



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 47th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait)

later: Mr. JATIVA (Ecuador)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 102: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
(continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 102: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
(continued) (A/43/3, 12 and Add.1, A/43/226-S/19649, A/43/370, A/43/371-S/19894,
A/43/373, 383, A/43/463-E/1988/106, A/43/510-S/20091, A/43/523, 533, 591, 709, 717
and Add.1 and Corr.1; A/C.3/43/6)

1. Mr. BOSCHWITZ (United States of America) said that he had a deep personal commitment to helping refugees for he himself had been a a refugee from Hitler's Germany. More recently, he had been deeply moved by a visit to refugee camps in Thailand, where UNHCR was doing impressive work to alleviate the tragic plight of thousands of South-East Asian refugees.
2. He was pleased to note that the outlook for the world's refugees had improved in the past three years, partly as a result of skilful diplomacy. UNHCR had organized the safe return of refugees from southern Sudan to Uganda and from Honduras to El Salvador under the most difficult circumstances, and had played a key role in organizing regional conferences on the refugee situations in southern Africa, Central America and South-East Asia which held the promise of finding solutions to long-standing problems. UNHCR had also negotiated promising new agreements with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme for development projects in a number of African countries where refugee problems were acute. The UNHCR Executive Committee had also created a trust fund to study the feasibility of development projects. The High Commissioner was to be commended for focusing on refugee aid and development assistance. He also welcomed internal reforms in UNHCR, particularly the changes in personnel policy that had improved staff-management relations, especially with regard to staff in hardship posts.
3. Diplomacy and management reforms were of little benefit without adequate funding, however, and UNHCR must be congratulated on having overcome its financial crisis by presenting effectively implemented and credible programmes that attracted firm support.
4. The protection of refugees was, ultimately, the responsibility of the entire international community, which must ensure respect for their lives and rights. UNHCR must act as a catalyst in involving Governments, United Nations agencies and private voluntary organisations in its programmes, but individual Governments and independent organizations were the key to meeting refugees' needs. Ultimately, UNHCR depended on the good will and support of Member States and the resources they provided. He hoped that such support would be forthcoming so that UNHCR could continue to give hope and relief to refugees everywhere.
5. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) said that, as a member of the Organization of African Unity, his country had participated in the decision to convene the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa. It fully supported the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action.

(Mr. Galal, Egypt)

6. In order for the refugee problem to be overcome, it must be viewed in its proper dimensions. Solving that problem required genuine and effective co-operation between the countries of North and South and between donor countries and countries that were hosts to large numbers of refugees. It was not a problem of any one State or any one region but a universal problem that had an impact on the entire international community. It was necessary to separate third world problems from great-Power conflicts which only aggravated the refugee problem. His delegation hoped that the prevailing climate of conciliation would help to alleviate the suffering of refugees and to solve many of the related problems.
7. An innovative approach and a spirit of co-operation on the part of host countries and the neighbouring countries which were also affected by the refugee problem would have a considerable impact on tackling the problem.
8. The dimensions of the problem required universal co-operation in putting an end to the human tragedy involved. There was a need for unwavering faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principle of the right of all peoples to self-determination without discrimination on grounds of colour or race, and their right to choose, freely and without foreign interference, the political, economic and social system they preferred. Additional resources must be made available for coping with the refugee problem; the regular budget of the United Nations must not be overburdened in the light of the difficulties it was already encountering.
9. Mr. SKIBSTED (Denmark) said that the ultimate protection for a refugee was a durable solution, whether in the form of voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement in a third country. The High Commissioner had the support of the international community in his efforts to find such solutions and could rely on a wide variety of international and national legal instruments in his monitoring States' compliance with their obligations with regard to refugees. States tended to have different understandings of their international legal obligations, however, depending upon whether they were countries of origin, of first arrival or of resettlement, and UNHCR had a responsibility to reconcile those differences and conflicting interests.
10. Countries of origin might deny that they had violated fundamental human rights and freedoms and claim that their refugees had simply left in search of a better life. In such cases, the international community and UNHCR should try to secure the safe return of such refugees and their right to live in freedom in their country of origin. Countries of first arrival, for their part, often felt that they were bearing a disproportionately heavy burden and expected international assistance and offers of resettlement, especially if they had many refugees and limited resources. Lastly, countries of resettlement also faced a different problem, the costly and difficult task of integrating refugees of different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds. Collective efforts must therefore be made to reconcile those differing perceptions of refugee situations.

(Mr. Skibsted, Denmark)

11. In countries of origin, efforts should be directed towards creating conditions for repatriation, while in the countries of first asylum they should be directed towards repatriation, financial assistance and resettlement. In the countries of resettlement, the goal should be to provide sufficient resettlement places to UNHCR. The number of traditional resettlement countries must therefore be increased to ensure equitable burden-sharing, and a country that provided a certain number of resettlement places in accordance with its capacity for integration should not at the same time be expected to receive spontaneous asylum-seekers in unregulated numbers. All Member States should be asked to provide resettlement places to UNHCR in order to motivate persons in need of asylum to seek UNHCR's assistance instead of seeking asylum on their own in uncontrolled migrations that only hampered efforts to establish resettlement places and worked to the detriment of genuine refugees registered with UNHCR, who had often been waiting many years for a place of resettlement. UNHCR should also do more to screen refugees on the spot. Of course, the competent national authorities would still have the final decision as to who was to be granted asylum in their territory.

12. A strong UNHCR presence in all refugee-affected regions would help those regions deal with individual asylum-seekers' requests for refugee status and placement and also help States decide who qualified as a refugee. A global resettlement scheme was also needed for refugees who, in the opinion of UNHCR, needed resettlement in a third country. Past experience indicated that such a scheme was feasible and would lead to the more orderly management of flows of asylum-seekers, thereby benefiting individual refugees.

13. Lastly, his delegation endorsed the proposal to convene an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees and hoped that such a conference would reach consensus on such matters as the preservation of first asylum, determination of refugee status, maintenance of adequate resettlement levels, repatriation, orderly departure, control of illegal departure and other important issues.

14. Mr. TEEHANKEE (Philippines) commended UNHCR for its non-political, humanitarian efforts on behalf of refugees. Encouraging developments in certain regions of the world offered real hopes of solving some refugee problems. On the African continent, massive organized or spontaneous repatriation of refugees was taking place. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had heightened public awareness of the situation in that region and his delegation looked forward to the attainment of the objectives set forth in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Conference. The Geneva agreements on Afghanistan were also paving the way for solving the hitherto intractable problem of millions of Afghan refugees. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there had been a dramatic increase in the past two years in the number of refugees voluntarily returning to their countries of origin. The planned international conference on Central American refugees was also a positive development and his delegation hoped that the conference would be successful. All those developments confirmed that man-made problems and crises could be solved with the necessary good will.

(Mr. Techankee, Philippines)

15. Those positive developments contrasted sharply with the serious refugee situation in the South-East Asian region. The Foreign Ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had recently reiterated their serious concern over the continued influx of Indo-Chinese refugees, displaced persons and other asylum-seekers into the ASEAN region, a situation which could create severe difficulties for the ASEAN countries and affect stability of the region.

16. In recognition of the collective responsibility of the international community and in keeping with its strong humanitarian concern for the plight of Indo-Chinese refugees, the Philippines had for almost nine years provided temporary asylum to thousands of such refugees. In that connection, he wished to thank UNHCR, other United Nations agencies, donor countries and non-governmental organizations for their continued support for the refugee centres in his country. Such centres had been established to provide temporary refuge for Indo-Chinese refugees until durable solutions were found. It was a matter of concern to the ASEAN countries that the application by certain countries of new restrictive resettlement criteria had given rise to a long-term refugee population in the region. While some developed countries were taking in large numbers of refugees, the overall spirit of international burden-sharing seemed to be waning.

17. His country joined its ASEAN partners in calling for full support for the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees and hoped that the Conference would lead to comprehensive and durable solutions to the region's refugee problem.

18. Miss AIOUZE (Algeria) said that the four decades that had elapsed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had amply demonstrated that efforts to protect and find durable solutions for refugees were an integral part of efforts to promote the universal protection of human rights. Her delegation had therefore noted with satisfaction the recent statement by the High Commissioner that the fundamental relationship between human rights and refugee problems merited particular attention during the commemorative year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

19. Her delegation also wished to call attention to the commemoration in 1989 of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the Organization of African Unity of its Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Populations in Africa.

20. UNHCR's task had become increasingly complex. The refugee situation was characterized by frequent violations of internationally accepted humanitarian principles and by the fact that many States continued to ignore the concept of burden-sharing. That lack of solidarity not only exacerbated the refugee situation, but also forced developing countries which offered asylum despite their own serious economic difficulties to shoulder an impossible burden. New influxes of refugees to those countries made the principle of equitable burden-sharing more relevant than ever and there was a need for resolute action to reverse current trends. International mobilization would trigger a process leading to durable solutions to refugee problems and would also contribute decisively to the efforts of UNCHR.

(Miss Aïoume, Algeria)

21. Her delegation expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by UNHCR to refugees from Western Sahara who had sought asylum in Algeria pending completion of the decolonization process in that Territory. Her country intended to maintain its policy of receiving and assisting Saharan refugees and hoped that the assistance programme for them would continue and be strengthened until the causes that prompted them to seek asylum were eliminated.

22. In the wake of the success of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, it was time to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Conference. Her delegation fully supported the upcoming international conference on Central American refugees and hoped that the conference would attain its stated objectives.

23. She reiterated her delegation's support for UNHCR activities to promote refugee-related development activities. In that connection, her delegation also supported the establishment of a project planning fund, which would embody the concept of harmonising refugee aid with national development plans in third world countries of asylum. It was important that the proposed fund be financed from supplementary resources, however. Lastly, her delegation believed that the question of the linkage between refugee aid and development should be included in the agenda of the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

24. Mrs. MOLOJWANE (Botswana) said that the plight of the over 12 million refugees world wide continued to be an embarrassment to humanity. She called on the international community to make concerted efforts to find solutions to the refugee problem and to address its root causes.

25. Her country was of central importance to the refugee situation in southern Africa because of its geographical position in that region, for Botswana shared a border with, among others, Namibia and South Africa. Since its independence in 1966, her country had been pursuing a policy of granting asylum in keeping with the relevant international instruments and national laws. The influx of refugees into her country had generally coincided with the escalation of conflict in neighbouring States.

26. The sole refugee settlement in Botswana was situated in the north-east of the country and housed a population which was mainly of rural origin. Under various assistance programmes, educational, health, water and sanitation infrastructures and services had been established at the settlement and the refugees were engaged in various training and self-sufficiency projects. With respect to the small proportion of refugees living in urban areas in her country, the majority were economically active and had attained varying degrees of self-sufficiency.

27. Her delegation wished to thank the UNHCR office established in Botswana in 1966 for its assistance programmes aimed at meeting the basic needs of refugees; promoting local integration; and facilitating voluntary repatriation and refugee transit. The office also funded counselling services for refugees.

(Mrs. Molojwane, Botswana)

28. She wished to thank UNHCR, UNDP and the Nordic countries for having made it possible to hold the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa.

29. Mr. Jativa (Ecuador) took the Chair.

30. Mr. FORTIER (Canada) said that large new movements of refugees in Africa and the Middle East had brought a renewed sense of urgency to international efforts to respond to the ongoing plight of the world's refugees. While States had an obligation to attempt to deal with the root causes of refugee movements, in existing refugee situations, whose root causes could not be addressed, they must first ensure respect for the principle of first asylum and then work for an adequate international response. Countries of first asylum in Africa and Asia were especially burdened because they also had to contend with their own development needs. The international community must respond generously with both resettlement and financial assistance.

31. UNHCR needed generous support, and in 1988 Canada would be increasing its contribution to \$25 million to reflect its awareness of the deepening refugee crisis and the extraordinary demands created by the overall growth in the number of refugees. Canada supported the High Commissioner's strategies for strengthening UNHCR's refugee aid and development activities through co-operation with various development agencies. It had long advocated an international co-operative system for the identification and protection of refugees and had based its own refugee programmes on co-operation with other countries and UNHCR. It contributed actively to programmes designed to promote durable solutions; it was a major financial donor and also a principal country of resettlement. It supported efforts to promote existing standards of protection and UNHCR's information campaign aimed at increasing understanding of the very complex issues involved in the current refugee situation.

32. He particularly welcomed efforts to help refugee women and UNHCR's focus on the specific needs of women refugees in its programme planning and development, as well as the High Commissioner's support for Canada's own programme for the resettlement of women. The highest priority must be given to programmes to protect and assist refugee women and children and he therefore welcomed the publication of UNHCR of comprehensive guidelines on refugee children. Lastly, he commended the High Commissioner for his initiatives to improve UNHCR's management and administration, which had enabled the office to respond more effectively to alleviating the plight of the world's refugees.

33. Mr. VAN DER KOOI (Netherlands) said that it was encouraging that political conflicts were being resolved, offering prospects of repatriation, the most desirable durable solution for refugees. It was a paradox that it was not only new refugee flows that taxed the available resources of UNHCR, but also promising developments such as the prospect of large-scale repatriation. The international community must find ways and means of providing additional resources for UNHCR and

(Mr. Van Der Kooij, Netherlands)

help it preserve its long-term viability and financial stability. The international community must take a joint look at structural trends in refugee affairs, encompassing durable solutions and their practical implications.

34. His delegation supported the active and comprehensive approach to refugee situations promoted by UNHCR. A close partnership was needed with implementing partners, however, particularly non-governmental organizations, and a division of labour should be established with other intergovernmental organizations. The High Commissioner should explore every opportunity to enhance UNHCR's partnership with voluntary agencies and non-governmental organizations. UNHCR's main role was to facilitate, co-ordinate and stimulate assistance to refugees. The use of implementing partners contributed to infrastructure in the countries concerned and to a broader base of support for refugee problems; it was also an essential element for keeping the Office's structure as flexible as possible, leaving more scope for attention to major policy issues, including those of protection.

35. With a budget growing to a size comparable with that of the United Nations itself, UNHCR would have to agree to an increased role for its Executive Committee, which could only lead to sound decision-making. Management issues should be resolved in a manner consistent with established United Nations rules and regulations, following the advice of qualified United Nations bodies such as the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and without claiming special treatment.

36. His delegation welcomed the increased emphasis placed by the Office on the protection of refugees. It was distressed at the increasing incidence of violations of the fundamental principle of non-refoulement. Ways must be found of improving protection in practical terms rather than through the broadening of definitions. Protection of refugees should also not be pursued in isolation from durable solutions. His delegation had already suggested that an open-ended working group should be established under the auspices of the High Commissioner as a suitable mechanism for discussing durable solutions. Working groups of countries directly concerned, meeting under the auspices of UNHCR, had proved highly effective in preparing packages of both durable solutions and protection measures. In that context, his delegation was keenly interested in the proposed conferences on Central American and Indo-Chinese refugees.

37. It was regrettable that the Executive Committee had been unable to reach agreement on the adoption of UNHCR's draft conclusion on irregular movements of refugees and asylum-seekers. It was gratifying, however, that the consultative process between UNHCR and a number of Western countries had led to a better understanding by UNHCR of the nature of the problems faced in Europe.

38. His delegation welcomed the special attention accorded by UNHCR to refugee women and children, the most vulnerable of the world's refugee population. It hoped that the Office would implement the guidelines on refugee women as soon as possible, especially in the field of protection.

(Mr. Van Der Kooi, Netherlands)

39. His delegation supported the efforts of the Executive Committee to build an international consensus on refugee aid and development; the General Assembly should endorse the conclusions and decisions of the Executive Committee's thirty-ninth session. Integration of refugee aid with structural development assistance was essential. It was most promising that host countries and countries of origin were committing themselves to development policies that would benefit nationals, returnees and refugees. The issue should receive prominent attention at all levels, including that of the governing bodies of development agencies, as well as through co-ordination in the field. The Netherlands would continue to assist UNHCR in its efforts to strengthen co-operation with development agencies and bilateral donors with a view to linking assistance to refugees and returnees with structural development projects.

40. Mr. STROHAL (Austria) said that it was deplorable that the state of world affairs was giving rise, year after year, to new refugee situations which called for concerted efforts on the part of the international community to alleviate them and caused suffering and hardship to a growing number of human beings. At the same time, it was reassuring that political developments in some parts of the world appeared conducive to durable solutions to refugee problems, in particular voluntary repatriation. Through their efforts to find political solutions, the parties involved and the United Nations Secretary-General were contributing decisively to removing the root causes of the flight of millions of people from their homes. He hoped that those efforts would lead to early solutions and serve as an example for other regions of the world.

41. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had succeeded in drawing the attention of the international community to the suffering on the African continent. The plight of the growing numbers of people concerned could be alleviated only by international co-operation. His Government was deeply impressed by the assistance which African States were giving to southern Africans who had been forced to leave their homes; their efforts demonstrated the need to show international solidarity with African States which were hosting refugees, returnees or displaced persons. The Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action were also relevant in revitalising the debate on the important issue of refugee aid and development. The conclusions and decisions of the UNHCR Executive Committee underlined the important role of development-oriented organizations and agencies and also non-governmental organizations in the implementation of programmes benefiting refugees.

42. Austria supported the convening of conferences on Central American and Indo-Chinese refugees. While considerations of economy mitigated against too rapid a proliferation of international conferences, such conferences could, if carefully prepared and accompanied by the necessary political will, contribute decisively to the solution of refugee problems.

43. Austria, a traditional country of first asylum, had experienced a considerable increase in the number of asylum-seekers over the past three years. He wished to make it clear that the agreements between Austria and some Eastern European

(Mr. Strohal, Austria)

countries on the abolition of tourist visas had not led to an increase in asylum-seekers. Some Eastern European countries, in endeavouring to implement the principles of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, had introduced more liberal regulations permitting their nationals to travel abroad. Some Eastern European tourists decided to stay and ask for asylum, but few of them were granted refugee status. While Austria received inestimable help and co-operation from the main countries of resettlement, the burden remained considerable. Nevertheless, Austria remained firmly committed to its humanitarian tradition and asylum policy.

44. The close link between effective protection of human rights and the protection of refugees was well known; despite some progress in that area, violations of the principles and basic standards for the treatment of refugees continued to occur in many parts of the world. Such violations included failure to observe the principles of asylum and non-refoulement, violations of the rights and safety of refugees and asylum-seekers, and military or armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements. International protection of refugees must remain strong and meaningful. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the Executive Committee's recent conclusion on international solidarity and refugee protection.

45. It was gratifying that the Office was paying more attention, in terms both of assistance and of international protection, to the most vulnerable groups, particularly refugee women and children. His delegation hoped that the High Commissioner would pursue his efforts intensively on behalf of those groups.

46. Mr. SOBANDLA (Swaziland) said that the factors which gave rise to refugee situations varied from region to region and were sometimes very complex. His delegation welcomed recent encouraging developments in international relations because it believed that one effective way of solving the refugee problem was to deal with its root causes. Swaziland drew encouragement from the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa.

47. The abolition of apartheid would contribute enormously to alleviating the refugee problem in southern Africa. The number of people in the region identified as refugees, returnees or displaced persons was too high for the small, developing economies of countries of the region to sustain. Despite their meagre resources, the countries of southern Africa had carried out faithfully their obligation to provide asylum to genuine refugees. He hoped therefore that the objectives of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action would be realized.

48. Swaziland urged Member States to continue the search for speedy, tangible solutions to the unprecedented growth of the refugee crisis. Political accommodation and dialogue played a major role in easing hardships and tension, as the favourable trends in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Afghanistan demonstrated. The constant attention paid by UNHCR to the plight of refugees had awakened most nations and Governments to the issue, which was why the crisis had abated in some regions. Swaziland hoped that increased attention would be paid to the situation in South-East Asia; it was important to monitor the refugee situation

(Mr. Sobandla, Swaziland)

there, especially in view of the disturbing tendency among receiving countries to refer to Indo-Chinese refugees not as bona fide refugees but as economic migrants who threatened the economic survival of genuine citizens.

49. His delegation commended UNHCR and other agencies for having identified the enormous refugee problem in Africa, which had worsened in the past year, and for having increased their aid proportionately. It also commended the successful dialogue with North America and European States in trying to reach an amicable solution of the refugee problem.

50. Swaziland, a small developing country, had a total of 34,000 registered refugees, some of whom had been resettled at a rural settlement in south-east Swaziland. A further 3,000 were being accommodated at a reception centre and 12,000 had been settled along the Swazi-Mozambican border. The estimated number of unregistered refugees was 100,000. The most critical problem created by the increased number of refugees was shortage of land for Swaziland, a small land-locked country of about 17,000 square kilometres, which had a total population of 706,000. Overcrowding on the land had a direct impact on agricultural production, the country's main source of income. Internal and external security problems had also been aggravated and the level of crime had increased. Substantial relief assistance was being provided by UNHCR, the World Food Programme, the Lutheran World Federation and CARITAS, as well as by his Government and local non-governmental organizations. However, although mindful of its moral and international obligations, Swaziland found itself obliged to request external assistance and burden-sharing on the refugee issue.

51. Mr. AZAMBUJA (Brazil) said that the changes which had occurred on the international scene in 1988 had underscored the many close links between regional or local crises and refugee problems.

52. The situation of refugees in Central America was not only a consequence of but also an additional factor in the conflicts in that region, for the existence of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons was an essential element which must be taken into account in the regional peace process. In that connection, his Government would be participating in the international conference on Central American refugees to be held in Guatemala City in May 1989. It was appropriate that at its thirty-ninth session, the Executive Committee of UNHCR had adopted a consensus decision supporting the planned conference.

53. His delegation wished to reiterate its solidarity with those African countries which had been affected by the problem of refugees and displaced persons and its praise for the attitude of African countries of asylum which, notwithstanding serious economic difficulties, had granted generous and hospitable treatment to refugees from neighbouring countries. In that context, follow-up to ICARA II was essential, especially initiatives for linking refugee assistance programmes with development-related activities. Brazil had attended the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa and attached the greatest importance to early implementation of the Oslo Plan of Action.

(Mr. Anambujia, Brazil)

54. His Government noted with satisfaction that the Executive Committee had devoted continuing attention to the search for durable solutions to the problems of thousands of refugees, while addressing with equal concern both new and deteriorating refugee situations. It also welcomed the Executive Committee's decision to open the sessions of its two sub-committees and informal meetings to participation by other Member States and specialised agencies as observers.

55. The refugee question was a problem which must be solved internationally if it was to be solved at all, and international efforts to that end could not dispense with the international institutional framework and machinery that had been set up over previous decades. The interdependence between an institutional framework and a willingness to co-operate was a fundamental aspect of the United Nations and was reflected fully in UNHCR's work.

56. Mrs. SEMAMRO-KALEMA (Uganda) said that her delegation was deeply concerned at the increase in the overall number of refugees in Africa. As developing countries, the countries of Africa faced serious economic problems and therefore required all the international assistance available to attend to the basic needs of African refugees, returnees and displaced persons.

57. There were some 5.4 million refugees, returnees or displaced persons in southern Africa as a direct result of the continued domination and oppression of the peoples of South Africa and Namibia by the apartheid régime of South Africa. Her delegation therefore endorsed the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa and hoped that the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of OAU would take steps to implement them. It looked forward to the convening of similar international conferences in other regions of the world.

58. In Central America, the total number of refugees had decreased but UNHCR still faced a major task in implementing its repatriation programme. Intensified peace efforts in the region had contributed significantly to such repatriation. In Afghanistan, as a result of the Geneva agreements, there was hope that, following the withdrawal of foreign troops UNHCR would be able to implement a major repatriation programme for Afghan refugees. In South-East Asia, there was an urgent need to find a lasting solution to the problems of Vietnamese and Kampuchean refugees.

59. Continued military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America had caused additional injuries to already suffering refugees, particularly refugee women and children, and remained a source of great concern to the international community.

60. Her delegation shared the concern expressed by the High Commissioner in paragraphs 20-22 of his report (A/43/12). A number of Governments had introduced or reinforced restrictive measures clearly aimed at limiting the entry of asylum-seekers. It was most regrettable that, in the administration of those

(Mrs. Semambo-Kalema, Uganda)

measures, some Governments had sought to appease bigots in their own countries by applying them mainly to refugees from developing countries.

61. There was currently no international mechanism for assisting internally displaced persons and her delegation hoped that the United Nations would find an early solution to that problem.

62. It remained her Government's policy to extend hospitality to refugees from neighbouring countries, but it could not allow Ugandan territory to be used for subversive activities against its neighbours. Full respect for human rights and the rule of law was a cardinal policy of the present Government of Uganda, which had made it clear that every Ugandan was free to return home. In that vein, an amnesty had been extended to many of those who had previously fought against the Government. As a result, as the High Commissioner had pointed out, the largest movement of voluntary repatriation during 1987 had involved the spontaneous and organized return of 81,000 Ugandan refugees. Her delegation wished to express its gratitude to UNHCR and other agencies which had assisted in the resettlement of those returnees.

63. In conclusion, her delegation believed that, while voluntary repatriation was an essential element in solving refugee problems, the root causes of such problems must be eliminated before lasting peace and security could be achieved in any given region.

64. Ms. ZINDOGA (Zimbabwe) said that massive outflows of refugees continued to be a major global phenomenon. Her delegation was pleased to note, however, that concerned countries in South-East Asia, together with UNHCR, were trying to find effective ways of tackling the refugee problem in that region and hoped that an international conference on the plight of Indo-Chinese refugees would be held in the near future. Her delegation also welcomed the success of the policy of voluntary repatriation in Central America and hoped that the proposed international conference on Central American refugees would meet in May 1989, as planned, so that strategies for durable solutions could be formulated bearing in mind that the refugee problem in that area had been further exacerbated by recent hurricanes.

65. Her delegation was concerned at the growing influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan in recent months and at the large number of refugees fleeing from floods in Bangladesh, a country which was in no position to cope with such a catastrophe. She appealed to the international community to contribute generously to that country's relief.

66. In the Middle East, the suffering of the Palestinian and Arab refugees continued and her delegation hoped that an international peace conference on the Middle East would be convened as soon as possible. Her delegation also welcomed the resumption of inter-communal talks in Cyprus, as there was an urgent need for Cypriot refugees to return voluntarily to their homes.

(Ma. Zindoga, Zimbabwe)

67. The region most affected by an increase in the number of refugees was Africa, where there had been 800,000 new refugees, including 260,000 refugees from the Sudan in south-west Ethiopia, in the past year. Her delegation urged the international community to continue to provide emergency assistance in terms of food and transportation.

68. It was encouraging to note that, in Uganda, the policy of repatriating Ugandan refugees from neighbouring countries was meeting with some degree of success. The situation in southern Africa was deteriorating rapidly, however, as refugees from Mozambique continued to flood into neighbouring States. In Zimbabwe alone, nearly 200,000 Mozambican refugees were either being accommodated in camps or were scattered around the country in makeshift shelters. There were also more than 22,000 South African and Namibian refugees in her country.

69. The magnitude of the tragedy of refugees and displaced persons in the region had been grasped by the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the Conference had identified priority areas for action by the international community and had urged the latter to commit itself to the promotion and implementation of development projects in favour of refugees and displaced persons and host countries. Her delegation could not stress enough the need to link humanitarian aid to economic development. The presence of refugees and displaced persons should not be allowed to impede economic development and perpetuate dependency. Her delegation also endorsed the Conference's appeal to the Secretary-General to hold consultations with a view to ensuring assistance for internally displaced persons, since there was currently no arrangement to cater for such persons. Her delegation wished to express its appreciation to Australia, Canada, Gabon, Ghana, Mauritius, Niger, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Zaire and the Africa Fund, which had provided support in cash at the Conference.

70. The problems of refugees and displaced persons in southern Africa would be solved only when apartheid had been completely eradicated. Her delegation therefore appealed to those members of the Security Council who had shielded South Africa by their veto to desist from blocking efforts to impose mandatory sanctions against that country.

71. Mrs. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Kenya) said that when the various international instruments on refugees had been drafted, it had not been foreseen that some States would seek to interpret them restrictively or give preference to one group of refugees over another. It had been assumed that international burden-sharing would continue in that sphere and that countries would be able to cope with refugee influxes.

72. Refugees had at one time been mainly able-bodied men who fled from political persecution and war, often leaving their families behind. They had not been millions of children, women and disabled and aging persons searching for peace across countries' borders, nor an educated class searching for greener pastures

(Mrs. Arungu-Olende, Kenya)

abroad. Hunger, poverty and drought had not been envisaged as possible root causes of mass exoduses, nor had the oppressive and destabilising policies of apartheid assumed their current proportions. All those factors were now at play and the refugee problem throughout the world had become increasingly complex. UNHCR must therefore function differently, although still within the terms of its original mandate.

73. It must be recognised that international instruments and national legal structures were not the complete answer to the refugee problem. Refugee protection depended, ultimately, on the morality of nations and on the political will of States to treat refugees properly by developing and applying humane and socially responsible practices. That moral dimension was what made the work of UNHCR unique among international organizations and at the same time made its task often extremely difficult. States parties to the various refugee instruments must revive the old co-operation with UNHCR in rebuilding and maintaining that moral dimension while the root causes of refugee problems were sought and durable solutions were pursued.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.