



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait)

later: Mr. JATIVA (Ecuador)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 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. Mrs. NIKOLIC (Yugoslavia) said that the refugee situation, in the context of current global political, economic and social trends, was not encouraging. At the same time, recent efforts to resolve long-standing difficulties in certain regions of the world afforded real hope that solutions to refugee problems could be found. Her Government supported the humanitarian character and development-oriented approach of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as its emphasis on finding durable solutions. Those solutions - voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in third countries - were all of equal importance. The choice of the appropriate solution, along with concrete measures for its implementation, should be based on the particular needs in each case.
2. Her delegation strongly supported all activities aimed at assisting development efforts in countries of asylum in Africa, Asia and Latin America, since those countries were burdened not only with economic problems but also with serious refugee problems. In carrying out those activities, it was important to co-ordinate the activities of UNHCR with other relevant United Nations agencies and with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
3. The refugee problem in southern Africa was the result of South Africa's apartheid policy, its illegal occupation of Namibia and its acts of aggression and destabilization against neighbouring States. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had proposed measures aimed at finding lasting solutions to the problems in that region. It was now time to implement those measures and to formulate appropriate short- and medium-term strategies for assisting the affected populations in the areas of emergency preparedness; needs assessment and delivery of assistance; recovery and development; and mobilization of resources.
4. Her delegation supported the convening of an international conference on Central American refugees and the proposal for the convening of an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees.
5. She stressed the need for further promotion of international protection of refugees and of compliance with existing international norms. Furthermore, States that had not already done so should accede to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol of 1967. UNHCR had an important role to play in the area of the promotion and dissemination of refugee law and its efforts in that field deserved full support.
6. Despite the conclusions adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner, military and armed attacks on

(Mrs. Nikolic, Yugoslavia)

refugee camps and settlements continued. Every possible measure must be taken to prevent such attacks.

7. The thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee had given renewed emphasis to the question of refugee women and children and had stressed the interdependence of the special needs of refugee women in regard to assistance, protection and durable solutions. Her delegation fully supported UNHCR efforts in strengthening preventive measures to enhance the physical safety of refugee women.

8. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to strengthen its field structure and to reorganize some of the supporting administrative structures at Headquarters. The Executive Committee, at its thirty-ninth session, had expressed concern about the successful financing of UNHCR because of its continuing need for additional sources of income and the ever-increasing number of refugees requiring assistance. To confront that problem, UNHCR was attempting to expand its donor base; at the same time, it was making maximum use of the resources provided by host Governments. Her delegation also appreciated the efforts of UNHCR to improve its ongoing assessment of priorities and the mechanisms established for identifying possibilities for redeployment of resources from lower to higher priority areas.

9. In accordance with the relevant international instruments and with its own legislation, her country did everything possible to provide humane treatment to refugees. Those efforts included comprehensive health and social welfare programmes and special assistance programmes for handicapped and aged refugees. Finally, she wished to stress her Government's interest in finding a definitive solution for the transit refugees in Yugoslavia.

10. Mr. KOPONEN (Finland) said that, although the overall situation of refugees in the world was still cause for concern, some encouraging signs had been emerging. In particular, regional developments leading to political accommodation and peaceful solutions to disputes and conflicts would have a positive impact on the refugee situation. UNHCR had a key role to play in finding innovative solutions to the refugee problem and his Government continued to support strongly and to participate in its efforts. Examples of that participation included sizeable increases in Finland's contribution to UNHCR over the past few years and an increase in its annual refugee quota.

11. His delegation viewed the protection of refugees as the principal task of UNHCR and therefore supported the increased emphasis on that task. Nevertheless, there were still many situations which threatened the physical or humanitarian rights of refugees. For example, the repeated condemnation of armed attacks on refugees had not diminished the occurrence of such acts; it was imperative that the international community do everything in its power to prevent them. The repeated instances of refoulement were another area of concern.

12. Women and children, who accounted for the majority of refugees, needed special protection and assistance, a fact recognized by UNHCR. His delegation wished to encourage efforts by the Office to promote income-generating activities for refugee women; in that connection, better demographic and socio-economic data were needed to help UNHCR identify and design effective programmes.

(Mr. Koyonen, Finland)

13. The arrangement of training programmes for refugee children in settlements and camps was also an important priority. His Government fully supported the guidelines established concerning refugee children and, in that connection, wished to emphasize the importance of family reunification.

14. In view of the positive developments in Afghanistan, his Government strongly encouraged efforts to assist the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees and the reconstruction of that country. As a practical measure, his country had made pledges totalling \$6 million for Afghan assistance.

15. The situation in Africa had deteriorated over the past year. It was nevertheless encouraging that voluntary repatriation was continuing, and he stressed the need to ensure that such a process occurred under conditions of safety and dignity. His Government appreciated UNHCR's efforts to meet the needs of refugees in the host countries of southern Africa and hoped for the timely implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa. His country also welcomed the recommendations made at that Conference to reinforce the activities launched by the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II).

16. His delegation had followed with keen interest the negotiations between Angola, Cuba and South Africa concerning the future of Namibia. Those negotiations appeared to have produced results and it was now time for the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978).

17. Another topic of major importance was the need to link refugee aid to the development process. His country fully supported the efforts of UNHCR to pursue durable solutions for refugees in close co-operation with other United Nations and related agencies; in that connection, he wished to emphasize the important co-operation between UNHCR and UNDP in the implementation of development projects.

18. His country supported the conclusions of the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee, which had welcomed the proposal for the convening of an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees and the decision to convene an international conference on Central American refugees. While it was useful to hold such conferences, it was important that they be carefully prepared and that all countries concerned participate in a constructive manner. In connection with the refugee situation in South-East Asia, his Government welcomed the active role being played by UNHCR in facilitating dialogue between the various countries in that region.

19. Noting with concern the UNHCR budget estimates for 1989, his Government hoped that UNHCR might broaden its donor base and find new sources of income to finance its programmes. That called for careful project planning and for assistance programmes to be designed in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Lastly, his Government gave assurances that its commitment to and financial support for the work of UNHCR would be maintained in the future.

20. Mrs. DE BARISH (Costa Rica) said that her delegation was encouraged by the progress achieved in many regions, Africa and Asia in particular, with respect to the repatriation of refugees, either through spontaneous action or through UNHCR. With regard to UNHCR efforts to promote voluntary repatriation in Central America over the past two years, it was clear that the intensified peace initiatives had done much to facilitate returnee movements. In that connection, her delegation was pleased that the High Commissioner's report (A/43/12) had recognized the signing of the 1987 Procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America as a significant achievement and hoped that the current impasse in the implementation of that agreement would be overcome. The report had stressed the importance of regional agreements leading to political solutions, since it had been demonstrated that the fate of refugees was inextricably linked to the wider political, social and economic context.

21. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1967 United Nations Declaration on Territorial Asylum embodied the principle that everyone had the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. Asylum remained, however, a matter of State sovereignty and the right to grant asylum had not been recognized as a binding international legal norm. Her country had unilaterally recognized that right since 1821 and, as a country of asylum, sincerely welcomed the assistance provided by UNHCR to Costa Rica's large rural and urban refugee population.

22. The UNHCR report on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons of Central America (A/43/591) had stressed the importance of the tripartite commissions, whose responsibility it was to organize and co-ordinate repatriation and the free choice of a place of reintegration in the country of origin. As a member of one of those commissions, her country was encouraged to note the increase in the number of voluntary returnees as a result of the work of the tripartite commissions and the programmes of voluntary repatriation.

23. Her delegation wished to reiterate its satisfaction with the close co-operation between UNHCR and UNDP in the elaboration of those sections of the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America which concerned refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The importance of that co-operation had been reaffirmed by the decision to convene an international conference on Central American refugees to find solutions to the problems of countries with large refugee or returnee populations, in co-ordination with the development programmes of those countries. The conference would also endeavour to promote the co-ordination of Central American development efforts within the United Nations system.

24. Her Government also commended the High Commissioner's efforts in other areas, including family reunification, the security of refugees, and the protection of refugee women and children. The particular attention paid by UNHCR to that last issue was of special interest to her delegation.

25. Her delegation also attached importance to the conclusions adopted by the Executive Committee at its thirty-eighth session regarding the problem of military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements. It agreed with UNHCR that those conclusions would help to strengthen international respect for the rights and security of refugees.

(Mrs. De Barish, Costa Rica)

26. It was encouraging to note that the number of States that had become parties to one or both of the basic international refugee instruments had tripled. It would be even more encouraging if those States which had not yet done so also acceded to those instruments so that they might become universal in scope.

27. Her delegation noted the important public information activities being carried out by UNHCR, which had made efficient use of the various media available. Those activities included special benefit concerts, a round-table on the protection of refugees, and the monthly publication of the magazine Refugees.

28. Lastly, her delegation, together with the other Central American delegations, had prepared a draft resolution entitled "International Conference on Central American Refugees". She hoped that the resolution would receive the support of the Third Committee.

29. Mr. TANIGUCHI (Japan) said that, over the past year, the problem of refugees had become increasingly complex. A durable solution for refugees must be based principally on the solution of regional conflicts; to that end, his Government would continue to work for increased co-operation for peace.

30. In South-East Asia, the influx of asylum-seekers and the 150,000 Indo-Chinese refugees still living in camps imposed a heavy burden on countries of the region. Although international efforts to help those refugees had concentrated mainly on resettlement in third countries, in future there would be an increased need to explore the possibility of voluntary repatriation, while continuing with efforts to promote resettlement and deter new outflows of boat people.

31. The signing of the Geneva agreements on Afghanistan had been a major step. Since most Afghan refugees were still in Pakistan and Iran and little progress had been made in their repatriation, it was crucial that they should return voluntarily to their homeland in safety and honour as soon as possible. The international community should unify its efforts to that end. Japan had pledged an initial contribution of \$US 60 million for assisting Afghan refugees through the relevant United Nations agencies, including UNHCR. It was considering another contribution to the operation through the United Nations Emergency Fund, in addition to the dispatch of medical and water supply experts.

32. As natural disasters had aggravated the already difficult situation in Africa, the international community should pay more attention to the serious refugee problem there and the heavy burden it placed on countries of first asylum. In other parts of the world such as the Middle East, Central America and Europe, there were large numbers of refugees for whom assistance and relief were also required.

33. Voluntary repatriation was the best durable solution for the millions of refugees in the world and strenuous efforts should continue towards that end. Although there were difficulties with that approach, it was encouraging that over 250,000 refugees had so far been able to return to their homes. Resettlement in third countries and, where appropriate, in first-asylum countries remained an important alternative, although it was clear that massive influxes of refugees into

(Mr. Taniguchi, Japan)

first-asylum countries and their prolonged stay there imposed a heavy burden on those countries, which must continue to receive international assistance.

34. His delegation welcomed the successful conclusion of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa and looked forward to the other proposed international conferences on refugees, which should serve to deepen understanding and promote co-operation among participants.

35. The work of UNHCR had become more complicated than ever before in dealing with the accelerated influx of refugees and, in particular, the expanded emergency relief operations stemming from the recent development of peace talks on several conflict areas in the world. At its thirty-ninth session, the Executive Committee had made some improvements in that field through a frank exchange of views among its members.

36. The field activities of UNHCR must be given high priority since they were its main responsibility: there must be better treatment of field staff and proper implementation of the rotation rule. Aid for refugee-related development was also important, since the development of recipient countries was often adversely affected by influxes of refugees. UNHCR should devote the utmost efforts to carrying out its role as catalyst and co-ordinator, however, and should not become a development-oriented organization. Even within that framework, it was quite possible to explore ways of meeting any requests for development, for example, by strengthening technical support services. Close co-ordination was essential between UNHCR and other international organizations concerned with development, such as UNDP and the World Bank.

37. Given its financial constraints, UNHCR should strive for maximum possible efficiency by using existing staff and promoting co-ordination among the relevant bodies of the United Nations system. It must make every effort to curtail projects which were not urgently needed and to pursue more savings. Emergency operations should not all become permanent, particularly in terms of staffing, since UNHCR must remain as free as possible to respond to other contingencies in the future. Transfers from the General Programme Reserve to other accounts should be carefully controlled so that it could maintain its proper function. UNHCR's efforts to find more donors in the private sector were commendable; at the same time he hoped that it would make its budget more transparent. Closer co-operation with non-governmental organizations should be encouraged so as to ease the burden on UNHCR.

38. As long as there were refugees in the world, the international community had a responsibility to help them, a responsibility which must be shared by all Member States. His Government had participated actively in international efforts by making substantial contributions to UNHCR. It had contributed more than \$US 33 million in 1988 and was prepared to make a further contribution, equivalent to approximately \$11.5 million, to the various programmes of UNHCR. In the long term UNHCR's function should be strengthened in order to respond to the increased need for emergency relief for refugees.

39. Mr. CHIDUMO (Mozambique) said that, despite the increasing efforts of the international community, the situation of refugees, displaced persons and returnees had worsened over the past year, especially in southern Africa. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had succeeded in identifying clearly the root causes of the increasing displacement of populations in that region. One of its most relevant conclusions had been that the plight of refugees, returnees and displaced persons was more than a humanitarian and political problem and had become an economic and developmental problem for the entire southern African region. The Conference had demonstrated once again that the situation in southern Africa required the concerted attention of the international community if a more severe human tragedy was to be averted.

40. Only the abolition of the anachronistic and abominable system of apartheid could bring lasting peace, prosperity and development to the region. Mozambique hoped that the recommendations of the International Conference would be endorsed by the General Assembly at its current session so that all Member States could contribute to their effective implementation. It reaffirmed its readiness to co-operate with the Secretary-General in giving effect to paragraphs 21 and 22 of the Plan of Action, particularly the need to set up a mechanism to deal specifically with internally displaced persons; that was particularly important in view of the absence of any international legal instrument on the problem. His delegation was grateful for the valuable financial contributions pledged during the Conference and hoped that the entire international community would address the increasing needs of the peoples of the region.

41. An updated report, prepared by his Government in co-operation with the United Nations, on the mid-term evaluation of the 1988-1989 emergency appeal had recently been made public. It indicated an improvement in the security situation in recent months, as a result of which relief activities were being extended to remote areas, particularly in Zambezia and other provinces. Since the beginning of 1988, major massacres of the civilian population had been prevented, as had the destruction of important economic and social infrastructures, demonstrating the determination of the people of Mozambique and their armed forces to defend their national independence and promote peace and progress. In that endeavour, Mozambique enjoyed the solidarity and support of the front-line States. As the security situation improved, new people had been brought into the category of affected and internally displaced persons. The remaining weeks of 1988 were likely to see much larger numbers of spontaneous returnees, particularly from Malawi, to the areas of Tete, Niassa and Zambezia provinces.

42. Negotiations were currently under way between Mozambique, Malawi and UNHCR for the establishment of a tripartite commission to deal with all aspects of voluntary repatriation and assistance to returnees. His Government would do its utmost to ensure that the principle of voluntary repatriation was respected.

43. Despite those positive trends, millions of Mozambicans still depended on the solidarity and generosity of the international community. They were suffering the consequences of a continuing scorched earth policy, a policy of violence and destruction which particularly affected children, women and the elderly. Floods and severe droughts had made the national economy even more vulnerable. Peace was

(Mr. Chidumo, Mozambique)

therefore vital not only for the people of Mozambique, but for the economic and social development of the entire southern African region.

44. His delegation endorsed the recommendations of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action, particularly those regarding the efforts to be made to minimize the risk of creating dependency on food and other emergency aid so as to allow affected people to achieve self-sufficiency. His delegation trusted that the international community would continue to extend maximum support to the people of Mozambique, support that had already made it possible to save thousands of lives.

45. Mr. Jative (Ecuador) took the Chair.

46. Mr. WILLE (Norway) said that his Government actively supported the valuable humanitarian work of the High Commissioner and his Office. The combination of action in the field with the responsibility of ensuring effective legal protection of refugees was a complex, demanding and unique mandate.

47. It was encouraging to note from the High Commissioner's report that some 250,000 refugees had returned voluntarily to their countries of origin and that there was increasing co-operation and co-ordination between UNHCR and other United Nations bodies, and a linking of refugee aid to development. UNHCR had a catalytic role to play in mobilizing all partners from the very beginning of a refugee problem and in initiating planning for longer-term development. His delegation welcomed the Office's continued promotion of self-reliance in its programme activities, and the measures that it had taken to strengthen its evaluation efforts and to take into account the long-term effects of refugee programmes on the environment. It was distressing that there had been an increase in the world refugee population in the period under review and that refoulement, unjustified detention and military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements had continued.

48. With regard to the protection of refugee women and children, his delegation commended the Office for establishing a high-level steering committee on refugee women. Further action at both national and international level was essential to achieving real progress. Opportunities must be created for enhancing the self-reliance of refugee women, thereby limiting the risks of their exploitation and enabling them to assume fully their key role in socio-economic life. At its thirty-eighth session, the Executive Committee had recognized that within the broader refugee population children had special needs.

49. Norway would actively follow up the recommendations of the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa and called upon others to do likewise.

50. Violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms continued to be the principal causes of massive flows of refugees. States must fulfil their obligations under the Charter and other international human rights instruments so as to reduce new flows of refugees and also help create the conditions which would allow refugees to return home. His country remained convinced that voluntary

(Mr. Wille, Norway)

repatriation, though often not an easy solution, was the best one. Norway encouraged the active involvement of UNHCR in promoting that option and in helping countries of origin create appropriate socio-economic conditions for the reintegration of returnees. Where voluntary repatriation was not feasible, local integration was normally the best solution. He paid tribute to the generosity of many countries of first arrival, particularly those with limited resources of their own. Those countries needed increased support from the world community; his delegation welcomed the efforts undertaken by UNHCR to assist affected countries in co-operation with other United Nations bodies.

51. His delegation believed that resettlement in third countries was a durable solution of last resort when solutions were not available within the region. In that connection, Norway operated a resettlement programme which reflected its view that only the full integration of refugees in their new environment could be satisfactory. If resettlement became accepted as a normal procedure, however, it could become self-perpetuating and counter-productive. The number of available resettlement opportunities represented only a small fraction of the number of people seeking such opportunities and it would be unfortunate if genuine refugees were to suffer in such a situation. The first duty and priority of the international community was to assist those in real need of international protection.

52. Norway was one of the major donors to the High Commissioner's programmes, not only in per capita but also in absolute terms. Its contribution so far in 1988 amounted to approximately \$US 16.4 million. His Government's strong commitment and financial support to the work of UNHCR would be maintained in future. In that context, it noted that intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations were vital partners in the implementation of the High Commissioner's programmes.

53. Mr. RALEBITSO (Lesotho) said that the problem of refugees in southern Africa was a result of the political situation in South Africa and of South Africa's violation of the basic principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States by providing, inter alia, material, financial and logistical support to rebel and dissident movements operating in the region. As long as such violations continued with impunity, the problem of refugees and displaced persons would persist. Despite its unenviable geopolitical situation, his Government had always reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the noble ideals and principles enshrined in the international refugee instruments. Lesotho would always stand ready to receive all bona fide refugees fleeing from political persecution and harassment in their countries of origin.

54. Since the mid-1960s, some 4,000 refugees had been integrated into Lesotho's society. Since the early 1980s, however, Lesotho had been confronted with serious problems regarding the safety of refugees, since South Africa perceived them as a constant threat to its security. South Africa's raid across the border on Maseru in 1982 had left 22 refugees and 12 Basotho dead, not to mention extensive damage to property. Since then, in consultation with the High Commissioner and the liberation movements concerned, Lesotho had worked out a plan whereby refugees whose security could not be guaranteed were evacuated to second countries of

(Mr. Ralebitso, Lesotho)

asylum. That unavoidable action should not be construed as a negation on Lesotho's part of the international instruments on refugees.

55. Despite serious constraints and a fragile economy, Lesotho remained committed to alleviating the plight of refugees in southern Africa. Since the majority of southern African refugees were young people of school age, they had been integrated into Lesotho's schools without any discrimination. Adult refugees were engaged in agriculture or small businesses, or were employed in the public sector. His delegation expressed appreciation to UNHCR for its assistance to refugees through the small enterprise development scheme launched in 1982. In that connection, Lesotho continued to receive support from the International Labour Organisation in the area of employment counselling and training. Loans were made available to refugees for small-scale income-generating projects which were an invaluable source of material and financial support for the genuine self-sufficiency, integration and betterment of the refugee community in Lesotho.

56. Following the promulgation in 1986 of a general amnesty which had extended to all Basotho refugees outside Lesotho, many Basotho had returned. His Government's policy was, as far as possible, to reinstate returnees in the positions they had occupied before leaving the country. With its scarce resources, Lesotho was not in a position to meet all the needs of returnees. His delegation therefore appealed to all donor agencies and the international community in general for appropriate assistance, pursuant to the declarations, decisions and resolutions adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity.

57. Mr. DING (China) noted that, in the past year, some 250,000 refugees had returned to their homeland and started a new life. With a total of 12 million refugees worldwide, however, there was no room for complacency.

58. The massive refugee problems caused by racism, colonialism and foreign aggression and occupation would be eliminated totally only when just and reasonable solutions were found to regional conflicts. The signing of the Geneva agreements and the beginning of the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan had created conditions for the voluntary repatriation of millions of Afghan refugees. The regrettable suspension of the pull-out by the Soviet Government would not only adversely affect the process of political settlement of the Afghan question but also threaten the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees. His delegation hoped therefore that the Geneva agreements would be strictly observed.

59. That the fate of refugees was closely linked with the political climate in the regions concerned was evident in the cases of both Afghanistan and Indo-China. The question of the Kampuchean refugees would be solved only when Viet Nam withdrew its troops from Kampuchea and ended its war of aggression. His delegation hoped that the Vietnamese Government would renounce its current policy and restore Kampuchea to its status of independence, neutrality and non-alignment at an early date, so as to pave the way for a complete solution to the question of the Kampuchean refugees.

60. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had been a success in that it had worked out

(Mr. Ding, China)

principles, methods and strategies for solving the increasingly grave refugee problem in southern Africa and had urged the international community to render greater material assistance.

61. Many countries of first asylum were developing countries which had displayed a spirit of international solidarity by accepting and accommodating large numbers of refugees. Notwithstanding their own limited resources, those countries had diverted substantial human, material and financial resources to the accommodation and resettlement of refugees and, in the process, had themselves sustained enormous political, economic and social pressures. In addition to sharing the heavy burden imposed by refugee problems, the international community, including countries of origin, must endeavour to eliminate the political root causes which gave rise to refugee problems. The international community must also make concerted efforts to solve refugee problems caused by natural disasters.

62. The situation of the Indo-Chinese refugees had gone from bad to worse and the resurgence of the problem of boat people had already put enormous pressure on the South-East Asian countries and Hong Kong. His delegation therefore supported the convening of a further international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees at an appropriate time. It also supported the proposal to convene an international conference on Central American refugees, many of whom had already returned to their countries of origin as a result of the progress achieved in the Central American peace process.

63. His delegation appreciated the efforts made by UNHCR to improve its efficiency and rationalize its use of resources. China had received broad support from UNHCR in accepting and resettling 280,000 Indo-Chinese refugees. The Chinese Government would, as in the past, continue its active support for the work of UNHCR.

64. Mr. PALMA (Honduras) said that special mention must be made of UNHCR's work in the Central American region, where internal crises in a number of countries had led to a massive exodus of refugees and large-scale displacements of persons.

65. Honduras currently provided asylum to some 45,000 refugees from Nicaragua, El Salvador and, to a lesser extent, Guatemala, who were living in camps to which UNHCR was providing assistance. In addition, some 200,000 citizens of those countries, many of them undocumented, had entered Honduras since 1979 and were living scattered throughout the country.

66. His delegation strongly supported the search for durable solutions in Africa and Asia, where the refugee problem was even more serious than in Central America, and expressed the hope that the proposed international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees would reach a consensus on practical measures to address the problem in the region. As both a country of asylum and a developing country Honduras welcomed the proposal to convene a conference on Central American refugees in May 1989. Honduras and the other members of the preparatory committee for the conference were making every effort to ensure that it would lead to lasting solutions which would eliminate the root causes of the refugee problem in the region.

(Mr. Palma, Honduras)

67. His delegation wished to emphasize that the conference should look carefully into the problem of displaced persons and the impact which a massive refugee presence had on the domestic economy and social situation of countries of asylum. The agencies of the United Nations system must therefore redouble their efforts, in co-operation with governmental and non-governmental organisations, to ensure that the planning of the conference, the conference itself and follow-up activities led to positive results.

68. Ms. POC (Democratic Kampuchea) said that her delegation shared the view that the role of UNHCR was vital in assisting the world's more than 12 million refugees. More concerted international efforts were needed to find effective responses to the problems of refugees, taking into account, in particular, the difficult situation of first-asylum countries.

69. In Africa, the momentum created by ICARA II should be maintained. In southern Africa, the refugee problem would not be solved until apartheid was completely eradicated and the South African and Namibian peoples achieved the right to self-determination. Her own country had attended the Oslo Conference as a gesture of sympathy and solidarity with the uprooted peoples of southern Africa and wished to reaffirm its support for the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action. Her delegation welcomed the convening of an international conference on Central American refugees, to be held in Guatemala City in May 1989.

70. In Western Asia, a special tribute should be paid to Pakistan and Iran for their generous assistance to millions of Afghan refugees, who still awaited the total withdrawal of foreign troops from their country pursuant to the Geneva agreements.

71. In South-East Asia, the unabated influx of Vietnamese boat people had again reached a peak, placing increasing strains on the other countries of the region. Her delegation fully supported the proposal of the ASEAN countries to convene an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in order to find a comprehensive, durable solution to the continuing outflows of refugees in South-East Asia. It emphasized the need for Governments to show the necessary political will to tackle the root causes of the refugee problem if any durable solution was to be found.

72. The plight of Kampuchean refugees and displaced persons continued unabated; indiscriminate oppression by the Vietnamese occupying forces resulted in a continuing flow of Kampuchean refugees and displaced persons into neighbouring Thailand. Cross-border shellings by the occupying forces in Kampuchea had caused many casualties and property losses among Kampuchean displaced persons and Thai villagers. Such attacks were in flagrant violation of internationally accepted humanitarian principles and must be condemned by the international community. It was clear that voluntary repatriation of Kampuchean refugees and displaced persons would be feasible only when peace had been restored to Kampuchea, following the total and unconditional withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in accordance with a definite and acceptable timetable and under international supervision.

73. With regard to Kampuchean displaced persons within Kampuchea, her Government was concerned at attempts by the occupying forces to impose demographic changes through

(Ms. Poc, Democratic Kampuchea)

the massive, systematic installation of Vietnamese settlers, who currently totalled almost 1 million. The international community must be made aware of the occupying forces' underhand attempts to legalize the massive influx of Vietnamese settlers into Kampuchea by claiming that they were Kampuchean returnees from Viet Nam. Vigilance was therefore necessary when dealing with reintegration assistance to Kampuchean returnees. It was high time that the Vietnamese Government took a responsible stand on the refugee problem and contributed positively to the search for durable solutions to the problems of refugees and to removing the heavy burdens imposed on the countries of South-East Asia and the international community.

74. In conclusion, her delegation wished to reiterate its deepest gratitude to the Thai people and Government for their generous hospitality towards Kampuchean refugees, and to donor countries and the United Nations agencies which had provided humanitarian relief assistance to Kampuchean refugees and displaced persons along the Thai-Kampuchean border.

75. Mr. CHENAUX-REPOND (Observer for Switzerland) said that support for UNHCR was a major component of his country's humanitarian policy. Switzerland had always had a humanitarian tradition and been a country of asylum. It attached great importance to respect for international commitments to the protection of refugees and to the legal concept of refugee as enshrined in international treaties.

76. His Government shared the concern of UNHCR that refugee assistance should be integrated into the development process of host countries. Short-term humanitarian assistance could then be merged with longer-term measures of co-operation for development, thus benefiting both refugees and the local population. In that connection, Switzerland believed that UNHCR had a threefold role to play: as an initiator of projects; as a catalyst for the identification of needs and the design preparation and implementation of projects; and as a partner, since a proportion of the recipient population came under its mandate. At each stage of the process, co-ordination with other relevant agencies, with host countries, with international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and donor States was very important.

77. Turning to the report of the High Commissioner, his delegation welcomed the emphasis placed on UNHCR's activities in the field, particularly the recent emergency operations in Africa and the assistance to Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan and to the Afghan population in general. Considerable progress had also been made in Central America and South-East Asia.

78. Switzerland welcomed the reorganization of UNHCR's headquarters at Geneva and its efforts to set priorities and ensure more efficient use of resources. Switzerland would continue to support UNHCR financially in 1989, and had contributed some \$10 million in the current year.

79. Mr. AGUILAR-HECHT (Guatemala) commended UNHCR for its humanitarian efforts to protect the thousands of people who had been forced to leave their homes and countries because of, inter alia, political violence, human rights violations, poverty, foreign intervention and natural disasters.

(Mr. Aguilar-Hecht, Guatemala)

80. Current efforts to arrive at political solutions to various regional conflicts were seriously threatened by the acute economic crisis confronting the developing countries. In Central America, therefore, the conclusion of the Esquipulas II agreement had been accompanied by the formulation of a Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America. That plan included assistance for the region's refugees, displaced persons and returnees. Efforts to promote voluntary repatriation were gaining momentum and it was encouraging that the Central American Governments had agreed to deal with refugee problems on a purely humanitarian, non-political basis.

81. He hoped that the international community would contribute to and support fully the international conference on Central American refugees to be held in Guatemala in 1989, and drew attention to its objectives as described in the annex to document A/C.3/43/6. He also hoped that the Third Committee would support the draft resolution to be submitted concerning the conference.

82. The best solution to the refugee problem was voluntary repatriation, and his delegation supported the efforts of UNHCR to that end. Some 40,500 Guatemalans had sought asylum in Mexico, where they benefited from various assistance programmes. Guatemala had established a special commission to work for the gradual return of Guatemalan refugees through voluntary repatriation, and a programme to facilitate the reintegration of returnees by improving basic infrastructures in the communities in which they resettled. The commission, which consisted of representatives of various ministries, co-operated with its counterparts in Mexico and Honduras and with UNHCR and concentrated on providing assistance to returnees in towns and villages through bilingual teachers, medical and paramedical staff and social workers and the provision of food and temporary shelter. The commission made sure that repatriation was voluntary and that returnees were reintegrated under conditions of full equality with the rest of the population and with full guarantees of all their rights. Assistance included the provision of identity papers, free medical treatment, help with regaining their land or obtaining land if they had none, and tools and equipment to work their land. Since the repatriation programme had started, some 3,407 refugees had returned to Guatemala.

83. Guatemala would do its utmost to work with the other Central American countries and Mexico to find a permanent solution to the problem of the refugees, displaced persons and returnees in the region and requested the support and understanding of the international community in that endeavour. International conferences to solve similar situations in other parts of the world were important, as was the need to support the humanitarian, non-political work of UNHCR.

84. Mr. MIKUCHAUSKAS (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the plight of the more than 12 million refugees in the world was a matter of great concern, and commended the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations, primarily UNHCR, to help them. The High Commissioner's work, which must remain exclusively humanitarian, in helping millions of refugees deserved praise, as did the positive results of UNHCR's co-operation with the entire United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and national liberation movements.

(Mr. Mikuchauskas, USSR)

85. He particularly welcomed the results and conclusions of the Oslo Conference, which highlighted the need for UNHCR to help refugees in southern Africa. Help was also needed to enable millions of Afghan refugees to return to their homes and live in peace. The Geneva Agreements on Afghanistan were a good beginning and attempts to circumvent them undermined the hopes of the refugees and complicated a peaceful settlement of their problem. United Nations humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan deserved international support. The General Assembly had called upon all States and national and international organizations to work with UNHCR to alleviate the plight of the Afghan refugees and to provide the necessary financial and material resources to ensure their rapid repatriation and resettlement, as well as the economic and social rehabilitation of the country. His country supported that appeal and was providing large-scale economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, much of which went to help the refugees. It hoped that such assistance would help to restore a peaceful, independent and democratic Afghanistan and enable million of refugees to return home. That example would facilitate the settlement of serious regional conflicts in other parts of the world and help reduce the number of refugees and remove the root causes of the refugee problem. His delegation supported the adoption by the Third Committee of decisions designed to strengthen United Nations activities in that important area of international humanitarian co-operation.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.