



**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th 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 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 102: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/43/3, A/43/12 and Add.1, A/43/226-S/19649, A/43/370, A/43/31-S/19894, A/43/373, A/43/383, A/43/463-E/1988/106, A/43/510-S/12001, A/43/523, A/43/533, A/43/591, A/43/709, A/43/717 and Add.1 and Corr.1; A/C.3/43/6)

1. Miss VERLEZZA (Venezuela) said that she had carefully read the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/43/12 and Add.1) on the commendable efforts he was making to confront the increasingly alarming problem of refugee flows, a social phenomenon which was closely linked with the political events which were occurring in various parts of the world. Venezuela, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner, intended to contribute to those efforts as far as its limited resources permitted. The conclusions recently adopted by the Executive Committee on military and armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements should be supported because they would help strengthen international respect for the safety and rights of refugees living in such camps. The special protection of women and children, who were often victims of exploitation, violence, forced recruitment and detention, was another important question. It was essential to continue to strive to prevent all violations of the rights of women and minors and to assist the victims. Efforts must also be continued for the reunification of families.
2. Attention must also be paid to promotion of the rights of refugees and the dissemination of information on that subject, with the help, in particular, of competent bodies of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. In that respect, mention should be made of the activities carried out recently by UNHCR, taking into account available resources, to strengthen its Centre for Documentation on Refugees, which had recently assumed the function of co-ordinating an emerging international network of refugee documentation centres, and in particular the publication of a bibliography on refugee children and the development of a multilingual thesaurus of refugee-related terms.
3. Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/717) on the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, she said that Venezuela supported the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Conference and hoped that their implementation would help improve the situation in respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the refugees of the region. Venezuela also fully supported the San Salvador communiqué signed by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua, concerning the convening in May 1989 in Guatemala of an international conference on Central American refugees, an initiative which had been the subject of a decision by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner at its thirty-ninth session. Such a conference was bound to contribute to the peace process initiated in the region in that it would make it possible to evaluate progress achieved in the protection and assistance accorded to refugees and to draw up plans and programmes of action which would provide concrete and lasting solutions so that Governments could cope with the massive presence of refugees,

(Miss Verlezza, Venezuela)

displaced persons and returnees in their territories. Those solutions should also aim to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, local integration in countries of first asylum or resettlement in third countries.

4. In conclusion, she paid tribute to the work carried out by United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations, regional and subregional organizations and by the International Committee of the Red Cross and certain States.

5. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the High Commissioner's Office in every region of the world and in Somalia in particular, which would not have been possible without the support and bilateral and multilateral co-operation of donor countries, United Nations agencies, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Through the good will of the international community, progress had been made in the search for durable solutions to the growing refugee problem, particularly voluntary repatriation in peace and dignity, notably in Afghanistan.

6. It was universally known that the most acute refugee problem was in Africa. The African countries of first asylum had had to make great sacrifices to continue their policy of traditional hospitality and receive half a million additional refugees during the period considered in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/43/12 and Add.1). Somalia hosted the largest number of refugees of any African country: 835,000 located in 40 official camps, and an equal number of "invisible" refugees who received no official assistance from international bodies, hence the magnitude of the problem of refugees in Somalia, which was recognized in the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/535). As a result of food and non-food aid and financial support by the international community, the High Commissioner's Office and the World Food Programme in particular, the nutritional status of those refugees had improved, but that support must continue and, indeed, increase. The programmes of assistance to refugees in Somalia had recently suffered from the sharp devaluation of the national currency and resultant inflationary tendencies. The refugee re-enumeration exercise had resumed after a temporary halt and the final results, awaited in mid-1989, should contribute to an improvement of plans for durable solutions to the refugee problem. In respect of durable solutions, his Government had facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 5,050 refugees from the Bur Dhubo camps and had done everything possible to promote the local integration of other refugees. In order to make them self-supporting and self-reliant, his Government had distributed land to them; as a result, with the assistance of UNHCR, the United States Agency for International Development and small non-governmental and voluntary organizations, small but very promising local settlement schemes were under way. Non-governmental organizations had also been invited to take part in all government activities in that sphere.

7. He wished to stress the enormous sacrifices Somalia had made to provide assistance and asylum to the refugees who now represented a quarter of its population. He appealed to the international community to give Somalia the necessary resources to alleviate the heavy burden placed on its fragile national

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

economy by the continuing presence of a large number of refugees, taking into account the oft-repeated willingness of Somalia to respect the norms and principles embodied in the international legal instruments on refugees. Somalia was grateful to the Secretary-General for the steps taken in implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/127 and believed that the efforts made so far by United Nations agencies in their respective fields of competence were encouraging. It urged them to continue their efforts in the implementation of the priority programme of action set forth in the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/535). It hoped that a further resolution would be adopted at the current session on assistance to refugees in Somalia.

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

9. Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia), having drawn attention to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/43/12 and Add.1), which emphasized the gravity of the world refugee problem and the need for durable and comprehensive solutions to it in various parts of the world and in various situations, said that the international community should not resign itself to accepting the problem of refugees as a never-ending one. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had increased international awareness of the fate of refugees in southern Africa, and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted on that occasion, once implemented, would provide major relief to the situation of those refugees. Malaysia, which had fully supported the convening of the Conference and had participated in its work, would welcome further efforts to alleviate the suffering of the refugees and allow them to participate in the development of their countries. Malaysia also supported the proposal by the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua for the convening of an international conference on the question of refugees in Central America. It also prayed for the return of the Afghan refugees to their country with the assistance of the United Nations and the High Commissioner, and sympathized with the Palestinians, who remained as refugees in their own homeland. Lastly, Malaysia was appreciative of United Nations efforts in assisting the displaced persons encamped near the Thai-Kampuchean border.

10. Like so many other South-East Asian countries, Malaysia had had to bear the brunt of the continuing influx of Vietnamese boat people (more than 230,000 since 1975), most of whom had been resettled in the developed countries. The ever-increasing flow of refugees imposed a serious burden on the countries of first refuge in the region and aggravated political, economic and social problems in addition to the security problems which those countries already faced. Since the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees held in 1979, there had been general agreement, arising out of a spirit of compassion, that the countries of the region would provide temporary refuge to Vietnamese, Lao and Kampuchean refugees, who were to be quickly resettled in third countries, in particular in the developed countries. Since 1979, however, the refugees leaving their countries because of armed conflict had been supplanted by migrants essentially in search of economic alleviation. Moreover, programmes set up following the 1979 meeting - resettlement in third countries, voluntary repatriation and the Orderly Departure Programme,

(Mr. Ranali, Malaysia)

however desirable they might have seemed at the time, had had only temporary results. What the countries of first refuge wanted were durable and effective solutions that took into account the change in the situation since 1979. To that end, there needed to be a dialogue involving all the parties concerned. Accordingly, Malaysia, together with the other South-East Asian countries, had proposed the convening of a new international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees at the ministerial level in early 1989. Consultations had been held among the ASEAN countries, resettlement and donor countries, countries of origin and UNHCR. A series of consultative meetings in preparation for the conference had been held, and the next one would be in December at Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia believed that, with thorough preparation and exhaustive deliberation, the conference would formulate both short-term and long-term proposals for comprehensive, durable and effective solutions, on the understanding that full account should be taken of the legitimate concerns of all the parties involved as well as the present circumstances of the problem. The proposal had been discussed at the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee, and Malaysia fervently hoped that it would be endorsed by the Third Committee and the General Assembly in the form of a resolution. In its continuing effort to promote dialogue, Malaysia had turned to the countries of origin to solve the problem of refugees and displaced persons. Thus, in April, the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister had visited the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, and those two countries had participated in the consultations in preparation for the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees, in which UNHCR had also been actively and positively involved. Malaysia was heartened by the Secretary-General's interest in the question of Indo-Chinese refugees and the support and co-operation of the major resettlement and donor countries, which would contribute to solving the problem.

11. Malaysia would continue, in a humanitarian spirit, to welcome bona fide refugees, but it would not accept those who fled for economic motives alone. It called on the international community and UNHCR to look closely at that phenomenon, while continuing to care for those who truly needed their assistance.

12. Mrs. MARCOULLIS (Cyprus) welcomed the adoption by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner at its thirty-ninth session of important decisions which would provide an appropriate framework for humanitarian assistance and international protection for refugees. It was equally important to implement effectively the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, as a result of the international community's consensus and dynamic approach to the most serious problems facing millions of refugees and displaced persons in that region. Cyprus also welcomed the decision of the Governments of Central America to convene an international conference on the question of Central American refugees, and hoped that similar conferences would be convened in other parts of the world to seek comprehensive and durable solutions to the problems faced by each region. Her delegation noted in that regard that it supported the position that the High Commissioner's functions should remain humanitarian and non-political. It was not his role to seek political solutions to the problems of refugees; the international community should identify those solutions, and Governments should

(Mrs. Marcoullis, Cyprus)

implement them in accordance with their responsibility under the Charter to carry out the decisions of the international community and respect the norms of international law.

13. Mass and flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, wars of aggression, alien domination, foreign intervention and military occupation continued to be among the principal causes of massive flows of refugees and displaced persons. Cyprus was in a position to know, for one third of its people had been uprooted from their ancestral homelands and rendered destitute refugees in their own country. It was in the United Nations and its resolutions, based on the rules of international law, that Cyprus put its hopes of seeing restored to the people of the country the fundamental rights and freedoms embodied in internationally recognized human rights instruments, especially the right of return.

14. Mr. MEKONYO (Chad) said that Africa held the saddest record in the world, that of the greatest number of refugees (5 million); since they were especially concentrated in southern Africa, the United Nations had organized, together with the Organization of African Unity, an International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, held in August 1988 at Oslo, Norway. Chad fully supported the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted there.

15. The refugee problem was particularly complex because of its political, economic and social dimensions. He paid tribute to the High Commissioner, whose actions had made it possible to ameliorate the tragic situation of refugees, who were often treated with scorn or hostility in the host countries and were sometimes even subjected to oppressive measures. The High Commissioner's actions involved increasing aid from the international community, for the situation of refugees was the general responsibility of all Member States, and those actions could be strengthened only by the overwhelming accession of States to the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention relating to refugees.

16. He recalled that Chad had benefited greatly from international assistance when it was faced with a very serious emergency. Through the joint efforts of United Nations bodies and voluntary organizations it had been possible to mobilize the necessary material and financial assistance. UNHCR and UNDP had set up a programme to provide for the needs of returnees and displaced persons and to facilitate the return of Chadians who had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. In 1987, UNHCR had helped resettle 97,000 Chadians mainly from the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Sudan. In 1988, a further 5,000 Chadians had returned voluntarily from Cameroon. UNHCR had at the same time provided assistance to some 20,000 Chadians who were still refugees in the Sudan, 8,500 in Cameroon, 5,000 in Nigeria and to smaller groups in other regions.

17. His Government was grateful to the States, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations and to the Secretary-General for all the special humanitarian assistance it had received but the assistance programme was ending and Chad was again facing an emergency with locust plagues compounded by floods. His

(Mr. Mekonyo, Chad)

delegation would therefore be pleased to have the special humanitarian assistance programme extended. That would be all the more justified in that Chad and Libya had decided to re-establish diplomatic relations. It was in that spirit that his delegation would submit, under agenda item 12, a draft resolution entitled "Emergency assistance for voluntary returnees and displaced persons in Chad".

18. Miss LEOW (Singapore) recalled that international détente had not solved the problem of refugees, who now numbered more than 12 million men, women and children.

19. Although she was not forgetting refugees in other parts of the world, she wished to focus particularly on the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees in South-East Asia. It was reckoned that in the past 15 years several millions of Indo-Chinese had left their countries of origin (not counting the thousands who had perished at sea before reaching their goal). The steady flow of Indo-Chinese refugees since 1979 had had a destabilizing effect on the countries of South-East Asia and had created, serious problems in Malaysia and in Thailand. It had often been said that the local integration and settlement of refugees was the best way to solve the problem, but that solution posed great difficulties for the ASEAN host countries, whose limited financial and human resources had been greatly strained.

20. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had indicated in his most recent report (A/43/12) that the resettlement of refugees in third countries still represented the most feasible, durable solution for the Indo-Chinese refugees. She fully supported that view but noted that resettlement had slowed down considerably in recent years. Some resettlement countries had proved increasingly reluctant and had created legislative and administrative obstacles. As a result large numbers of Indo-Chinese refugees, now estimated at 160,000, were still in camps waiting for resettlement. The situation of those refugees was tragic and she deplored the discrimination often faced by the refugees, who were old, disabled or lacking special skills. Of course everyone was aware of the economic difficulties of the resettlement countries, but the countries of first asylum should not be expected to shoulder the burden alone. She called upon the traditional resettlement countries to increase their absorption rate while urging other countries to participate in the resettlement efforts.

21. As resettlement slowed down, voluntary repatriation back to the countries of origin was becoming an increasingly attractive solution. She welcomed the efforts to that effect which the High Commissioner was making in close consultation with the Governments concerned, but voluntary repatriation was a viable solution only if the countries of origin did not link their acceptance of refugees to financial and other assistance and if the refugees were not victims of persecution or discrimination.

22. It was imperative that the international community seek the co-operation of the countries of origin in order to curb the outflow of refugees at the source. Concrete measures must be taken to stem the organized departure of refugees for profit or unscrupulous motives.

(Miss Leow, Singapore)

23. A durable solution to the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees must be found. She therefore supported the convening of an International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and hoped that the conference would be convened as soon as possible.

24. Mr. Abulhasan resumed the Chair.

25. Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) stressed the fact that the international community, in seeking solutions to the refugee problem had recorded a series of successes mainly through co-operation.

26. However, the policies of imperialism, apartheid and interference in the affairs of other countries had resulted in a large number of refugees in the modern world. An International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa had been convened in Oslo, in August 1988, in response to General Assembly resolution 42/106, to deal with the problem of black refugees in southern Africa. That Conference had adopted a Declaration and a Plan of Action (which his Government fully endorsed), stating that the refugee problem in the region could not be solved unless apartheid was eliminated, independent States established, racial equality recognized and economic development ensured.

27. In the Middle East, the situation of the Palestinian refugees, who had been subjected to exactions of every kind, deserved the full attention of the international community.

28. After a long war imposed by foreigners his country had witnessed the departure of some of its inhabitants. Some had served in enemy forces, others had succumbed to foreign propaganda and still others had sought an easier life elsewhere.

29. His Government was ready to welcome all Laos who sincerely wished to return to their country. Under the auspices of UNHCR, more than 3,000 Laos had already done so and a further 176 expatriates had returned during the current year.

30. His Government felt that the most durable solution to the refugee problem was voluntary repatriation, a difficult solution when some States used refugees for political purposes and others incited the population to leave their country. Accordingly, international co-operation was particularly essential in that area, as had been stressed by the group of governmental experts on international co-operation to avert new flows of refugees, established in 1981 by the General Assembly. The only way to create a climate of international understanding and find a just and durable solution to the refugee problem was through co-operation.

31. Mr. TANLAX (Turkey) paid tribute to UNHCR and its staff whose tireless efforts had led to the resolution of many refugee problems. At the same time, he recalled that the more than 12 million remaining refugees represented a global problem, which called for joint action based on a spirit of sacrifice and solidarity, the collective taking of responsibility and a sharing of the burden among the members of the international community.



(Mr. Tanlay, Turkey)

32. Addressing a particular aspect of the problem he stressed that 80 per cent of all refugees were currently living in countries of first asylum or of transit, which were generally developing countries. While they had accepted that very heavy burden, those countries were counting on international solidarity. In the mean time, transit countries were faced with ever-increasing difficulties. Thus it was deplorable that certain industrialized countries, far from attempting to ease the burden of the transit countries, were limiting the entry of asylum-seekers, setting inadequate admission quotas and lengthening the procedures for considering documents. As a result, the number of refugees in the intermediary countries was building up and those countries might be forced, in turn - faced with the influx of new refugees - to take their own restrictive measures.

33. It was essential to find durable solutions to the refugee problem, either through integration in the country of first asylum or through resettlement in another country, the most desirable solution clearly being voluntary repatriation. International solidarity had to play a role in all efforts. He applauded the work of UNHCR, which in 1987 had helped to end the refugee status of more than 250,000 individuals and, in that connection, he recalled that the United Nations Convention of 1951 relating to the status of refugees and endorsed international solidarity. Unfortunately, the solidarity was still inadequate; it was therefore in that area above all, that action had to be taken. His country was following with interest the reorganization of structures and methods within the Office of UNHCR and would continue to co-operate with that body in order to assist it in carrying out its humanitarian task.

34. Mr. HUSAIN (Pakistan) thanked the High Commissioner for his presentation of the previous day regarding the situation of the world's 12 million refugees and welcomed the remarkable success achieved by UNHCR with the support of the international community.

35. The improvement in the international political situation had created a favourable climate for the resolution of the refugee situation, which nevertheless required termination of all military intervention and foreign occupation.

36. In that connection, he referred to the three million Afghans who had sought asylum in his country, who constituted the largest concentration of refugees in the world. In spite of its economic difficulties, his country, had offered shelter and humanitarian assistance to those refugees. In that connection he wished to thank the friendly Governments, UNHCR, the World Food Programme and other international organizations which had assisted his Government in that task. At the same time, Pakistan continued to provide 50 per cent of the cost of that assistance, which constituted a heavy burden on its resources.

37. The signing, in April 1988, of the Geneva Accords providing for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan represented an important step forward but did not settle the question of internal conflict. That situation would be resolved only after the complete withdrawal of Soviet forces and the establishment of a broad-based interim Government. Only then could the Afghan refugees return home in safety and honour.

(Mr. Husain, Pakistan)

38. It was regrettable that the Kabul forces, in flagrant violation of all humanitarian norms, continued to attack the Afghan refugee camps. Until those refugees were free to return to their country, humanitarian assistance would continue to be essential. He therefore welcomed the decision of the High Commissioner to maintain the assistance programmes for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran at their current levels. Far from having diminished, the number of refugees in Pakistan had in fact increased because of the continuing armed conflict in Afghanistan.

39. His delegation wished the High Commissioner success in his efforts to promote dialogue among the countries of East and South-East Asia, which had a refugee population of more than 130,000, with regard to the convening of a conference in 1989 to deal with the refugee problem in the region.

40. His delegation hoped that the international community would give its undivided attention to the objectives of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the recent International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa. It also hoped for rapid progress towards the abolition of apartheid, the independence of Namibia, the settlement of internal conflicts and the improvement of socio-economic conditions, which were the prerequisites for a durable solution to the refugee problem in Africa.

41. His Government was pleased to note that an international conference had been scheduled for May 1989 with a view to finding concrete solutions to the problem of refugees in Central America.

42. Commending those countries which had contributed to assistance programmes, Pakistan welcomed the approval of the revised budgetary targets of UNHCR and joined with the High Commissioner in appealing to the generosity of Governments for 1988 and 1989.

43. Mrs. SINGIORGIS (Ethiopia) paid tribute to the High Commissioner for his admirable dedication and tireless efforts and reiterated her Government's commitment to assist him in the performance of his humanitarian task. She thanked the United Nations, UNHCR, UNDP and the Norwegian Government for their invaluable assistance in organizing, in Oslo, the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa.

44. The successful outcome of that Conference indicated the extent of the international community's concern about the fate of the refugees in that region of Africa. It was incumbent on the international community not only to relieve their misery, but also to find durable solutions by attacking the root causes. In that connection, her Government condemned the racist South African régime for its armed attacks on the refugee camps and settlements and the acts of aggression and destabilization it perpetrated on its neighbouring independent African States. With the refugee or displaced persons population now numbering more than 5 million, the international community must continue its assistance so that the Oslo Plan of Action could be implemented.

(Mrs. Sinigiorgis, Ethiopia)

45. It was encouraging that certain positive events had resulted in some voluntary repatriation or resettlement in third countries; that was, in the opinion of her country, the best long-term solution. Her Government remained ready to co-operate in facilitating voluntary repatriation of Ethiopians from abroad. To that end, it had established reception centres and was endeavouring to resettle the returnees in their original localities. With the assistance of UNHCR, her Government was attempting to reintegrate the returnees into society and make them self-sufficient. In that connection, she pointed out that once refugees had returned to their country of origin, international assistance terminated; subsequent economic difficulties often forced the returnees to flee again. That was a problem which merited serious consideration.

46. In order to be durable, solutions to the problem of refugees in developing countries must be development-oriented. For Ethiopia, refugee assistance and development aid were indissolubly linked. In that connection, she endorsed the conclusions and decisions adopted at the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programme (A/43/12/Add.1) on refugee aid and development and she read out paragraph 32 (h) (ix).

47. In spite of some positive developments, the overall world situation was, unfortunately, very grim. Africa was once again the hardest hit region. During the period under review, the refugee population had increased by 900,000. That situation had to be viewed against the backdrop of the economic crisis, drought and locust infestation.

48. For Ethiopia the 12 past months had been most exacting. New influxes of refugees had brought the total refugee population close to 800,000. Consistent with its tradition of hospitality, Ethiopia was doing its utmost to welcome the refugees but, as various dignitaries, ambassadors, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and donor agencies, including the High Commissioner and his Deputy, had observed, their situation was still appalling. The tremendous number of refugees and the distances involved in both the east and west of the country had given rise to colossal logistical problems. Difficulties of access, lack of drinking water in the eastern region and malnutrition and ill health among the majority of new arrivals, particularly in the west, had complicated the operation.

49. Least developed countries like Ethiopia could not cope with such problems without adequate assistance from the international community. Expressing its gratitude to donor Governments, UNHCR, the United Nations system and voluntary organizations for their generous contributions, his delegation joined the High Commissioner in appealing to the international community to intensify its assistance, and on behalf of the hundreds and thousands of refugees, would be submitting a draft resolution to that effect.

50. Mrs. BUTIKU (United Republic of Tanzania), observing that the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees could not discharge its responsibilities without the assistance of the international community, asked why the average amount of assistance per refugee per annum was lowest in Africa.

(Mrs. Butiku, United Republic  
of Tanzania)

51. In order to carry out their task effectively, the staff of UNHCR must be highly competent and dedicated. Unfortunately, certain circumstances had recently demoralized and frustrated UNHCR personnel. The Charter and staff regulations of the United Nations and the principle of equitable geographical representation should be respected, and the practice of favouring some regions at the expense of others avoided, when recruiting and promoting staff members.

52. Tanzania was particularly concerned about the plight of those whom colonialism, racism or injustice compelled daily to leave their homes and flee abroad. The majority of those refugees were women, children and old people. They were sometimes malnourished and in very poor health, and most of them had been brutalised and tortured.

53. Tanzania, like any peace-loving country, was very disturbed by the large-scale displacement of people in southern Africa, especially in Angola and Mozambique. It welcomed the holding of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa and hoped that UNHCR would ensure the implementation of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action. It regretted, however, that the Conference had not highlighted the root causes of the refugee problem in the region, namely South Africa's policies of apartheid, aggression and destabilization. It unreservedly condemned that country's armed attacks, using UNITA and MNR terrorists, on refugees and innocent civilians in southern Africa and believed that no durable solution could be envisaged until apartheid was totally eradicated.

54. Tanzania had granted asylum to nearly 250,000 refugees, and had made large expanses of land available to them. It was one of the few States to have offered the possibility of naturalized citizenship to a large number of refugees. However, prevention was better than cure and, since the refugee problem was largely the result of politics, Governments should make a concerted effort not to precipitate exoduses from their own or other countries. They should also desist from exploiting unfortunate refugee situations for political ends. Tanzania therefore reiterated the need for urgent international co-operation, in which it was willing to play its part.

55. Mr. EL BASHIR (Sudan) expressed his Government's concern at the refugee situation in southern Africa. The Sudanese Minister for Refugees Affairs, Relief and Rehabilitation had personally taken part in the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, at a time when devastating floods were affecting his country.

56. In the Sudan, the refugee problem dated back a quarter of a century. Successive waves of refugees of different ethnic and cultural origins had been granted asylum. The number of refugees in the Sudan had now reached the staggering figure of almost one and a quarter million. Only one third of those were registered refugees accommodated in settlements. The rest, representing 7.5 per cent of the total population of the country, had settled spontaneously.

(Mr. El Bashir, Sudan)

57. Deeply committed as it was to the protection of refugees, the Sudan had, since the early 1970s, acceded to all the international legal instruments relating to refugees; in 1974, it had adopted its own Refugee Asylum Act.

58. Since then, however, the country had faced a succession of calamities (drought, desertification, floods and a plague of locusts) which had caused the displacement of one and a half million people who needed to be resettled. Against that alarming background, his delegation emphasized the importance of international solidarity.

59. Since the needs of refugees grew with their numbers, his delegation requested that the programme of assistance be revised accordingly.

60. His delegation drew attention to the new dimensions of the refugee problem in Africa. The refugee presence, whether in rural or urban areas, was placing a heavy burden on the resources of asylum countries and their fragile infrastructures. The traditional approach to refugee assistance was no longer adequate, and his delegation welcomed the new, more realistic, trend towards linking refugee aid with development. That new approach was intended to provide additional resources to offset the negative impact of the presence of large numbers of refugees in host countries. The establishment of a revolving fund for refugees would facilitate the design, financing and implementation of development projects.

61. The Sudan welcomed the recent agreements signed between the High Commissioner and development agencies aimed at co-ordinating relief programmes with the development plans of certain developing countries. The scope of such co-ordination should be widened to involve other multilateral development agencies and non-governmental organizations.

62. The presence of refugees placed a particularly heavy burden on least developed host countries like the Sudan. He referred in that connection to the report on that question submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-first session (A/41/264), in particular paragraph 54 which advocated special treatment for such countries in regard to international development assistance. Since nothing had so far transpired on that issue, his delegation requested that the Secretary-General instruct the Committee on Development Planning to look into the issue again and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session through the summer session of the Economic and Social Council.

63. The Sudanese Government and people paid tribute to the staff of UNHCR for their excellent work and assured them of their full support, and expressed their gratitude to the donor community and UNHCR's development partners whether multilateral or bilateral funding agencies or non-governmental voluntary agencies. Lastly, his Government had launched a national information campaign designed to heighten public awareness that the refugee presence must be tolerated as a reflection of a sovereign act by the Government. The intention was to alleviate social tension, which sometimes verged on hostility towards refugees on the part of the Sudan's equally poor and illiterate rural and urban population.

64. Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia), said that refugees were the responsibility of the entire international community and not just of the countries which initially received them. The burden should be shared and concerted action taken to find durable solutions to the plight of those who daily sought refuge from war, persecution and starvation and those who had languished in refugee camps for years. It was not sufficient to provide economic and humanitarian aid to refugees, which, while easing their suffering, failed to solve the problem; they must be resettled in third countries.

65. Since the current world political situation lent itself to solving some problems and preventing new flows of refugees, advantage should be taken of the current dialogue and the growing sensitivity to the international refugee situation.

66. In South-East Asia, there had been an influx of Indo-Chinese refugees for the past 13 years. In 1988, there had been an upsurge in new arrivals and a concurrent reluctance to provide resettlement. Until the root causes of those refugee movements were eliminated, voluntary repatriation was not a viable option. Indonesia therefore supported the consultations initiated by UNHCR and the efforts made to create conditions for the safe voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin. In the meantime, the international community must focus its attention on resettlement. In that connection, the Orderly Departure Program needed to be enhanced.

67. As indicated in the Manila Declaration of 1987, the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) would persevere in their efforts to find an effective solution to the refugee problem. The Executive Committee of UNHCR had welcomed the proposal made by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN in their Joint Statement in 1988 to convene an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees to find comprehensive and durable solutions to the problem.

68. In other regions of the world, the easing of tensions and renewed dialogue augured well for increased humanitarian assistance and a reversal of refugee trends. One situation remained unchanged, however, and it was in that connection that the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa held at Oslo in August 1988 had adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action. However, the eradication of apartheid must be achieved before the suffering inflicted on people in that region could be brought to an end. His delegation noted from the Secretary-General's report (A/43/717) the importance attached to the work of the Conference and trusted that the measures and strategies adopted would be effectively implemented. It also noted from document A/43/591 the progress thus far made in preparing for the international conference on Central American refugees.

69. His delegation was encouraged to note that UNHCR had improved its emergency preparedness and response capabilities and was working on the development of emergency systems in the areas of early warning and staffing (A/43/12, para. 66). Lastly, he commended UNHCR's efforts to improve the management of assistance programmes (A/43/12, chap. II).

70. Mrs. HOANG BICH LIEN (Viet Nam) noted with satisfaction from the High Commissioner's report (A/43/12 and Add.1) that more than a quarter of a million refugees had been able to return home under the voluntary repatriation plan or had been resettled in third countries. Her delegation welcomed the convening at Oslo of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa and its adoption of a Declaration and Plan of Action. Although considerable progress had been made in solving the refugee situation in Africa, thanks to the concerted efforts of UNHCR, the parties concerned and the international community as a whole, the momentum should be maintained, especially through the implementation of the projects submitted to the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. The refugee problem was still far from being resolved, however, for the total number of refugees world wide fluctuated at around 12 million and there were nearly half a million refugees in southern Africa alone. A collective approach and co-ordinated action must be taken by countries of origin, countries of first asylum and countries of resettlement, as the High Commissioner had emphasized. The definition of refugee contained in the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol did not cover all situations, and such reasons as political crises created by wars of aggression, external intervention and pressure, racism, zionism, and apartheid, as well as poverty and natural disasters, should be added to fear of persecution.

71. For 40 years, South-East Asia had been subjected to continuous wars of aggression which had caused untold suffering to the peoples of Indo-China and created serious social and economic problems, giving rise to exoduses of Indo-Chinese refugees. It was essential therefore that all parties concerned should act together to solve the problem, strictly respecting humanitarian principles and without political motivations.

72. The Vietnamese people needed peace and stability for the reconstruction of their country and all their resources to rebuild their economy. The Vietnamese who had left the country since 1975 were divided into three groups: those who could not sympathize with the new system, those who had been incited to flee the country by hostile forces, and those who were seeking a better material life or reunification with their families abroad. Due account must be given to that reality and to respect for people's aspiration to move elsewhere. Since 1979, Viet Nam, had been co-operating with UNHCR and countries of resettlement in implementing the Orderly Departure Program from Viet Nam, with considerable success until recently. In the past two years, however, there had been a considerable reduction in orderly departures, mainly owing to the lack of further resettlement opportunities in third countries. As a result, there had been an increase in illegal departures. Although the Vietnamese Government had taken firm measures to stop further illegal departures, it called on third countries to provide further resettlement opportunities and to refrain from imposing more complex criteria and from delaying resettlement in the case of legal and orderly departures while facilitating illegal departures.

73. Viet Nam had for some time been taking an active part in the international talks held at Bangkok under the auspices of UNHCR aimed at solving the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees. It had also held bilateral talks with the Malaysian,

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Hong Kong and United Kingdom authorities with a view to identifying realistic and effective measures for solving the problem. Her Government was in favour of the convening of an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees and of its preparatory meeting, and was prepared to participate in them actively.

74. Viet Nam paid particular attention to the protection of refugees, and was deeply concerned that some humanitarian norms including the principle of non-refoulement, continued to be violated. It therefore welcomed the fact that, at the meeting of its Executive Committee in October 1988, UNHCR had strongly reaffirmed the purely humanitarian nature of its activities.

75. Mr. ZAMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) thanked and commended the staff of UNHCR who were trying to alleviate the suffering of the more than 2.3 million refugees currently living in his country, making it the second largest refugee host country in the world.

76. In view of the burden which the presence of those refugees imposed on Iran's limited resources, assistance programmes should seek to strengthen the country's infrastructure. Indeed, limiting assistance to the basic needs of refugees might run counter to the goal sought.

77. With regard to Afghan refugees, Iran welcomed the appointment of a Co-ordinator for United Nations Economic and Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan and assured him of its support and its readiness to co-operate in the programme for the voluntary repatriation of those refugees which would contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan following the withdrawal of foreign forces from that country.

78. His delegation also drew the attention of the international community to the new waves of Kurdish refugees who had recently arrived in his country after passing through Turkey. While welcoming the positive steps taken by the High Commissioner, Iran believed that the situation called for a more comprehensive assistance programme which would enable them to become self-sufficient, since the provision of assistance designed to meet a small part of basic needs could not offset the damage caused by their presence to the country's economy.

79. His delegation believed that the problem of refugees in the world could be solved only by appropriate measures designed to prevent acts of aggression and resolve conflicts, to rectify the unjust imbalance between rich and poor and to respond to emergency situations. Assistance to refugees was also an ideological and humanitarian responsibility. To subject it to political pre-conditions and considerations could only weaken the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol.

80. Mr. HOCHE (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he was very encouraged by the support expressed by members of the Third Committee for the mandate and goals of the Office. The great concern shown by the international community for the physical well-being and security of refugees was highly



(Mr. Hocke)

satisfying, particularly following the recent adoption of the conclusion on the promotion of international law regarding refugees and the day-to-day protection efforts of the Office. However, a text alone would not produce immediate changes. That would require the determined efforts of all members of the international community.

81. The concern shown for the needs of refugee women and children would also serve to heighten awareness of the special attention that should be given to those groups.

82. He noted with satisfaction the emphasis given to the search for durable solutions and, in particular, to voluntary repatriation as the most desirable solution. In cases where that solution was not feasible, however, emphasis had been placed on local integration and resettlement in a spirit of solidarity and international burden sharing.

83. He welcomed the conclusion adopted in October 1988 by the Executive Committee concerning refugee aid and development and the catalytic role foreseen for the Office in that regard.

84. In conclusion, the international community must make a more concerted effort to avert further flows of refugees, to find lasting solutions for existing refugees and to provide international protection and respect for the human rights of all refugees without exception. The forthcoming international conferences on Central American and Indo-Chinese refugees would provide such an opportunity.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.