting lasting asylum and in identifying persons to be regarded as refugees of concern to the international community. The economic recession in a number of countries had encouraged the view that all aliens, including refugees, were potential competitors for limited economic opportunities. It was therefore of the utmost importance to ensure that the fundamental principles of international protection, defined in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, should not be

(Ms. Rasi, Finland)

weakened, endangered or called into question. That applied in particular to the principles relating to asylum and non-refoulement. It was, however, encouraging to note that since the last report, 10 countries had acceded to the Convention and Protocol, to which Finland was a party. Further accessions were needed, to make those instruments universally applicable.

51. The High Commissioner's estimates for General Programme requirements showed a downward trend; that was a hopeful sign, for UNHCR programmes were not of the kind that the international community wished to see enlarged annually.

52. As a response to the High Commissioner's appeal for resettlement of handicapped refugees, Finland had decided to receive a number of disabled refugees, together with their families, taking into account the existing rehabilitation capacity and other facilities available in the country. Her Government continued to support UNHCR as a central institution designed to alleviate the human suffering of refugees and displaced persons. It therefore intended to increase its regular contributions to UNHCR and was prepared to respond without delay to new emergency situations. Finland continued to contribute through different channels to many of the current disaster relief projects and refugee assistance programmes. Several non-governmental organizations in Finland were also making an invaluable contribution, both in fund-raising and as implementation agencies in the field.

53. Mr. SCHELTEMA (Netherlands) said that the basic instruments for dealing with refugee problems - the Statute of UNHCR, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1967 Protocol - had all, by and large proven adequate and well adapted to their purpose, the performance of a non-political, humanitarian task by the international community. Since universality of those instruments was vital to their effectiveness, his delegation welcomed the recent accession of the People's Republic of China to the Convention and the Protocol and commended the high Commissioner for his efforts to make them as universal as possible.

54. His delegation was deeply concerned at the increasing threats to refugees and asylum-seekers and the violations of their physical safety, which had assumed unprecedented proportions in recent years. The year under review had seen the barbaric massacres in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, military attacks against refugee camps in southern Africa and at the border between Thailand and Kampuchea, an increase in the practice of detaining asylum-seekers, and pirate attacks on asylum-seekers in the South China Sea. Those events demonstrated the importance of UNHCR's role in protecting refugees and the significance of the existing legal instruments and the basic principles embodied in them.

55. Although the task of the High Commissioner was purely humanitarian and should remain so, he should not be passive or politically insensitive. The mere presence of UNHCR officials could enhance the physical safety of refugees. His delegation hoped that the study on the problem of attacks on refugees and asylum-seekers would help clarify what could be expected of the High Commissioner when the physical safety of refugees was threatened, keeping in mind his humanitarian mandate. The Netherlands was prepared to participate actively in exploring new avenues to meet

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(Mr. Scheltema, Netherlands)

the needs of refugees and hoped that the anti-piracy programme in the Gulf of Siam, to which it contributed financially through UNHCR, would be effective in assisting the efforts of the Royal Thai Navy.

56. Protection of refugees and the broader issues of human rights were closely related, for many, if not most, refugee problems arose from massive violations of human rights. In order to protect the victims from a renewal of their plight, the principle of non-refoulement should be strictly and scrupulously observed as the corner-stone of all humanitarian action in their behalf. His Government shared the High Commissioner's disappointment at the forced return of asylum-seekers to countries where they were in danger of persecution or even death. More information on what UNHCR was doing in the field of protection would be appreciated, since that could lead to a greater involvement of Governments in, and thus support of, the High Commissioner's difficult task.

57. Turning to the High Commissioner's equally important task of seeking to promote permanent solutions to refugee problems, he said that protection and assistance were analogous, one aimed at keeping the refugees safe from persecution by man, the other from hunger, disease and other dangers. The experiences and the gained results achieved by UNHCR and its implementing partners in the search for durable solutions were of great value for the future. His delegation reaffirmed its full support for UNHCR's assistance leading to voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, to local integration in the refugees' country of asylum, and to resettlement from the country of temporary residence to a third country. The achievement of those objectives should continue to play a major role in the planning and implementation of assistance projects for refugees. In refugee situations in low-income countries, UNHCR, in co-operation with the international community, rightly assumed a far greater share of the financial burden than had been projected when its Statute had been adopted. However, the goal of UNHCR's assistance remained that of helping refugees reach a level of self-sufficiency comparable to that of the local population. As before, refugees should be granted fair and non-discriminatory treatment, equal to that of the national population. However, UNHCR's efforts should not be continued indefinitely, and its ultimate goal should be the achievement of durable solutions bringing about full integration.

58. His delegation greatly appreciated the hospitality of many developing countries in accepting large groups of refugees, despite their meagre national resources and modest overall economic capability. As host countries, they were indeed major donors to UNHCR's programmes. Where limits to their generosity became apparent, the international community should continue to be prepared to give technical and financial support for the integration of non-nationals. His Government felt that durable solutions to refugee problems should be sought within their development context. Integration programmes should be co-ordinated with, and gradually become part of, the ongoing national development plans and efforts. It was important to involve other, more development-oriented organizations in assistance programmes and activities in behalf of refugees at an early stage.

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(Mr. Scheltema, Netherlands)

59. Noting the importance of the role played by non-governmental organizations, he expressed the hope that the High Commissioner would respond favourably to the suggestion made by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies that UNHCR should consider the establishment of a commission of experts from a wide range of organizations to study the question of refugees and development. It was also important to involve refugees themselves in the preparation and implementation of projects. In that connection, he drew attention to the valuable work undertaken by the International Labour Organisation, in co-operation with UNHCR, in the field of income-generating projects for refugees in Africa and Asia.

60. Since it was neither realistic nor reasonable at present to expect host Governments to bear the total burden of assistance, the international community, through UNHCR and its governmental and non-governmental partners, should help refugees to achieve self-sufficiency. Once that phase had been completed, further development should become the responsibility of the national authorities, consistent with their national development objectives and, when necessary, with external assistance. From the very beginning of new refugee influxes, UNHCR should actively participate, as an advocate of the cause of refugees, in the process of negotiation on national development efforts between the host country and the multilateral and bilateral donor agencies. In that connection, he recalled General Assembly resolution 2294 (XXII), which provided that UNHCR should participate in the development consultations sponsored by UNDP, and resolution 2789 (XXVI), which had reaffirmed UNHCR's participation in the country programming system adopted by UNDP. Finally, he stressed the need to link the search for durable solutions to the political, social and economic realities of asylum countries.

61. Turning to the question of the continuation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, he said that the need for the humanitarian work performed by UNHCR was greater than ever and that his delegation would gladly support the prolongation of its mandate for another five years. However, changes in the administrative management of UNHCR assistance should be earnestly considered, especially since refugee problems were becoming increasingly structural. He looked forward to the report of the Administrative Management Service, which he hoped would contain some recommendations for innovative action in UNHCR management. The next five-year period should see the restoration of the balance between headquarters and the field. There was a clear need for a more field-oriented approach, since it was primarily at the field level that refugee problems could be effectively tackled. Unfortunately, the redeployment of staff from headquarters to the field and the reassignment of responsibilities to UNHCR officials in the field had not kept pace with the overall administrative growth of the Office. There was also a need for a better administrative structure, in view of the serious financial constraints expected for the years ahead. He commended the High Commissioner for reducing the budget for the reporting year in comparison with the 1980-1981 budget. A better administrative structure could and should be obtained by adjusting management style and procedures to actual and projected developments, not by resorting to additional staff. The need to economize was as imperative for UNHCR, as for other United Nations agencies to which the "zero real growth" rule applied. The fact that the total number of refugees in the world was

(Mr. Scheltema, Netherlands)

stabilizing should make it easier to achieve those aims. However, the "zero real growth" concept should apply only to administrative costs, staffing and other overheads. In the case of new emergencies, additional funds must be found, and the High Commissioner should not have to refuse justified appeals for help because of financial constraints. The Netherlands continued to stand ready to heed such appeals.

62. In the period 1978-1982, the Netherlands had contributed \$50 million to UNHCR assistance programmes. It had also supported the resettlement programmes by accepting groups of refugees, including more than 6,000 people from South-East Asia. The integration of those people in the Netherlands cost tens of millions of guilders annually. His Government would do its utmost to continue its support for UNHCR's general programmes and special operations in the years ahead.

63. In conclusion, he recalled that the Netherlands had suggested to the Secretary-General that Mr. Max van der Stoep, its former Minister for Foreign Affairs, would be highly qualified to fill the post of High Commissioner for Refugees for the coming five years.

64. Mr. MI Guojun (China) said that UNHCR was performing an important function and that the High Commissioner and his staff had done much commendable work.

65. In dealing with refugees, the international community should bear in mind two important aspects of the problem. First, refugees were leaving their country in very large numbers, ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions, over a short period of time. In particular, the mass exodus of refugees in Indo-China and South Asia since 1979 was of a scale rarely seen in history. As a result of Soviet armed aggression against Afghanistan and Soviet military occupation of that country, millions of Afghan refugees had fled to neighbouring countries, as many as 2.7 million going to Pakistan alone. The Vietnamese aggression and expansion in Indo-China had produced more than a million refugees in the three countries of Indo-China within a few years. Half of the world's total population of refugees was concentrated in Africa, and Latin America had also witnessed such flows in recent years. Secondly, most refugees were staying in countries with an underdeveloped economy, and the influx of large numbers of refugees had created enormous additional economic and social burdens.

66. Emphasizing the principle of burden-sharing and international co-operation, he said that the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees was the responsibility of the international community as a whole. Those economically backward developing countries which had provided temporary shelter for thousands of refugees had made tremendous contributions in terms of material relief and moral support. Other members of the international community had also made due contributions. However, the generosity and willingness of the international community still left much to be desired. At the end of September 1982, \$60 million of the funds required for the 1982 programmes still had not been covered. It was worth mentioning that a certain State with strong economic power had not contributed a single penny to the UNHCR programmes for assisting refugees and to the appropriate international pledging conferences.

(Mr. Mi Guojun, China)

67. With regard to international protection, he noted the work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, the international seminars on the subject, the specific arrangements made to protect refugees from pirate attacks, and the number of States, including his own, which had recently acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. While those positive steps had contributed to the strengthening of international protection, there were still practical difficulties to be overcome. When faced with large numbers of refugees, the first-asylum countries could not follow the normal procedures in determining their status. Sometimes it was difficult even to register their names. For various reasons, those countries often lacked the means to provide long-term settlement for the refugees. Some other countries, especially those willingly chosen by the refugees for resettlement, had clearly become less enthusiastic in providing resettlement opportunities in recent years. Therefore, many refugees who wished to be settled in a third country had to remain a long time in refugee camps. There had also been increasing difficulties in reuniting families. In the past two years, refugee camps had been subjected to brutal military attacks, bombings and massacres. Refugee camps in Thailand and Pakistan had suffered armed harassment and attacks carried out by those who had created the refugee problems, and the Namibian refugee camps in Angola had been repeatedly bombed by the South African army. In addition, a bloody massacre had recently taken place in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Those inhuman acts deserved the strongest possible condemnation.

68. With regard to the scope of UNHCR protection, his delegation favoured a realistic and flexible approach. Where there was no clear distinction between displaced persons and refugees, UNHCR could only protect both without discrimination.

69. While the activities of UNHCR should remain non-political, it was clear that, for the international community, refugee problems could not be solved without tackling the root causes. Currently, while the international community was making every effort to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees to alleviate their sufferings, and giving them relief and protection, refugees were constantly being created and refugee camps subjected to gunfire, bombings and massacres. Emphasis on remedying the root causes of the refugee problem would not reduce but increase the humanitarian value of refugee relief work.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.