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REPORT OF THE THIRTY-SECOND MEETING  
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
(8-11 March 2005)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Hernán Escudero Martínez (Ecuador), opened the meeting. He informed the Committee of requests for observer status from Benin and the Republic of Moldova, to which the Committee agreed. The Chairman advised the Committee that the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Shotaro Oshima (Japan), had recently left Geneva and that an extraordinary plenary meeting of the Committee would be convened to elect a new Vice-Chairman.

2. In an introductory statement, the Acting High Commissioner assured the Committee that staff had remained focused on the mission of helping refugees worldwide, despite confronting a difficult period. She acknowledged the commitment and personal sacrifice of UNHCR staff worldwide and on the occasion of International Women's Day paid special tribute UNHCR's women staff who played a critical role in efforts to protect women and children. The Special Advisor to the High Commissioner on Gender Issues provided an update on UNHCR's efforts to mainstream gender concerns.

3. Delegations throughout the meeting recognized the contribution made by High Commissioner Lubbers during his term of office and expressed their confidence in the interim leadership as well as the commitment of UNHCR staff.

## II. CHAIRMAN'S VISIT TO CHAD AND SUDAN

4. The Chairman reported on his visit to Chad and Sudan (west Darfur) from 29 January to 6 February. He commended the efforts being made, in particular the cooperation between UNHCR and NGO partners, but called for greater involvement by the international community in this crisis, notably to provide additional emergency funding to meet protection needs and to develop a clearer definition of the mandates and competencies of all actors in the Field. In Sudan, on the political front, he perceived that the North-South Peace Agreement was a positive development, and a potential starting point for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Governments of Chad and Sudan for their hospitality and collaboration, as well as to the staff of UNHCR and NGOs in Chad and Sudan who had contributed to the preparation and organization of the mission.

## III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-SECOND MEETING AND 2005 WORK PROGRAMME

5. The agenda for the meeting (EC/55/SC/CRP.1/Rev.1) was adopted. The Standing Committee's work programme for 2005 (EC/55/SC/CRP.2), as approved at the planning meeting held on 7 December 2004, was also adopted, without revision.

## IV. MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL CONTROL, ADMINISTRATIVE OVERSIGHT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

### A. Update on management reforms

6. The Acting High Commissioner provided an update on management reform in UNHCR. She reviewed action taken following the headquarters process review, which responded to recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and underlined that this review had been constituted with the aim of improving the way Headquarters supported the Field. As follow-up to the conclusions of the Marnett report, a process of consultation was under way to develop suggestions for implementation and improvements. In setting a target of no net growth of positions at Headquarters in 2006, under a formula referred to as 90/10, managers had been asked to identify 10 per cent of their "assets" for possible shifting to areas of higher priority.

7. Several delegations welcomed UNHCR's response to the JIU recommendations, especially on results-based management, the further development of standards and indicators, and on the Management Systems Renewal Project (MSRP). UNHCR's focus on the Field was also welcomed, as were the helpful suggestions contained in the Marnett Report. Nevertheless, there were calls for UNHCR to enhance transparency further, especially with regard to the work of the Inspector General. There was some concern about the need to increase UNHCR's protection presence as well as staff security in the Field, and to maintain UNHCR's emergency response capacity. Progress on Project Profile was welcomed by several delegations. The importance of UNHCR's partnerships with other United Nations entities and NGOs was also consistently emphasized.

8. The Acting High Commissioner agreed to reconsider the question of greater transparency in the work of the Inspector General, including the extent to which inspection and investigation reports could be shared with the Executive Committee, and to review the Oversight Committee and its terms of reference. She also agreed attention should be maintained on the need to pursue durable solutions in Africa at this time.

B. Proposal to create a post of Assistant High Commissioner (Protection)

9. A consensus emerged to postpone any decision on the proposal to create a post of Assistant High Commissioner for Protection until a new High Commissioner had been appointed, and most delegations also felt that further consultations would be needed on the proposal and related management issues. Several delegations nevertheless urged UNHCR to upgrade the resettlement post immediately to the Deputy Director level to ensure an effective response to recent positive developments in resettlement opportunities, and many were also supportive of the proposal to mainstream Convention Plus.

C. Matrix on follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the accounts for 2003

10. The Controller presented the matrix on follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the accounts for 2003, which was welcomed as an example of increasing transparency. More information on progress on MSRP was requested, especially in relation to funds used by implementing partners. The Controller confirmed that following its introduction at Headquarters, the accounts for 2004 had been closed using MSRP. However, although UNHCR was now able to track progress on a monthly basis, full implementation would take two years.

D. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

11. The Inspector General provided an oral update on the IGO's work in 2004 and announced a plan to strengthen and expand the inspection function in 2005. The IGO would continue to develop UNHCR's accountability framework, including the pursuit of pre-emptive and targeted measures to prevent misconduct and recording of the results of disciplinary proceedings on staff members' fact sheets; improvement in the quality and timeliness of investigations; continuing collaboration with UN investigation bodies in support of the development of investigation functions among UNHCR's NGO partners; and publication of more information on the numbers and types of investigations carried out.

12. Several delegations welcomed the Inspector General's ambitious programme and asked for more detailed reports in the future. Delegations broadly supported the JIU recommendations and requested further details on how UNHCR intended to respond. Several delegations also asked for further information on the relationship between the IGO and the United Nations' Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and on referrals of cases to law enforcement agencies. The Inspector General responded that there were currently five referral cases, however this was not standard practice due to the need to take into account differences between national standards and those of the United Nations. He also undertook to provide a paper on the respective terms of reference and the relationship between the IGO and the OIOS.

## V. PROGRAMME BUDGETS AND FUNDING

### A. Programme budgets and funding in 2004, and projections for 2005

13. The Controller introduced the latest figures for 2004 and projections for 2005, as contained in document EC/55/SC/CRP.5. In 2004 UNHCR had again managed to stay within the total financial resources available and maintain relative financial stability, helped by an unexpectedly high carry-over from 2003 and percentage caps on programme and non-staff administrative cost budgets. Income in 2004 had been US\$ 1,031 million, with a carry-over from 2003 of US\$ 105 million. As 2004 expenditures were estimated at US\$ 1,062 million, the projected carry-over into 2005 was US\$ 74 million. The Controller noted that realized and unrealized gains from foreign currency adjustments during 2004 amounted to US\$ 6.6 million. With respect to overall prospects for 2005, UNHCR had taken measures to prepare for a possible funding shortfall under the Annual Programme Budget, particularly through the capping of the 2005 programme and non-staff administrative cost budgets at 95 per cent. The Controller was cautiously optimistic about the financial prospects for 2005, but did not rule out the introduction of further budgetary restraint measures.

14. The Director of the Division of External Relations reviewed fund-raising efforts in 2004. Progress achieved included a strengthened partnership with traditional donors, complementary sources of funding, and increased contributions from the private sector. Concerning 2005, the Director noted that current financial requirements amounted to US\$ 1,350.6 million. While the December 2004 Pledging Conference had mobilized a record US\$ 405.4 million from 48 donors, the Director requested donors to honour their pledges as soon as possible in order to avoid any disruptions to operations. He regretted the low level of contributions so far received for the six 2005 Supplementary Programmes (totalling US\$ 369 million), but urged that requirements arising as a result of new developments should not divert funds from the Annual Programme.

15. Several delegations announced fresh contributions to UNHCR. A number of delegations noted with concern the Office's expectation that the 2005 Annual Budget would again not be fully funded, and, even if fully funded, would not meet all identified needs. This underlined the need for fully comprehensive needs assessments. There was also concern over the low level of contributions to the 2005 Supplementary Programmes, and the potential funding shortfalls for Africa. While commending UNHCR's work in relation to the tsunami emergency, it was hoped this would not affect contributions to the Annual Budget.

16. There was general support for the establishment of a Supplementary Programme for confidence-building measures in Western Sahara, and for unused funding from Operational Reserve Category II to be carried over to the Supplementary Programme. One delegation called for further discussion on whether the seven per cent support cost charge levied on Supplementary Programmes would also be applied in this case. In response to several queries as to why the Chad/Darfur operation had been continued as a Supplementary Programme rather than being incorporated into the Annual Programme in 2005, the Director explained that at the time the 2005 budget was being finalized, UNHCR did not know how the situation would develop in Chad and Sudan.

17. In response to questions regarding the application of the five per cent “freeze” on 2005 programme and non-staff administrative cost budgets, the Controller explained that caps were on a regional basis and that bureaux directors were responsible for deciding which particular budgets would be reduced. UNHCR preferred to reduce budgets earlier in the year rather than at the end, but he cautioned that the initial cap might still not be sufficient. On why the carry-over for JPOs was so high, the Controller replied that this was currently under discussion and further information would be provided. In relation to questions concerning the effects of fluctuations in the value of the US dollar, the Controller cited a number of challenges, including the exchange rate differences between the date of a pledge, the receipt of funds and actual payments, as well as the discrepancies between the market currency rates and the UN rates, and the fact that many of UNHCR’s programmes were implemented in currencies other than the US dollar.

18. The draft decision (Annex VIII to EC/55/SC/CRP.5) was adopted.

**B. Evaluation of the pilot phase of Operational Reserve Category II**

19. The Controller explained that the review of the Operational Reserve Category II, presented in document EC/55/SC/CRP.6, also contained the report of the independent consultant as well as a draft decision proposing an extension of the pilot scheme.

20. Many delegations welcomed the report of the independent consultant, and the suggested continuation of the pilot phase. While several delegations commended the increased transparency and improved guidelines, a number also requested further refinement of the criteria with presentation of further analysis before the 2006 ExCom session. One delegation urged UNHCR to ensure that Category II did not lead to fragmentation, and endorsed the proposed regular updates through the website. Some concern was expressed with regard to a possible adverse impact on Annual Budget funding and a needs-based planning and budgeting process. Considering Category II to be a valuable mechanism for donor funding of core activities which were otherwise not included in UNHCR’s Annual Budget, one delegation supported making Category II permanent as of 2006, but would not oppose an extension of the pilot scheme until the end of 2006. Another delegation insisted that donors should include a confirmation of additionality in their contribution letters. The question of including administrative overheads in Category II allocations was debated and it was agreed that UNHCR should further examine this issue. The Controller noted the broad support for maintaining Category II, and confirmed that UNHCR would continue to work on the issues of transparency and the provision of clear criteria.

21. Following the incorporation of amendments proposed by several delegations, the draft decision (Annex I to EC/55/SC/CRP.6) was adopted.

**C. Analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal to biennialize the Programme Budget**

22. The Controller explained that the paper being presented (EC/55/SC/CRP.7) provided a preliminary analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of a biennialization of the budget cycle, which would be further elaborated upon at forthcoming informal consultative meetings.

23. Several delegations supported biennialization because this would represent harmonization with the United Nations system, and because it could improve long-term planning. One delegation also stressed that biennialization could improve continuity and stability while another expressed disappointment that a more substantive analysis had not been prepared for the meeting. It was suggested that time and money could be saved since the second year of biennial budgets would not have to be prepared from scratch, and that it should be possible to introduce some flexibility in the second year. Furthermore, some of UNHCR's programmes were already multi-year. However, some delegations saw difficulty in ensuring budgetary adjustments in the second year, including the risk that if a major crisis occurred in the first year, a funding shortfall could occur in the second year. A number of delegations cautioned that since they had annual budgetary cycles, they would continue to commit funds on an annual basis even if a biennial budget were introduced.

24. The Controller advised that biennialization would not mean the end of annual financial reporting; UNHCR would continue to produce annual financial reports and be subject to annual external auditing. He stressed that UNHCR had not yet taken a position on the issue, but had noted the comments made and would provide additional details for the forthcoming informal consultative meetings. On the specific issue of budgetary adjustments in the second year, the Controller noted that a number of mechanisms and techniques were available for this.

## VI. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

25. In her oral update on implementation of the Agenda for Protection, the Director of the Department of International Protection (DIP) highlighted the close and direct links between DIP and the Bureaux to improve protection in the Field, including the "mainstreaming" of the Agenda for Protection. DIP was compiling best practices in protection delivery thanks to a grant from the Ford Foundation. Priorities in 2005 included making further progress in addressing problems of statelessness, promoting understanding of gaps in protection to inform capacity-building strategies, and improving UNHCR's own refugee status determination processes. Progress had also been made in the search for durable solutions in Africa and in Latin America, as well as in the further development of the Framework for Durable Solutions. The Convention Plus initiative would remain an important vehicle through which to pursue implementation of the Agenda for Protection. The Department would also seek ways to strengthen cooperation with NGOs in disseminating awareness of the Agenda and factoring it into their work. The Director asked delegations whether it would be feasible to arrive at a comprehensive progress report, at the Agenda's five-year mark, whereby UNHCR, States and NGOs would produce a common overview of gaps, challenges and future directions.

26. In their interventions, speakers affirmed their ongoing commitment to the Agenda, and two delegations announced that they would report on their own efforts to implement the Agenda at the June Standing Committee. Several delegations saw merit in pursuing the idea of a comprehensive report to mark five years of the Agenda's implementation. With reference to the component of the Convention Plus initiative focusing on targeting of development assistance, there was a call for a detailed report from UNHCR on its experiences in various African countries, in order to enable States to contribute to the elaboration of a generic agreement in this area. There was also a request for UNHCR to take prompt action to invoke the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees.

27. The Director welcomed the intention of a number of States to report on their own implementation of the Agenda and the offer of support on new initiatives on statelessness. Some thought had indeed been given to convening a ministerial-level meeting, but the question would need to be considered carefully, in consultation with the new High Commissioner. The Director was committed to moving ahead with upgrading the post of Head of the Resettlement Section, but deferred to the Acting High Commissioner for any additional comment on this issue. On the question of application of the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees, the Director observed that UNHCR would need to consider each different era of exodus carefully, but that meanwhile, cessation was not an impediment to active promotion of voluntary repatriation. On the issue of targeting of development assistance, UNHCR was working on a statement of best practice within the context of the Convention Plus initiative. The Director promised to take the question of an analysis of experiences in applying this approach back to colleagues for further reflection.

## VII. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

28. The Assistant High Commissioner introduced the Regional Activities and Global Programmes item, drawing attention to several operational developments, including UNHCR's extraordinary emergency response to the tsunami at the request of the Secretary-General. On the basis of the Office's emergency expertise, experience and capacity, UNHCR had instituted the Action Alert system, in full collaboration with IASC members. Staff security was of paramount concern and UNHCR was in the process of implementing the recommendations of the extensive internal security review undertaken the previous year. The Assistant High Commissioner outlined recent efforts to facilitate durable solutions for protracted refugee situations, including through improving UNHCR's capacity to gather solid data and measure progress. Progress had also been made in registration through Project Profile, mainstreaming the use of standards and indicators, and ensuring proper consideration of the special needs of women, children and the elderly through implementation of the Age and Gender Mainstreaming Project.

### A. Asia and the Pacific

29. After a brief introduction and review of the Indian Ocean tsunami emergency response, the Director's presentation focused on three major areas of concern in the Asia-Pacific region: strengthening of the refugee protection framework, durable solutions and meeting the protection needs of women and children.

30. Delegations overall expressed appreciation of UNHCR's speedy response and delivery of emergency relief items to the victims of the tsunami, although several were concerned that the presence of external actors in the Indonesian Province of Aceh was currently under review. The Director recalled that, while the Office had received much support from the Indonesian Government, there had been queries as to whether its presence after the emergency phase was compatible with its mandate. UNHCR was awaiting clarification on this, and would be prepared to work out an alternative to the current mode of implementation. The Director also noted that longer-term recovery strategies in Sri Lanka, including the "4Rs" component,<sup>1</sup> were being revised to take into account the tsunami context.

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<sup>1</sup> Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

31. A number of specific situations were raised. Several delegations praised the recent efforts of the parties concerned with finding solutions and opening dialogue on the Montagnard situation in Cambodia, while expressing concern about UNHCR's access to the Central Highlands and the inclusion of new arrivals in the Memorandum of Understanding framework. Several delegations drew attention to the precarious situation of Tibetans transiting through Nepal and called on UNHCR, Nepal and Bhutan to resolve the protracted situation of the 100,000 refugees in camps in south-eastern Nepal. The situation of North Koreans in China was discussed. Thailand was praised for broadening its asylum space but there was a call for Thailand to grant refugees from Myanmar the rights to work and freedom of movement and to give UNHCR a strong monitoring role in the Provincial Admission Boards, once re-established. The current crackdown in Malaysia, despite recent progress in strengthening asylum, was giving cause for concern. UNHCR's positive steps in Papua New Guinea were welcomed, as were the Office's initiatives on gender and age mainstreaming. The NGO delegation reminded States that the non-issuance of birth certificates was the major source of statelessness and that States should focus on this area if they were sincere in wanting to reduce the number of stateless people. The Director described statelessness in the region as UNHCR's "second mandate" and affirmed UNHCR stood ready to assist in this regard.

#### B. CASWANAME

32. The Director reported on progress towards realizing durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern in the CASWANAME region. He applauded the steps taken by several Central Asian Republics to grant citizenship to refugees and announced UNHCR's intention to consider declaring cessation of refugee status for displaced Tajiks towards the end of 2005, in consultation with the Governments concerned. Further discussions would follow regarding the potential for other durable solutions for refugees and stateless persons in the region. The Director expressed appreciation for the resettlement of Afghans in Central Asia and commented on the evolution of the Afghan refugee situation, confirming that UNHCR-supported voluntary repatriation would continue in 2005. He also welcomed the consensus reached at recent strategic consultations in Brussels with concerned Governments and the international community on identifying longer-term solutions. Nevertheless, conditions in some parts of Afghanistan did not yet allow for return. For most Iraqi refugees, the current circumstances did not permit a safe and dignified repatriation either. The Director described UNHCR's efforts, despite enormous problems, to assist spontaneously returning Iraqis through an NGO network in the country, and regretted that no fresh contributions had been received for the 2005 Iraq Supplementary Budget. Preparations were being made for more significant levels of return once conditions improved.

33. The Director reported on progress achieved in mainstreaming gender and age issues into operations in the region, and expressed particular appreciation for support in resettling Afghan victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). He emphasized the need for mechanisms to prevent the tragic loss of life of persons from sub-Saharan Africa attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa to Europe and to support the capacity of North African States to identify asylum-seekers in the mixed flows of migrants that transit through the region, highlighting the need to prevent deportations of intercepted asylum-seekers and refugees to locations where their life and security were at risk.



34. Several delegations commended UNHCR's work towards durable solutions in Central Asia, and welcomed the Protection Gaps initiative. There was wide support for UNHCR's comprehensive solutions approach to the Afghan situation, as well as for the strategy of establishing linkages to ensure that development initiatives for persons of concern were mainstreamed. In relation to Iraq, UNHCR's position not to promote return to the country was endorsed, and several delegations commended UNHCR's "remote management" and building of relationships with Iraqi Ministries. A number of delegations welcomed the Office's work on SGBV and initial efforts to mainstream gender and age issues at the community level in the Middle East, and looked forward to an extension of this throughout CASWANAME operations.

35. Many delegations applauded the progress achieved with the Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) programme in Tindouf and Western Saharan refugee camps, and some announced support for its second phase in 2005. There was a request for a registration of refugees in the Tindouf camps, to which the Director reiterated UNHCR's intention to continue diplomatic contact with all parties involved.

36. The Director emphasized the need for new sustainable solutions policy frameworks for those Afghans who can not yet return home that look beyond the humanitarian sphere towards poverty and migration issues. He commented on the issue of "remittances" of money being channelled into Afghanistan from nationals working abroad, and said that UNHCR was exploring different aspects of this question with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Director thanked countries in the region for generously hosting Iraqis under the 'temporary protection' regime.

### C. Europe

37. The Director highlighted the complex processes of transition and transformation in Europe, including the completion of the first phase of European harmonization in the asylum area and the accession of 10 additional States to the Union, with profound implications for asylum and migration. The Bureau for Europe had developed a five-year strategic framework which focused on three main themes: strengthening asylum, promoting stability and solutions and securing support for UNHCR's work.

38. Despite a decrease in the number of asylum applications, the strengthening of asylum systems in Europe was extremely challenging. UNHCR had strongly supported the first phase of EU harmonization, despite some concerns that the Directives on asylum fell short of international standards and best practice in some important aspects. The Office was now focusing on the second phase, aiming at the establishment of a common asylum system by 2010, as decided in The Hague Programme adopted in November 2004. In the broader Europe, UNHCR had been promoting enhanced cross-border dialogue between States on both sides of the new external border of the EU, including through the Soderkoping Process. A final meeting of the Follow-up to the 1996 Geneva Conference on the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Migration and Asylum Issues (also known as the "CIS Conference Process") was due to take place later in 2005, and a detailed gaps analysis would be applied to define areas for further action.

39. The Director also reviewed UNHCR's role in the northern and southern Caucasus, and in the Balkans, where the Office was part of a multilateral dialogue to take stock of the post-Dayton progress and define the remaining tasks related to voluntary repatriation. The restructuring of UNHCR's presence in western and central Europe was being pursued to facilitate strategy formulation and the development of responses to common challenges, while streamlining staffing, structures, functions and responsibilities.

40. Many delegations expressed support for UNHCR's work in the northern Caucasus and the forthcoming High Level Dialogue on Human Security. There was support for UNHCR to continue pursuing durable solutions in south-eastern Europe, including minority returns to Kosovo. The "3x3" initiative in the Balkans was welcomed as a model for achieving solutions for refugees through close cooperation and a trilateral approach. One delegation greatly regretted the increasing xenophobia and confusion between refugees and migration issues, and there were several calls for greater responsibility and burden sharing within the European Union.

41. In responding to interventions, the Director commented that the growing interest in developing regular migration channels and programmes in Europe might lead to less confusion over the distinction between asylum-seekers and migrants. UNHCR would also like to see an increase in resettlement places offered by Europe. With respect to the increase of asylum claims in some new member States on the EU external borders, there was a need for stronger burden sharing to assist States that still had fragile asylum systems.

42. The Director confirmed that the Office was continuing to focus on repatriation for refugees in Serbia and Montenegro and the need to lift obstacles to returns. Despite a difficult climate for the return of minorities, UNHCR was fully committed to support the return of IDPs to Kosovo and would maintain its presence in Kosovo in 2006. In Azerbaijan, a mission was planned to re-evaluate UNHCR's role and to better focus the Office's interventions and advocacy efforts. With regard to Georgia, a revalidation of IDPs had started in October 2004, but, funds were still needed to complete this exercise.

#### D. Africa

43. The Director reviewed current refugee situations in Africa, highlighting the return of over 350,000 refugees since the previous year's Dialogue on Voluntary Repatriation and Sustainable Reintegration in Africa, and predicted the likely voluntary repatriation of even greater numbers of refugees in 2005. Durable solutions remained UNHCR's fundamental overall objective in Africa but considerably greater involvement by development actors was needed. The Office's major challenges were to sustain return operations with sufficient resources at the outset, and to continue to support protracted refugee situations.

44. While welcoming the increasing number of voluntary returns, a number of delegations recognized that if returns were to be sustainable, many challenges had to be addressed including security, land mines, infrastructure, economic development and livelihoods. The threat to sustainable peace caused by the proliferation of small arms was underscored by a number of delegations and others expressed concern over poor security conditions in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

45. Several delegations commented that the international humanitarian community was not providing an adequate response to ensure the protection of the growing number of IDPs around the world, notably in Sudan, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and called for clear lines of responsibility for IDPs and an assessment of the collaborative approach in Darfur.

46. There were several expressions of appreciation for the Country Operations Plan (COP) joint planning exercise, and delegations welcomed UNHCR's progress in developing the use of standards and indicators. However one delegation urged that training on standards and indicators be completed for all UNHCR field offices by the end of 2005, and there were calls for the inclusion of more indicators relating to environmental and security issues. Further efforts with age and gender mainstreaming were encouraged, and one delegation drew attention to an example of good gender participation under the "4Rs" programme in Liberia. An update on implementation of "4Rs" initiatives in Africa was requested.

47. Many delegations expressed alarm over food shortages in several parts of Africa, cautioning that this ongoing problem could become a humanitarian crisis. Several refugee hosting countries also made strong appeals to the international community to provide greater support in critical areas relating to the reintegration of returnees, notably in relation to security, and there was a call for a study of local integration best practices to identify why this is such a difficult durable solution for many African States.

48. In his responses, the Director concurred that while the "4Rs" strategy was working well overall, more support from development actors was needed. He recognized that improvements could be made with regard to coordination with other United Nations agencies and encouraged new thinking by the international community concerning responsibility for IDPs. The Director noted that the Somalia Comprehensive Plan of Action was making good progress with a draft action plan to be completed shortly. Finally, the Director appealed to donors for greater support for voluntary repatriation programmes in Burundi, Liberia and Southern Sudan, as well as for local integration and self-reliance strategies such as DAR (Development Assistance for Refugees) and DLI (Development through Local Integration) to improve the standards of protection and assistance in protracted refugee situations.

#### E. Overview of the Operation for the Sudan Situation

49. The Director of the Operation for the Sudan Situation reviewed the current situation in Chad, Darfur and southern Sudan. The situation in Chad had moved beyond the emergency phase, though the overall situation remained fragile. There were some 200,000 refugees in 11 camps and an additional 18,000 refugees remained settled along the border. Sustained resources were required to address significant needs, including the provision of water, food and firewood; a further complication was the tension between refugees and locals over the meagre resources.

50. In Darfur, the United Nations system had made progress in providing assistance to IDPs. UNHCR had responsibility for the protection and voluntary return of IDPs to their villages of origin in west Darfur. However, the current security situation did not warrant mass returns of IDPs and refugees, and despite some positive developments, a political solution was required to

end the conflict. Nevertheless, the Government of Sudan had plans to rehabilitate villages in west Darfur, an LOU had been signed for the voluntary return of IDPs to and within west Darfur, and limited returns had already taken place.

51. In southern Sudan, the peace agreement had given hope for a political solution to end decades of civil war. The Director described UNHCR's two-pronged approach: to address the needs of spontaneous returns and residents in areas of origin and develop the absorption capacity of receiving communities; and to strengthen protection to foster an environment conducive to targeted organized returns in the second half of 2005, security permitting. An additional 550,000 refugees from neighbouring countries and at least as many IDPs were expected to return. However, the lack of basic infrastructure in the areas of return and remaining insecurity did not permit large-scale returns at that point. With only five per cent of required funding pledged, the Director appealed for immediate action before the onset of the rainy season.

52. Delegations expressed considerable concern about conditions in the Chad refugee camps, notably with respect to the food pipeline and security risks. Commenting on the estimated cost of assisting the refugees in Chad, one delegation asked for a comparative table of costs of assistance to refugees around the world. There were even greater concerns about the protection needs and security situation of IDPs in the Darfur region. There was support for UNHCR's role with IDPs in west Darfur, but one delegation asked whether the differences between the LOU signed with the Government of Sudan and the Humanitarian Coordinator and the MOU with IOM implied that there were different levels of safeguards and measures from one area of the region to another. Many delegations requested further clarification of the roles of different actors in Darfur, and several supported an initiative calling for an inclusive evaluation of the collaborative approach to protecting IDPs with the participation of all actors. One delegation called for urgent, strong United Nations leadership and overall coordination by one agency of external assistance and protection to IDPs in Darfur, while another stressed the responsibility of the international community in addressing the root causes of the problem, seeking a lasting solution to the crisis, and providing assistance to the Darfur victims.

53. On the southern Sudan situation, many delegations were concerned over the low level of funding received for the return programme, and those who took the opportunity to announce contributions for this purpose also called for more support from other delegations and early engagement of development agencies in order to ensure sustainable return. Other areas highlighted for particular attention in this returnee situation were property issues, the problem of mines and the need to ensure that returns were on a free and fully-informed basis.

54. With regard to UNHCR's role in Darfur, the Director explained that agreements had been drawn up in relation to geographical areas of responsibility for IDPs in west, north and south Darfur: the LOU signed with the Government of Sudan and the Humanitarian Coordinator targeted the voluntary return of IDPs to and within west Darfur while the MOU with IOM ensured coordination with the Government of Sudan as well as the Humanitarian Coordinator on returns to north and south Darfur. There were some 42 international posts in southern Sudan where UNHCR had IDP responsibility, and while sectoral responsibilities were clear, precise geographic areas of responsibility remained unclear. An upcoming meeting would address a

protection strategy and return plan for southern Sudan. With regard to the collaborative approach, the Director reminded delegations that the needs and challenges were enormous and that there was more than enough work for all actors involved.

#### F. The Americas

55. The Director gave a brief overview of the refugee situation in North and Latin America and the main aspects of the Office's work in the different subregions. He emphasized that the statistics of Colombian displacement in neighbouring countries did not reflect the true dimension of this crisis. The Americas region had common problems which called for a stronger sense of collective responsibility and State solidarity, notably in addressing the complex problems posed by the conflict in Colombia, where UNHCR had recently increased its field presence. The Office was also revising its role in the coordination system for IDPs; preparing an MOU with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and pursuing capacity-building activities aimed at more effective implementation of IDP legislation. The November 2004 Mexico Plan of Action represented the implementation of the Agenda for Protection in the region and the Director called on member States to maintain the momentum for implementation of the Plan of Action.

56. Delegations also expressed their strong commitment to the Mexico Plan of Action, including the segments on resettlement and local integration, as well as on strengthening asylum in the region, and several called on donors to provide support to achieve the objectives of the Plan. One delegation requested UNHCR's assistance in drafting new asylum legislation and reaffirmed its offer to resettle Colombian refugees. With regard to the situation in Colombia, there were renewed calls for international support in view of the far-reaching impact of the crisis. Although one delegation drew attention to some improvements in the security and humanitarian situation which had allowed the return of some internally displaced families to areas of former residence and a reduction in new displacements, there was still great concern about the IDP situation, the size of the refugee caseload and ongoing insecurity in many areas. The existing tripartite mechanism, UNHCR's DAR initiative and implementation of the Mexico Plan of Action would be very important in resolving the situation. Several delegations emphasized the need to monitor border crossings better, including through an increased UNHCR presence, and to ensure separation of armed elements from persons of concern.

57. Other issues of particular concern to delegations included the situation of Haitian refugees; some regional practices relating to the reception, detention and removal of asylum-seekers; and the need to address the problems of trafficking of women and children in the Caribbean. UNHCR's role in improving protection and RSD structures in the Caribbean, its positive relations with IOM and its resettlement work in the region were commended, however the Office was encouraged to develop stronger coordination between offices in the region to improve protection.

58. The Director appreciated the support expressed for the Mexico Plan of Action in particular, as well as for various expressions of willingness to resettle refugees within the region. He agreed to give further consideration to a number of the issues raised, including the strengthening of UNHCR's presence in the region.

### G. Global Programmes and Partnerships

59. The Director of the Division of Operational Support recalled that the global programmes were priorities for UNHCR. They included efforts to pursue the implementation of the Agenda for Protection at field level as well as the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), notably in respect of the eradication of poverty, gender equality and the empowerment of women, basic education and combating HIV/AIDS. She underlined the need for close partnership and cooperation both within UNHCR and also with other organizations. Key areas highlighted included efforts to improve the quality of programmes in the Field, particularly through the development of results-based management approaches; the coordination of various bilateral and multilateral initiatives in the search for durable solutions; and the integration of age and gender perspectives, including through registration. UNHCR's membership of UNDG would help the Office to advocate for the inclusion of the needs of displaced populations in efforts to pursue the MDGs.

60. Several delegations commended the progress achieved in mainstreaming age and gender concerns and welcomed the efforts to broaden dialogue with refugees and other persons of concern in this respect. An evaluation of the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project would be discussed at the Steering Committee meeting in April. One delegation asked for all bureaux directors to ensure full commitment to incorporating age and gender awareness throughout UNHCR's programmes. There were calls for more information on lessons learned on SGBV initiatives in Sierra Leone and on SGBV training for staff from the roster.

61. UNHCR's efforts in developing partnerships on education and empowerment of refugees were noted with appreciation, but one delegation drew attention to the need for psychosocial support for youth and encouraged more collaboration between UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in this respect. On other partnership issues, several delegations highlighted the importance of the linkages between humanitarian and development agencies and welcomed developments with "4Rs" programmes and the launch of evaluations in four countries. One delegation requested more details on UNHCR's collaboration with financial institutions on the question of development aid and the inclusion of refugee-specific criteria in strategic planning exercises. The cooperation between UNHCR and WFP was strongly commended, notably in relation to joint efforts to manage food shortages in Africa. One delegation reaffirmed its commitment to providing technical expertise and assistance to UNHCR, particularly in emergency situations.

62. Several delegations recognized the significant advances made in registration through Project Profile, but sought more details, in particular on the rate of implementation and provision of documentation for refugee women. While commending achievements to date in introducing the use of standards and indicators, some delegations suggested that more visibility should be given to their use as a monitoring tool.

63. The Director confirmed that Project Profile had been introduced in six countries in 2004 and was due to be implemented in some 30 countries in 2005. In relation to the use of standards and indicators, a report would be shared shortly after the meeting that identified offices

using standards and indicators, as well as the protection gaps. In its efforts to meet the Five Priorities for Children, UNHCR was collaborating closely with UNICEF, Save the Children and the Human Rights Commission.

64. The Director agreed that gender awareness should be expanded across programmes other than the 16 countries where this was piloted in 2004. The Assistant High Commissioner pointed out that during earlier interventions, the level of commitment for the age and gender mainstreaming process had been evident, and this would be incorporated into the objectives of all regional programmes in 2006.

#### VIII. PROGRAMME/PROTECTION POLICY

65. The Director introduced UNHCR's draft Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS for 2005-2007, which was based on policies and lessons learned from implementation of the 2002-2004 Strategic Plan, technical guidance from the UNAIDS Secretariat and other Cosponsors, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines on HIV/AIDS in emergency settings. The Plan presented the Office's objectives and key strategies to combat HIV and AIDS among refugees, returnees and other persons of concern as well as to ensure that the human rights of persons of concern to UNHCR who are living with HIV and AIDS were duly respected. The Plan would be finalized in the coming weeks.

66. Most delegations who took the floor, welcomed the Strategic Plan as ambitious and comprehensive. Several delegations wished to know more about the financial implications of the Plan. One delegation particularly welcomed the results-based approach, but asked for more information on how progress would be measured and others sought further details on the results of the 2002-2004 Strategic Plan. A number of delegations emphasized the need for local populations to have access to treatment as well as refugees and for prevention and care to be linked. There were calls for greater focus on youth and on more cooperative arrangements amongst neighbours, as highlighted in the UNAIDS 15<sup>th</sup> ESCAP Conference in Thailand. While appreciating the emphasis on coordination, one delegation suggested that if UNHCR could define further its own particular focus and contribution this might help generate more donor support. The NGO delegation felt that the particular needs of women and girls and those of refugees in urban areas required greater emphasis and resourcing. The UNAIDS representative supported the human rights-based and collaborative approach taken in the Strategic Plan and considered the Plan was in conformity with the unified budget.

67. In response to the requests for more information, the Director and the Special Adviser on HIV and AIDS confirmed that the full 2003 Report was available and the 2004 Report would be available in April or May. Funding and timelines had been met for the 2002-2004 Strategic Plan and the 2005-2007 Plan was also considered realizable, though this would depend partly on the level of funding available. As a Cosponsor of UNAIDS, UNHCR's funding requirements were part of a unified budget and would be fully integrated into the 2006 country budgets.

68. The Special Adviser undertook to place a greater focus on youth. With regard to the provision of anti-retroviral treatment to refugees and local populations alike, UNHCR's policy was to seek to convince host governments and donors to include refugees in their programmes. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission was also a priority. UNHCR had been concentrating

its efforts in Africa, the region which was most affected at present, but was expanding to address the specific problems of HIV in Asia. A Regional Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific region would start work in early April.

#### IX. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STAFF COUNCIL

69. The Chairman of the Staff Council acknowledged the contribution made by the High Commissioner during his four years of service and expressed the Council's regret over certain aspects concerning the handling of the investigation which had culminated in his resignation. The Staff Council had written to the Secretary-General appealing for firm action with regard to ensuring respect for due process and the fundamental principle of confidentiality in investigations. Looking forward, the Chairman outlined the Staff Council's priority areas for 2005 in the fields of staff security and welfare, personnel practices, and gender equity. The Staff Council was committed to working closely with the acting High Commissioner and the Assistant High Commissioner in this interim period.

#### X. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

70. Under this item, the Chairman brought to the attention of the Committee various resolutions of relevance to UNHCR that had been adopted at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. They included the 'Omnibus' resolution endorsing the report of the fifty-fifth session of the Executive Committee (A/RES/59/170); a resolution on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/RES/59/172); and a resolution for the enlargement of the Executive Committee (A/RES/59/169).

71. The Chairman also reminded the Committee of forthcoming informal consultative meetings on the Annual Programme Budget for 2006; the proposal to biennialize the Programme Budget; staff security and safety; and, the issues to be covered in the 2005 ExCom conclusions on international protection. The Bureau would also be consulting with members on the possibility and timing of a further consultation relating to the Office of the Inspector General.

72. The Chairman then declared the 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee closed.



LIST OF POINTS  
FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTION

1. Creation of a Resettlement Service under a D1 staff member;
2. Resumption of dialogue on proposal to create a post of Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) and related management issues;
3. Paper by Inspector General's Office on the relationship between the Inspector General's Office and the Office for Internal Oversight Services;
4. MDG reporting to be incorporated in future into strategic presentations on Regional Activities and Global Programmes;
5. Further reporting on the use of standards and indicators;
6. Information on JPO carry-over;
7. Analysis of experiences on targeting development assistance;
8. Further information on implementation of "4Rs" initiatives in Africa.

DECISION ON  
PROGRAMME BUDGETS AND FUNDING IN 2005

*The Standing Committee,*

*Recalling* the Executive Committee's decision at its fifty-fifth session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1003, para. 24) as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the thirty-first meeting of the Standing Committee,

*Reaffirming* the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden of host countries, especially developing ones,

1. *Notes* that UNHCR's overall needs under its Annual Programme for 2005, based on currently known requirements, amount to US\$981.6 million, as approved by the Executive Committee at its fifty-fifth session (which included \$28.7 million from the United Nations Regular Budget and \$7 million for Junior Professional Officers);
2. *Notes* that the 2005 Supplementary Programme Budgets currently amount to \$369 million;
3. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding during 2005 may result in the need for additional or expanded Supplementary Programmes and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs;
4. *Notes with continuing concern* that the High Commissioner has been compelled to reduce the activities under the Annual Programme Budget in reaction to anticipated funding shortfalls; and
5. *Urges* Member States, in light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, to respond generously and in a spirit of solidarity, and in a timely manner, to his appeal for resources to meet in full the approved 2005 Annual Programme Budget, as well as the requirements of the 2005 Supplementary Programme Budgets.

DECISION ON  
THE REVIEW OF THE OPERATIONAL RESERVE CATEGORY II

*The Standing Committee,*

*Recalling* the Executive Committee's decision ((A/AC.96/1003, para 24 (c)) in which it requested an independent evaluation of the Operational Reserve Category II,

1. *Notes* with appreciation the report of the independent evaluation;
2. *Notes* the recommendation of the evaluation report and of UNHCR that the Executive Committee at its fifty-sixth annual plenary session take a decision to extend the pilot period further so that a final decision on the Operational Reserve Category II may be made at its fifty-seventh annual plenary session;
3. *Requests* UNHCR to present an analysis at the Standing Committee in March 2006 of the extended pilot, and to make a recommendation on the value and need for Operational Reserve Category II beyond the extended pilot period;
4. *Requests* UNHCR to include in its draft Annual Programme Budget for 2006 an Operational Reserve made up of two components, namely the first (ORI) set at an amount corresponding to 7.5 per cent of programmed activities and a further component (ORII) amounting to \$50 million;
5. *Further requests* that during the extended pilot period UNHCR take steps to improve information sharing and transparency in the operations of the ORII;
6. *Emphasizes* that the ORII mechanism should be limited to the funding of projects falling within the High Commissioner's core mandate; and *requests* UNHCR to ensure that this objective is fulfilled by inter alia clear criteria for eligibility and reporting, and by the provision of appropriate advice, as necessary, to potential donors.