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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirtieth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 307TH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva  
on Wednesday, 10 October 1979, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. HESSEL

(France)

later:

Mr. BIRIDO

(Sudan)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 3) (A/AC.96/INF.156 and Add.1 and A/AC.96/INF.158)  
(continued)

1. Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria) said that the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held at Geneva in July 1979, although prompted by the plight of the boat people, had been a significant development in a general awakening to the plight of refugees everywhere. Since then, tremendous progress had evidently been made in solving the South-East Asian refugee problem.
2. The significance of the Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa, held at Arusha in May 1979, lay in its affirmation of Africa's awareness of its responsibility towards refugees, and the emphasis placed on observance of certain basic principles relating to the protection of refugees, especially the principle of non-refoulement, which was embodied in article II of the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.
3. Africa had 4 million refugees, 80 per cent of whom could be traced to one source, namely, the obnoxious policies of apartheid and minority racist governments in southern Africa, which the so-called friends of Africa had continued to assist by supplying military equipment and logistic support to enable them to carry out acts of terrorism against defenceless peoples. The front-line African States were not only being called upon to bear the burden of refugee problems, but were also the target of military aggression by the racists. Their economies were being deliberately overstrained, for they had to accommodate refugees and arm themselves for self-defence.
4. The African countries, many of which were in the category of the least developed, were not encouraged by the imbalance between the proportion of UNHCR funds spent on African refugees and the proportion spent on refugees in other parts of the world. The figures in the reports on UNHCR assistance activities and on the Voluntary Funds accounts for 1978 and the budget for 1980 spoke for themselves. It was urgently necessary to redress that imbalance. Nigeria considered the existing UNHCR assistance activities for Africa refugees to be inadequate and supported the proposed establishment of a UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions, which it hoped would go a long way towards redressing the imbalance in UNHCR assistance.
5. His Government would continue to support the High Commissioner's Programme and had decided to double its annual pledge to UNHCR. In addition, it would willingly meet its share of the commitments in respect of African refugees. Nigeria had given Mozambique more than \$1 million in assistance for the resettlement of Zimbabwean refugees. In close co-operation with the Organization of African Unity, it would continue its policy of assisting refugees in African by providing direct aid, block grants and donations to voluntary organizations. He had noted with satisfaction the increase in the activities of UNHCR throughout the world and was aware of the need for more staff; he hoped its recruitment would be based on regional and sociological considerations.

6. Mr. MAAMOURI (Tunisia) said that UNHCR should play a catalytic role in matters relating to the international protection of refugees. Recent developments had shown that inadequacies in that respect should be remedied as soon as possible, otherwise thousands of people would suffer. The UNHCR Protection Division had a vital part to play in that work. The Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection had made important recommendations concerning the problem of asylum which should encourage all countries to ensure respect for the basic principles of non-refoulement, family reunion, temporary asylum and "burden-sharing" with countries of first asylum. Those principles had been reaffirmed at the Arusha Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa and endorsed by the sixteenth Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity held at Monrovia in July 1979. Another decisive factor in matters relating to international protection would be the accession by all States to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

7. Assistance activities were another very important aspect of UNHCR's work, particularly in countries which admitted large numbers of refugees but would not have been able to do so without international assistance and support. In that connexion, UNHCR was to be commended for the results achieved since the Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia held at Geneva in July 1979.

8. Despite such achievements, much remained to be done. There was an urgent need for solutions to the problems of the Palestinian refugees and the refugees in Africa, particularly in the Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti. Tunisia therefore fully supported the proposal to establish a UNHCR fund for durable solutions.

9. Mr. KALONJI (Zaire) said that his Government was grateful for the international community's response to the appeal it had made in 1978, following the general amnesty it had decreed, for assistance in repatriating and reintegrating Zairians who had sought asylum in other countries. UNHCR's assistance programme had enabled more than 150,000 refugees to return to Zaire from Angola and some 36,000 others to return from Burundi. His Government had also requested UNHCR's assistance in repatriating some Zairian refugees who had been living in the Sudan for 15 years and who had expressed a desire to return home.

10. Because of its geographical location and its tradition of hospitality, his country had had long experience of refugee problems and was, at present, harbouring over 750,000 refugees from 12 different countries. Most of them had been fully integrated into life in Zaire; they were working on an equal footing with Zaire citizens and receiving wages that enabled them to meet their immediate needs. The most recent wave of refugees had brought Angolans and Ugandans to his country, which was providing them with housing, land for cultivation, medical care, identity papers and educational and employment opportunities. With regard to the protection of refugees, his country strictly observed the principles of asylum and non-refoulement.

11. The problem of assistance to refugees must be regarded as an international one. The African countries had adopted a generous approach to that problem at the Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa at Arusha. Because countries in Africa had a tradition of hospitality, the mass media often failed to reflect the situation

of African refugees objectively. Moreover, the African countries of asylum often had difficulties in obtaining assistance from UNHCR. In 1980, the 4 million refugees in African countries would benefit from only 25 per cent of UNHCR's estimated budget of \$230 million. Since 1978, the share of UNHCR budget resources intended for assistance to African refugees had continued to decline, but the number of refugees in that part of the world had continued to increase. His delegation therefore supported the proposal to establish a UNHCR fund for durable solutions, which must be used exclusively to deal with world-wide refugee problems. His delegation also supported the proposal made by Morocco at the 305th meeting that the agenda of future sessions of the Executive Committee should include an item on the efforts made by the High Commissioner to promote durable solutions.

12. His delegation had been pleased to learn from the High Commissioner's opening statement that UNHCR had no particular problems of financing. It therefore hoped that the High Commissioner would appeal to the members of the Executive Committee to allow an additional share of UNHCR's budget resources to be used for African refugees. UNHCR's success in finding new solutions to new problems in other parts of the world should prompt the High Commissioner and the international community to try to find durable solutions to the problems of African refugees who certainly met the criteria for refugee status laid down in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, to which his country and 32 others in Africa were Parties. Africa was the only continent that had a regional convention on refugees, namely, the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

13. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that the staff of UNHCR had doubled in the past two years. That expansion had been possible as a result of the Executive Committee's understanding of the tasks with which UNHCR had to cope. When recruiting new staff members at all levels, however, the High Commissioner should not lose sight of the fundamental principle of equitable geographical distribution, to which a number of under-represented African States had drawn attention on other occasions.

14. Mr. SEFAKO (Lesotho) said that his country had accepted membership of the Executive Committee in the belief that, by doing so, it could help to alleviate the plight of the millions of displaced people and refugees. However, it was impossible to solve a problem without first identifying its cause. He would therefore identify what his country considered to be the root causes of the refugee problems in southern Africa, especially as they affected Lesotho.

15. The refugee problem in Africa had begun when the acquisition of independence by certain countries had involved bloodshed and the exodus of indigenous populations in search of protection and asylum elsewhere. The economic and political problems of southern Africa had subsequently been exacerbated by the apartheid policies of the Republic of South Africa, which subjected the black people of South Africa itself and of the neighbouring independent States to exploitation, discrimination and humiliation. Apartheid led to arrests, detentions and trials of Africans, and the fugitives from those acts of oppression swelled the number of refugees in the countries bordering on South Africa, including Lesotho. Since January 1979, hundreds of children and young people from Bloemfontein had been fleeing into Lesotho every day despite their parents' efforts to prevent them. Their rebellion represented a landmark in the struggle against apartheid. As long as there was apartheid, there would be no genuine peace and stability in southern Africa, and the tensions created in neighbouring countries, and especially Lesotho, would become increasingly acute.

16. The latest statistics showed that Africa had nearly 4 million refugees, most of whom were destitute and in dire need of material and financial assistance. Consequently, his Government fully supported the proposal to establish a fund for durable solutions.

17. In Lesotho the problem was complicated by the presence of large numbers of unregistered student refugees and exiles from South Africa, Namibia and Rhodesia. As more accurate statistics were essential both for Lesotho and UNHCR itself the offer of the services of an educational planning consultant to Lesotho was very welcome. Refugees in Lesotho were not confined to camps but were allowed to mix freely with the people so as to become gradually assimilated into the nation. That approach to the refugee problem had worked well and deserved to be supported by the international community. In view of the country's refugee integration policy, the education resource centre to which UNHCR had already allocated funds would be opened to Lesotho students.

18. Every effort was made in Lesotho to protect refugees from being harassed or killed, but recently six South African refugees had nevertheless been seriously injured by a parcel bomb in the capital of Lesotho.

19. Turning to budgetary questions, he said that there was evidence of geographical discrimination in the allocation of budget funds, more of which should be earmarked for Africa. He asked UNHCR to submit information on the administrative structure of the Office before the end of the present session.

20. In conclusion, he expressed his country's gratitude to the High Commissioner for visiting Lesotho to see its problems for himself.

21. Mr. ANGKANARAK (Thailand) said that Thailand, as a new member of the Executive Committee, pledged itself to work for the effective discharge of the Committee's responsibilities in the interests, not of one nation or ideology, but of the world as a whole.

22. The problem of refugees and displaced persons was a highly dynamic one which now spanned the globe. It was a particularly serious problem for the South-East Asian region, where no solution was likely to be effective or worthwhile unless it was directed at the root cause. Thailand had provided a refuge for asylum-seekers throughout its existence as an independent nation, but it was now faced with an entirely different and far more complex situation whose causes could be traced back to developments in Indo-China after the Second World War, and above all to the convulsive changes of the last few years in the Indo-Chinese peninsula as a whole. The first flood of refugees into Thailand had been in April 1975, but only in August of that year had UNHCR offered support in cash and kind to the Government of Thailand, which since then had spent no less than \$7 million a year on relief work. Although the Government sincerely appreciated the assistance it received from UNHCR and other intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies, the problem it faced was of so great a magnitude that their contributions were of little avail. The total number of persons in Thailand awaiting resettlement by the end of 1978 had been 208,096 and since the outbreak of war in Kampuchea in 1979 the figure had risen to over 400,000. Approximately 140,000, including several thousand Kampucheans, had voluntarily returned to their countries of origin, and 110,000 had been resettled, but by the end of September there were still some 130,000 displaced persons in Thailand. However, that number represented only displaced persons and illegal entrants who had been registered, and many more were known to have entered undetected.

23. The critical proportions reached by the influx of refugees in 1979 had caused severe political, socio-economic and security problems in the ASEAN countries and had had a destabilizing effect on the entire region. The Meeting held at Geneva in July to discuss the problem, although encouraging, had fallen short of providing an over-all and lasting solution, so the ASEAN countries had decided to alleviate the situation in the meantime by establishing processing centres for refugees awaiting resettlement.

24. Since then the number of departures from the camps in South-East Asia had increased; there had been 8,000 departures from Thailand in September. His Government hoped that that number would represent the barest monthly minimum, since even then it would be difficult to keep pace with the new influx of some 360,000 starving and disease-stricken Kampucheans, who were reported to be moving towards the Thai border in anticipation of the intensification of hostilities at the end of the monsoon season, and would strain the already overcrowded camps in Thailand to the limits of their capacity. His delegation therefore appealed to the international community: 1. To move all displaced persons in those camps to countries of resettlement in the shortest possible time; 2. To urge countries to provide greater resettlement opportunities for current and future caseloads in South-East Asia and to speed up the procedures for resettlement; 3. To urge countries that had not yet done so to take in displaced persons; 4. To call on the Government undertaking military operations in Kampuchea to desist from its present policy and actions; and 5. To assist the Government of Thailand to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Kampuchea.

25. The Thai Government had formulated and launched a relief programme for the destitute people of Kampuchea, in close co-operation with the Governments of Australia, Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Holy See, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, and with a number of international agencies. The guidelines for the programme were: 1. The international community should recognize Thailand as a transit centre for relief distribution without prejudicing its neutrality; 2. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam should agree to the undertaking; 3. There should be international supervision and monitoring to ensure that the aid reached the intended recipients; 4. The relief arrangements should not be construed as recognition of the régime now installed in Phnom Penh; and 5. Aid should be given to the civilian population in general.

26. His delegation had received disturbing reports that the relief supplies had to be delivered to the people because they were too weak to walk to the distribution points, and furthermore that the supplies were being taken away by the military forces of the foreign army for their own use. He nevertheless wished to express his Government's gratitude for the support given to Thailand in cash and in kind or pledged by delegations in the Executive Committee.

27. Turning to the question of the agenda for the present session, he emphasized the importance of international protection. To ensure that effective protection was given would require an approach that was at the same time idealistic and practical. Protection could best be guaranteed if it was directed at the source of the problem, and if the particular characteristics of each situation were taken into account. Prevention was better than cure. It was clear that the problem of refugees and displaced persons would not diminish in absolute terms for some years, but because of its variations in magnitude and gravity over time and space, the emphasis had to change accordingly. The overriding concern was how to strike a balance in trying to meet the needs of all cases in all parts of the world.

28. His delegation was deeply interested in the idea of a fund for durable solutions, but it was essential first to determine exactly what it entailed and what its terms of reference would be. His delegation needed more time to reflect on the question, including the proposed name of the fund, in order to avoid any misunderstanding that might frustrate the good intentions which had undoubtedly inspired the proposal to establish it.

29. Mrs. SELLAMI-MESLEM (Algeria) said that the Arusha Conference and the Geneva Meeting held in July 1979 had paved the way for a more realistic approach to the refugee problem. At Arusha, 38 African countries had reaffirmed their solidarity with respect to aid to refugees in Africa. The fact that almost all the African countries had signed the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol and that many had ratified the OAU Convention demonstrated their desire to help refugees from whatever source. The number of refugees in Africa was the highest in the world - 3.5 million for a population of 430 million - and those figures were all the more impressive when it was realized that Africa had the greatest number of least-developed countries in the world, with a per capita income of less than \$200.

30. The High Commissioner and the international community had made commendable efforts to help refugees in Asia, not only materially but also through the mobilization of information media which had resulted in a generous flow of assistance and resettlement offers throughout the world. She hoped that the motives for that action were strictly humanitarian and that a similar approach would be adopted for all refugees whatever their origin.

31. The Office of the High Commissioner should be given all the human and financial resources needed to meet the situations which arose. Swift action was needed to prevent suffering. The relevant instruments currently in force had been adopted in 1952 ought perhaps to be revised in the light of new circumstances.

32. The proposal to set up a fund for durable solutions, was long overdue, because the General Programmes were always inadequate to help the increasingly large number of refugees throughout the world. During the past 20 years it was the countries of the Third World that had been most affected by the flows of refugees, whereas their capacity for absorption and resettlement was practically nil.

33. Another measure which might improve the flow of assistance for African refugees would be the establishment of an ad hoc committee consisting of representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner and of host and donor countries.

Mr. Birido (Sudan) took the Chair.

34. Mr. RADJAVI (Iran) expressed his Government's confidence in the High Commissioner and said that it had been particularly happy to welcome the HCR mission sent to Iran to discuss problems of common interest. The people of Iran were aware of the sufferings and anguish of displaced persons. He himself had until recently been a refugee. Obeying the will of the Iranian people, his Government had broken with the hypocritical attitude of the former régime and was trying to introduce the teachings of Islam in its domestic and foreign policies.

35. One of the first acts of the new Government had been to support the Palestinian refugees and the liberation struggle of the PLO in its attempt to regain its legitimate rights. The causes underlying the refugee problem had to be eliminated. In that connexion he wished to denounce those Powers that deliberately incited whole peoples to leave their countries of origin and then, under cover of international charity, maintained them, instead of helping them to return home in accordance with repeated resolutions of the United Nations.

36. The second act of the Republic had been to denounce apartheid and break off relations with the Government of South Africa.

37. Despite the immense task of reconstruction facing his country and the fact that the former régime had transferred more than \$40 billion abroad, the new Government had not hesitated to make a gesture of international solidarity by announcing a contribution to help the refugees of South-East Asia at the meeting convened by the High Commissioner on that subject.

38. His Government could not remain indifferent to the fate of refugees within its own frontiers or elsewhere. He referred to the very heavy burden being placed upon Pakistan by the great influx of refugees. Despite its current economic difficulties his Government would continue to support the efforts of the High Commissioner to solve the refugee problem throughout the world.

39. Mr. CHORAFAS (Greece) pledged his Government's fullest possible support for UNHCR and expressed satisfaction with the report of the High Commissioner (A/AC.96/564). Because of the tragic situation of refugees and the dramatic increase in their numbers, governments had a special responsibility to assist the work of the High Commissioner in every possible way; that work should be strengthened and expanded.

40. His delegation had noted that the financial targets proposed in document A/AC.96/564 represented the minimum necessary to meet urgent needs, and was in favour of approving the target both for the General Programmes and Special Programmes for 1979 and 1980. Although it was useful for the Committee to have tentative projections for the next few years, his delegation realized that the programme requirements of UNHCR, by their very nature, hardly lent themselves to long-term or even medium-term projection.

41. His delegation welcomed the proposal to establish a fund for durable solutions, and hoped that practical decisions could be taken in that regard at the present session of the Executive Committee.

42. Greece continued to take an active part in UNHCR activities. In the past year 378 asylum-seekers had been granted refugee status in Greece, 490 refugees had emigrated and 25 had been naturalized. As in the past, his Government had shown great understanding in dealing with asylum-seekers with inadequate documentation by granting them entry permits and political asylum. It had accepted for permanent establishment 52 Vietnamese refugees, who were already living and working in Greece. Their settlement had been a total success; when offered an opportunity to go to another country some had preferred to stay.



Greece was expecting 150 more South-East Asian refugees shortly. A considerable number of boat people had been rescued by Greek ships and resettled in other countries. His Government had instructed the masters of Greek vessels to rescue any refugees they might find drifting in the South China Sea. In co-operation with the Office of the High Commissioner the Greek authorities had also been issuing guarantees for refugees who, having been rescued, needed to disembark at the first port of call.

43. The determination of refugee status had been considerably facilitated by the smooth functioning of the new procedure established in co-operation with UNHCR. In 1978 the Greek Government had withdrawn most of the reservations it had made when acceding to the 1951 Convention. It had increased its contribution to annuities from 30 per cent to 45 per cent. In 1980 a further increase in government participation would reduce the UNHCR contribution to 50 per cent. Greece continued to provide transit facilities for groups or individuals wishing to resettle elsewhere.

44. The High Commissioner and his staff were to be particularly commended on their efforts in dealing with the situation in South-East Asia. Clearly the situation in South-East Asia would continue to affect UNHCR expenditure in Asia. His delegation believed that no effort should be spared to bring relief to the people of that region, but Africa, Latin America and Europe also needed help from UNHCR.

45. His Government deeply appreciated the assistance given by the High Commissioner to some 200,000 displaced persons in Cyprus. That work was designed to help a once peaceful and prosperous population to live in bearable conditions until they were allowed to return to their homes and land in accordance with repeated United Nations resolutions. His delegation thanked donor countries for their generosity and appealed to them to continue their assistance, which went a long way to help displaced persons to survive.

46. Mr. CORDERO di MONTEZEMOLO (Italy) said that the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the refugee problem had been well illustrated in the report of the High Commissioner, whose work was greatly appreciated by the Italian Government. What was needed was a political approach to settle the problems behind the exodus of so many refugees; but the political problems were so complex that there was little hope of solving them in most of the regions concerned. However, unless the international community acted to arrest the flow of refugees and seek solutions, the refugee problem itself might well become insoluble in the near future.

47. Italy had always co-operated with UNHCR, most recently in the form of a special allocation of some 670 million lire. Italy had also taken independent steps to help the peoples of South-East Asia: some 1,200 persons had already been settled in Italy and others were expected. Italian ships had been sent to South-East Asian waters specifically to pick up refugees at sea.

48. With respect to the "traditional" movements of asylum-seekers from Eastern Europe, he said that Italy was a typical country of first asylum. It was prepared to act as a bridge between country of origin and country of final settlement. There was no question of the temporary hospitality granted by Italy in such cases being dissociated from emigration to another host country. Sometimes obstacles arose, and goodwill was called for to avoid causing distress.

49. Mr. KASTOFT (Denmark) said that the enlargement of the Committee was a sign of increased support for the cause of refugees and displaced persons throughout the world. The tragic growth of the refugee problem during the past year, as described by the High Commissioner, placed a particular responsibility on the current session of the Committee.

50. In the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, his delegation had worked to establish criteria which represented a fair balance between the rights and needs of the individual seeker of asylum and the interests and obligations of the receiving State. Such criteria must be generally applicable and should gain universal recognition if, as his delegation hoped, they were to constitute a genuine step forward in international humanitarian law.

51. His delegation found the proposed target of \$233 million for the 1980 General Programmes realistic in the circumstances. He was speaking on behalf of a caretaker Government, but the outgoing Government had planned to increase Denmark's annual contribution to UNHCR General Programmes from 6.5 million kroner in 1979 to 15 million kroner, about \$3 million, in 1980. The 1979 contributions had been supplemented by an unearmarked special contribution to the General Programmes of about \$3 million. That, together with the annual contributions to UNHCR educational and similar activities and special contributions to the UNHCR South-East Asian Programme and Special Programme in Uganda, Denmark's total contribution to UNHCR in 1979 had amounted to about \$8 million, which was more than one dollar per Dane. Denmark's over-all assistance to refugees, including reception in Denmark and contributions to programmes administered by UNHCR, the International Red Cross, ICEM, IUEF and church organizations outside Denmark, would exceed \$30 million in 1979. He had mentioned those figures to support his earlier appeals for more equitable burden-sharing among donor countries and an over-all increase in contributions commensurate with the problem facing the international community.

52. The proposal submitted by the High Commissioner (A/AC.96/569) on the establishment of a UNHCR fund for durable solutions to some extent met the ideas put forward by the representative of Denmark at the July Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, to the effect that programmes combining development and resettlement objectives as far as possible within the region of the refugees concerned should be envisaged. However, the proposal did not, in its preliminary form, offer concrete suggestions corresponding to the specific recommendations Denmark had made. He looked forward to a fruitful discussion on agenda item 7 and was particularly interested in the views of developing countries regarding the use of settlement possibilities in their countries in combination with development assistance, as had been proposed by Denmark.

53. The regular yearly appropriation for reception and integration of some 500 refugees in Denmark was being used, in close co-operation with the UNHCR resettlement section, for the resettlement of refugees from all over the world, with special attention being given to handicapped and other particularly vulnerable cases. In addition to the general quota, Denmark had offered to resettle a further 500 Indo-Chinese refugees in response to appeals made at the July Meeting. Those people had just arrived in Denmark from camps in Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, and other Indo-Chinese rescued by Danish ships were also arriving. The reception and integration programme was carried out by the Danish Refugee Council, a voluntary agency, and was aimed at enabling each refugee within a period of approximately two years, to enjoy his rights and opportunities on an equal basis with Danish citizens.

54. The responsibility for giving the High Commissioner the means to act effectively in the field of legal protection, material assistance programmes and the search for durable solutions for every single refugee, rested upon the international community as a whole. His delegation hoped that the current session of the Executive Committee would reflect the political will to meet the challenge which it faced.

55. Mr. ASSEDRI (Uganda) said that it was encouraging to note the international community's increasing awareness of the serious refugee problem throughout the world, of which the situations in Africa - where there were over 4 million refugees - and in South-East Asia were prime examples. That awareness had been reflected in a series of international and regional meetings which had passed useful resolutions and recommendations. The establishment of a UNHCR fund for durable solutions, which his delegation supported in principle, was another step in the right direction.

56. In Africa, the refugee problem had two main causes: foreign domination accompanied by racism and a minority regime, and dictatorial rule resulting in massive violation of human rights. Although those causes were, to a considerable extent, political, until they were removed, the refugee problem would become more acute. It was time for the Committee to take decisive action, as Uganda had done to eliminate the conditions which, for the past eight years, had been responsible for the enormous outflow of its people seeking refuge. He thanked UNHCR and the other humanitarian organizations and friendly countries which had helped with the voluntary repatriation of Ugandan refugees following the liberation of Uganda. Over half the estimated number of Ugandan refugees had already returned home and were participating in the reconstruction of their country. He assured the Committee that the Ugandan exiles in neighbouring countries were not in the categories defined in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, since the situation in Uganda had returned to normal and there was no need for them to be afraid to return, unless they had committed a serious crime against the Ugandan people.

57. The number of refugees sheltered in Uganda remained the same as that reported at the previous session of the Committee. Unfortunately, the recent developments in Uganda had seriously affected various refugee settlements and external assistance would be needed to give the refugees a new start. Similarly a number of nationals, displaced as the war had intensified, and returning exiles would also require external assistance. His Government appreciated the quick response of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner and, through them, of governments and non-governmental organizations. He hoped that the High Commissioner's target of \$13 million would be achieved very soon, since that assistance would be of considerable help in stabilizing the country. He assured members that his Government had no intention of diverting any of the aid provided for purposes other than those for which it was intended.

58. His Government would support all endeavours to put an end to the refugee problem and was reconsidering its accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, with particular reference to the reservations made by the former regime. It hoped to accede to the OAU Convention and supported in principle the proposal, made at the Arusha Conference, that an ad hoc consultative committee should be established to deal with refugee problems on the African continent.

Mr. Hessel (France) took the Chair.

59. Mr. GHALIB (Observer for Somalia) expressed deep appreciation to UNHCR, voluntary agencies, international organizations and sympathetic countries for their generous response to appeals for assistance for the refugees and displaced persons from Western Somalia and Abo. The refugee problem in Somalia had reached alarming proportions, as indicated in document A/AC.96/564/Add.1, paragraphs 6 to 10. Since its accession to independence, Somalia had always suffered from a refugee problem, but had never officially declared that situation before 1978, because the refugees returned home within a reasonable period of time. However, since mid-1978, the flow of refugees had increased to the point where the regular assistance programmes were no longer sufficient. The number of refugees in camps had increased from some 80,000 during the first half of 1978 to 331,000 by the end of September 1979. Over the past few months, approximately 1,000 refugees had been arriving daily, and the total refugee population at large, as well as in camps, now amounted to about 1 million. That nightmare situation had recently obliged his Government to declare a state of emergency. The entire country was affected by the problem; many of the inhabitants were nomads and overgrazing was affecting vegetation and endangering the ecological balance, thereby threatening livestock, which constituted the main national resource and making famine a distinct possibility.

60. His Government was doing its utmost to assist the refugees, within its financial and budgetary limitations, not only with food, clothing, shelter, emergency medical supplies and other basic necessities, but also through determined efforts to sustain the morale and dignity of the refugees by engaging them in productive work in order to make them self-reliant. That was why a number of refugee camps had been located in areas best suited to agriculture. Effective and speedy implementation of the programmes and projects for refugees required generous financial assistance from humanitarian agencies, international organizations, sympathetic countries and other donors. The assistance requested was to meet, not only the immediate needs of refugees for food, shelter, clothing and medical facilities, but also their long-term requirements, such as the creation of agricultural settlements, for which machinery and other aid would be essential. Under the subheading "local integration" (A/AC.96/564/Add.1, paragraphs 8 and 9), further steps to accelerate the self-sufficiency programmes for refugees in Somalia were outlined. In that connexion, he drew attention to the memorandum submitted through UNHCR specifying annual requirements for food aid, services and durable solutions for an estimated 350,000 refugees in his country. Although his Government appreciated the assistance received from UNHCR, specialized agencies, friendly States and donor organizations, it was totally inadequate.

61. The problem should be dealt with under two complementary programmes: one essentially humanitarian, concerned with food, medical care and shelter for refugees, and the other social and economic, covering temporary resettlement of refugees to enable them to become self-supporting. In his delegation's view, the situation merited an inter-agency or multi-disciplinary mission similar to those sent by the Secretary-General to other disaster areas in Africa. However, UNHCR should continue to play a central role because the problem was essentially a refugee problem.

62. Mr. ABANEH (Observer for Djibouti) said that his country had been faced with a crushing refugee burden since its accession to independence and refugees now accounted for some 10 per cent of its population. That constituted a tremendous burden for one of the smallest and poorest countries in the world, where some 50 per cent of the active population was unemployed and the weakness of the new social and administrative structures posed serious problems. It would be impossible for his country to meet the needs of the 30,000 refugees it was sheltering without the assistance of UNHCR. Three-quarters of the refugees were of rural origin and were housed in camps, where their immediate needs were met with the assistance provided by the international community co-ordinated by UNHCR. An extensive housing programme was under way to improve the living conditions of those refugees. Tentative efforts towards integration had been undertaken, including the Mouloud irrigation project, some 100 kilometres south of Djibouti, where refugees and nationals were working together.

63. However, much remained to be done and it was essential to organize education for the many children in the Ali-Sabieh and Dikhil camps. The situation of the rural refugees posed less of a problem than that of the urban ones. His Government was seriously concerned over the situation of the latter. Although 10,000 people had been taken in by relatives and friends or foreigners in Djibouti, 5,000 had been accorded refugee status and many of them were young students or former employees who spoke English only, and to whom the limited French-speaking educational system and labour market offered no hope of rehabilitation. The only solution for those people, who might well become a real danger to national peace and security, was resettlement in a third country where they could continue their studies or find work. He therefore appealed to governments and international agencies to take urgent, concrete measures to deal with the situation. He expressed his Government's gratitude to Egypt, the Ivory Coast, the United States and the United Kingdom which had agreed to take some of those young refugees.

64. His country had adhered to the international legal instruments concerning refugees and had passed legislation to ensure the implementation of its undertakings under those instruments. It was ready to discuss with interested parties, and with the help of the High Commissioner, the possible voluntary repatriation of the refugees to whom it had granted asylum, since it felt that that was the best solution provided the conditions were right. His delegation fully supported the proposal for establishment of a fund for durable solutions, but stressed the need for objectivity to ensure that one region was not favoured at the expense of others. He thanked all the organizations which had helped his Government to meet its humanitarian obligations.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.