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THIRD COMMITTEE

45th meeting

held on

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at 11 a. m.

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CALERO RODRIGUES (Brazil)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.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,
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- (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)

1. Mr. van WELL (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the year under review had seen an increase in the number of refugees in South-West and South-East Asia and in Central America, as well as developments in East Africa and in the Horn of Africa which had aggravated the overall situation. Massive flows of refugees not only posed large humanitarian problems but were also likely to contribute to the heightening of international tension. For that reason, his Government had launched its initiative for averting new flows of refugees by complementing the existing curative measures in the humanitarian field with a preventive diplomatic approach aimed at dealing with the root causes. The overwhelming support given to that initiative, reflected in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 36/148 by consensus, encouraged his delegation's hope that the international community would be able to develop appropriate means to avert, or at least reduce, new massive flows of refugees.

2. Stressing the enormous value of UNHCR's contribution to the solution of refugee problems, he said that his delegation greatly appreciated UNHCR's efforts to safeguard the well-being of refugees and felt that the continuation of the Office was the appropriate means of ensuring that those efforts would continue.

3. The importance attached by his Government to the task of UNHCR could be seen from its increased contributions to UNHCR programmes. Apart from its share in the contribution of the European Community, it had provided \$19.16 million for UNHCR's programmes in 1981, and in 1982 it had contributed \$13.38 million as of 3 November.

4. Recent developments had shown that, besides the provision of humanitarian aid, the physical protection of refugees was a question of prime importance. His Government fully supported the High Commissioner's efforts in that direction. It also welcomed UNHCR's endeavours to help refugees become more self-reliant until durable solutions could be found. With regard to those solutions, he called on the international community to share the efforts to resettle refugees and recalled that in the aftermath of the Second World War, his country had been faced with and had solved the problem of resettling millions of refugees. Resettlement should, however, be considered only where repatriation was precluded. Wherever UNHCR considered repatriation possible, it would have his Government's full support in seeking to bring it about.

(Mr. van Well, Federal
Republic of Germany)

5. Given the need to increase the effectiveness of UNHCR's efforts, it was of the utmost importance that other competent organizations should co-operate with the Office and that all measures to help refugees should be based on a meaningful division of labour. UNHCR's successes had been made possible by the spirit of co-operation that had prevailed in United Nations bodies dealing with humanitarian questions. His Government hoped that that traditional consensus would continue to guide all necessary decisions taken by the General Assembly.

6. In conclusion, he expressed his Government's appreciation of the way in which the High Commissioner had fulfilled his important function and its conviction that the world refugee situation demanded the continuation of UNHCR.

7. Mr. BELLO (Nigeria) commended UNHCR for its work in providing prompt assistance to refugees throughout the world and expressed the hope that the Office would continue to show the same, or even a greater, level of dedication as it faced the challenges of the years ahead.

8. Unfortunately, the international economic and political situation remained such that there was still no solution to the refugee problem. So long as nations chose the path of confrontation and war, the tragic problem of refugees would remain. All of the world's countries should therefore give substance to the Charter of the United Nations by renewing their commitment to settle disputes through the process of negotiation and arbitration and to refrain from the use of force as an instrument of policy. Since the problem of refugees was largely man-made, man could, if willing, put an end to it. In the case of natural disasters which produced refugees, his delegation hoped that those countries which had advanced technological and scientific knowledge for the detection and control of natural phenomena would put their knowledge and assistance at the disposal of those societies in need of it.

9. While the refugee situation in the Horn of Africa and the Sudan had become relatively stable, his delegation noted with concern that the situation in Africa as a whole still constituted about half of the overall world problem. His country, acting through the Organization of African Unity, had always been in the forefront of efforts to promote peace and political situations that would put an end to the problem of refugees. For many years, it had quietly offered assistance to hundreds of thousands of refugees and had uncomplainingly shouldered an enormous refugee burden, in accordance with the idea of the brotherhood of all peoples and the belief that suffering and misery required understanding, compassion and effective action from all Governments and all States. Given the clear need for all Governments to admit refugees in all regions of the world, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and offer them resettlement assistance, he was deeply concerned at the growing incidence of the refoulement and detention of refugees from many countries. Nigeria continued to give assistance to refugees, despite the cost to its social and economic development, because of its awareness and acceptance of the humanitarian nature of the problem. He appealed to all Member States to resist the temptation to adopt restrictive practices in granting asylum, despite the current recessionary trends and their legitimate concerns about

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(Mr. Bello, Nigeria)

large-scale movements of people. As a measure of its commitment to the problem of refugees, Nigeria had provided offices and accommodation for UNHCR at Lagos and had promised to increase its contribution to UNHCR Programmes for 1982 by \$10,000.

10. Turning to the protection of refugees, with particular reference to the ability of the countries of asylum in southern Africa to offer such protection, he said that the apartheid régime of South Africa was persisting in its despicable policy of organizing military expeditions into neighbouring States to raid, maim and kill defenceless refugees, including women and children. South Africa, a country that placed no value on decency and human dignity and which in many ways was responsible for the sad refugee situation involving people from and within southern Africa, continued to perpetrate terrorist acts against those refugees, in open defiance of world opinion. Those acts of aggression further confirmed the depth of infamy to which the racist régime had sunk. He urged all countries to remain firm in their condemnation and repudiation of the system of apartheid, which gloried in the denial of the most basic human rights to its citizens.

11. His delegation felt that the imbalance in the staff of UNHCR, which was dominated by people from the industrialized world, should be corrected by measures aimed at achieving equitable geographical distribution. It also felt that UNHCR should not be denied essential staff, especially in the field.

12. In conclusion, he said that Nigeria favoured shifting the emphasis in the assistance programmes towards self-sufficiency activities and projects. It welcomed efforts in that direction and all other efforts to promote voluntary repatriation and special care for disabled refugees.

13. Mr. VONGSALY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he appreciated the efforts undertaken by UNHCR to mobilize the international community to help the millions of asylum-seekers currently living in distress in various parts of the world. The practical results of those efforts could be seen every year in the resettlement of refugees in third countries, their repatriation and the improvement of their living conditions. His delegation therefore supported the continuation of the mandate of UNHCR for another five-year period.

14. After the total victory of the Lao people over imperialism, and with the aid of a generous contribution from UNHCR, the 700,000 people driven from their homes as a result of United States bombing raids had been able to return to their native villages. However, their difficulties remained, since most of them could not take complete possession of their land, owing to the presence of unexploded bombs and other United States ordnance which continued to cause significant loss of life and damage to property.

15. As one of the three countries of Indo-China from which refugees were departing, he wished to remind those who arbitrarily assigned responsibility for such exoduses to his Government that those refugee flows consisted of those in power in the previous régime who owed their allegiance to United States imperialists and were fleeing from justice, of parasites on society, of foreign merchants attracted by American dollars who had settled in his country in the 1950s

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

and could no longer make a fraudulent living under the new régime, of officers and soldiers in the special forces, maintained and paid directly by the CIA during the United States war of aggression, of people with a smattering of foreign culture who had felt out of place in their own country and were unable to sacrifice their personal interests for the community, of people who had been afraid of temporary economic difficulties and been lured by mendacious propaganda about the easy life abroad, and of the Meo-ethnic minorities, which, having helped the United States war of aggression, had feared reprisals from the patriotic forces. His Government could not therefore be held responsible for those people, who had left despite the extremely humanitarian measures taken to prevent their departure.

16. His Government's policy concerning voluntary repatriation was clear and well known. In the previous three years, it had received a favourable response from refugees in Thailand, France and Australia. Since 1980, more than 1,000 Lao refugees had returned from camps in Thailand to their homeland, as a result of joint assistance from UNHCR and his Government and with the help of the Thai Government. In addition, almost two or three times that number had returned independently. Since the end of 1981, the number of Lao leaving the country had gradually declined. In that connection, he agreed with paragraph 224 of the High Commissioner's report, which stated that the number of land arrivals was roughly half the 1980 figure. He reaffirmed that all those repatriated were not subjected to any form of imprisonment or retaliatory measures. They could be reintegrated into the new society after a period of readaptation at reception centres. His country was underdeveloped and underpopulated and therefore needed those people, on the same terms as all Lao citizens, for national reconstruction and economic recovery. The UNHCR delegation which had visited his country in September 1982 had been able to see how things really were. The same policy would be pursued by his Government with respect to all those who wished to return to their own country, with the exception of the 34 people who had been sentenced in absentia by the people's courts.

17. Referring to the statement by the representative of Thailand, who had said that little progress had been made to help Indo-Chinese displaced persons to realize their aspirations to return to their homes, he said that his Government had informed the Thai Government on many occasions of its sincere desire to accept all refugees now in camps in Thailand who wished to return to their homeland. Those good intentions had been constantly frustrated by the schemes of those who, both in Thailand and elsewhere, wanted to use young refugees as cannon fodder to disrupt order and security in his country.

18. Referring to the statement made by the representative of the United States accusing the Lao People's Democratic Republic of having used chemical and biological weapons against the Hmong minority, he said that those accusations were simply lies borrowed from Lao refugees waiting in camps in Thailand to be accepted by a third country or already settled in other countries, who were trying to win the sympathy of host countries. Furthermore, even during the war of national liberation and independence, the Lao Popular Liberation Army had, as far as possible, avoided firing on the forces of the former régime. In the seven years

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

since the formation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, its armed forces had become more numerous and better equipped and had no reason whatever to use chemical weapons against the few remaining members of the Vangpao special forces, which had been financed by the CIA. His Government had a clean record, unlike a certain so-called civilized Government which claimed to be a defender of human rights but whose conscience was still burdened by the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and by the systematic destruction of the three countries of Indo-China. He reminded the representative of the United States that there was no provision in the Charter, nor any rule of international law, prohibiting a State from re-establishing public order within its territory if that order had been disrupted. In wrongly accusing his Government, the representative of the United States seemed to forget that United States airplanes had dropped 3 million tons of bombs and spread various chemical agents on Lao territory. Indeed, a special commission of inquiry should be set up to investigate United States crimes involving the use of chemical weapons against the people of Indo-China. No amount of slander could enable the United States to wash away its crimes or escape responsibility for them. Rather than shedding crocodile tears, the representative of the United States should persuade his own Government to contribute to the reconstruction of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which it had devastated.

19. In conclusion, he said that his Government deeply appreciated the assistance given by UNHCR and the actions of those countries which had contributed to the various projects carried out jointly by UNHCR and the Lao Government.

20. Ms. RADIC (Yugoslavia) said that her Government's approach to the question of refugees had always been a humanitarian one. Consideration of the root causes of the refugee problem inevitably led to politically motivated concentration on refugees in certain parts of the world; such selectivity, should be avoided in the consideration of the High Commissioner's report because it resulted in an unjustifiable disregard for the plight of refugees in other areas.

21. Her delegation appreciated the continuing and intensive assistance given by UNHCR to refugees and displaced persons. It believed that the mandate of the Office ought to be extended for another five-year period to benefit the 10 million or so more refugees and displaced persons in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and other parts of the world.

22. Yugoslavia attached great importance to the ratification of or accession to the international instruments relating to the status of refugees. It welcomed the increase in the number of parties to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and felt that their broad recognition was essential for the betterment of the condition of refugees.

23. Referring to the unsatisfactory results of ICARA, as indicated in paragraphs 36 and 37 of document E/1982/76, she said that further attention should be given to that issue in line with the conclusion of the Council of Ministers of OAU at its thirty-eighth session.

(Ms. Radić, Yugoslavia)

24. In conclusion, she said that since the problem of refugees was one which primarily concerned developing countries, those countries should be more widely represented in the Executive Committee, a measure which also would be in keeping with the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

25. Ms. FAWTHORPE (New Zealand) said that since 1978, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had been confronted with new challenges, including refugee outflows on an unprecedented large scale, which had tested the flexibility of its mandate. At times, for example, its activities had necessarily overlapped with those of other international agencies. UNHCR had managed to deal successfully with those difficult challenges. It had made possible the continuation of the practice, both in the Executive Committee and in the General Assembly, of taking all decisions by consensus, a practice which New Zealand supported.

26. Although many suggestions for changes in the mandate of the Office would be made as refugee problems continued to increase, her delegation believed that the existing mandate had served the international community and the refugees well and should be renewed without change. In particular, it had safeguarded the humanitarian nature of the Office's work. People sometimes fled their countries for non-political reasons, such as natural disasters; nevertheless, UNHCR was inevitably involved in political problems, or rather in the problems of the individual victims of political conflicts. The international community had rightly chosen not to entrust it with any political responsibility, so that it could remain a humanitarian agency. Her country favoured the establishment of other procedures for seeking ways to remedy the root causes of refugee problems. The Secretary-General's appeal, in his annual report, to Member States to make more effective use of the Security Council also had important implications for the solution of those problems.

27. Countries of first asylum, often struggling to further their own development, were entitled to assistance from the international community, just as the refugees had a right to protection and the satisfaction of their basic needs. Situations of refoulement or abuses of refugees rights could be avoided only if the wider community accepted its responsibilities. It was particularly disturbing that threats to refugees and asylum-seekers and violations of their physical safety had continued and even intensified during 1981.

28. Her country had maintained a steady level of financial contributions to the General Programmes of UNHCR, which was often supplemented by special additional allocations, such as the grant of \$100,000 announced in October 1981 by the Minister of Immigration. New Zealand's main contribution to UNHCR work had, however, consisted in taking in refugees for resettlement, a measure seen as the best alternative to repatriation in the search for a lasting solution to the plight of refugees. Most of the refugees who had recently resettled in her country had been of Indo-Chinese origin, owing to the severe nature of the refugee problem in the South-East Asian region. New Zealand had also continued to accept refugees from the East European region, particularly, Poland. Disabled refugees had been allocated a separate quota. The sizable number of refugees resettled in her country had been selected on the basis of humane criteria, including family reunification.

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29. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines) reaffirmed his country's support for the principle that refugees must be accorded international protection without distinction as to race, religion, sex or country of origin. He expressed the hope that the Office of the High Commissioner would continue to monitor issues relating to pirate attacks against refugees, to the safety of refugee camps, to the integration of refugees and to voluntary repatriation. Ways must be found to alleviate the situation of refugees, in view of the difficulties experienced by countries of asylum in providing the refugees with economic opportunities and the problem of assimilating refugees in those countries.

30. There was a need for increased emphasis on means to disseminate information concerning the international protection activities of UNHCR. The principles of international protection should be clearly understood, especially by those directly involved in relief work.

31. Three years earlier, the international community had been galvanized into action to solve the plight of refugees and displaced persons fleeing from war in South-East Asia, notably the "boat people" of Indo-China. That situation had provided a sombre backdrop to the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees held at Geneva in July 1979. In response to the world-wide call for humanitarian assistance to those victims, his Government had offered to provide temporary relocation to some 50,000 Indo-Chinese refugees from various countries of South-East Asia. The Philippines currently had established three refugee centres: the Bataan Refugee Processing Centre at Morong, Bataan; the Fabella Refugee Processing Centre at Manila; and the Palawan Refugee Centre on the island of Palawan. The Bataan Centre was a large, well-equipped facility which, in addition to offering temporary residence for refugees who had already been accepted by their countries of final destination, served as a rehabilitation and vocational-training institution. The refugees were also taught the culture, life-style, traditions, beliefs and customs of their sponsoring countries.

32. In alleviating the plight of the refugees, the international community must address itself to the root of the problem. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the right to self-determination, particularly that of peoples under foreign domination and alien subjugation. Any approach to the problem must take into consideration all aspects, since the humanitarian aspect was closely intertwined with the broader aspect of the need for political stability.

33. Massive international flows of refugees had generated serious problems in the countries of first refuge, with consequent threats to regional harmony and stability and to good-neighbourliness between States. In view of the need to eliminate the root causes of new and continued massive refugee flows, his delegation welcomed the proposal to establish an ad hoc group of governmental experts to undertake a comprehensive review of the improvement of international co-operation to avert new flows of refugees as an initial step to finding a viable solution to that problem.

34. Miss SHALHOUB (Jordan) said that in the light of the humanitarian views of States and their co-operation in dealing with refugees, there was reason to hope that a solution to the refugee problem could be found. A number of countries

(Miss Shalhoub, Jordan)

had borne the burden of refugees at times when they were experiencing economic and political difficulties. It was heartening to note that most of those countries had accepted refugees from neighbouring States on the basis of non-refoulement.

35. Her country, which lacked natural resources and had a sluggish economy, had received large numbers of refugees over the years, especially since 1948. It was well known that Palestinian refugees had been assimilated in her country, had become citizens and constituted a major part of the population. However, they were disillusioned because they had not been able to realize their hopes for repatriation. Most of their country of origin had been taken from them, and the rest was occupied, seemingly with a view to its total annexation. Their situation had worsened in 1967 with the annexation of Arab Jerusalem, followed by measures to oust the rest of the Palestinian population by every means possible. The inhumane treatment and intimidation of Palestinians had further aggravated - as shown by the attempt to annihilate them at the Sabra and Shatila camps in Lebanon - a plight similar to that suffered by the Jews themselves when they had faced extinction in Nazi Germany.

36. Jordan welcomed the fact that durable solutions for some refugee problems had been found, and it hoped that there would be a durable solution to the Palestinian problem as well. Her delegation noted that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) intended to stop sending rations to the Palestinian refugee camps, whose residents were dependent on them, and to review the continued operations of its schools in 1983. She emphasized that the Palestinians needed all the assistance they could get through the generosity of Governments and agencies such as UNRWA and UNHCR to alleviate their plight.

37. Turning to refugee problems in other parts of Asia, she said that the situation of the boat people was indeed very tragic; the principle of non-refoulement must be observed with respect to them and other refugees, in spite of the difficulties encountered by the countries hosting them temporarily. The massacres of Kampucheans by the successive rulers of their country had led to another refugee problem, which UNHCR had played a valuable role in helping to alleviate. The occupation of Afghanistan was yet another example of a situation leading to a mass exodus of refugees in large numbers to a country which had generously welcomed them.

38. The countries of the Horn of Africa had done a great deal, given their financial, economic and development goals and problems, to assist refugees. The results achieved by the 1982 International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa held at Geneva were commendable. It was to be hoped that the 1983 Conference would receive more donations from Member States.

39. There had been serious violations of human rights in Central America, and many people had left their countries as a result. She also expressed concern at the problem of displaced persons in Cyprus, an issue that had lingered for many years.

40. Her delegation commended the High Commissioner for having donated the cash award associated with the Nobel Peace Prize to handicapped refugees. It looked

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(Miss Shalhoub, Jordan)

forward to the renewal of the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner in 1983 because, as the High Commissioner had said, the reasons that had led to the founding of UNHCR in 1951 were still valid.

41. Jordan believed that the High Commissioner had been doing an exemplary job. However, the Sudan, a country that had been receiving a constant flow of refugees, along with Somalia and Djibouti, had decided to nominate former Minister Dafallah El Hag Yousif Medani and had received the endorsement of the Arab League and the Islamic Conference for the nomination. Her country would therefore support that candidature.

42. Mr. ZAKI (Egypt) expressed his delegation's gratitude to the High Commissioner for Refugees for his comprehensive report on the work of the Office (A/37/12 and Add.1). The great achievements of the High Commissioner and his competent staff were greatly appreciated by the Egyptian Government. The report would also contribute to an understanding of the true dimensions of the problems which the Office confronted in its work.

43. He emphasized the need to strengthen the means and resources available to the Office of the High Commissioner, so that it could shoulder the vast responsibilities placed on it by the international community. Those responsibilities constituted challenges which, unfortunately, were increasing yearly. The refugee problem was not confined to any one continent but was a general, world-wide problem. The courses which had given rise to that problem differed widely, ranging from earthquakes and natural disasters to political disturbances and even wars.

44. World developments and the outcome of some of those developments, particularly the political ones, prompted the international community to take a particularly careful look at the refugee problem at the present time, and thence arose the world-wide concern accorded to that problem, because the international community was aware of its gravity and significance from the humanitarian, economic and political viewpoints alike.

45. The efforts of the High Commissioner for Refugees in many States, though not always successful, were consistent with the vast dimensions of the problem. Unfortunately, the fine results which had been and were being achieved could not keep up with the evident expansion of the problem, which placed on all an obligation to make redoubled efforts to deal with the flows of refugees.

46. The contents of the report of the High Commissioner made it clear beyond any doubt that the African continent was still bearing the burden of the greater portion of that problem, since it was still giving asylum to almost 5 million refugees. Consequently, it was natural that that continent should receive the greater portion of attention, care and financial resources, in accordance with the realities and in the light of the limited potentials of the developing African States. The convening of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held at Geneva, had unquestionably had extremely important and valuable results with regard to the problem of refugees on the African continent.

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(Mr. Zaki, Egypt)

47. His delegation noted with satisfaction the statement in chapter II of the report of the High Commissioner concerning the voluntary repatriation of thousands of Chad refugees. It appreciated the role of the High Commissioner in that operation and agreed that the best way to resolve the refugee problem on a just and lasting basis was the return of the refugees to their country of origin, provided that that was effected on a voluntary basis.

48. The problem on the Asian continent was still explosive, with the continued flow of Afghan refugees to Pakistan. They now totalled approximately 2 million, the majority being women, children and old people. It was essential to take all measures to deal with that problem. He noted that large numbers of Cambodians had returned to their country. The efforts of the High Commissioner in that area in co-operation with the Thai Government had undoubtedly played a large part in the attainment of that result.

49. The increase in the number of refugees in Latin America, mentioned on page 32 of the report of the High Commissioner, showed that no region in the world was free from that problem, which thus concerned the international community as a whole. That further increased the major challenges facing the High Commissioner, since basic needs - shelter, food, clothing and health care - had to be met for the ever-increasing number of refugees.

50. While expressing Egypt's full appreciation for the great achievements of Mr. Poul Hartling and his efforts, he emphasized that the time had now come for the third world to support those efforts, and he mentioned, in that connection, the role of the Sudan and its participation in giving asylum to refugees and finding solutions to their problems. It also, naturally, supported the Sudan's nomination of Mr. Dafallah El Hag Yousif Medani to assume those burdens.

51. The tragedy of the world's refugees was one which troubled the conscience of all and was among the most urgent human problems confronting the contemporary world. It placed a duty on all to strive and co-operate to relieve the suffering of their brethren who had unwillingly been turned into refugees, deprived of their homelands and of the most elementary natural human rights.

52. Egypt hoped that all States would continue to provide the necessary assistance to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in the performance of his lofty humanitarian task, so that he might continue his efforts. It hoped also that definitive solutions would be found for the cruel problems of millions of refugees.

53. Mr. TOPCUOGLU (Turkey) said that from the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/37/12 and Add.1), it appeared that UNHCR had been rather successful in carrying out its mandate during the current year, despite the fact that it had had to face complex and unprecedented problems. The overall picture regarding the situation of refugees, however, continued to be quite gloomy. Against that background, the full support of the international community for the work of UNHCR was as vital as ever. The establishment of full co-operation between UNHCR and the Governments concerned would be very useful and constructive. That relationship should not be limited to simple transactions regarding supplies

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(Mr. Topcuoglu, Turkey)

or receipt of funds. A more functional approach would require both sides to be involved in refugee problems in a more comprehensive manner at all levels and in all fields, in particular with respect to asylum.

54. His delegation noted with satisfaction that in Africa a large number of refugees had been repatriated to their home country under UNHCR auspices. Unfortunately, in other parts of the world conditions still did not permit the voluntary return of refugees on a large scale. His delegation shared the view of the High Commissioner that voluntary repatriation was the preferred solution to refugee problems. It also acknowledged with appreciation the favourable climate created by the Governments concerned, which enabled the High Commissioner to report some positive results in certain regions of the world in reuniting families. He hoped that the political and humanitarian goodwill of Governments would prevail in that field.

55. Despite important repatriation movements, there were still some 5 million refugees - almost half of the world refugee population - on the African continent, and the tragic situation of that large population, concentrated in the Sudan and Somalia, remained critical.

56. The problem of refugees in Asia was still very serious, particularly because of the steady and considerable increase in the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. That situation was indeed unique and deserved the utmost concern of the international community because Pakistan now had a larger refugee population in its territory than any other country in the world. His delegation hoped to see the creation of conditions in Afghanistan that would enable the Afghan refugees to return to their homes in safety, peace and honour. In August 1982, Turkey, in co-operation with the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, had received almost 5,000 Afghan refugees from Pakistan. His Government had adopted a series of measures to facilitate the refugees' adaptation to the conditions in their new environment, and they were now free to settle in Turkey or return to their country of origin.

57. South-East Asia, particularly Thailand, was another area where the refugee problem continued to be a source of great concern for the international community. It was imperative to find a durable solution to the problem of Kampuchean refugees through a political settlement of the Kampuchean problem.

58. In Latin America, despite continuous efforts for the implementation of durable solutions for many refugees by several Governments of the region and the strengthening of the presence of UNHCR there, the refugee population had increased. With respect to other continents, he said that the admission of more Indo-Chinese refugees and the resettlement of handicapped refugees by the United States and some European countries were very commendable. Nevertheless, considerable work remained to be done and greater efforts should be made.

59. He emphasized the fundamental humanitarian nature of the work of UNHCR. Its character was non-political, and it was therefore essential that implementation of the relief and assistance programmes carried out by UNHCR should be free from any

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(Mr. Topcuoglu, Turkey)

interference or political considerations. In that connection, his delegation noted with appreciation the determination of the High Commissioner to remain outside of any political quarrels and to take no sides or be a party to any political conflict. In the light of the present refugee situation, it was clear that the continuation of UNHCR was imperative. His delegation would support fully the relevant draft resolution to be submitted to the Third Committee.

60. He also emphasized the vital role of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. His delegation firmly believed that the Executive Committee, by assuming the full functions and responsibilities entrusted to it, would be of great help in ensuring the success of the administration and management of UNHCR's programmes.

61. Mr. RAMLI NAAM (Malaysia) said that since 1975, Malaysia had been providing assistance to hundreds of thousands of Indo-Chinese illegal immigrants and displaced persons that had found their way to its shores. However, being a small country, it could make only minimal efforts. Accordingly, Malaysia had been compelled to seek the assistance of the international community, and the response so far had been commendable. Recognition of the principle of equitable burden sharing by the international community had contributed considerably to ameliorating the situation. There had been over 70,000 refugees in Malaysia at the peak of the crisis; today there were approximately 10,500 of those unfortunate people still in temporary camps in Malaysia. In view of that improved situation, his delegation wished to express once again its gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his personal involvement and to the High Commissioner and his staff for their untiring efforts to respond to refugee situations when they arose. He also expressed Malaysia's appreciation to the major settlement countries - the United States, Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and others - for their gallant response to resettlement appeals and for their generous financial contributions. While the situation in Malaysia was under control, the international community could not remain complacent, for arrivals in Malaysia were still continuing.

62. Malaysia shared the concern of the High Commissioner and other delegations regarding the problem of the large-scale flows of refugees in other parts of the world, such as Africa, West Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. It was pleased to note that developments in 1981 and early 1982 had contributed to the solution of some refugee problems in those areas. Nevertheless, international efforts to deal with the massive and tragic problems of refugees must be vigorously continued. If those efforts were to be effective, the international community must address itself to the root causes of the problem, and that effort deserved the co-operation of all States.

63. It should be borne in mind that the tragic casualty of any conflict was the human person, and the countries concerned must be made to shoulder a special responsibility and obligation to the world community in that regard. They must make a serious effort to take preventive action to stop refugee exoduses; they must recognize the adverse consequences in neighbouring countries and not presume that their neighbours or the world community would look after what might be regarded by

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(Mr. Ramli Naam, Malaysia)

them as undesirable and maladjusted elements. The world community should exert the necessary pressure to emphasize the obligation and responsibilities of the countries of origin of the refugees.

64. Mr. LOWZOW (Norway) said that the refugee problem was a joint responsibility of the international community, and it was of utmost importance that all should contribute to its solution. His Government viewed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as the main instrument for seeking that solution. The report of the High Commissioner clearly indicated that he was carrying out his mandate satisfactorily. A prerequisite for obtaining the full co-operation of all Governments concerned, the necessary funding and other means of co-operation was that the entire organization of UNHCR should remain non-political. Its aim should always be humanitarian and social in character, and his delegation found regrettable the tendency to bring conflicts of interest between Member States into the sphere of competence of the High Commissioner. Norway welcomed recent initiatives for studying the root causes of large-scale influxes of refugees; however, those efforts should be continued in appropriate forums separate from the Office of the High Commissioner.

65. Since 1975, Norwegian vessels had rescued more than 5,500 boat people on the high seas off South-East Asia and his Government had provided resettlement guarantees for them. In addition, a number of persons in Viet Nam and in camps in South-East Asia had been granted permission to go to Norway. His country had also been able to grant resettlement to refugees from Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. While his Government was aware of the problems that large influxes of refugees had produced in the countries of South-East Asia, it considered it important that the principle of non-refoulement should be scrupulously observed. While the countries of first asylum were experiencing serious problems, they should at least grant the refugees admission to their territories and provide basic care for them until resettlement elsewhere had been arranged.

66. His Government was also pleased to note that family reunification under the orderly departure programme from Viet Nam was now developing in a generally positive way. However, the processing of applications under the programme was still too slow, and his delegation hoped that it would be possible to expedite applications where there were obvious humanitarian considerations. A positive step regarding the boat people had been taken in June 1982, with the agreement between the Government of Thailand and UNHCR on behalf of 12 donor Governments aimed at combating piracy in the South China Sea. The problems related to the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea were, however, only a small part of the work of the High Commissioner in the field of international protection. It had been necessary for the High Commissioner to increase his efforts for the protection of the basic human rights of refugees. Inhumane attacks against defenceless refugees had taken place in refugee camps and settlements in the Middle East, in *southern Africa, in Central America and elsewhere*. His delegation therefore welcomed the fact that the High Commissioner and his Executive Committee had devoted increased attention to the physical safety of refugees.

(Mr. Lowzow, Norway)

67. It had been agreed that voluntary repatriation, whenever possible, was the best solution to the refugee problem. That, however, had been possible only on a rather limited scale. Resettlement seemed therefore to be the most realistic solution for large groups of refugees. From the Asian region alone, more than 800,000 persons had been resettled outside their country of origin since 1975, a fact that demonstrated the responsiveness of the international community to the need for burden-sharing and its readiness to provide durable solutions in situations of large-scale influxes. However, resettlement opportunities were still insufficient, and the High Commissioner faced increasing difficulties in resettling refugees on a more permanent basis.

68. The Norwegian Government had noted that the number of States parties to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol had increased to 93. That was a positive development and an expression of the trust that the international community had in the High Commissioner. His Government was therefore pleased by the decision of Mr. Hartling to make himself available for another term as High Commissioner for Refugees, and he wished to assure him of the fullest support of the Government of Norway.

69. Mr. OUSMANE (Niger) drew attention to the note verbale dated 21 October 1982 from the Permanent Mission of Niger to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat (A/37/576) on co-operation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. That note contained the text of the communiqué issued following the co-ordination meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held on 12 October 1982 at United Nations Headquarters. In paragraph 9 of the communiqué, the Conference declared its support of the candidature of Mr. Dafalla El Hag Yousif Medani, representative of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, for the post of High Commissioner for Refugees.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.