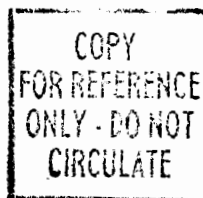


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ASSEMBLY**
THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION
*Official Records**



THIRD COMMITTEE
45th meeting
held on
16 November 1983
at 10.00 a.m.
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

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Chairman: Mr. CHAVANAVIRAJ (Thailand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 98: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
(continued) (A/38/12 and Add.1, A/38/85 and Add.1, A/38/134, 158, 168, 302, 399 and
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(a) REPORT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER (continued)

(b) ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

1. Mr. SOLARZ (United States of America), noting that the constituency he represented in the United States House of Representatives included survivors of the Holocaust, and Soviet Jewish, Polish, Kampuchean and Cuban refugees, said that to them the Committee had no more important continuing responsibility than to review, support and strengthen the life-saving work of the United Nations in aiding refugees. He assured the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of his Government's strong support for and continued interest in his humanitarian endeavours. The United States had assigned a high priority to refugee issues and had generously supported UNHCR by contributing more than half a billion dollars since 1975, as well as providing, over the previous eight years, permanent resettlement opportunities for more than 850,000 refugees. Thousands of United States citizens had become personally involved in relief efforts abroad, while tens of thousands had aided in the resettlement and adjustment of the more than 2 million refugees who had entered the United States since the end of World War II. The refugees had made enormous contributions to American society, and on the basis of that experience, the United States would encourage other nations to reconsider their ability to resettle those refugees who had no hope of returning to their homelands.

2. Unfortunately for the millions of refugees who had perished in the Holocaust between 1943 and the end of World War II, early efforts to support relief and migration efforts for refugees had not been as effective as UNHCR had been since its establishment in 1951. The human costs of the exoduses of refugees seeking escape from oppression could be measured in the loss of people to the home country, often including the ablest and most spirited, the burden of added population to the receiving countries and the human toll on the refugees themselves.

3. There was growing recognition of the need for a full international process of burden-sharing to aid refugees. There was also need to consider what could be done to anticipate and prevent refugee flows, in particular to reduce the size and duration of the massive exoduses that were occurring with increasing frequency. The rights of refugees needed to be preserved and protected, and at the same time the responsibility of States to reduce or eliminate the situations in which entire populations were forced to look to other countries for the minimum conditions of decent life needed to be spelled out more clearly. The successful adaptation of some refugees should not be allowed to obscure the hardship that the refugee experience imposed on all concerned.

(Mr. Solarz, United States)

4. If prevention was the best cure for the refugee problem, the next best was clearly for refugees to be enabled to return freely to their homelands. Even if voluntary repatriation was not immediately in sight, it made sense to care for refugees within their own regions. Wherever possible, efforts should be made to develop programmes aimed at easing the transition to refugee self-sufficiency and long-term solutions. UNHCR should take the lead in organizing the international aid effort in such a way as to engage the widest possible number of donors and to bring to bear the resources of the appropriate international agencies. Through such agencies as the International Committee of the Red Cross and private humanitarian organizations, as well as directly, the United States had aided refugees by contributing some \$US 300 million in 1983, including Food for Peace commodities, and it was likely that it would contribute the same in 1984.

5. With regard to the matter of protection, he noted that the High Commissioner's role had had to expand from the traditional emphasis on legal protection to an active effort to deal with physical attacks on the very persons and lives of the refugees. The United States had supported the useful work undertaken to improve the protection of refugee settlements from military attacks. Recent attacks on Khmer refugees had resulted in dozens of deaths and serious injuries and had caused thousands of refugees to flee for their lives. Fortunately, the Government of Thailand had allowed the refugees to flee into Thailand temporarily, thereby increasing the great respect which the international community had for the Royal Thai Government. But there was probably no sadder chapter in the history of refugee movements than the fate which had befallen thousands of boat people who were fleeing from Viet Nam. Fifty-five per cent of the boat refugees reaching Thailand in 1983 had been attacked on their perilous passage to freedom. The United States welcomed the extension of the joint Thai-UNHCR anti-piracy programme and hoped for the development of an even more effective protection programme with broader international participation. In his capacity as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs of the United States Congress, he had been active in securing \$US 5 million to expand United States support for that programme.

6. In the area of assistance, UNHCR continued to be responsible for a vast quantity of resources. He commended the High Commissioner for the thoroughness of his report (A/38/12 and Add.1) and urged him to develop improved demographic analyses of refugee populations so that donor countries could more readily understand and project the types of assistance needed, particularly for women refugees, and respond more fully to both emergency care situations and self-sufficiency projects.

7. The international economic downturn of the past few years, coupled with the size of refugee populations, made it all the more essential not only that the High Commissioner's programmes should be managed effectively but also that they should be seen to be so managed. Without good management, resources were wasted, and donor confidence and support must necessarily wane.

(Mr. Solarz, United States)

8. He congratulated the non-governmental organizations, notably the International Rescue Committee, now celebrating its fifteenth anniversary, on their selfless and tireless efforts to provide care and aid to all refugees. In many cases their traditional role was being supplanted by the Governments of countries giving asylum to refugees. Those Governments were of course in the front line of any refugee emergency, but in more and more cases they were prepared to turn to and welcome the help available from the international community through UNHCR and other responsible agencies. That meant that UNHCR must be prepared to offer management services as well as technical expertise where needed.

9. His delegation welcomed the steps which the High Commissioner had taken to strengthen his organization's emergency response capability by establishing an Emergency Unit which had made significant contributions in preparing the international response to recent refugee emergencies in Honduras, Rwanda and Uganda. It would be useful for the High Commissioner to further regularize his arrangements for initial emergency response and to establish additional guidelines on their relation to UNHCR offices in the field as well as at Headquarters. He commended the High Commissioner for improvements in overall project management and was confident that he was sensitive to the need to have full regard for the sovereign responsibility of the countries concerned when carrying out those management functions. Without the co-operation of host Governments, the international community could do little to help in emergencies. Host Governments must co-operate by facilitating access for those who needed help and for those willing to provide it, developing accurate estimates of refugee numbers and needs and by establishing logistical supply arrangements. Actions that might adversely affect the administration of relief operations or weaken broad donor support for them must be avoided. He praised the generosity of numerous host Governments and the vital role of the many non-governmental organizations which so often worked in close co-operation with those Governments and UNHCR to accomplish the actual delivery of assistance.

10. In relation to the global refugee situation, he said that despite serious and sustained efforts to ameliorate the conditions which created refugees, the population of those in need of international assistance continued to rise. In Africa, drought, political rivalries, military conflict and ethnic and political persecution had created new populations in need of help. He paid tribute to those African Governments and peoples in the Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and elsewhere in Africa which were accommodating large refugee influxes, even when that meant sharing already scarce resources with the newcomers. Other United Nations agencies should take the refugee burden fully into account in granting economic assistance to developing countries which had accepted large numbers of refugees for asylum and resettlement and who deserved the support of the international community.

11. In South-East Asia, the Governments of the ASEAN States, humanely recognizing the plight of the refugees fleeing from oppressive and restrictive régimes, continued to provide first asylum to over 200,000 refugees from Indo-China. He commended those nations for their generosity and assured them that their efforts would not be forgotten. Efforts must continue in the direction of achieving a

(Mr. Solarz, United States)

political solution which would end the motivation for flight and give Indo-Chinese refugees the possibility of returning to their homes freely and in peace. Until that was achieved, however, the burden of caring for those refugees in the country of first asylum must be alleviated through support for maintenance of refugee camps, increased protection for all refugees, particularly women, and the provision of timely resettlement opportunities. He reiterated his own country's commitment to continuing its resettlement programmes for the Indo-Chinese refugees and called upon other countries to re-examine their programmes to see if an expansion of their resettlement activities could be achieved. The successful evolution of the Programme of Orderly Departure from Viet Nam was an example of the role the High Commissioner could play in ameliorating humanitarian problems. He expressed the hope that the High Commissioner would soon be able to arrange with the Government of Viet Nam for the release and orderly departure of those Vietnamese long held prisoner in re-education camps.

12. Pakistan had provided an example of successful co-operation in meeting the needs of refugees. Approximately one-third of Afghanistan's people had fled to neighbouring countries because of the continued occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet forces. Well over 2 million refugees were being cared for in Pakistan alone. That temporary burden must not become a permanent one. The international community must ask for the withdrawal of all Soviet forces within the framework of the United Nations resolutions on that issue and for the cessation of the brutal attempt to subjugate Afghanistan. Such a Soviet withdrawal would not only allow the proud Afghan people to return with dignity to their homeland but would also allow the Soviet Union to protect its legitimate security interests while considerably reducing the level of tension not only in that region but throughout the world.

13. The United States continued to encourage and support UNHCR and other multilateral programmes to aid refugees in other parts of the world such as Central America. In compliance with his mandate, the High Commissioner's activities provided the non-political humanitarian shield for refugees behind which they could be helped in the search for an appropriate durable solution. Through his "good offices" function, the High Commissioner had been of assistance to other groups in need and had taken an active role in assisting interested Governments, including the United States, in training and educating their personnel in the implementation of international law and treaties on refugees and the principles of asylum. As long as fear of persecution drove people from their homes or made them unable to return, the High Commissioner's task would continue, and he would continue to have the whole-hearted support of the United States.

14. Mr. ZAKI (Egypt) stressed the need to consolidate and strengthen the means available to UNHCR to cope with the onerous responsibilities involved in the increasing challenge of refugees. The problem was not limited to a single continent but was general and international, and it had many causes, including natural disasters, political upheaval and war. It was essential to make the international community aware of the seriousness of the problem and the variety of its manifestations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He praised the efforts of UNHCR in that respect but observed that it was not always able to deal with the

(Mr. Zaki, Egypt)

ever-increasing flow of refugees. Referring to chapter II of the High Commissioner's report (A/38/12, para. 113), he noted that one of the goals that had been achieved was the voluntary repatriation of many citizens of Chad and that there were improved prospects for the voluntary repatriation of Ugandans and Ethiopians. He reaffirmed the need to step up contributions to ensure the success of the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. There was also a need to evaluate the success and results of the first Conference.

15. Efforts must be pursued to deal with the explosive refugee problem in Asia. Another problem area was Central America, where, as stated in paragraph 129 of the High Commissioner's report, the total number of refugees exceeded 300,000. There was thus no region which was free from the problem of refugees. The substantive problems of housing, food and health care were identical in all the regions and human suffering was the same. The refugee problem was a threat to future generations, and neither women, children nor the aged were spared. He called on all countries to assist the High Commissioner in his tireless efforts to cope with the problem.

16. Mr. LILLO (Chile) said the documentation before the Committee bore eloquent witness to the difficult situation in which millions of people found themselves, particularly in those countries which, although lacking in resources, had welcomed an enormous flow of refugees into their territory. Chile fully agreed with the High Commissioner on the urgent need to find durable solutions to the problem. The success of UNHCR's work was largely due to its capacity to keep its activities within the strictly humanitarian sphere, free from political considerations. That had undoubtedly been a factor in obtaining the aid of Governments, whose co-operation was increasingly necessary. The statistics presented in the High Commissioner's report confirmed the importance of such co-operation. The impact of the world economic crisis had been felt especially in the poorest countries and had had serious consequences for the refugees who had sought shelter in their territories, especially when they did so in mass influxes. A renewed effort must be made to facilitate UNHCR's task, for which the financial support of all Governments was crucial. Chile had maintained a policy of co-operation with UNHCR in supporting its humanitarian work within the limits of its resources and would continue to do so in 1984.

17. He expressed special concern for the situation of those who, because of severe political crises affecting their countries, had been forced to seek refuge in Pakistan and Thailand. His country was also concerned about African and Central American refugees. Such problems required the most urgent attention of the international community if a prompt solution was to be found. He praised the efforts of UNHCR and said that although the overall picture was somber there were some encouraging signs which should not be underestimated. His delegation noted with satisfaction that in 1982, for the second consecutive year, there had been a reduction in the level of voluntary fund expenditure. The generous attitude of 84 Governments and various non-governmental organizations showed the receptivity generated by the serious problem of refugees.

(Mr. Lillo, Chile)

18. The High Commissioner had done important and productive work aimed at bringing the plight of the refugees to the attention of world public opinion and had never lost sight of the fact that its purpose was above all humanitarian.

19. Mr. PINTO (Portugal) said that his delegation agreed with the High Commissioner that the refugee situation had recently become relatively stabilized, but did not feel that that was cause for optimism. Large-scale refugee flows continued to result from external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or attacks on public order in a number of countries. Those problems should be addressed in the appropriate forum, namely the United Nations, and by Governments, which should develop policies aimed at eliminating conflicts. They should not be addressed by UNHCR itself because its concerns were social, humanitarian and totally non-political; indeed, that was what accounted to a large extent for its success.

20. Voluntary repatriation, when possible, was the best solution to refugee problems: it not only met the deepest aspirations of the refugees themselves but also showed that the causes of refugee flows were being removed. His delegation was gratified by the progress made by Bolivia, Colombia, Mozambique and other countries where amnesties had been declared.

21. Portugal welcomed the fact that the basic principle of non-refoulement was gradually becoming a norm of international law, but regretted that in some cases asylum-seekers had been forcibly returned to their countries of origin and denied an opportunity to explain their cases. The imprisonment of a refugee was contrary to article 31 of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In 1982, his Government had issued an administrative instruction that UNHCR must be notified of the detention of a recognized refugee.

22. Most of the African countries with large numbers of refugees and returnees were among the least developed nations, and the burdens placed on their fragile economies by the presence of such persons were therefore very heavy. His delegation accordingly welcomed the decision to convene the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and hoped that the results would be positive.

23. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said the UNHCR report showed that while the report under review had not been marked by new large-scale movement of refugees, existing refugee situations had not been resolved and in some cases, had become worse. Obviously the basic reason was that the root causes of those flows of refugees, namely, internal political problems or military conflicts, had not been removed. The international community had reiterated its support for the work carried out by the High Commissioner, and his strictly humanitarian and non-political function, broadly recognized, had unquestionably strengthened that support.

24. His delegation fully shared the High Commissioner's view that in the search for durable solutions the problem of refugees should be viewed from a long-term perspective. Durable solutions required certain fundamental preconditions if they

(Mr. Montaña, Mexico)

were to be consistent and politically viable. His delegation agreed that voluntary repatriation was the ideal formula for solving the problem of refugees. However, it was only on the basis of a unilateral expression of choice on the part of those who had abandoned homes, family, traditions and land that the option of returning could be established. Frequently, the factors that had caused people to become refugees persisted, and the refugee had well-founded reasons for fearing for his safety in the event of his return to his country of origin.

25. His delegation recognized that local integration as a durable solution was sometimes problematical because the countries of asylum were in many cases developing countries with limited resources on which mass influxes of human beings imposed an additional economic burden, generating tension among some groups of the population who felt threatened by competition and feared losing their jobs. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner's remarks on relocation in third countries, within or outside the region, as a durable solution.

26. It was essential to ensure conditions that would guarantee the safety of refugees and would open new prospects for their future development. The international community noted with concern and alarm the armed attacks against refugee camps, which made refugees the victims of political and military conflicts of which, in the majority in cases, they were not involved. He hoped that the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa would generate greater humanitarian understanding of the problem of refugees in that region, particularly on the part of those countries which were in a position to make contributions in cash or in kind.

27. Paragraph 129 of the report referred to the refugee problem in the Americas. He drew attention in that connection to resolution 38/10 adopted a few days earlier by the General Assembly entitled "The situation in Central America: threats to international peace and security and peace initiatives". The situation in the region was a critical one in which many people had abandoned their homes out of fear for their lives and the lives of their families.

28. Mexico reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining its traditional posture as a country of refuge and asylum for those who had abandoned their country of origin because of political problems which made them fear for their safety. That was a position that his country had maintained throughout its history as an independent nation. His delegation hoped that the Committee and the General Assembly would adopt by consensus the draft resolutions on the work of the High Commissioner and his Office thus manifesting once again their confidence in and support for his work.

29. Mr. ARCILLA (Philippines) said that while his delegation participated in the international effort to provide first asylum and to alleviate the sufferings of refugees, it wished to stress the key importance of durable and lasting solutions to the refugee problem. The countries directly concerned should respond positively to the effort of the international community to remove the root causes of large-scale movement across national frontiers: military conflict and occupation.

(Mr. Arcilla, Philippines)

30. Bearing in mind the fundamental principles of humanitarianism and of the United Nations Charter, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries comprising the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had deplored the indiscriminate military attacks against refugee camps, schools and hospitals for civilians which had led to the immediate influx of 40,000 people into a neighbouring country, most of them women, children and the elderly. The Ministers had emphasized the need for external assistance both to the refugees and to the villagers whose lives had been disrupted by the refugee influx.

31. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner that the optimum and practical solution was voluntary repatriation. The ASEAN Ministers of Foreign Affairs recognized the inalienable right of refugees who had sought temporary refuge in neighbouring countries to return safely to their homeland. They therefore urged the international community at the political level to work towards that objective and welcomed the evolving role of UNHCR as an intermediary between countries of asylum and origin. The Ministers had also emphasized that the granting of first refuge by ASEAN countries depended on the commitment to resettlement in third countries and eventual repatriation. They therefore appealed to the countries concerned and UNHCR to exert concerted efforts towards that end.

32. While emphasizing durable solutions as a primary objective of all UNHCR activities, the ASEAN countries expressed their deep appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General for the humanitarian role he had assumed on behalf of the refugees in South-East Asia and the rest of the world. His delegation welcomed the co-operation between UNHCR and the other members of the United Nations family and noted the growing awareness within the United Nations system of the complex needs of the refugees and, in that connection, the wide range of skills and resources available within the United Nations. It commended the unselfish efforts of some 250 non-governmental organizations for their continued support for the activities of UNHCR and for advocating the cause of refugees in major donor countries.

33. His delegation noted with concern, however, that in 1982 UNHCR voluntary fund expenditure had been reduced for the second consecutive year. It hoped that the donors would continue to be understanding and generous in the next few years so that the increasing numbers of refugees might be assisted effectively and that durable solutions to that global problem would be found. In conclusion, he said his delegation agreed with the decisions taken by the Executive Committee at its thirty-fourth session and with the observation that resources expended for effective durable solutions were less costly, in the long run, than continued care and maintenance which might generate a dependency syndrome.

34. Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that despite the laudable efforts of UNHCR the refugee problem was far from being solved. His delegation shared the world concern about that human tragedy. In southern Africa, masses of black refugees had fled the racist and inhuman apartheid régime in order to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Uprooted from their native land and generally deprived of the very means of survival, those black populations were still the object of brutal attacks by the racists of South Africa. Yet those who

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

gave their full support to the apartheid régime were shamelessly intensifying their co-operation with it while advancing an array of pretexts which the international community had flatly rejected.

35. In the Middle East, the situation of Palestinian refugees was no less tragic. After the massacres of Sabra and Shatila which were the direct result of Israeli aggression against Lebanon and in which a large number of Palestinian refugees, including women, children and the elderly, had been savagely exterminated, the Palestinian refugees were again being exposed to danger and threats to their lives.

36. In other parts of the world there were also growing movements of refugees, and, an in-depth analysis of their causes should be undertaken. In his delegation's view, the main cause of the mass exodus of populations lay in the imperialist policy aimed, firstly, at maintaining colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, occupation and foreign aggression, secondly, at creating tension and armed conflict in various parts of the world and, thirdly, at interfering in the internal affairs of other States through propaganda and acts of sabotage and destabilization. In addition, there was the refusal of certain imperialist forces to join with the overwhelming majority of States in the world in the establishment of a new international economic order based on justice and equality. The cause having been identified, it was now incumbent upon all mankind to act with force, firmness and vigour to put an end to those contemptible policies in order to strengthen world peace and to restructure international economic relations on a basis of justice and equity.

37. It was true that his country was currently faced with the exodus of a part of its population. The Lao People's Democratic Republic had nothing to hide and was not afraid to speak of it. As an under-populated country, it could not but regret that exodus. Aware of the tragedy, and out of humanitarian concern, his Government had done all in its power to prevent that flight. The policy of his Government with respect to expatriate nationals was well-known. With the exception of criminals, traitors and counter-revolutionaries, all Lao people who were refugees abroad were free to return to their country without fear for their safety, as had been noted by the representative of the High Commissioner at a recent press conference. Only the week before, his Government had welcomed 50 Lao nationals returning from camps in Thailand. That bore witness to the seriousness and good will with which it applied the principle of voluntary repatriation. It was for that reason that it regretted that a delegation from a neighbouring country, at a previous meeting, had shown its lack of understanding of the question. In addition, some other delegations, while manifesting excessive sympathy for the lot of Lao nationals seeking refuge abroad, had uttered not a single word about the activities of subversion and sabotage which some imperialist and hegemonist countries were forcing a certain group of refugees to undertake in order to destabilize the Lao People's Democratic Republic. One imperialist representative had even spoken of chemical weapons used in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. While his delegation would reply to that when the matter was taken up in the First Committee, he noted that some allies of that imperialist delegation and even

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

scholars who were citizens of the country concerned had called into question those baseless allegations. He hoped that that great Power would think twice in future before making such allegations.

38. Because of its complex nature, the question of refugees required an honest and balanced analysis in all its aspects. One could not speak of oppression in a country in which the principle of voluntary repatriation was being actively upheld. Similarly, one could not speak of the flight of a part of the population of a country without uttering a word about the policy pursued by other countries of inciting such departures for political and even military purposes. In short, an examination of only some aspects of a question as complex as that of the refugees would not contribute to the effective solution of the problem.

39. His delegation wished to pay a tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the generous assistance he had given to his country and it would do its utmost to contribute to the efforts which he was making to solve the complex and difficult problem of refugees.

(Third part)

40. Mr. PENN NHACH (Democratic Kampuchea) said that whereas the people who had become refugees as a result of the two World Wars had been European, refugees now came from the developing countries, driven into exile by armed conflict, invasion and foreign occupation, persecution and oppression and natural disasters. The Khmer people were particularly grateful to the High Commissioner for Refugees because, since the invasion of their country by Vietnamese troops in December 1978, all of the more than six million people of Kampuchea had at one time or another been refugees. Hundreds of Kampucheans had become refugees as defined by the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951 and the 1967 Protocol, and the others had become refugees in their own country. Currently there was a ceaseless exodus of Khmer people driven by the occupation of their country by 200,000 Vietnamese troops, to seek safety in the vast areas controlled by the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. The invasion of Kampuchea was part of a long-standing plan by Viet Nam, whose imperialist and annexationist ambitions went far back in history. The second stage of the plan - following the first stage of occupation - had started in 1980 and involved absorption by Vietnamization. Vietnamese settlers, already numbering more than 600,000, occupied the best land and controlled economic activity. The population was subjected to arbitrary arrest, persecution, rape, indoctrination, enlistment as cannon fodder in the army. Viet Nam's so-called aid and support for Kampuchea was resulting in slow death. The only alternative was flight.

41. In discussing the refugee problem it was essential to look for the cause. In the case of the Khmer refugees, the cause was Viet Nam's occupation of Kampuchea and its ambition to annex it. External aid could be no more than a temporary palliative. As Prince Norodom Sihanouk, President of Democratic Kampuchea, had said in his statement to the General Assembly, there could be no solution of the

(Mr. Penn Nhach, Democratic Kampuchea)

problem of Kampuchean refugees until the root problem had been solved, namely the political problem of Kampuchea. Most members of the General Assembly shared that opinion and had been voting for the past five years, with increasing determination for resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. Yet the Assembly would shortly be discussing the question of peace, stability and co-operation in South-East Asia (item 37) which had been submitted by Viet Nam, a country which for 30 years had done nothing but make war, which provoke the exodus of refugees by land and sea to destabilize all the countries of the region and which failed to achieve co-operation with any country of the region because it knew only policy was that of diktat. The problem of Kampuchean refugees would be solved with the restoration of Kampuchea's peace, stability and independence - in other words the total withdrawal of Vietnamese troops - for the refugees would then have no hesitation about returning voluntarily to their country. The countries now assisting Khmer refugees, in particular Thailand, could then direct their efforts toward other regions. His delegation wished to express its gratitude on behalf of the Khmer people to Thailand and all the other countries which had helped the Khmer refugees.

42. His delegation was also concerned about the fate of African, Latin American and other refugees. It had attended the first International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and fully supported the proposed second Conference, at which it would give full support to efforts to find a solution.

43. Mr. SAAB (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), referring to subitem (b), said that at a recent high-level meeting in Rome and in a recent statement to the Second Committee, the Director-General of FAO had described the situation in Africa where a significant proportion of the more than 150 million inhabitants of 22 African countries were facing serious economic distress and shortage of food which might lead to mass hunger and malnutrition and would certainly cause a serious setback to the development process of those countries. Those exceptional hardships should be seen in the context of the already weak agricultural production of African countries, where per capita consumption had steadily declined, food imports had tripled in a decade and world recession, high interest rates, balance-of-payment deficits and weak foreign markets had undermined the ability of African countries to sustain reasonable levels of production and exports and where food aid had remained stagnant. It was clear, therefore, that one of the principal aims of the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa should be to mobilize new and adequate resources and stimulate efforts both to meet the emergency survival needs of refugees and returnees and to make possible the rapid promotion of food self-sufficiency and gainful employment for refugees on a sustained basis.

44. In response to that imperative, a high-level FAO expert had been seconded as a full member of a multidisciplinary United Nations technical team which had recently visited a number of countries and had identified, with the assistance of Governments and FAO Country Representatives, a substantial number of agricultural project proposals for refugees, totalling some \$45 million in nine countries so far visited. Those proposals would shortly be submitted to potential donor Governments

(Mr. Saab, FAO)

for consideration in preparation for the second International Conference. About 40 per cent of FAO's budget and of its programmes funded from extra-budgetary resources, was devoted to activities for the exclusive benefit of Sub-Saharan Africa.

45. If large numbers of refugees and returnees were to be able to sustain themselves over the medium and long term and if host countries were to be able to sustain and possibly even benefit from such groups, a firm core of agricultural production must be developed from the outset as a basis for other economic activities. His Organization would continue to play its part in that effort.

46. Mr. RIACHE (Algeria), noting that the total number of refugees now numbered more than 10 million, said that the immediate burden of providing for their needs fell on the countries of first asylum, which were all developing countries, already suffering from the effects of underdevelopment, the international economic crisis and natural disasters. However great their efforts to meet their humanitarian responsibility to the refugees to whom they had given shelter, those efforts alone were insufficient. The activities of the High Commissioner and his efficient co-ordination of international aid was therefore of particular importance and should be given wholehearted encouragement and support. The High Commissioner's task, which was essentially non-political and humanitarian, was also a delicate one, since he had to remedy the effects of political or other situations in which he could not become involved. Indeed, the effectiveness of his action depended in large measure on his capacity to concentrate solely on the humanitarian aspects of refugee problems.

47. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner in respect of international protection for refugees which was one of the most important aspects of assistance, but was concerned at the High Commissioner's reference to failures to implement the provisions of the relevant conventions. While emphasizing the importance of respect for the humanitarian principle of non-refoulement and temporary asylum, his delegation favoured the solution of voluntary repatriation, which it was pleased to note was given high priority in the High Commissioner's activities. It noted with interest the success of repatriation in Zimbabwe, Chad and Djibouti. The persistence of piracy and military aggression against refugee camps was a serious threat to the personal safety of refugees and asylum seekers. In that connection he referred to the attacks on Palestinian, South African and Namibian refugee camps carried out regularly by the racist régimes of Tel Aviv and Pretoria with a criminal hatred and violence that showed their contempt for the high ideals that united mankind. His delegation firmly condemned those criminal acts and reaffirmed the moral obligation of the international community and the Office of the High Commissioner to ensure the safety of the refugee camps. It hoped that the Executive Committee would adopt the draft declaration on that question at its next session.

48. He noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had taken advantage of the current let-up in the large-scale flow of refugees to concentrate on finding durable

(Mr. Riache, Algeria)

solutions to refugee problems and improving his methods of work. Since the status of refugee was temporary, the search for viable solutions should be aimed at making refugees self-sufficient. While voluntary repatriation, where feasible was the best solution, resettlement and local integration were also useful. In that connection he noted with interest that the High Commissioner was increasingly associating assistance with development. The recent meeting in Geneva on refugee aid and development had made a useful contribution. His delegation had also noted with satisfaction the growing co-operation between the UNHCR and the specialized agencies in carrying out development projects to improve the economic and social conditions of refugees and the progressive expansion of UNHCR's field of activity to cover education, employment and economic and social rehabilitation for refugees.

49. Despite the considerable and praiseworthy efforts of the international community and UNHCR, aid for refugees was still far short of what the receiving countries needed if they were to be able to accommodate them. The African countries, which were at the same time suffering from the effects of the world crisis, underdevelopment and natural disasters. International aid must be considerably increased and must be shared, having due regard to the particularly difficult situation of the African receiving countries. Algeria, which had experienced the difficulties of a war of liberation, was currently offering hospitality to tens of thousands of Saharan refugees who had fled their country as a result of occupation by foreign troops. He hoped that they would soon be able to opt for voluntary repatriation, in the context of the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of the exercise of their right of self-determination and independence, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations.

50. His delegation had noted with considerable satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and welcomed the inclusion of UNDP in the Steering Committee and the appointment of a group of experts to prepare country papers on the basis of projects submitted by interested African Governments. He hoped that the Conference would help to make the public in general aware of the crucial problems afflicting refugees in Africa and would encourage active international solidarity.

51. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said it was unfortunate that the refugee problem was being exacerbated by natural disasters, by internal political unrest, international conflicts, flagrant violations of human rights, the intervention of foreign armies and other factors. The achievement of permanent solutions, either through voluntary repatriation, integration in the receiving country or resettlement in a third country, would greatly mitigate the UNHCR's financial problems. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the repatriation operations carried out in a number of countries, including Burma, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Chad, those that were being undertaken in the cases of Ethiopia and Djibouti. Morocco also endorsed local integration in the receiving countries, although it recognized the difficulties involved in such a project.

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

52. The international community had condemned the cruel attacks of pirates on the boat people. Unfortunately, deliberate military attacks on refugee camps in certain front-line African countries and in Thailand were becoming more frequent. To protect refugees against such reprisals, the receiving countries should try to resettle them further from the borders of their countries of origin. Countries with serious economic problems should be given international assistance in order to allow them to carry out that task.

53. Although the refugee situation in Asia, and particularly in Pakistan and Thailand, was cause for great concern, it must be noted that Africa had beaten every record with regard to refugees. The convening of the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa should be welcomed by all those who sought to ease the sufferings of African refugees.

54. In that connection, she wished to draw attention to the problem of the persons held at Tindouf. The only change made in that regard had been that the Algerian Government had received a large and in the view of Morocco inexplicable increase in UNHCR aid, which would total \$3,500,000 in 1984. Assistance or an increase in assistance must be justified by verification of the identity of so-called refugees in order to establish their country of origin and place of birth and the authenticity of the figures submitted by the authorities of the receiving country. In the case of the people held at Tindouf, it was well known that the Algerian authorities had never agreed to a census verifying their country of origin. That reluctance was understandable, for people from the so-called Western Sahara made up only a small part of the population of the Tindouf camps: the problem of the so-called Sahrawi refugees had been spawned by the fertile imagination of the Algerian authorities when the camps had been filled by people fleeing from Mali, the Niger and Mauritania following the drought which had plagued the Sahel in recent years. If the Algerian authorities had been concerned only with obtaining a few million dollars, a census carried out by UNHCR would not have effected the assistance it would have received at all, as long as the assistance was being given to true refugees - those fleeing the drought. The increase in aid was also unjustified because UNHCR had not been able to monitor how the funds it provided were being used. That was all the more disturbing in view of the financial difficulties which prevented the High Commissioner from carrying out his task in numerous urgent cases and in view of the situation of some refugees who required assistance on a priority basis. It should be borne in mind that the people held at Tindouf had not fled there deliberately: they were nomads who had been on the frontier, with their families and flocks, only to be taken away under armed guard during the retreat of the Algerian army which had been stationed in Moroccan territory. About 5,000 of them had been placed in camps, in tents open to the four winds: they were powerless and under strict, armed guard. The camps were by no means little paradises, and no visitors or journalists were allowed to visit them. UNHCR and Red Cross officials should have been authorized to see how the people held at Tindouf lived. Morocco had recently acquired evidence which it was prepared to make available to those organizations and, if necessary, it would put together a dossier on the subject which would put an end to the myths that were being propagated.

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

55. Her delegation would prefer the Algerian authorities to adopt a positive attitude and allow the humanitarian authorities to visit the camps freely, and it hoped that the census would be carried out. In response to the Algerian representative's claim that voluntary repatriation could not be effected until political solutions to the problem had been found, she said that no Government had the right to speak for the population concerned, and that UNHCR officials must ask the people in the camps themselves if they wished to stay or to return to their country of origin. Her delegation was prepared to co-operate with UNHCR in voluntary repatriation operations, and the King of Morocco had committed himself to ensuring the harmonious reintegration of the individuals involved. When, then, would the census take place and when would the people held at Tindouf be allowed to return to their homeland?

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.