

**ADDENDUM
TO THE
REPORT
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

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the work of its thirty-fourth session

(Geneva, 10-20 October 1983)

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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES ON THE WORK
OF ITS THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION*

(Geneva, 10-20 October 1983)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its thirty-fourth session from 10 to 20 October 1983 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The session was opened by the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Kharma of Lebanon, who reviewed some of the major concerns during his tenure. In relation to protection, he referred in particular to continuing military attacks on refugee camps and settlements, failures to rescue asylum-seekers in distress at sea, and the recent more restrictive approach by some States to the granting of asylum and the determination of refugee status. The principle of non-refoulement was, he suggested, under increasing threat. On the question of assistance, he referred to the problem of drawing the dividing line, if one exists, between refugee aid and development assistance. He recalled, in that connection, that the primary objective of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), must be the attainment of durable solutions and that assistance could only be a temporary measure, to be phased out as the self-sufficiency of refugees grew. Given that the majority of asylum countries were also among the world's poorest States, a wider approach to the question of assistance as well as the guidance of the Executive Committee would be needed.

2. Ambassador Kharma felt that the Committee could be satisfied with the progress made on administrative and financial questions, but he added that there was room for further improvement. Consideration had to be given, for example, to restructuring the respective responsibilities of the divisions of international protection and of assistance, in relation to the promotion of durable solutions. There was also a need to look at the relationship between job classification and the job descriptions undertaken by the Office in the light of the Administrative Management Service (AMS) report, the recommendations of the Executive Committee contained in document EC/SC.2/15 and the remarks of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed reapportionment of the administrative costs process. The classification of posts and the proposed transfer of posts between the United Nations regular budget and voluntary funds were intimately linked. On the apportionment question, it was important for Executive Committee members to maintain their supportive position both in the Committee and in the General Assembly, in compliance with article 20 of UNHCR's Statute and with previous decisions of the Committee.

A. Election of officers

3. Under rule 10 of the rules of procedure, which provides that officers shall be elected for the whole year, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

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Chairman: Mr. H. Ewerlöf (Sweden)
Vice-Chairman: Mr. F. Mebazaa (Tunisia)
Rapporteur: Ms. E. Feller (Australia)

B. Representation on the Committee

4. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Algeria	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Sweden
Argentina	Israel	Switzerland
Australia	Italy	Thailand
Austria	Japan	Tunisia
Belgium	Lebanon	Turkey
Brazil	Lesotho	Uganda
Canada	Madagascar	United Kingdom of
China	Morocco	Great Britain and
Colombia	Namibia (represented by the	Northern Ireland
Denmark	United Nations Council	United Republic of
Finland	for Namibia)	Tanzania
France	Netherlands	United States of
Germany, Federal	Nicaragua	America
Republic of	Nigeria	Venezuela
Greece	Norway	Yugoslavia
Holy See	Sudan	Zaire

5. The Governments of the following States were represented as observers:

Afghanistan	El Salvador	Pakistan
Angola	Ethiopia	Panama
Botswana	Guatemala	Portugal
Burundi	Honduras	Rwanda
Central African	Iceland	Senegal
Republic	Indonesia	Somalia
Chile	Iraq	Spain
Congo	Ireland	Swaziland
Cuba	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	United Republic
Democratic Kampuchea	Luxembourg	of Cameroon
Djibouti	Malaysia	Viet Nam
Dominican Republic	Mexico	
Egypt	New Zealand	

The Sovereign Order of Malta was also represented by an observer.

6. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

United Nations Secretariat

Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO)

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

World Food Programme (WFP)

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Bank

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

7. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers:

Commission of the European Communities

Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM)

Islamic Development Bank

League of Arab States

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Organization of American Unity (OAU)

Organization of the Islamic Conference

8. Fifty-seven non-governmental organizations were represented by observers, including the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS).

9. The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) were also represented at the meeting.

C. Adoption of the agenda

10. The Executive Committee decided to adopt the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. General debate.
5. Action taken on decisions by the Executive Committee.
6. International protection.
7. Conclusions of the meeting of experts on refugee aid and development.
8. The role of UNHCR in promoting durable solutions.
9. UNHCR assistance activities.
10. Administrative and financial matters.
11. Status of contributions and overall financial requirements for 1983 and 1984.
12. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the thirty-fifth session of the Executive Committee.
13. Any other business.
14. Adoption of the draft report of the thirty-fourth session.

D. Opening statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

11. In taking the chair, the newly-elected Chairman, Ambassador Ewerlöf, thanked his colleagues for their expression of confidence manifested in his election.
12. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman paid tribute to his predecessor for his dedication to the work of the Committee. Despite the dramatic events in his own country which forced him to be absent often from Geneva, Ambassador Kharma had found it possible to follow the Committee closely and to guide its work.
13. The Chairman noted that it had been 18 years since his first participation in an Executive Committee meeting, and that the work of the Committee had increased dramatically since that time. Humanitarian issues and, in particular, refugee problems, had become one of the most important responsibilities of the Permanent Representatives in Geneva. The Executive Committee had begun to take an active interest in the administration and management of UNHCR, and the High Commissioner had taken steps to increase the efficiency of the Office. These included strengthening the field organization of his Office and increasing delegation of authority to the field.
14. The Chairman then commented on certain issues which he felt should be given special attention during the year. The magnitude and complexity of refugee problems required greater co-ordination of multilateral and bilateral assistance to maximize the effect of the assistance effort. The expert group on refugee aid and development, convoked by the High Commissioner in August, suggested that the international community had not exhausted all the possibilities for the durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration. It was important to

ensure effective follow-up of the report of the expert group. The Committee's discussion on the item might provide a valuable input to next year's International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa.

15. International protection still presented a serious challenge. While military attacks on refugee camps were perhaps the most dramatic aspect of the problem, there were many examples around the world of violations of the physical safety of refugees. The Committee was obliged to give its utmost support to the High Commissioner in fulfilling his responsibilities in this field.

16. Finally, the Chairman stressed the valuable work of the voluntary agencies as UNHCR's implementing partners and welcomed their active participation in the work of the Committee. Dialogue with the agencies would be to the benefit of UNHCR, Committee members and the agencies themselves.

II. GENERAL DEBATE

(Item 4 of the agenda)

17. Congratulations were extended by all speakers to members of the Bureau on their election. Appreciation was also expressed for the past leadership of the outgoing Chairman who, despite the tragic events in his own country, Lebanon, and the heavy responsibilities in this regard, had made an important contribution to the deliberations of the Executive Committee. Warm congratulations were also extended to President Julius Nyerere on the award of the 1983 Nansen Medal. The humanitarian response of the United Republic of Tanzania to the refugee problems in its region was widely complimented.

18. The High Commissioner and his staff were commended for their constructive role in the protection and assistance of refugees and in the search for durable solutions to refugee problems. In this connection, the need to maintain a close and fruitful working relationship between UNHCR and the Executive Committee was mentioned by several speakers.

19. The apolitical character of the Office and its strictly humanitarian mandate were underlined by many delegations. Many, however, also drew attention to the vital need for the international community to address the root causes of refugee problems through action paralleling and complementing the High Commissioner's efforts on behalf of refugees. Given the humanitarian character of the Office of the High Commissioner, it was felt that such action should be pursued in the appropriate international fora such as the General Assembly of the United Nations and the Security Council. Several delegations went on to remark that, until such root causes are addressed within countries of origin, it cannot be hoped that refugee outflows can be averted.

20. Appreciation was generally expressed for the emphasis placed by the High Commissioner in his opening address on the pressing need to pursue and achieve durable solutions. A number of representatives commented on the fact that there had not recently been new large scale refugee outflows and that the overall world refugee situation seemed relatively more stable. Many delegations, however, expressed deep concern about ongoing refugee situations and the fact that solutions were not yet in sight. They underlined the urgent need for innovative approaches in the search for durable solutions.

21. In the course of the debate, considerable attention was paid to refugee problems in particular countries or regions. The size of the refugee population in Africa continued to be a major cause of concern and the review of the problem to take place at the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa was generally welcomed. In the Horn of Africa, however, which hosts one of the largest concentrations of refugees on that continent, some positive developments were seen to have recently occurred. Most notable was the successful launching of the programme of voluntary repatriation from Djibouti to Ethiopia and the announcement by the Somali Government of a new policy permitting the creation of local settlements and encouraging self-reliance among the refugee population.

The Government of the Sudan, with its very large refugee caseload, was also credited for its successful efforts in local integration.

22. The situation in Western Asia remained, for its part, profoundly disturbing. In Pakistan the presence of some three million refugees and their livestock continued to impose a colossal administrative burden on the authorities and had caused extensive ecological damage. With prospects for durable solutions continuing to be poor, increased emphasis had been placed on the development of self-reliance and income-generating projects. In this connection, many speakers made favourable mention of the project drawn up in consultation between the Government of Pakistan, the World Bank and UNHCR.

23. In the course of the debate, one speaker also drew attention to the presence of 1.5 million Afghan and 100,000 Iraqi refugees, including 15,000 Iraqi Kurds receiving assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the observer of Iraq, the latter group consisted rather of Iranian nationals who had engaged in subversive activities in Iraq and, as a result, had been expelled to their country of origin. This interpretation was disputed by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran who quoted the International Review of the Red Cross and the statement of the Minister for Affairs of Iraq to the Security Council in October 1980 in support of his statement that it was Iraqis of Iranian origin who had been expelled.

24. In considering the situation in South-East Asia, attention was drawn to the continued presence of large numbers of refugees, particularly in Thailand. One delegation reported in detail on the problems entailed, notably those of national security and of the displacement and disruption of local populations. While the international response in resettling over one million refugees from the region was recognized, it was also felt that emphasis had to be placed on developing other durable solutions, notably voluntary repatriation. Progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Orderly Departure from Viet Nam was also welcomed. Attention was drawn by the observer of Democratic Kampuchea to what he described as the extremely grave situation of Kampucheans who have become refugees in their own country because of the situation presently prevailing in that country.

25. Concerning the situation in Latin America, and in particular in Central America, several representatives drew attention to the fact that the refugee problem was becoming more serious. Two speakers emphasized the efforts of the Contadora Group, which seeks peaceful solutions to conflicts in Central America and thus directly confronts the root causes of refugee flows. Several representatives recalled the work of the High Commissioner in this region, praised the Governments and voluntary organizations which were working to improve the lot of refugees and requested that UNHCR's programmes in the area be strengthened. In this connection, some delegations pointed to the rural character of the refugee problems in Central America and called on UNHCR to take this into account in according its programme priorities. These delegations, stressing the urgency and magnitude of the problems, also underlined the importance of UNHCR's programmes in supporting the peace efforts in the region of the Latin American countries.

26. The heavy burden imposed through the presence of large numbers of refugees on countries of asylum was widely acknowledged and attention was drawn to the fact that the majority of such countries are among those facing severe economic and development problems of their own. Several speakers suggested that the refugee burden for host countries was not only an economic one. One speaker pointed out

that even relatively small numbers of refugees can bring with them serious security and political problems and conflict with hostile neighbouring States.

27. A number of speakers whose countries host important refugee populations reported in some detail on the particular problems which refugee influxes in their countries have created, including the adverse effect refugee populations may have on the local environment and their negative economic and social impact on the local population. Many speakers suggested in this context that, in accordance with the principles of international solidarity and burden-sharing, States should be encouraged to fulfil obligations to assist countries of first asylum to shoulder their heavy burdens. Most delegations reaffirmed their Governments' support for the principles of international solidarity and burden-sharing.

28. Also, in connection with burden-sharing, a number of delegations expressed regret that possibilities for resettlement in countries which have resettled and can reasonably be expected to resettle refugees seem to be diminishing. Hope was expressed that new impetus might be given to this aspect of burden-sharing by the international community as a whole. One delegation said it would attach strong priority to resettlement from countries in the region to which it belongs. Several delegations endorsed the idea of regional solutions to regional problems. With respect to difficulties concerning the process of integrating refugees and asylum-seekers in certain European countries, particular mention was made by several speakers of the usefulness of the Seminar on Integration of Refugees in Europe, which had been convened by the High Commissioner in September 1983. The hope was expressed that appropriate follow-up of the conclusions of the Seminar would lead to solving present difficulties in the admission and integration of refugees.

29. Some speakers commented on the difficulty of distinguishing genuine refugees from would-be migrants. In this context, several speakers mentioned the difficulties this could pose for determination of refugee status, particularly in mass influx situations. Some delegations also observed that in Latin America the national immigration laws were more generous and less strict than in other countries. It was pointed out that Latin America had had for many years a long and generous tradition of asylum which in fact pre-dated existing international refugee instruments. For these reasons, large numbers of refugees enter Latin American countries, many discreetly as ordinary immigrants or in another legal capacity. Another speaker referred to the difficulties this creates for the recording of refugee numbers for assistance purposes and suggested that UNHCR study this problem.

30. Several speakers commented on the importance of establishing accurate base data for refugee assistance and protection activities. To enable UNHCR, inter alia, to assess accurately numbers of beneficiaries of assistance programmes, these speakers called for UNHCR to be given regular access to all beneficiaries.

31. There was general agreement that UNHCR should devote serious and priority attention to the pursuit of durable solutions and in particular to the preferable solution of voluntary repatriation, wherever feasible and appropriate. Some speakers commented that the High Commissioner's pursuit of durable solutions has not always been as concerted as it might have been. They expressed concern that only 26 per cent of UNHCR's 1981 General Programmes expenditure was devoted to achieving them. It was noted, however, that this trend was already being reversed as the High Commissioner himself had pointed out in his opening statement. Some

speakers drew attention to the need to build durable solutions into the planning of assistance programmes from the very beginning of a refugee influx. They also stressed the need to co-ordinate UNHCR activities with relevant agencies specialized in development assistance from an early stage.

32. Many delegations stressed that, among the three durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and third country resettlement, the first, if feasible, was to be preferred as in the best interests of the refugees and the international community. Considerable emphasis, however, was placed on the need to ensure the completely voluntary character of any repatriation exercise. It was widely appreciated that many of the obstacles to voluntary repatriation which were of a political nature were beyond the High Commissioner's scope of action. Several speakers nevertheless felt that, given the right conditions, the High Commissioner could play a pivotal role in facilitating negotiations between asylum countries and countries of origin as well as in helping create, through assistance to returnees, a climate conducive to voluntary return. The positive role played by the High Commissioner in facilitating the establishment of the programme of voluntary repatriation from Djibouti to Ethiopia was mentioned by a number of speakers as an instance where active involvement had led to positive results.

33. The question of local integration was also commented upon by many speakers and attention was again drawn to the principle of burden-sharing. Speakers placed particular emphasis on the need for assistance measures to benefit the surrounding population as well as refugees so as to avoid the danger of creating resentments which may militate against successful integration.

34. While the need for resettlement in third countries was recognized by several speakers as the only possible durable solution in certain circumstances, a number emphasized that it was the least desirable and most costly durable solution and should only be adopted as a last resort. One speaker pointed out that, while the urgency of durable solutions was fully appreciated, over-hasty resettlement could preempt the possibility of voluntary repatriation, which would be a preferable solution in the longer term.

35. On the question of refugee aid and development assistance, most speakers agreed that the dividing line between these two types of assistance is difficult to draw. There was a broad consensus that additional development assistance should be provided to low-income countries burdened by a massive presence of refugees so as to counterbalance the negative impact on their national economies and infrastructures. As UNHCR is not a development agency, refugee assistance with a major development component should be co-ordinated among all concerned agencies and organizations within and outside the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and including the non-governmental organizations. As for development aspects of refugee programmes also benefiting local populations, it was generally felt that the role of UNHCR should be that of an initiator and catalyst. In the opinion of one speaker, however, UNHCR should provide development assistance where beneficiaries are predominantly refugees. The importance of special programmes in the grey area between refugee aid and development assistance was also stressed by this speaker.

36. Many representatives expressed appreciation of the initiative taken by the High Commissioner in bringing together a group of experts at Vevey, Switzerland, from 29 to 31 August 1983, to consider the subject of refugee aid and development. The majority of those who addressed the subject felt that the report produced by

the meeting was useful. One speaker, however, found the recommendations not fully convincing while another delegate saw nothing substantially new in the conclusions of the expert group. Most of the delegates felt that the report provided a good statement of the complexity of the problems and, as such, set the stage for further action. A number of delegations recommended that there should be further discussion of the matter at the next informal meeting of representatives of States members of the Executive Committee in early 1984. Two speakers called for the High Commissioner to provide his comments on the report to facilitate further discussion of this issue. It was also suggested that the views of the other development-oriented agencies and non-governmental organizations were relevant and should be sought. Several delegations felt that work on the complex issues involved should be continued in an ad hoc working group. Many delegations noted the relevance of the conclusions on refugee aid and development to preparations for and discussion at the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa.

37. In connection with the Second Conference, there was widespread support for this forthcoming conference as a valuable means of promoting durable solutions in Africa. A number of speakers pointed to the scale of the refugee problems in Africa, to the humanitarian response by African countries of asylum, to the heavy burden imposed by the reception of refugees and to the need for substantial international support to ensure adequate assistance to the refugees themselves and to the often severely pressed countries of refuge. A number of representatives laid particular emphasis on the need for careful and early preparation of submissions to the conference. One delegate suggested that the preparation for this second conference should include a full evaluation of the results of the first Conference.

38. Some speakers laid particular stress on the need to counter the present trend of world public opinion, which was becoming indifferent to refugee problems, by bringing more effectively to its attention the obstacles in the way of achieving durable solutions. They recommended that UNHCR, with the support of States members of the Executive Committee, organize a major public information campaign to this effect, and disseminate more information on refugee problems so as to create a more favourable climate and offset current restrictive and xenophobic trends.

39. Most delegations commented in some detail on protection questions. Many generally expressed serious concern about the deterioration in the protection situation as outlined in the note on international protection (A/AC.96/623) submitted by the High Commissioner. There was unanimous agreement that the protection of the fundamental rights of refugees and the promotion of their physical safety were primary functions of UNHCR. One speaker pointed to an apparent disparity in the volume of information provided by UNHCR on assistance and on protection matters.

40. One delegation stressed the great importance of the mutually reinforcing relationship between protection and assistance. That delegation supported the work to date of the UNHCR Emergency Unit and called on UNHCR to be prepared to act immediately in emergency situations to provide the international community promptly with professional, accurate assessments of the scope of the problems and of the extent of the assistance required. That delegation also suggested that UNHCR regularize its initial emergency response structure and establish clear guidelines as to how that structure relates to other UNHCR offices at headquarters and in the field. The High Commissioner's actions in creating a Specialist Support Unit in the Assistance Division were commended strongly and the hope was expressed that the

expertise available in that unit would be applied to all aspects of UNHCR's work, including emergency response.

41. Particular concern was expressed by a number of speakers about pirate attacks against refugees on the high seas and the apparently increasing reluctance of ships to rescue asylum-seekers in distress at sea. A number of delegations called upon UNHCR to continue its efforts to encourage rescues and to facilitate subsequent disembarkation, through improved arrangements for more equitable burden-sharing by the international community. In this connection, several speakers appealed to States to support and expand the disembarkation resettlement offers (DISERO) scheme. Certain other speakers complimented UNHCR on its initiative to develop other burden-sharing arrangements which would involve flag States and other resettlement States in sharing the burden of rescued refugees.

42. One representative reported on efforts made to combat piracy in the South China Sea. He drew attention to the absence of any reports of attacks during the last several months and advised the Committee of the extension for a further term of 12 months of the anti-piracy programme conducted by the Royal Thai Government. Several speakers expressed support for this programme. One speaker felt that its effectiveness still had to be fully demonstrated.

43. Military attacks on refugee camps and settlements were widely condemned as a violation of basic humanitarian principles and rules. The majority of speakers stressed that the problem was urgent and that it was proper for the Executive Committee to consider it. They expressed regret that members of the Executive Committee had not yet been able to reach consensus on a statement of principles which would condemn and contribute to the prevention of such attacks. A number of representatives expressed confidence that such a statement could nevertheless be adopted by the Executive Committee at its current session or at least soon thereafter.

44. Emphasis was placed by many speakers on the strictly humanitarian and civilian nature of refugee camps and settlements. They reaffirmed that military and armed attacks against such camps and settlements are under no circumstances justified and must be condemned unreservedly. A number of speakers pointed to the responsibility of countries of first asylum to ensure the civilian nature of such camps and settlements. Several also drew attention to the need to locate refugee camps at reasonable and safe distances from borders with countries from which armed attacks against such camps might be launched and they emphasized the need for UNHCR to have access to those camps. Several speakers underlined, however, the need not to impose too heavy responsibilities on countries of asylum. One speaker said the principles in question should strike a proper balance between the respective responsibilities of all parties.

45. Many delegations underlined the importance of consensus on a text of draft principles. There were also many representatives who expressed their support for the text of the draft principles which had been the basis for consideration by the Executive Committee. In this connection, several delegations cautioned against over-hasty conclusions on this question, noting its delicacy and the need to avoid decisions that could impair the strictly humanitarian mandate of UNHCR. They felt that the principles in question should focus exclusively on the humanitarian aspects of the problem and take adequately into account the terms of reference of the Executive Committee.

46. The problem of refugees in orbit was raised by one speaker as a matter meriting particular study. He drew attention to the conclusions relating to refugees without an asylum country adopted by the Executive Committee at its thirtieth session in 1979, and requested that a follow-up report be prepared by the High Commissioner for the thirty-fifth session.

47. More generally, accession without reservation to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1/ and the 1967 Protocol 3/ was called for by a number of representatives. One speaker welcomed the recent accession to these instruments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru. Many delegations agreed on the need to reaffirm existing principles for the protection of refugees and to strengthen adherence to them as well as to promote the development of new measures to fill gaps in the existing international legal framework. It was also stressed that new, flexible and imaginative protection techniques should be developed.

48. Two speakers singled out for special comment the positive contribution made to the teaching and development of refugee law by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law at San Remo.

49. Recent improvements in the administrative efficiency of UNHCR and its enhanced capacity for effective programme delivery were generally acknowledged by many delegations and the High Commissioner was urged to continue his efforts in this direction. Mention was made by a number of speakers of the High Commissioner's positive response to the recommendations of the Administrative Management Service review as well as to the Executive Committee's own recommendations for the strengthening of UNHCR's management. Many speakers also said they looked forward to further improvements in this area.

50. Certain representatives noted their disagreement with the proposal by the High Commissioner to abolish the position of Regional Co-ordinator for South-East Asia. They preferred that the High Commissioner maintain in the region a high-level capacity to pursue durable solutions, especially as opportunities seemed to be opening up for progress in this direction.

51. Some representatives referred specifically to the need for further action to ensure more equitable distribution in geographical terms of professional-level posts in UNHCR. Other speakers, however, emphasized their concern that action taken in this respect should not detract from the efficiency of the organization, which should remain the primary consideration.

52. UNHCR was commended by several representatives for increased transparency as a result of the provision of more extensive and informative documentation. The need for more timely distribution of documents was pointed out, however, so as to ensure that member States were able to study them in depth before sessions of the Committee. Two speakers also expressed their wish that documents be available in official languages of the United Nations other than English and French. With regard to the volume of documentation produced, one representative suggested there was a danger in imposing too heavy a burden on the UNHCR secretariat. Energies which might otherwise be devoted to the service of refugees could thereby be diverted.

53. The importance of co-ordination between UNHCR and other international agencies and non-governmental bodies active in the field of refugee assistance was commented

upon by certain speakers. One representative complimented UNHCR on its efforts to develop co-operation with such organizations, while another requested that this vital aspect of assistance activities should be more extensively covered in UNHCR documentation. In the course of the debate, non-governmental organizations, in particular, were singled out for special praise for the vital role they play in rendering assistance to refugees.

54. A statement was made by the observer of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) who drew the attention of the Committee to the alarming refugee situation in Africa, where it is frequently the poorest countries which are most seriously burdened by refugees. He also made reference to the complex refugee situation obtaining in Lesotho with regard to the massacre of innocent people in December 1982 by South Africa. While noting the traditional hospitality extended by African countries to refugees, the speaker nevertheless pointed to the danger that a saturation point may soon be reached. In this context, he stressed the need to ensure the success of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa.

55. The observers from the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), of Namibia, addressed the meeting and expressed appreciation of the valuable support given to assistance projects for refugees associated with their respective movements and appealed to the High Commissioner for more humanitarian material assistance. Serious concern was expressed by these speakers about the continued military attacks by South Africa against refugee camps and settlements in southern Africa and about the pressure applied on countries hosting refugees.

56. Observers from the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS), and the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) also made statements. The representative of ICVA expressed concern at the deterioration of standards of treatment of refugees in many parts of the world, not the least in Europe. In connection with the role of the non-governmental organizations in assistance to refugees, initiatives taken to involve such agencies more actively were welcomed. The speaker also drew attention to the alarming situation of large numbers of displaced persons throughout the world who fall outside UNHCR's mandate and consequently receive no international protection and, frequently, little assistance.

57. The representative of LRCS described plans currently under consideration by the General Assembly of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with a view to increasing involvement in refugee protection and assistance activities. The ICRC, for its part, stressed the need for better protection of refugees and drew particular attention to the significance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two additional protocols of 1977 in relation to victims of armed conflicts. The need to find means of coping in a humane and orderly way with mass movements of people was raised by the delegate of ICM, who also stressed the importance of addressing the economic and political root causes of refugee phenomena.

58. Following the general debate, the Deputy High Commissioner responded to statements concerning the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. The largely constructive and positive comments of delegations would be conveyed to the Steering Committee. The Deputy High Commissioner counted on

Governments of affected countries to present realistic and credible proposals and on donor Governments to consider them in a spirit of good-will, recognizing fully the needs of both refugees and asylum countries. It had been determined at the outset that, in preparing for the Second Conference, dialogue between all parties concerned was of vital importance. As the date approached, Governments would be consulted frequently. The conference imposed a special obligation on Governments and on UNHCR to prepare thoroughly and to act with thought and generosity.

59. In closing the general debate, the High Commissioner thanked the Executive Committee for its clear reaffirmation of support for the humanitarian work of his Office. He stressed the urgent need to counter current restrictive trends in the granting of asylum and refugee status and expressed concern for the physical safety of refugees in various parts of the world, notably in southern Africa. The High Commissioner again underlined the importance of promoting durable solutions to refugee problems and appealed to the international community to make every effort to ensure that humanitarian considerations be allowed to prevail in the pursuit of such solutions. He also extended special thanks to the diverse organizations which continue to collaborate closely with his Office in assisting refugees. The High Commissioner concluded with an expression of appreciation for the constructive spirit in which the debate had been conducted and for the support and guidance offered by the Committee.

Decisions of the Committee

60. The Executive Committee:

(a) Expressed appreciation of the introductory statement of the High Commissioner which, inter alia, emphasized the need for innovative planning in the ongoing pursuit of durable solutions;

(b) Noted as a positive development the fact that there had not recently been new large scale refugee outflows;

(c) Expressed, nevertheless, concern at the continued severity of refugee problems, notably in Africa, Asia and Central America and requested the High Commissioner to continue his efforts to provide assistance and international protection;

(d) Urged the High Commissioner to intensify his efforts to realize durable solutions for refugee problems, in particular, voluntary repatriation which was recognized as, where feasible, the preferred durable solution;

(e) Noted with concern the heavy burdens imposed on first asylum countries by the presence of large numbers of refugees, expressed appreciation to them for their valuable humanitarian response, and reaffirmed the principle of international solidarity and burden-sharing in responding to refugee problems;

(f) Called upon Governments to assist the High Commissioner to establish accurate base data for refugee assistance projects administered by his Office;

(g) Expressed also serious concern about the deterioration in the respect for the fundamental rights of refugees and the increased threats to their physical safety on the high seas and in refugee camps and settlements through military and armed attacks on such camps and settlements;

(h) Urged Governments to facilitate the work of the High Commissioner in carrying out his function of international protection;

(i) Reaffirmed the fundamental humanitarian character of the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner, but drew attention to the vital need for the international community to address in appropriate fora the root causes of refugee flows through actions complementing the efforts of the High Commissioner on behalf of refugees;

(j) Registered appreciation of the valuable contributions made by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection and the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters to the work of the Executive Committee;

(k) Urged the High Commissioner to maintain the momentum already established to improve and strengthen the management of his Office, welcomed initiatives already under way in this respect, and supported continued dialogue on this question between the Office of the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee;

(l) Welcomed efforts made by the High Commissioner to improve the flow of information to members of the Executive Committee;

(m) Expressed appreciation for the timely and important initiative in convening an expert group to study the question of refugee aid and development;

(n) Felt that the question was sufficiently important to merit further consideration by the Executive Committee on the basis, inter alia, of views on the matter from the High Commissioner and from other concerned agencies and organizations, including the non-governmental organizations;

(o) Welcomed the information provided by the High Commissioner on the preparations made so far for convening the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa; recognized the importance and timeliness of the Second Conference in connection with the pursuit of durable solutions to refugee problems in Africa, and reiterated the need for carefully prepared and realistic project submissions so as to help ensure the success of this conference;

(p) Commended other United Nations organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies for their continuing support of the High Commissioner in carrying out his humanitarian functions; urged even closer co-operation in this respect and requested the High Commissioner to ensure continuing co-ordination of his efforts with these organizations and agencies;

(q) Noted with satisfaction that a Seminar on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, consisting of experts of Governments, of voluntary agencies and of UNHCR, had been held in September 1983 at Geneva, and expressed the hope that there would be appropriate follow-up of the conclusions of the Seminar;

(r) Stressed the importance of continuing and expanding public information activities to focus the attention of the world on refugee problems and to foster a climate conducive to their solution.

III. ACTION TAKEN ON DECISIONS BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Item 5 of the agenda)

61. The summary report submitted by the High Commissioner on action taken on decisions by the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/626) was welcomed as most useful in helping the Committee to stay abreast of action taken on previous decisions and conclusions requiring follow-up by the High Commissioner. There was general agreement that the High Commissioner should provide similar reports to future sessions. Two speakers felt that the topic should feature as a separate item on future agendas.

62. One representative pointed to inaccuracies in that part of document A/AC.96/626 concerning the activities of UNHCR in the Tindouf region. Referring to paragraphs 23 and 24 of this report, he drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that consultations between UNHCR and the Permanent Mission of Morocco at Geneva had not occurred at any stage. He also pointed out that the mission undertaken by UNHCR's Director of Assistance had, in fact, taken place before the relevant decision of the Executive Committee and could not thus be accepted as an action taken as a result of this decision. Furthermore, paragraph 24 of the document referred the reader to paragraph 3 of document A/AC.96/594 for an account of progress which had been given to the thirty-second session. The latter paragraph, however, did not in fact indicate that any progress had been achieved. The speaker stressed the need for future reports to be more detailed and frank in their description of difficulties encountered in the implementation of decisions and in the explanation of any lack of progress.

Decision of the Committee

63. The Executive Committee:

Noted with appreciation the report submitted by the High Commissioner on action taken on decisions by the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/626) and requested that such a report become a regular feature of future sessions.

IV. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

(Item 6 of the agenda)

64. Opening the debate on this item, Mr. I. Kharma (Lebanon), Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, introduced the report of the eighth meeting of the Sub-Committee (A/AC.96/629). The Sub-Committee had recommended for adoption by the Executive Committee a number of recommendations relating to the problems of manifestly unfounded or abusive applications for refugee status and the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea. With regard to the item on military attacks on refugee camps and settlements, the Sub-Committee had considered a set of draft principles which had been submitted to it by a Working Group of 12 Member States of the Executive Committee. The Working Group had been able to reach consensus on this text with the exception of three paragraphs. During the examination of this matter by the Sub-Committee, reservations were also expressed on other aspects of the text. Despite considerable effort, it had not proved possible to remove these various divergences and he was therefore compelled to request the Chairman to continue, as a matter of utmost urgency, negotiations within the Executive Committee in order to obtain final agreement on a set of principles.
65. The Director of International Protection, introducing document A/AC.96/623, observed that the exercise of this function would be inconceivable unless States worked together in a spirit of solidarity and co-operation to uphold and strengthen the fundamental principles for the protection of refugees. It was unfortunate, then, that in some regions of the world, a number of States were becoming more restrictive towards persons seeking asylum, rejecting them at the frontier and even adopting measures to deter their arrival. Such restrictive policies created problems for the many States which continued to maintain generous asylum policies, and could also have negative repercussions in other parts of the world.
66. He expressed the hope that the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection would resist this development and would continue to work for liberal standards, rather than reducing its conclusions to a lowest common denominator by merely restating the existing practice of member Governments.
67. Reasons for the changed attitude included economic recession, the large-scale arrival of aliens, delays in asylum procedures due to a proliferation of ill-founded claims, and the impression of Governments that the present problem of large-scale flows was without any solution. The belief that there was no way out of the present difficulty had led to an implacable hardening of attitude towards persons seeking refuge and to the introduction of drastic measures to discourage them from coming.
68. The balance that had existed between the emergence of refugee problems and their resolution through one of the traditional durable solutions was threatened, not so much because of a lack of resettlement opportunities as because of the difficulty in arranging for the local integration or the voluntary repatriation of large numbers of refugees, due to the absence of appropriate political solutions. In order to maintain UNHCR's ability to provide protection and assistance to refugees, it was necessary for all the component parts of the problem to be dealt with. The humanitarian mechanisms which had been set up to provide for the immediate needs of refugees should allow for the political mechanisms to reach

peaceful long-term solutions. Both the political and the humanitarian aspects of refugee problems had to be addressed with vigour.

69. The initiatives required of UNHCR in this context must assume various forms. In addition to direct action on behalf of refugees in the field, it was necessary to undertake diplomatic efforts of a humanitarian nature lending the High Commissioner's good offices to bring about solutions in the interest of all parties. UNHCR also had the more general tasks of fostering a favourable climate in international public opinion and developing and promoting legal standards and principles through dialogue with Governments, regional bodies, non-governmental organizations and the academic world.

70. Concrete examples of innovative action by the High Commissioner included the programme undertaken in conjunction with ICRC and concerned Governments to assist Thailand to combat piracy, the initiatives undertaken with the help of the International Maritime Organization to ensure the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea, the Office's action with the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia to permit voluntary repatriation to Ethiopia, its efforts in collaboration with the United Nations Secretary-General and the Governments of Rwanda and Uganda to resolve the problems of refugees and displaced persons in those countries, and the attempt with a number of other Governments to find ways to enable Lesotho to continue to shelter refugees from South Africa. In regard to the Afghan refugee situation, the High Commissioner was making his expertise available to the Secretary-General in his continuing efforts to find a solution. In Central and northern Latin America, new initiatives were also currently underway to resolve extremely complex problems.

71. The diplomatic and humanitarian work of the High Commissioner had to remain discreet and confidential. However, in cases where the intransigence of some parties led to situations which could have tragic consequences for refugees or be harmful to the Office's presence in the field, it might be appropriate for the Office to make the international community aware of the facts. For this purpose, the Executive Committee and the General Assembly, on the occasion of the presentation of the annual report, were appropriate fora.

72. It was very much hoped that the Executive Committee would be able to achieve agreement on a statement of principles against armed attacks on refugee camps, which had added a new and tragic dimension to international protection.

73. In conclusion, the Director of International Protection also stressed the importance to the Office's activities in the international protection field of recent exchanges with voluntary agencies. He also referred to the courses on refugee law given for government officials in association with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy, and to the commentary on the 1951 Convention prepared by Dr. Paul Weis.

74. In the ensuing discussion, special tribute was paid to the valuable contribution made by Ambassador Imbrahim Kharma as Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection. A number of speakers expressed appreciation for the frank and courageous statement of the Director of International Protection. There was general agreement with the view expressed by the Director and in the note on international protection that there was a trend towards a deterioration in the protection of refugees. A number of speakers expressed their appreciation of the clear and incisive language of the note which, in the view of

one delegation, was in line with the High Commissioner's primary duty of bringing perceptible trends relevant to the situation of refugees to the attention of States and of giving early warnings.

75. Many speakers shared the High Commissioner's concern that the principles which have been developed by States for the protection of refugees were in real danger of being eroded and it was widely agreed that a reversal of this trend should be a priority task of the Office. It was recognized that not only the High Commissioner but also States had an unqualified obligation to seek a reversal of this deteriorating trend.

76. A number of speakers referred to the fact that, in the exercise of his international protection function, the High Commissioner had become increasingly concerned with matters relating to the physical safety of refugees which had been violated as a result of military or armed attacks, piracy and other acts of brutality and by the failure to rescue asylum-seekers in distress at sea. There was general recognition of the seriousness of these problems and of the fact that efforts to find solutions constituted an important part of the High Commissioner's protection responsibilities. During the discussion on this item, as in the course of the general debate, profound concern was expressed regarding the continuing pirate attacks on asylum-seekers. The programmes undertaken by UNHCR in co-operation with the ICRC and interested Governments to assist the Royal Thai Government to combat this problem were particularly welcomed. Attention was drawn by one speaker to the necessity that UNHCR should, on humanitarian grounds, increase its efforts to trace missing victims of pirate attacks in the South China Sea.

77. A number of speakers referred to restrictive practices adopted by certain Governments in regard to the admission of asylum-seekers and refugees. These included an increasingly rigid interpretation of the criteria for refugee status, also as regards the application of the concept of family unity, and the imposition of an unduly high burden of proof on applicants for refugee status. Reference was also made by a number of speakers to the rejection of asylum-seekers at frontiers and to measures of "humane deterrence", including the detention of asylum-seekers and the reduction to a minimum of living standards and social assistance, which were being resorted to by countries confronted with a large-scale influx of asylum-seekers. In regard to such measures, one representative expressed the view that asylum-seekers should only be detained if there was justifiable doubt as to their identity. He also believed that asylum-seekers who were not provided with the necessary means of subsistence should be allowed to earn their own living. Another speaker referred to the danger that restrictive measures by some Governments could prompt others to act in a similar manner.

78. A number of speakers referred to the difficulties currently faced by States in the field of international protection. Mention was made in particular of recessionary trends and the large-scale arrival of aliens seeking employment, which had in a number of instances led to xenophobic attitudes. One speaker referred to increasing domestic pressures on Governments to curb what is often perceived to be penetration of their labour markets and social welfare systems through the refugee process. Mention was made by other speakers of the increasing indifference of public opinion towards the special situation of refugees. One delegation, however, raised the question of whether the High Commissioner's note reflected with sufficient prominence the contribution that a number of countries in different parts of the world - most of them poor countries, some of them very poor - were

making to ensure that large numbers of refugees in their territories were treated according to accepted international humanitarian standards.

79. Several speakers pointed out that the effective exercise of the High Commissioner's international protection function had been rendered more difficult by the reduced availability of durable solutions for refugee problems. This situation, in the view of one representative, called for an imaginative use of such resources as existed and should, in any event, not result in a deterioration of existing standards of international protection.

80. There was unanimous agreement on the importance of international solidarity and burden-sharing as a basis for the effective exercise of international protection. The view was expressed by one speaker that the introduction of restrictive measures by individual Governments was inconsistent with the principle of international solidarity and burden-sharing in so far as they tended to divert flows of asylum-seekers to those countries which adopted a more liberal asylum practice. One speaker referred to the close linkage between international solidarity and burden-sharing and the admission of refugees. Both he and other speakers also emphasized in this context the importance of accession by States to the international refugee instruments and their comprehensive implementation. The objective of such co-operation was to establish a balanced system of responsibilities as between the States concerned, the international community and the High Commissioner's Office.

81. The representative of Denmark informed the Executive Committee of some of the more important provisions of the new Danish Aliens Act which entered into force on 1 October 1983. This Act considerably improved the legal protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in Denmark, particularly as regards the procedure for examining asylum applications.

82. Many speakers agreed with the view expressed in the note on international protection that the effective implementation of the High Commissioner's protection tasks was dependent on the good will and co-operation of Governments which had the fundamental responsibility for resolving refugee problems. Several speakers referred to the moral authority of the High Commissioner's Office and one speaker considered that this authority could be more frequently invoked in order to redress individual and collective problems of non-compliance with the basic standards of international protection. He also believed that where efforts of moral persuasion by UNHCR failed, interested Governments should be prepared to join forces to add weight to the High Commissioner's representations. Repeated reference was made to the competence of other organs of the United Nations to deal with the political aspects of refugee problems. A number of speakers also referred to the need for the international community to address the problem of root causes of refugee problems, in regard to which one speaker believed UNHCR had an important role to play.

83. Many speakers stressed the need to maintain existing standards of international protection and to preserve the gains so far made in this important humanitarian field. There was also recognition of the need to fill certain lacunae which still existed in refugee law, particularly as regards the admission of asylum-seekers and their treatment pending a determination of their status. The problem of determining the country responsible for examining an asylum request and the problem of refugees with de facto recognition in one country who move to another for reasons of personal convenience were also identified as matters requiring clarification.

84. A number of representatives recognized the importance of the High Commissioner's ongoing action to promote the teaching and the further development of international refugee law through contacts with universities and academic institutions. Support was also expressed for the annual course on refugee law organized by UNHCR in conjunction with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law at San Remo, Italy and for the Office's intention to develop its Refugee Law Documentation Centre in co-operation with the Institute.
85. Several speakers emphasized the importance of a favourable climate of public opinion for the effective international protection of refugees, and one speaker referred to the need for more imaginative approaches in mobilizing public opinion in their favour. A number of speakers also referred to the important role which non-governmental organizations could play in this regard.
86. One speaker referred to the resettlement of refugees, which he noted contained an important protection element. His delegation believed that the judicious use of resettlement opportunities could serve to ensure the protection of refugees and, in this connection, his Government was ready to provide a quota for emergency cases.
87. One representative considered that more detailed information could usefully be provided regarding the state of accessions to the international refugee instruments. Another representative considered that the information provided in document A/AC.96/152/Rev.4 was valuable and could be expanded to include information on the standards of treatment granted to refugees once they have been recognized. Another representative suggested that a letter describing current protection issues could be sent periodically by the Office to the members of the Executive Committee. Replying to these various proposals, the Director of International Protection stated that the requested information regarding accessions to the international refugee instruments would be provided. As regard information on the standards of treatment accorded to refugees in various countries, it might be preferable to include this in a separate document. This would, however, imply a considerable increase in the workload of the Division. Having regard to these workload implications he would examine how the requested information could be made available. As regards the suggestion for a periodic letter on current protection issues, he believed that it would indeed be useful to strengthen the existing dialogue and information sharing on protection issues with members of the Executive Committee. The exact form of such arrangements would be the subject of further consultations.
88. It was generally recognized that the Executive Committee must continue to fulfil its important function of reaffirming and further developing basic standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers. Particular importance was attached to the work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection and, in this connection, its original objectives were recalled. One representative considered that the Sub-Committee's conclusions were of a dual nature; they served to strengthen the action of the High Commissioner in various fields and also to promote the development of international refugee law. Another representative pointed out that, while the principles so developed were sometimes in advance of the actual legal position in various States, they served as an incentive for the further strengthening of national refugee legislation.
89. Reference was made by a number of representatives to the different questions which had been examined by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection. In regard to the question of manifestly unfounded or abusive

applications for refugee status, a number of representatives stated that this phenomenon constituted a serious problem for their Governments. In seeking solutions it was, however, essential to ensure that basic procedural guarantees were maintained so that the interests of bona fide asylum-seekers should not be adversely affected. One speaker considered that criteria for refugee status should not be applied too severely so as to dissuade genuine applicants. A number of representatives recognized the desirability of generally speeding up asylum procedures and described measures for this purpose which had been taken or were envisaged in their respective countries. One representative stressed the need for asylum applicants to be interviewed by competent and experienced staff. The observer, speaking on behalf of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, considered that an application should not be regarded as manifestly unfounded merely because an applicant came from a country where no persecution might be assumed to exist and that membership of an ethnic or religious minority group should usually justify a positive presumption at the first stage of the determination of refugee status procedure.

90. Agreement was expressed with the conclusions recommended by the Sub-Committee, in particular as regards the proposed procedural guarantees. Certain speakers indicated, however, that the application of such guarantees might involve some practical difficulties for their authorities. Two speakers indicated that such guarantees already figured in their respective countries' legislation. One speaker expressed doubt as to whether the recommendations of the Sub-Committee could resolve the problem of the large backlog of applications existing in his country.

91. With regard to the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea, several speakers expressed concern at the declining proportion of such asylum-seekers who were being rescued. A number of speakers recognized that the proposed Rescue at Sea Resettlement Offers (RASRO) scheme could contribute to resolving this problem and should therefore be initiated on a trial basis. One speaker, while noting his Government's willingness to participate in the RASRO scheme if others do so as well, expressed the view that RASRO's scope could usefully be broadened and the hope that this idea may be discussed further with UNHCR and potential participants. One representative indicated that not all flag States had the same possibilities of accepting refugees rescued at sea and that, to his understanding, international burden-sharing should mean a greater involvement of all States in granting the necessary guarantees for temporary or final resettlement. The same speaker supported the expansion of the DISERO (disembarkation resettlement offers) scheme. Another speaker indicated that, while his Government was prepared to participate in the RASRO scheme on a trial basis, it hoped that a scheme would eventually be devised which would reflect the obligation of ships masters to rescue as well as provide for the equitable resettlement of rescued refugees on the basis of equitable burden-sharing and would thus obviate the need for resettlement guarantees against disembarkation.

92. There was unanimous approval of the publication and distribution by UNHCR of a pamphlet entitled "Guidelines for Disembarkation of Refugees" and of the proposed joint action between UNHCR and the International Maritime Organization for ensuring the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea.

93. With regard to the problem of military attacks on refugee camps and settlements, all speakers reaffirmed the gravity of the problem and expressed concern that such attacks were continuing. Many speakers stressed the need to condemn unreservedly such attacks as, in their view, they constituted a grave

violation of international humanitarian law as well as of the territorial integrity of the asylum countries. Certain speakers also considered such attacks to be an act of aggression against asylum countries with the aim of forcing them to expel refugees from their territories or to return them to their oppressors, contrary to humanitarian principles, including the principle of non-refoulement. Failure to prevent such attacks would therefore undermine the basic principles of international protection.

94. The Draft Principles on the Prohibition of Military and Armed Attacks on Refugee Camps and Settlements figuring in the report of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection were considered by a number of speakers to contain the necessary balance as regards the responsibilities of the various parties involved. Many speakers underlined the strictly humanitarian and civilian character of refugee camps and settlements. A number of speakers also pointed to the responsibility of countries of first asylum to ensure the civilian nature of such camps and settlements. Attention was drawn by several representatives to the need to locate refugee camps at reasonable and safe distances from borders with countries from which armed attacks against such camps might be launched, as well as to the need to permit UNHCR access to these camps. Other speakers believed that the responsibility of the aggressor had not received sufficient emphasis. Several delegations considered that the Draft Principles placed an excessive burden on the country of asylum or refuge. Other views on the responsibilities of the parties involved were also expressed during the general debate.

95. The fact that it had not been possible to reach a consensus on a statement of principles on the question of the prohibition of military or armed attacks was regretted. A number of speakers believed that, in view of the large measure of agreement already attained, it should be possible to reach consensus on a text. Some speakers, however, believed that the various outstanding issues should be the subject of more thorough consideration. One speaker stressed that, as in the case of previous conclusions of the Executive Committee on the subject of international protection, any statement of principles adopted should objectively reflect the relevant rules and also contribute to developing the legal framework applicable in the matter.

96. At the close of the discussion, the Executive Committee adopted the following conclusions which include those recommended by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection.

97. Conclusions of the Committee:

(1) General

The Executive Committee:

(a) Reaffirmed the fundamental importance of the High Commissioner's international protection function;

(b) Noted that the High Commissioner's international protection function includes, in addition to promoting the development and observance of basic standards for the treatment of refugees, promoting, by all means within his competence, measures to ensure the physical safety of refugees and asylum-seekers;

(c) Noted with satisfaction that many States in different areas of the world - and in particular in developing countries faced with serious economic problems - have continued to apply recognized international humanitarian standards for the treatment of refugees and to respect the principle of non-refoulement;

(d) Noted, however, with particular concern that, in various regions, the physical safety of refugees and asylum-seekers has been seriously violated through military or armed attacks, acts of piracy and other forms of brutality and the failure to rescue asylum-seekers in distress at sea;

(e) Noted also with concern that the exercise of the High Commissioner's international protection function has been rendered more difficult in many areas of the world by restrictive trends relating to the granting of asylum and the determination of refugee status;

(f) Stressed the importance for further States to accede to the 1951 United Nations Convention 1/ and the 1967 Protocol 2/ relating to the Status of Refugees and welcomed the additional accessions to these important humanitarian instruments which had taken place since the Committee's thirty-third session;

(g) Called upon all States to ensure the full and effective application of these and other instruments for the protection of refugees to which they are parties;

(h) Noted with satisfaction that further States have adopted national measures to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, particularly as regards procedures for the determination of refugee status and stressed the importance for States to establish such procedures to ensure fair and equitable decision-making in line with the conclusions adopted by the Executive Committee at its twenty-eighth and thirty-third sessions;

(i) Reiterated the importance of determining the country which is responsible for examining an asylum request by the adoption of common criteria as identified in the Conclusion on Refugees without an Asylum Country, adopted by the Executive Committee at its thirtieth session;

(j) Recognized the importance of developing standards of protection by maintaining a constant dialogue with Governments, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions and of filling lacunae in international refugee law, particularly as regards asylum-seekers whose status has not been determined and as regards the physical protection of refugees and asylum-seekers;

(k) Recognized the value of the High Commissioner's continuing activities in encouraging the teaching and further development of international refugee law and welcomed his intention to enlarge his Office's legal documentation centre in co-operation with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo;

(l) Recognized the essential need for the exercise of the High Commissioner's international protection function to be facilitated by the co-operation of Governments in granting asylum, in providing the durable solutions of resettlement and local integration and in creating conditions favourable to and promoting voluntary repatriation, which, whenever appropriate and feasible, is the most desirable durable solution for refugee problems; such co-operation should also

include fostering in public opinion a deeper understanding of the special needs of refugees and asylum-seekers;

(m) Noted with appreciation the work of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection which continued to fulfil an important function in defining and further developing standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers and in supporting the High Commissioner's action in the field of international protection.

(2) The problem of manifestly unfounded or abusive applications for refugee status or asylum

The Executive Committee:

(a) Recalled conclusion No. 8 (XXVIII) adopted at its twenty-eighth session on the determination of refugee status and conclusion No. 15 (XXX) adopted at its thirtieth session concerning refugees without an asylum country;

(b) Recalled conclusion No. 28 (XXXIII) adopted at its thirty-third session, in which the need for measures to meet the problem of manifestly unfounded or abusive applications for refugee status was recognized;

(c) Noted that applications for refugee status by persons who clearly have no valid claim to be considered refugees under the relevant criteria constitute a serious problem in a number of States parties to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Such applications are burdensome to the affected countries and detrimental to the interests of those applicants who have good grounds for requesting recognition as refugees;

(d) Considered that national procedures for the determination of refugee status may usefully include special provision for dealing in an expeditious manner with applications which are considered to be so obviously without foundation as not to merit full examination at every level of the procedure. Such applications have been termed either "clearly abusive" or "manifestly unfounded" and are to be defined as those which are clearly fraudulent or not related to the criteria for the granting of refugee status laid down in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees nor to any other criteria justifying the granting of asylum;

(e) Recognized the substantive character of a decision that an application for refugee status is manifestly unfounded or abusive, the grave consequences of an erroneous determination for the applicant and the resulting need for such a decision to be accompanied by appropriate procedural guarantees and therefore recommended that:

- (i) As in the case of all requests for the determination of refugee status or the granting of asylum, the applicant should be given a complete personal interview by a fully qualified official and, whenever possible, by an official of the authority competent to determine refugee status;
- (ii) The manifestly unfounded or abusive character of an application should be established by the authority normally competent to determine refugee status;

(iii) An unsuccessful applicant should be enabled to have a negative decision reviewed before rejection at the frontier or forcible removal from the territory. Where arrangements for such a review do not exist, Governments should give favourable consideration to their establishment. This review possibility can be more simplified than that available in the case of rejected applications which are not considered manifestly unfounded or abusive.

(f) Recognized that while measures to deal with manifestly unfounded or abusive applications may not resolve the wider problem of large numbers of applications for refugee status, both problems can be mitigated by overall arrangements for speeding up refugee status determination procedures, for example, by:

(i) Allocating sufficient personnel and resources to refugee status determination bodies so as to enable them to accomplish their task expeditiously, and

(ii) The introduction of measures that would reduce the time required for the completion of the appeals process.

(3) Rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea

The Executive Committee:

(a) Noted with concern that, according to available statistics as contained in document EC/SCP/30, significantly fewer numbers of asylum-seekers in distress at sea are being rescued;

(b) Welcomed the initiatives undertaken by UNHCR to meet this grave problem by promoting measures to facilitate the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea and expressed the hope that those initiatives would receive the widest possible support of Governments;

(c) Recommended that States seriously consider supporting the efforts of UNHCR to promote the Rescue at Sea Resettlement Offers (RASRO) scheme, as described in document EC/SCP/30, and providing the necessary quotas and other undertakings to enable UNHCR to initiate the scheme on a trial basis;

(d) Welcomed the support given by States to the DISERO (disembarkation resettlement offers) scheme;

(e) Commended the initiatives undertaken by UNHCR in co-operation with the International Maritime Organization aimed at identifying joint action for facilitating the rescue of asylum-seekers in distress at sea.

(4) Military attacks on refugee camps and settlements in southern Africa and elsewhere

The Executive Committee:

(a) Expressed profound concern at the continuation of military or armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements which was causing untold suffering to refugees, including women and children and elderly persons;

(b) Stressed the utmost importance and urgency of responding to this grave humanitarian problem;

(c) Took note of the report of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection, which includes a draft statement of principles on the Prohibition of Military and Armed Attacks on Refugee Camps and Settlements;

(d) Noted with regret that it had not been possible to reach a consensus on these principles in the time available;

(e) Requested the Chairman to continue his consultations in order to seek final agreement on these principles with the least possible delay.

V. REFUGEE AID AND DEVELOPMENT

(Item 7 of the agenda)

98. The discussion on this item was held coincident with that on durable solutions (item 8 of the agenda). One speaker remarked that the joint discussion of items 7 and 8 was appropriate as the issues were closely interrelated, although several other speakers commented that both topics were sufficiently important in themselves to merit individual attention under separate items.

99. The Executive Committee considered document A/AC.96/627 containing a consultant's paper on "Refugees in the Developing World: a Challenge to the International Community" and the report of the Meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development, as well as the High Commissioner's presentation of the question.

100. In introducing the document, the High Commissioner described the manner in which the meeting of experts had been organized and commented generally on certain of the conclusions. He suggested that, generally speaking, the suggestions went in the right direction. The experts had stressed the need to seek durable solutions to present refugee problems. They had also stressed the need to encourage the refugees' productivity and self-sufficiency from the early stages of a new refugee situation. In the High Commissioner's view the experts had made a number of valuable suggestions bearing on large-scale influxes of refugees in low-income areas.

101. The representatives who spoke expressed their appreciation to the High Commissioner, the consultant, the co-Chairmen and the experts for their contributions to this initial study of the topic. The importance of the subject was generally recognized, as was the need for further detailed examination.

102. One speaker stressed that present arrangements concerning the interrelationship between refugee aid programmes and development assistance activities were inadequate, particularly in low-income areas. He asked, however, whether the development component of durable solutions for refugees should fall within UNHCR's competence and, if so, whether UNHCR had the resources to finance them. He also suggested that the role of development agencies in the development of refugee-affected areas needed further investigation.

103. Another representative felt that there was a need to study the implications of poverty-oriented programmes as an element in the design of self-sufficiency projects to be undertaken where refugees are to be integrated into very poor communities. He felt that a new form of programming affecting both refugees and the surrounding population, which would be poverty-oriented, seemed to be required. He also suggested that the need for community-based planning in communities to which refugees are to be voluntarily repatriated could merit further study.

104. Most representatives who spoke stressed that UNHCR should not become a development agency even when promoting and supporting durable solutions for refugees through programmes with a development component. In such instances, UNHCR should serve as a catalyst and co-ordinator to the elaboration and the implementation of projects by intergovernmental or non-governmental agencies which have the required expertise.

105. Many representatives stressed the importance of close co-operation between UNHCR, Governments having bilateral aid programmes, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, particularly UNDP, especially when implementing durable solutions for refugees through programmes with developmental components. Two representatives stressed the importance of Governments ensuring effective co-ordination between those bodies within their own administrations with responsibility for refugee assistance and those dealing with development aid.

106. Several representatives felt that UNHCR should give particular attention to the promotion of voluntary repatriation, in a manner which would give to this solution its necessary priority.

107. One representative suggested that UNHCR projects should gradually be integrated into national development plans. In this connection, other representatives felt that the local population living in the area surrounding the site of a UNHCR-financed rural settlement project should receive assistance, similar to that for the refugees, possibly through complementary projects financed from other sources.

108. Many representatives agreed that the pilot project implemented by the World Bank in Pakistan, with the support of UNHCR, was a commendable initiative.

109. Several representatives raised the notion of additionality. The situation differed from Government to Government depending on internal arrangements for handling funds for humanitarian assistance and/or development aid. One representative suggested that UNHCR should undertake a study of this notion.

110. A number of representatives had some initial comments to make on aspects of the experts' conclusions. There was, however, general agreement that these conclusions and the subject in general required further study by the Executive Committee. In this connection, most representatives urged that the views of other relevant intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations be obtained, as well as those of the High Commissioner before such further discussion. Several representatives suggested that the co-Chairmen of the expert group should also be invited to the next meeting of the Executive Committee on the subject.

111. The observer from UNDP made a statement informing the Executive Committee about the consultations being carried on between UNHCR and UNDP on how to co-operate effectively and on the possibilities of support for UNHCR's programmes at the country level from UNDP's field offices. He emphasized that nothing in UNDP's mandate or procedures precludes it from participating in projects which are refugee related but of a developmental nature. He stressed, however, that UNDP's involvement requires the explicit endorsement of the Governments concerned. He further stressed the constraints on UNDP's resources and the need for additional funds for refugee oriented development projects.

Decisions of the Executive Committee

112. The Executive Committee:

(a) Expressed its appreciation to the High Commissioner for having organized the Meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development along the lines of a proposal

made at a previous session and to the co-Chairmen and experts for their contribution in connection with the study on the relationship between refugee aid and development;

(b) Noted the High Commissioner's presentation of the document and the statements made during the general debate and under this item of the agenda;

(c) Requested the High Commissioner:

(i) To obtain the views and comments of relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies on the report of the Meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development before the end of the year;

(ii) To give his own views and comments on the matter before the end of the year;

(iii) To undertake a study of issues and problems relating to the question of additionality before the Executive Committee is requested to commit itself on principles or courses of action;

(iv) To circulate the views and comments thus obtained to the States members of the Executive Committee with a view to assisting further consideration of the matter prior to the next informal meeting of the Executive Committee in early 1984;

(d) Agreed to revert to the matter with priority at its next informal meeting and decided to devote a full day to consideration of this project;

(e) Agreed that the two co-chairmen of the Meeting of Experts should be invited to attend the informal meeting.

VI. THE ROLE OF UNHCR IN PROMOTING DURABLE SOLUTIONS

(Item 8 of the agenda)

113. Introducing this item, the Director of Assistance referred to those parts of document A/AC.96/620 which deal with durable solutions. The Director welcomed the introduction of this item, which is at the very heart of the assistance activities of the Office, as a separate item of the agenda. He stressed the benefits derived by the refugee, the host country and the international community from the implementation of durable solutions. The Director mentioned as the two factors which had contributed to shaping UNHCR's programmes in the late 1970s the phenomenon of mass exoduses and the concept of temporary asylum. He then reviewed the various measures taken by UNHCR in promoting each of the three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

114. The Director of Assistance then referred to the efforts made since 1981 to give renewed emphasis to the search for durable solutions. He also referred to programmes to promote self-sufficiency which represent an intermediate formula. The Director also reviewed UNHCR's co-operation, in particular with other members of the United Nations system and voluntary agencies in implementing durable solutions. In this connection, he mentioned the often highly technical character of the planning required for local integration programmes benefiting refugees in developing countries.

115. Many representatives welcomed the inclusion of an item on durable solutions in the agenda. Several speakers supported a representative's proposal that this item become an annual one on the agenda of future Executive Committee sessions. It was suggested by one speaker that the High Commissioner should prepare a separate document on durable solutions for the next Executive Committee.

116. As in the general debate, representatives stressed the importance of a renewed emphasis on the search for, and implementation of, durable solutions. In this connection, some speakers welcomed the recent trend towards an increase in the percentage of the High Commissioner's programme funds allocated to durable solutions. Several representatives expressed the hope that this trend would continue. One delegation pointed out that the current world refugee situation is somewhat more stable than two or three years ago; the opportunity to move towards durable solutions must be grasped. Another delegation stressed that Governments must possess a strong political will and the determination to act if durable solutions are to be achieved.

117. One representative noted the cumulative nature of funding care and maintenance for increasing numbers of refugees during the past several years, with the result that fewer funds were available for durable solutions. An observer remarked that, in many cases, funds and resources expended for effective durable solutions were less costly, in the long run, than continued care and maintenance. The Fund for Durable Solutions was mentioned by another speaker as a useful model for means to promote durable solutions, particularly voluntary repatriation. Many representatives commented on the need to incorporate adequate planning for durable solutions from the beginning of any particular refugee situation. One speaker observed that a prerequisite for the realization of durable solutions was accurate information on the nature and dimensions of the problem.

118. A number of speakers stated that voluntary repatriation, where feasible, was generally the most effective and the preferable durable solution, particularly in cases of mass influxes of refugees. Local integration and resettlement were however recognized as appropriate durable solutions for many refugees. Many representatives confirmed the importance of the High Commissioner's function in promoting durable solutions and several speakers mentioned his role as a mediator or catalyst in facilitating voluntary repatriation. It was pointed out by two speakers, however, that while awaiting a durable solution, the High Commissioner had a duty to continue to provide appropriate assistance. One representative stressed however the non-political character of the High Commissioner's tasks while another called on member Governments of the Executive Committee to assist the High Commissioner in his role of humanitarian intermediary. Other speakers encouraged the High Commissioner to assist returnees if so requested by the Government of the country of origin.

119. A few representatives pointed out the need for Governments to work towards solution of the root causes of refugee outflows as a prerequisite for effective voluntary repatriation. One representative stressed that in refugee situations resulting from colonial or foreign occupation, voluntary repatriation of refugees is linked to an overall political solution. Another representative spoke of the need for a decree of amnesty to reassure refugees returning to their country of origin. Several representatives expressed their support for the continuation of the voluntary repatriation programme to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and urged the High Commissioner to make further efforts to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Kampuchean refugees. One representative reaffirmed the readiness of his Government to co-operate in the realization of proposals to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Kampuchean refugees which his Government had put forward at the meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in June 1982. The same representative also encouraged the High Commission to investigate possibilities for regional resettlement of refugees within East Asia.

120. It was proposed by one representative that there should be established within UNHCR a separate division or unit entrusted with the co-ordination of the pursuit and promotion of durable solutions. Some speakers supported this proposal, suggesting that this unit be set up within the Assistance Division.

121. The Chairman summed up the discussion and proposed the adoption by the Executive Committee of the following decisions.

Decisions of the Executive Committee

122. The Executive Committee:

(a) Noted with concern the decline during the previous decade of the percentage of the High Commissioner's programme geared towards durable solutions;

(b) Took note with satisfaction of efforts made by the High Commissioner to give renewed emphasis to the promotion of durable solutions to the problem of refugees, in particular through their voluntary repatriation but also through their integration into new communities and their resettlement;

(c) Noted that a growing proportion of annual programme funds for 1984 were earmarked for the promotion of such solutions and requested the High Commissioner to make every effort to continue to increase that proportion;

(d) Expressed its concern at decreasing resettlement rates and urged Governments to give practical effect to their commitment to durable solutions by establishing or renewing refugee resettlement programmes to meet the needs of refugees with no other durable solution immediately in prospect;

(e) Appealed to Governments to provide the necessary support to the High Commissioner in promoting durable solutions and in creating conditions conducive to the voluntary repatriation or integration or resettlement of refugees within new communities;

(f) Stressed the need for co-operation between the High Commissioner, other members of the United Nations system and relevant agencies, including non-governmental organizations in the promotion of durable solutions and encouraged the strengthening of such co-operation;

(g) Agreed that the promotion of durable solutions become part of the agenda of the Executive Committee's future sessions; requested the High Commissioner to consider ways in which the pursuit of durable solutions by his Office might best be co-ordinated and carried forward effectively and to report annually on this question.

VII. UNHCR ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

(Item 9 of the agenda)

123. Introducing the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 and proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1984 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1), the Director of Assistance reaffirmed UNHCR's efforts to promote the most appropriate durable solutions to help solve the problems of different groups of refugees.

124. The Director stressed the importance given by UNHCR to the search for durable solutions in Africa. He noted that 56 per cent of the total funds allocated under the 1984 General Programmes for Africa were devoted to the implementation of durable solutions. The Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa will, inter alia, also focus on the issue of durable solutions. The Director then briefly mentioned steps being taken in the Sudan, Somalia and various other African countries in support of rural settlements and income-generating activities in the countries of asylum, voluntary repatriation and assistance to returnees.

125. The Director reviewed the situation in northern Latin America where, despite a relatively stable situation as regards the number of refugees, concerted efforts have been made to improve the implementation of effective assistance measures. He noted the large care and maintenance programmes in Honduras and Mexico where, nevertheless, efforts are being made to promote self-sufficiency activities. He also referred to programmes in other parts of Latin America and, in particular, to the programme of assistance to Bolivian repatriates and the local integration of Indo-Chinese refugees in Argentina.

126. The Director referred to the Seminar on the Integration of Refugees in Europe recently organized by UNHCR, and the slight increase in allocations for General Programmes in Europe. He also mentioned the programme in Pakistan and stressed the close collaboration between the Government of Pakistan, the World Bank, ILO and UNHCR aimed at promoting employment and self-sufficiency. Finally, the Director reviewed the situation of Indo-Chinese refugees in South-East Asia and requested and support of Governments in order to find the most appropriate solution, including solutions within the region itself, for the different groups and individuals concerned.

127. As in the general debate, many representatives praised the High Commissioner for substantial improvements in the assistance documentation and periodic reports on developments in assistance. Several speakers expressed satisfaction with the annual report on assistance activities, both in terms of content and presentation, and welcomed overall improvements in project management. One representative, while noting the significant improvements, suggested that further qualitative changes could be made to include more analysis of the constraints and problems faced by UNHCR and UNHCR's views on the longer-term prospects for each country. He also recommended a strengthening of UNHCR's monitoring capabilities and requested more information on the results and impact of education scholarships. Another representative suggested that statistical data on refugee populations should be presented in tabular, rather than narrative, form. Several representatives welcomed the increased capability of the Specialist Support Unit and co-operation with other United Nations agencies as regards technical expertise. One speaker

suggested co-operating with donors in evaluation missions and a strengthening of UNHCR's field organization at the sub-office as well as the branch-office level, including appropriate delegation of authority.

128. A number of representatives and observers spoke during the discussion relating to programmes in Africa and informed the Committee of their Governments' efforts to assist refugees and the impact of refugees in their countries. As in the general debate, several speakers stressed the need for careful preparation of ICARA II. One representative praised the co-operation between UNHCR and the International Labour Organisation and supported the increasing emphasis on self-sufficiency and durable solutions. He also stressed the need for more resources to assist refugees in Africa.

129. The representative of Algeria welcomed continued UNHCR assistance for Sahrawi refugees in Algeria. He presented the Committee with a brief history of the co-operation between UNHCR and the Government of Algeria in relation to assistance activities in favour of refugees given asylum in Algeria, and enumerated the many UNHCR missions to Algeria in this context, the majority of which had visited the refugee camps and settlements. He renewed the commitment of his country to the promotion of durable solutions, in particular voluntary repatriation, which constitutes the preferable solution when all conditions permit. This solution could, however, only be envisaged once the root causes of a refugee situation had been eliminated. Pending such a solution, UNHCR had a duty, under its humanitarian mandate, to continue to provide assistance to the refugees concerned. The representative of Algeria also recalled that the obstacles to voluntary repatriation in the case of Sahrawi refugees were certainly not created by the Algerian authorities and reaffirmed the wish of his country to continue to co-operate with UNHCR to improve the situation of these refugees. The representative of Morocco referred to previous decisions of the Executive Committee calling for the promotion of durable solutions and questioned the need for continued increases in assistance to the people of Tindouf. In this respect, he stated that his delegation had never opposed the provision of assistance for humanitarian considerations and to the extent that such assistance has been closely linked to the pursuit and promotion of durable solutions. He also questioned why, after eight years of assistance, there was no durable solution in sight. He expressed concern over the lack of UNHCR monitoring and control of assistance in relation to this particular programme. He reiterated his Government's willingness to receive the persons whose Sahrawi origin would have been proven and who wished to return, through a programme of voluntary repatriation co-ordinated by UNHCR, with a full guarantee of safety for all returnees. He said that no Government was authorized to speak in the name of the persons concerned who alone were entitled to say to the representatives of UNHCR, in full independence and freedom, that they wanted to return to their homes. Another speaker noted with satisfaction that Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf region were benefiting from closer attention and increased assistance from UNHCR. The High Commissioner made the following statement:

"I want to bring to your attention that I have received an invitation from the Government of Algeria to send a technical mission to Algeria. It is my intention to send this mission in the near future and to take this opportunity to discuss with the Algerian authorities the modalities for the establishment of a permanent UNHCR presence. This mission will also discuss with the Algerian authorities the possibilities of promoting durable solutions

in accordance with the Statute and normal procedures of UNHCR. I shall of course give the Executive Committee a report at the first opportunity."

130. During the discussion on the Ethiopia chapter, one representative asked for confirmation on the number of beneficiaries in Ethiopia. Referring to paragraph 174 of the report on assistance (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1), the representative of Nigeria noted that employment restrictions in the public sector have been lifted for foreigners living legally in Nigeria and that restrictions did not apply to the private sector. In reference to paragraph 175, he pointed out that although jobs are not frequently available to foreigners, there is no absolute prohibition. When discussing the Senegal chapter, the observer of Senegal requested clarification of the meaning of one sentence in paragraph 213, particularly of the reference made to multipurpose assistance projects which UNHCR claimed to have had disappointing results. He drew attention to the efforts made by his country on behalf of refugees, and suggested that any failure to produce the desired results was because of the insufficiency of the means provided. The representative of the Sudan commented on the serious economic and ecological pressures on the Sudan as a result of the refugee influx and requested UNHCR to improve procurement procedures and mechanisms for the quick release of funds. The representative of Uganda requested that UNHCR continued to assist refugees and returnees in Uganda. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania informed the Committee of possible delays in handing over the Mishamo settlement and the need for further discussions regarding spontaneously settled refugees in the Kigoma region. Following completion of the discussion on Africa programmes, the Director of Assistance and the Head of the Regional Bureau for Africa provided the required clarifications and the individual chapters were approved.

131. One representative expressed concern about protection in Central America and suggested that UNHCR consider strengthening its presence. The observers from Honduras and Nicaragua thanked the High Commissioner for the assistance provided. The representative from Venezuela proposed that the title of the chapter "North America" be changed to read "United States of America and Canada" because section II of document A/AC.96/620 entitled "Americas and Europe" contained a chapter entitled "Mexico".

132. During the discussion of the section on Europe, the representative of Austria described the situation of refugees in his country and thanked the High Commissioner for his efforts. He outlined the need for resettlement of some refugees seeking asylum in Austria, and the problems attendant to local integration, including the financial burden borne by his Government. He also announced, subject to the final approval of his Government, a 10 per cent increase in the 1984 General Programmes contribution to UNHCR.

133. The Head of the Regional Bureau for the Americas and Europe took note of the various comments concerning his area of responsibility and emphasized the Office's efforts to ensure adequate protection for refugees in Central America. He also thanked the representatives of Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela for their kind and constructive interventions.

134. During discussion on programmes in East and South Asia and Oceania, the representative of the United Kingdom described the extremely difficult situation of refugees in Hong Kong which now accommodated the greater part of the "boat people" in the region. She referred to the already dense population of the area and the need for strict immigration control. She recounted the exemplary record of the

Hong Kong authorities as regards refugees, including local integration and a continuing policy of granting temporary asylum. She noted the lower rate for arrivals of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, but stressed her concern over the even greater reduction in resettlement. She thanked the countries traditionally accepting refugees for resettlement from Hong Kong for their generosity and urged all countries to continue their programmes of resettlement, in particular for those refugees who had been in Hong Kong for over two years. The representative from Thailand thanked UNHCR, the donors and non-governmental agencies for their continued assistance on behalf of Indo-Chinese refugees in Thailand. She also stressed the need to promote and implement durable solutions for these refugees through voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

135. In the course of the debate relating to the Middle East and South-West Asia region, the observer from Cyprus commended the High Commissioner's programmes and informed the Committee of his Government's efforts to assist refugees and displaced persons in his country and its support for UNHCR's programmes in other regions of the world, in particular, Africa. He also referred to the inclusion of a sentence in paragraph 1031 of the report (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1) relating to discussion on phasing out UNHCR's co-ordinating role, and requested that this sentence should be deleted. The Director of Assistance agreed to the deletion. The representative of Turkey referred to the introductory sentence of paragraph 1031 indicating that the humanitarian assistance given to Cyprus was extended to residents of local communities who were "displaced" rather than to refugees, and noted that the two communities referred to therein were the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot communities.

136. During the discussion relating to the programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Director of Assistance referred to paragraph 1045 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1), and submitted a budget adjustment to the revised allocation for local integration in 1983 whereby the total would be revised to \$2.5 million, due to implementation delays. He noted that there were no changes in the proposal for 1984. The representative from the Islamic Republic of Iran accepted this revision. He also expressed concern over the wording of paragraph 1043 relating to the integration of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He noted that his country did not intend to integrate Afghan refugees locally as they wished to repatriate to their country of origin when the situation was conducive to their return. The Director of Assistance took note of this comment. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran also reiterated his Government's request for assistance to 100,000 Iraqi refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The observer from Iraq made an intervention to the effect that the so-called Iraqi refugees were actually Iranian nationals. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran responded to the effect that the Government of a country of origin of refugees had no role in determining the status or number of refugees in the country of asylum.

137. The representative of Lebanon thanked the High Commissioner for his programme in Lebanon, in particular the recent allocation from the Emergency Fund for assistance to people affected by the recent events in Lebanon.

138. The Director of Assistance presented a revision in paragraph 1075 of the report (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1) relating to multipurpose assistance in Pakistan whereby the 1983 allocation was revised to \$64,854,000, based on recent developments and changes in the exchange rate. He also mentioned that the needs for 1984 would be re-examined by a mission in the near future. The observer of Pakistan expressed his Government's willingness to discuss the 1984 programme with

the proposed mission. He briefly described the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and his Government's support for the shift towards self-sufficiency. He also supported UNHCR's initiative in developing a joint programme with the World Bank. He cited the need for a balance between the relief and self-sufficiency components and expressed his concern that recent cuts in some sectors may cause hardship for the refugees. He requested that the High Commissioner consider purchasing wheat and sugar directly from Government stocks in Pakistan, thereby avoiding logistic problems and saving international and local transport costs. The observer of Afghanistan asserted that the number of refugees said to be in Pakistan by the Government of that country had been greatly exaggerated so as to increase the flow of international aid. He claimed that the majority of those involved were members of the local population or traditional nomads who had, throughout history, crossed borders seasonally, as well as migrant workers. Many of those involved, he further suggested, had already returned home to Afghanistan but nonetheless continued to be registered as refugees in Pakistan. He confirmed his Government's statement of amnesty for Afghans outside Afghanistan and gave assurances of security and freedom for those who wished to return. The observer of Afghanistan further pointed to the need to consider refugee problems from a purely humanitarian point of view. The observer of Pakistan responded that all refugee camps in Pakistan were accessible to the United Nations and non-governmental organizations based in Pakistan, and that the actual refugee population could easily be confirmed. The representative of Lebanon requested the Director of Assistance to provide the figure for the percentage of UNHCR funds earmarked for self-sufficiency from the total multipurpose assistance allocation for Pakistan.

139. The overall allocations presented in paragraphs 1132 to 1142 of the report (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1) were approved by the Committee.

140. Three representatives spoke to stress their Government's support for freedom of access for UNHCR staff to all project sites. One delegate suggested that the High Commissioner report to the Executive Committee on any instances where UNHCR was refused access to project sites.

141. Two representatives requested that the High Commissioner seek ways of improving the quality of the report on assistance through a revised format, without a corresponding increase in the volume of the report.

142. The Director of Assistance introduced the report on resettlement of refugees (A/AC.96/624). He noted that resettlement reflected both international co-operation and burden-sharing, but that as a durable solution it should be sought primarily where voluntary repatriation and local integration were not feasible. Of increasing concern was the tendency of resettlement countries to limit their programmes to refugees having family or other links, and a more generous response was needed. Similarly, special procedures should be considered to meet the needs of refugees whose immediate security depended upon resettlement. He was gratified to note that considerable progress had been made in the resettlement of disabled refugees; more places were needed, however, and he asked that consideration be given to developing the "10 or more" plan into a plan for "20 or more". Among the areas of particular concern, the Director of Assistance singled out the situation in South-East Asia, where the number of Vietnamese refugees in camps had not changed for two years, despite the considerable drop in arrivals. While the Orderly Departure Programme was working well, UNHCR remained concerned about the plight of several thousand Kampuchean refugees in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. He recalled that the fate of many refugees and asylum-seekers in distress at

sea depended upon the availability of resettlement places which facilitated their disembarkation; schemes to serve the common interest in assisting such refugees would be kept under review. Finally, the Director of Assistance looked forward to future co-operation in the field of resettlement, particularly through the promotion of seminars and by support of the work of the International Refugee Integration Resource Centre.

143. One speaker, in responding to the statement of the Director of Assistance, observed that some major countries of resettlement had set their intake quotas at relatively high levels and had begun to plan globally. He commented on the use of resettlement as a helpful protection tool. He called on UNHCR to take a more active role in assisting Governments by means of the assessment of relative needs for resettlement among various refugee groups as well as by the co-ordination of international resettlement efforts.

Decisions of the Committee

144. The Executive Committee:

A

- (a) Took note of the progress made by the High Commissioner in the implementation of his General and Special Programmes in 1982 and the first months of 1983 as stated in the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 and proposed voluntary funds programme and budget for 1984 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1);
- (b) Took note of the allocations made by the High Commissioner from his Emergency Fund during the period 1 July 1982 to 30 June 1983;
- (c) Took note of the observations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions submitted in document A/AC.96/621;
- (d) Reviewed schedule A of document A/AC.96/620 and approved the following:
 - (i) The proposals for "new and revised" allocations under the 1983 General Programmes for both operations and programme support and administration as summarized in table III, column 12, of document A/AC.96/620, amending the revised allocation for programmes in the Islamic Republic of Iran to read \$3,585,000, and the one for programmes in Pakistan to read \$66,200,800;
 - (ii) A revised financial target of \$322,975,000 (not including the \$10 million Emergency Fund) for 1983 General Programmes;
 - (iii) The proposals set out in paragraphs (c) to (e) of Schedule A of the introduction to document A/AC.96/620;
- (e) Noted with appreciation that the Report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 and proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1984 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1) provided the comprehensive information requested by the Executive Committee at its thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and encouraged the High Commissioner to pursue his efforts to improve the quality of documentation on assistance activities;
- (f) Commended the High Commissioner for the periodic reports on developments in assistance provided to members of the Executive Committee twice a year;

(g) Took note with appreciation of the report on UNHCR project evaluation (EC/SC.2/12) and recommended that appropriate measures should be taken to strengthen further project self-evaluations and mid-project reviews;

(h) Commended efforts made by the High Commissioner to improve planning and procedures for procurement and to strengthen the Specialist Support Unit;

(i) Welcomed steps taken by the High Commissioner to strengthen the management of projects by implementing agencies, and encouraged the development of guidelines and the organization of training in order to assist such agencies.

B

(a) Took note with satisfaction of the progress made in reorienting many major assistance activities from emergency or relief programmes to the promotion of self-reliance and durable solutions, and commended the High Commissioner for the progress made in the promotion of voluntary repatriation and local integration;

(b) Welcomed the High Commissioner's co-operation with other members of the United Nations system and noted with appreciation the continued co-operation with the World Food Programme in providing relief assistance and with the World Bank and the International Labour Organisation in promoting self-sufficiency and income-generating or employment opportunities;

(c) Noted increased assistance needs in Africa, welcomed the efforts made by UNHCR in the preparations for the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and invited the Office to pursue these efforts in collaboration with other organizations concerned so as to ensure the full success of this Conference;

(d) Commended the efforts of the High Commissioner, in co-operation with the Governments concerned, to launch a programme for the voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from Djibouti;

(e) Welcomed the initiatives of the Government of Somalia and the High Commissioner in the implementation of rural settlement schemes for refugees in Somalia;

(f) Expressed concern regarding the situation of refugees in Central America and appealed to Governments in the region to provide the necessary support to the High Commissioner in implementing self-sufficiency projects and durable solutions;

(g) Took note of the increased assistance requirements in Europe and welcomed the High Commissioner's initiative in convening a seminar on the integration of refugees in Europe;

(h) Noted and encouraged the continued efforts of the Government of Pakistan and the High Commissioner in promoting employment and self-sufficiency activities for Afghan refugees in Pakistan;

(i) Drew attention to the ongoing refugee problems in South-East Asia, the difficulties these entail for the affected countries in the region and the need for renewed efforts to promote durable solutions to these problems.

(a) Took note of the report on the resettlement of refugees (A/AC.96/624) and of the resettlement activities undertaken by the High Commissioner in co-operation with Governments and the intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies concerned;

(b) Reiterated, in accordance with the principle of international burden-sharing, the importance of Governments continuing to admit refugees who, in the absence of any other durable solution, are in need of resettlement and, in particular, to accept refugees who may have no family or other links with any resettlement country, and to provide resettlement places for those in need in the absence of any other more appropriate durable solution;

(c) Requested the High Commissioner to co-ordinate and facilitate the planning of resettlement programmes by Governments through the regular provision of updated assessments of resettlement needs and priorities;

(d) Requested Governments to adopt special procedures to facilitate the rapid resettlement of individual refugees who need resettlement to ensure their immediate security;

(e) Urged Governments to give consideration to developing the "10 or more Plan" for the resettlement of disabled refugees into a plan for "20 or more";

(f) Noted with concern that the number of Indo-Chinese refugees in camps in South-East Asia who are awaiting resettlement has not decreased over a period of two years in spite of a significant reduction in arrivals, and called upon the High Commissioner to strengthen his efforts to promote durable solutions in the region, particularly, where feasible, voluntary repatriation;

(g) Welcomed continuing co-operation between Governments concerned and UNHCR, which has facilitated the operation of the Orderly Departure Programme from the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam;

(h) Commended the High Commissioner for his efforts to secure the disembarkation and resettlement of refugees rescued at sea, called on Governments of both coastal States and flag States to facilitate disembarkation, and appealed to the latter to give guarantees for the resettlement of refugees rescued at sea by ships flying their flags;

(i) Welcomed the activities of the High Commissioner in promoting the resettlement and integration of refugees, in particular, by organizing workshops and seminars and by his support of the International Refugee Integration Resource Centre.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

(Item 10 of the agenda)

145. In his presentation of the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628), the Chairman stated that a variety of issues were discussed at length by the Sub-Committee. Particular attention had been paid to the proposals for strengthening UNHCR's management policy submitted by members of the Executive Committee (EC/SC.2/15) and UNHCR's response to them (EC/SC.2/13 and 15/Add.1). Attention had also been given to such personnel issues as the geographical composition of UNHCR's staff, recruitment policies, career development, promotion, staff rotation and training. The Sub-Committee had also considered the management, programme support and administration sections of document A/AC.96/620 and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/AC.96/621). In this respect, the High Commissioner's efforts to meet new needs through the redeployment of posts were appreciated and satisfaction had been expressed at the proposed net zero growth in the staffing level proposed for 1984. The Sub-Committee had also taken note of the implementation of the first phase of the reapportionment of UNHCR's administrative costs between the United Nations regular programme budget and UNHCR's voluntary funds and of the fact that that would be subject to the approval of the General Assembly. UNHCR's efforts to improve programme delivery and project evaluation had also been noted. Finally, the report of the United Nations Board of External Auditors on the accounts for the year 1982 (A/AC.96/618) and the report of the Advisory Committee thereon (A/AC.96/618/Add.1) were considered. In concluding his presentation, the Chairman stressed that the Sub-Committee had again demonstrated its usefulness.

146. In introducing item 10 of the agenda, the Director of Administration and Management addressed the Executive Committee on the management policy required of UNHCR, which has three fundamental aspects.

(a) Firstly, the highest degree of efficiency and effectiveness must be brought to the functioning of the Office. In a climate of fiscal restraint, UNHCR must be in a position to utilize scarce resources with optimum effect. While the demands of refugee situations continue unabated, the Office has managed to redeploy significant resources to meet additional needs, thus maintaining a net zero growth in staff. Working effectively with limited resources necessitated, however, a refinement and development of UNHCR's managerial methods to make them less bureaucratic, straightforward and action-oriented. A number of steps in this direction have already been taken.

(b) The second characteristic required of the Office's management policy is clarity and transparency. Clarity vis-à-vis Governments, donor countries and asylum countries could be achieved through improvements in the flow of information. The need for clarity is also vital within UNHCR itself which must ensure that internal procedures are understood and appreciated by all staff both at headquarters and in the field.

(c) The third aspect of dynamic management is good staff performance and morale. To function effectively with limited resources, UNHCR must expect from its staff an increasing degree of efficiency and productivity. This can be achieved through such measures as the establishment of an institutional framework for a dialogue between staff and management, more realistic performance evaluation and expanded staff training.

147. Throughout the ensuing discussions, many speakers expressed their appreciation of the work of the Sub-Committee and approval of its report. A number of speakers also expressed satisfaction with UNHCR's serious efforts to strengthen the management of the Office and with the High Commissioner's response to the Executive Committee's proposals for strengthening the management policy of UNHCR. It was noted that progress had already been made in a number of areas. Most speakers urged, however, that these efforts needed to be continued, particularly with regard to improved staffing policy and effective programme delivery and that proper follow-up procedures should be established. Some speakers noted, however, that additional steps were called for to implement a fair and sound policy of rotation between headquarters and duty stations in the field, which would also include staff at the highest level. Other speakers reiterated a call for greater efforts in bringing about an equitable geographical distribution of staff at all levels, bearing in mind such criteria as membership of the Executive Committee or involvement in refugee problems. One speaker, however, stressed that merit should remain the paramount recruitment criterion; he emphasized his view, which was supported by certain other speakers, that service in the field should be a prerequisite for all promotions in the Professional category and above.

148. Several speakers specifically noted that an efficient and effective system of rotation is fundamental to a field service organization like UNHCR. They requested that the practice of rotation encompass all D-level positions as well. A number of speakers also affirmed the need for a linkage between field service and all promotions, not only accelerated promotions.

149. Another speaker reiterated his request that a list be submitted to the Executive Committee showing the Professional staff serving at headquarters, their date of arrival and their previous field experience. He also expressed the view that the list of posts not subject to rotation should be reviewed and reduced. Furthermore, he expressed doubts regarding the Trainees Scheme as described in paragraph 1154 of the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 and proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1984 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr. 1), as it could duplicate the existing Junior Professional Officers' (JPO) scheme while also reducing chances of long-term employment by UNHCR of JPOs both from developing countries and from sponsoring countries. A report should be submitted to the Executive Committee evaluating the Trainees Scheme. As for the Reassignment Scheme, described in paragraph 1155 of the report, he wondered whether such unforeseen needs could not best be met through missions from headquarters. Finally, he hoped that the Revolving Fund for Field Staff Housing and Basic Amenities would assist in staff rotation.

150. Three speakers indicated their support for maintaining the post of the Regional Co-ordinator for South-East Asia, in view of the particular importance of this position in the search for durable solutions in the area. They requested from the secretariat an indication as to what would happen to the D-2 position involved if the post were abolished.

151. With respect to effective programme delivery, several speakers stressed the importance of access to refugee camps, settlements and project locations.

152. A number of speakers expressed their satisfaction with the level and quality of the flow of budgetary information in its present form. In this context, one speaker expressed some concern about the volume and format of the main budget

document and proposed that an informal working group, composed of members of the Executive Committee and UNHCR, be set up to study ways and means of improving its presentation.

153. Several speakers stressed the need for UNHCR to persist with its efforts to give effect to the proposals of the Executive Committee on strengthening UNHCR's management policy. They said that the Committee should keep the matter under constant review and suggested that UNHCR should submit follow-up reports to the regular and informal meetings of the Executive Committee on these suggestions. One delegation proposed for adoption by the Executive Committee a draft decision on the matter. Several delegations supported the draft.

Decisions of the Executive Committee

154. The Executive Committee:

A

(a) Took note with appreciation of the Report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628).

B

(a) Took note of the accounts for the year 1982 and the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors thereon (A/AC.96/618);

(b) Noted the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in respect of the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors on the audit of the accounts of the voluntary funds administered by UNHCR for the year 1982 (A/AC.96/618/Add.1);

(c) Noted further the relevant sections of the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/AC.96/628) and current efforts to improve financial planning and control.

C

(a) Recalled the proposals of the Executive Committee for strengthening UNHCR's management policy (EC/SC.2/15);

(b) Noted the relevant sections of the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628);

(c) Acknowledged with appreciation the note on the strengthening of UNHCR's management policy (EC/SC.2/15/Add.1) and the High Commissioner's efforts to strengthen the management of his Office;

(d) Requested the High Commissioner to persist in his efforts designed to give full effect to the proposals of the Executive Committee;

(e) Decided to keep the matter under constant review and requested the High Commissioner to report at informal sessions and to report in writing at formal sessions of the Executive Committee on the proposals contained in document EC/SC.2/15.

D

(a) Urged that these efforts to improve the management of the Office should be continued, particularly as they relate to the devolution of authority, staffing policy and effective programme delivery and that UNHCR should submit periodic reports on this question to the Executive Committee;

(b) Encouraged the High Commissioner to proceed with the job classification of all UNHCR posts and the corresponding job descriptions at the earliest opportunity;

(c) Stressed that the recruitment of UNHCR's staff should continue to be governed by the need to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and a commitment to the cause of refugees, paying due regard also to the need to secure balanced geographical representation.

E

(a) Took note of the programme support and administration sections of the report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1982-1983 and proposed voluntary funds programme and budget for 1984 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1);

(b) Noted the relevant sections of the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628);

(c) Noted further the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/AC.96/621) and the comments contained therein;

(i) Commended the High Commissioner for the proposed net zero growth in the established staffing level of his Office in 1984, and stressed the importance of continuing efforts to meet additional needs through the redeployment of posts;

(ii) Expressed its appreciation for the level and quality of the documentation on administrative issues provided to members of the Executive Committee and urged that the constructive dialogue between the High Commissioner and members of the Executive Committee on these questions should be maintained, both informally and through the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters;

(iii) Noted that the proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1984 (A/AC.96/620 and Corr.1) reflect a proportion of the reapportionment of UNHCR's administrative costs between the United Nations Regular Programme Budget and Voluntary Funds which are subject to the approval of the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

F

(a) Took note of the note on the use of the revolving fund for field staff housing and basic amenities (EC/SC.2/14);

(b) Noted also the relevant sections of the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628);

- (i) Expressed its satisfaction at the efforts being made to improve the conditions of field service and urged that these should be continued,
- (ii) Requested the High Commissioner to keep the Executive Committee informed of these matters.

IX. STATUS OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND OVERALL FINANCIAL
REQUIREMENTS FOR 1983 AND 1984

(Item 11 of the agenda)

155. The Director of External Affairs introduced the item by referring to the report of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (A/AC.96/628).

156. The present programme funding situation was that, taking into account new pledges announced and indications received of further contributions, the 1983 General Programmes would be fully funded. Several Special Programmes, however, such as assistance to Returnees to Ethiopia, Organized Repatriation from Djibouti and the programme of Orderly Departures from Viet Nam needed further funding in the near future.

157. The Director expressed UNHCR's appreciation of the generous financial support given by donors. He highlighted two important developments which affect UNHCR programme funding. First, the annual level of voluntary fund expenditure required of UNHCR seems to have stabilized at the level of \$US 400 million. The room for reductions had narrowed considerably. Second, improved levels of programme expenditure meant that contributions pledged should be paid as soon as possible to avoid disruption in programme financing.

158. The Director, referring to the 1984 General Programmes requirement of \$US 368.5 million, indicated that, in order to maintain the improved programme performance achieved in 1983, UNHCR would need \$US 150 million for General Programmes in the first quarter of 1984. In overall terms, a higher level of contributions would be required in 1984. He appealed to all member States to contribute to UNHCR, either at the Pledging Conference in New York in November 1983 or as additional contributions in 1983 or 1984.

159. One representative expressed his Government's appreciation of UNHCR's success in reducing and stabilizing its programme expenditure. He commended also the improved balance between General and Special Programmes. Transfer of certain Special Programmes into the General Programmes made for better programme control. His delegation welcomed the improved levels of obligation by UNHCR and fully supported UNHCR's principle of providing adequate assistance to refugees in the most cost-effective manner possible. He mentioned the additional contribution of \$Can 10 million to 1983 General Programmes announced recently by the Government of Canada.

Decisions of the Executive Committee

160. The Executive Committee:

(a) Took note of the report submitted by the High Commissioner on the Status of Contributions to UNHCR Voluntary Funds and the overall financial requirements for 1983 and 1984 (A/AC.96/622);

(b) Expressed appreciation of the generosity of all Governments and non-governmental organizations which had responded to the financial requirements of the High Commissioner's Programme and affirmed the hope that the additional funds

required would be made available to ensure the full financing of the 1983 programmes;

(c) Reaffirmed the universal character of the refugee problem in the world and the need for more equitable and widespread financial support within the international community for the programmes undertaken by the High Commissioner;

(d) Recognized also that the effective implementation of the 1984 General Programmes required that a substantial proportion of the total funds required which amount to \$368,460,000 should be available to the High Commissioner at the beginning of the programme year in January 1984 and, to that end, urged Governments to announce contributions indispensable for the implementation of the UNHCR General Programmes for 1984 either at the Pledging Conference to be held in New York in November 1983, or as additional contributions in 1983 and 1984;

(e) Urged Governments and others to make, to the maximum extent possible, early contributions and payments to the 1984 General Programmes to enable the High Commissioner to implement those programmes as approved by the Executive Committee;

(f) Requested and encouraged the High Commissioner to pursue all appropriate means such as appeals and the negotiation of contributions to obtain the necessary resources to ensure full financing of the 1984 programmes.

X. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Item 12 of the agenda)

161. One delegate made suggestions as to possible changes for the draft agenda. There was not time to discuss them. The following draft provisional agenda was noted by the Executive Committee for its thirty-fifth session.

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. General debate.
5. International protection.
6. The role of UNHCR in promoting durable solutions.
7. UNHCR assistance activities.
8. Administrative and financial matters.
9. Status of contributions and overall financial requirements for 1984 and 1985.
10. Action taken on decisions of the Executive Committee.
11. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the thirty-sixth session of the Executive Committee.
12. Any other business.
13. Adoption of the draft report of the thirty-fifth session.

XI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(Item 13 of the agenda)

162. The representative of the Sudan presented a draft supported by a number of delegations relating to the inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as official and working languages of the Executive Committee. He indicated that, in his view, the estimate presented by the Secretariat entailed modest costs which could in any case be covered by the United Nations regular budget depending, of course, on a favourable decision by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. The adoption of these languages as official and working languages would permit officials of countries which used Arabic, Chinese and Spanish to familiarize themselves with and take a more active part in the work of UNHCR. He emphasized that the problems raised by the Secretariat were well understood by his delegation and that, if unavoidable, he would not mind a reasonable delay in submitting documents in these languages until the services for the newly-introduced languages are fully established, although he felt that the six week rule for submission and distribution of documents should be abided by. This should not, however, prevent the Committee from adopting the proposal in question. He also felt that the information provided by the Secretariat was sufficient to allow the Committee to take a decision.

163. Several delegations supported the proposal, stating that the costs involved in the inclusion of the additional languages would be offset by considerable benefits for the humanitarian work of UNHCR as it would become more widely accessible to a larger circle of countries. In addition, certain Governments were obliged to translate the documents themselves with all the difficulties and delays this implied.

164. Several other speakers said that while they understood the desire of countries to have UNHCR documents in their languages, they nevertheless strongly felt that there was a need to study further all the implications of such a decision. One representative stated concerns regarding the potential for further delays in producing Executive Committee documents and that any decision which would entail an additional charge on the United Nations regular budget would not be acceptable to his Government. Speakers asked for further elucidation of implications, both logistic and budgetary, incumbent on UNHCR itself and not only on the services of the United Nations and their regular budgets.

165. The Director of External Affairs, in replying to the statements made by delegations, explained that document A/AC.96/625 was intended only to provide information on the effect that the translation of official documents, amounting to 1,000 pages, in the three languages under discussion would have on the regular budget of the United Nations. The estimate had been given by the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG). Statements by the High Commissioner, UNHCR periodic letters to members under the agreed flow of information arrangements and other texts had not been taken into account. As final responsibility for documents is assumed by UNHCR, the Office has English and French editors/translators on its secretariat staff. If additional working languages were to be approved, staff fluent in Arabic, Chinese and Spanish would have to be recruited and appropriate equipment purchased.

166. The Director was also preoccupied by the question of timeliness. At present, the cut-off date for reporting on UNHCR assistance activities is 30 June of the current year. If additional languages were to be added and documentation still available for the Executive Committee's October session, the reporting date would have to be advanced to March or April as UNOG printing facilities did not seem to be equipped for simultaneous printing of large documents. The Director wishes to place these thoughts before the Committee in order for it to have as full and objective a picture as possible, in anticipation of a further in-depth study.

167. In his summing up of the debate, the Chairman noted the statements made by various members and observers as well as the presentation by the Director of External Affairs. He acknowledged that there was clearly no consensus on this question. He therefore proposed that the draft submitted by Sudan, and endorsed by a number of other countries should be attached to the report of the session and that the secretariat of UNHCR should study the question further. A comprehensive report should be submitted to the Committee at a later date.

Decisions of the Executive Committee

168. The Executive Committee:

(a) Took note of the draft submitted by the Government of the Sudan and endorsed by a number of other countries on the inclusions of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as official and working languages of the Executive Committee;

(b) Requested the High Commissioner to undertake a comprehensive study of the full financial and practical implications, and to report thereon to the Executive Committee.

Notes

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545, p. 137.

2/ Ibid., vol. 606, No. 8791, p. 267.

ANNEX I

Draft decisions on the inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish
as working and official languages of the Executive Committee

Proposed by the Government of the Sudan and supported by the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, China, Colombia, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Madagascar, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Somalia, Spain, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Venezuela

The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, meeting at its thirty-fourth session,

A

Recalling General Assembly resolution 35/219, in which it was decided to include Arabic among the official and working languages of the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly no later than 1 January 1983,

Noting the High Commissioner's note on the inclusion of Arabic, Chinese and Spanish as working languages of the Executive Committee,

Decides to include Arabic, Chinese and Spanish among the official and working languages of the Executive Committee and requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to provide the necessary financial allocation for this purpose from the United Nations regular programme budget.

B

The Executive Committee,

Adopts the following amendment to the rules of procedure for the Executive Committee:

Replace rule 28 by the following text:

"Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish shall be both official and working languages of the Executive Committee."

Opening statement made by the United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees to the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme at its thirty-fourth session on 10 October 1983

1. Mr. Chairman, first of all, may I congratulate you warmly on your election. I am looking forward to co-operating with you this year and I have no doubt that, under your guidance, we shall have a constructive and inspiring session. While expressing my deep thanks to the outgoing Chairman for all his help and good advice throughout the year, and to his colleagues in the Bureau, let me extend my congratulations and welcome to the new Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur.
2. Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, as you know we are giving the Executive Committee considerably more information than in the past: following the wishes and pertinent decisions of the Executive Committee, the Programme document, which we usually call the "book", is more thorough in its presentation of facts and figures; documents on progress in various fields are regularly sent to Executive Committee members in the framework of the flow of information arrangements; and informal sessions or other meetings are held during the year as required. Therefore, I no longer feel that my introductory statement should serve to report on various refugee situations in the world, but rather as a basis for reflecting together on some major issues confronting this Office in its humanitarian task. The few specific refugee situations, to which I shall refer, should only illustrate the broader concerns I shall now try to share with you.
3. When we look at the "book", we find a report on the previous year, an explanation of the state of affairs in the current year, and our plans for the next year. In other words, while reporting on the past, we look more or less just over a year ahead. This is probably a reasonable time-span for establishing realistic and sufficiently detailed programmes and targets for each country, given the fluidity and sometimes rapid or drastic evolution of refugee situations. However, even though we have this annual cycle, we are trying increasingly to develop a longer-term view, especially in so far as we have to steer our minds and our action toward durable solutions whenever this is possible. Sometimes, these can only be achieved over a matter of several years. Much has been said - and I hope, done - about improving our capacity for programme delivery and monitoring. We now feel the need, more than ever, to develop our long-term planning from a solution-oriented perspective. Of course we have already been doing this, both for new problems or for problems which linger on year after year. This is in our mandate. But can we do more and better?
4. While never giving up hope that one day - however remote - the refugee problem will subside, we should, in the face of realities and past evolution, look at the problem as a long-term one. Refugees have been with us in considerable numbers for decades. Why not admit that the refugee problem will be with us for a long time to come? Solutions have indeed been found and implemented, sometimes for very large numbers, year after year. But new refugees and new problems have constantly emerged. As a consequence, though the list of solutions is long, the overall balance in terms of numbers reflects unfavourably on mankind: there were some 1.5 million refugees in 1951 when UNHCR started its activities; there are some 10 million today. Numbers are not all. In a way, however, the magnitude of the refugee problem is an indicator of the state of the world. True, there have been,

these last two years, fewer refugee generating crises than in the years before. Yet, even if, in the future, there were no new refugee influx anywhere, it would take the world a long time to absorb the backlog it has created. Very often, a situation of initially modest scope gains momentum and turns into a lasting problem; solutions, when they are possible, are often only partial. Therefore, we have good reasons to look into the future of our activities.

5. All those concerned with refugee work, including of course UNHCR, Governments and non-governmental organizations, must develop not only the will but also the capacity to achieve durable solutions. We all know there are obstacles on the road to a durable solution. Some cannot be overcome and some can. Let us review them briefly and recall how UNHCR may help. Obstacles may stand in the way of all three solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Sometimes, one or the other of these options is left open, sometimes the horizon for solutions is obstructed whichever way one turns.

6. Impediments to voluntary repatriation are basically of a political nature, or linked with political life. The numerous voluntary repatriation operations of these last years have followed accessions to independence, changes of régimes, amnesties to political opponents, or the end of a conflict. Our hopes for the future, as regards this solution, are based on past experience. We are not in a utopian world where all refugees can repatriate voluntarily. However, even a purely humanitarian organization as we are can help: a successful repatriation and rehabilitation programme can produce a snowball effect once the political conditions are created; through our participation in tripartite commissions grouping the authorities of the country of refuge, the country of origin, and UNHCR, a set of difficulties can be ironed out and conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation can be promoted. I have in mind, for instance, the repatriation from Djibouti to Ethiopia which started recently. Sometimes even, UNHCR can help in delicate negotiations between two countries, provided we do not side with either one and confine ourselves to our purely humanitarian and non-political role. Within the framework of existing realities, we are systematically reviewing the situations where we believe, or hope, that more can be done for voluntary repatriation so that, while respecting the refugees' free will, no stone is left unturned.

7. Local integration is not always possible either. Some of the difficulties in developing countries are well known: insufficient infrastructure, lack of cultivable land or of water, shortage of work opportunities, often severely limit the absorption capacity of the receiving country. The international community then needs to act in a co-ordinated way, so that conditions are improved as much as feasible, within financial, technical and staff constraints. In this context, I would mention the Meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development, held from 29 to 31 August. The meeting's report is submitted to the Committee. It calls for a review of policies for refugee assistance in low-income countries with a major refugee problem and for a new approach to the solution of such problems. The report emphasizes that, while meeting refugees' urgent needs as a first priority in the early stages of an influx, the refugees' productivity should be encouraged from the outset to the extent possible: this should enable refugees progressively to support themselves and contribute to the development of the area. This more comprehensive view of what is sometimes called the "refugee affected areas", where the refugees are a component of a much wider picture which involves the local population as well, invites us to realistic reflection on the means of overcoming the obstacles to self-sufficiency and, where it is feasible, local integration.

8. But obstacles may be other than technical. Even when refugees are offered asylum and hospitality temporarily, they may nevertheless be undesirable. Asylum should always be considered as a peaceful and humanitarian act. However, refugees may be seen to have a political impact as a group and may contribute to tension between neighbouring countries or affect important national concerns.
9. Short of the possibility of repatriation and local integration, resettlement becomes the only solution. Obstacles to resettlement are well known. No country has an endless receiving capacity. Not all refugees are able to integrate smoothly. For many, resettlement is not really an adequate solution and they may suffer severe cultural trauma. There are the handicapped who have the double disadvantage of being refugees and disabled. Three hundred of them are accepted every year. Eight hundred, a comparatively small figure, are still waiting, however and new disabled refugees are identified every day. More places are also needed for those whose security is endangered and need immediate resettlement as the only possible solution to their protection problem.
10. The difficulty of reaching of burden-sharing balance acceptable to all concerned, the world economic crisis, xenophobia which is a spreading danger, compassion fatigue, all these factors affect resettlement policies and practices as indeed they may deplorably affect the granting of asylum.
11. As a result of the combination of all the adverse factors I have briefly reviewed, there has now been, for a long while in our programmes, a comparative slowdown in the provision of durable solutions. Relief, care and maintenance, have become increasingly conspicuous components of our overall efforts. Some striking figures are reported in the programme "book". In 1970, 83 per cent of the programme was geared toward the promotion of durable solutions. In 1977, the proportion was 54 per cent. Then, major refugee crises erupted within a timespan of very few years: refugees in South-East Asia, in the Horn of Africa, in Pakistan. In 1981, as a consequence of this rapid increase, the proportion of the programme devoted to the promotion of durable solutions was at its lowest: 26 per cent. Since then, there has been some progress again and we hope that next year we shall reach 33.5 per cent. These are perhaps too many figures. But they are indicative and must serve as a powerful incentive to reverse the trend further.
12. We only have three solutions at our disposal. We must promote them wherever there is the slightest glimmer of hope, even if it takes many years to reach them and implement them satisfactorily. And we need the Governments with us: they have the key, not UNHCR. Of course, Governments have their own constraints and it would be unrealistic and unfair not to recognize them. However, refugees are waiting, and for them no progress often means deterioration of their condition.
13. Through this great puzzle, we are trying to develop our planning capacity, keeping the need for "durable solutions whenever possible" as our leit-motiv. We must help push barriers a little further back. Though we are by no means the centre of the game, which is a position occupied by Governments, we must be a catalytic agent and convince: convince refugees, convince Governments, convince the international community. It is not always so difficult to start helping. A new problem may receive a favourable echo from Governments, from public opinion, from others concerned. But gradually, if solutions are not readily feasible, the situation changes. The great difficulty lies in seeing a problem through to a conclusion. Like the problem of the boat-people or that of refugees from Indo-China more generally.

14. In the context which I have outlined, I would like to give a few examples of where we stand and what we are trying to achieve today.

15. We have been giving a great deal of thought to the refugee situation in the Horn of Africa and the Sudan. How can we achieve further progress in depth, in each country and in the region as a whole?

16. In Somalia, there are two sine qua non conditions for a real shift towards self-sufficiency: more land, more income-generating activities. This requires a considerable effort. In March of this year, in compliance with the pertinent General Assembly resolution, a review mission visited Somalia to consult with the Government on the refugee situation, assess the international relief effort and identify the requirements for 1983 and later. The mission was to focus on the overall needs of refugees, including aspects relating to their settlement and rehabilitation. These terms of reference could not coincide better with UNHCR's own preoccupations. Assessments of this kind, and ensuing recommendations, especially at a time when the emergency phase is over and concrete efforts are being made to move beyond care and maintenance, are fundamental for proper long-term planning.

17. The mission visited all regions where there are refugees: Gedo, Hiran, the north-west and lower Shebelle. It acted in close co-operation with the authorities, visited 27 camps out of 35, and met with representatives of countries involved in helping. The World Food Programme accompanied UNHCR and liaison was maintained with other United Nations bodies. While attention was paid to self-sufficiency in Somalia itself, the question of voluntary repatriation was not overlooked.

18. The mission looked into all facets of assistance: food and food storage, health, safer water supply, communal facilities, provision of utensils and equipment, shelter, transport and logistics. And, of course, self-help, which is really the new direction. Though conditions do not permit, as regards self-help, an all embracing plan covering all refugees, it is now hoped that efforts will lead to more than just a modest beginning. Attention is being paid to small-scale farming. Larger scale agricultural projects are also planned, where the possibility of land expansion exists, dry and irrigated, with rain, river, or underground water, next to camps or in other areas to which relocation is envisaged. Guidelines are being drawn up for planning and implementing rural settlements for refugees, with the objective of achieving socially and economically viable rural entities. Measures also include training in various fields. Small-scale industry and handicrafts are foreseen. Provision for reforestation, tree and bush planting, is made. The needs of the local population are part of the overall concern.

19. Of course this approach is by no means a solution to all difficulties and will require years of efforts by all concerned. It is, however, an endeavour to consolidate, improve and build something better in a vast joint effort, realizing the magnitude of the task, the time element, and the means that need to be mobilized by UNHCR and others.

20. In the Sudan, there have been new elements: a sizeable refugee influx this year and last, and flooding in the Kassala area which made it imperative to airlift tents and blankets. While these emergencies were faced, reminding us that data and conditions in a given refugee situation may change rapidly or suddenly, attention

was also paid to a plan of action, in line with the intent and spirit of General Assembly resolutions, the latest of which is from December 1982. Just before that date, UNHCR had already sent an assistance review mission to the Sudan, in November. The mission came up with a set of recommendations, in agreement with the Sudanese authorities, designed, once they could be implemented, to give a fresh impetus to the programme, aiming at self-sufficiency and integration where possible. These recommendations covered refugee protection and assistance measures; they also addressed the phasing out of some UNHCR activities. Much attention is given to the highly complex problem of ensuring that refugees have access to sufficient land in the face of its limited availability near existing settlements. The Director of Assistance then visited the Sudan early this year to study with the authorities how best to implement the recommendations. In April, an UNHCR-International Labour Organisation study was concluded on income-generating activities for refugees in Eastern and Central Sudan; implementation of some aspects has already begun. The United Nations system has helped in various surveys. Here again there is no magic wand, but there is a systematic effort. In order to give the necessary support to the launching and implementation of the plan and to follow up progress carefully, a task force has been set up within headquarters, drawing on all sectors concerned.

21. Djibouti today is an example of a situation where a new element intervenes and entails reorientation of part of the programme toward a durable solution: in this case voluntary repatriation. Refugees have now started to return to Ethiopia, some spontaneously, some under the organized repatriation programme. The return of the first group under the programme took place on 19 September. Two further groups have returned since. The Tripartite Commission composed of authorities from Ethiopia, Djibouti and of UNHCR, focused on ways and means to promote the return while emphasizing its strictly voluntary nature. A plan was established to provide appropriate relief and rehabilitation assistance measures upon return. Here we see the regional dimension of the problem. Returnees from Djibouti cannot be viewed in isolation, but fit into the wider context of voluntary repatriation to Ethiopia. UNHCR offices have been opened in Asmara and Dire Dawa to provide technical assistance to the Government and the agencies and on-site monitoring of programme implementation.

22. When the Special Programme of Assistance to Ethiopian Returnees started in June 1982 it was felt, on the basis of the pattern which had evolved over the years, that basic relief assistance was necessary but not sufficient. Hence, in addition to distribution of food and other basic commodities, self-sufficiency packages are given, for agricultural or pastoral activities, according to the requirements. On the one hand, utensils, a draft animal, a plough, seeds and fertilizers and, on the other, starter flocks of goats, sheep, or cattle. Urban returnees are eligible to receive assistance in establishing small-scale cottage industries. Thus, an endeavour for an overall programme, adapted to refugee needs and local realities. However, once more we have learned that in a real world, it is not sufficient to wind up the clock and let it go. According to the Government, it seems that up to three million people in the north-western provinces have been affected by drought: this has had a negative impact on the UNHCR programme and understandably so, as priorities in the area, in terms of logistics and transport, had to be reviewed and existing means mobilized for immediate distribution to victims. Our objective, however, remains unchanged: in co-operation with the authorities and the agencies, to provide proper initial rehabilitation to the returnees, giving them a sound basis to start a new life in their home country.

23. The most globally planned, longer-term approach to refugee problems in Africa is being developed today through the preparation of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, due to take place at Geneva from 9 to 11 July next year. The pertinent General Assembly resolution aims both at meeting the needs of refugees and returnees and at strengthening the social and economic infrastructure of African countries concerned with refugee or returnee problems, to help them cope with the burden. In our 1984 programme to meet refugee needs, more than half of the target submitted for Africa is for durable solutions. Additional needs are being studied, country by country.

24. In order to devise projects aimed at easing the burden on national infrastructures, technical teams are at work: the Organization of African Unity, the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations Development Programme, UNHCR and other agencies, are visiting some 15 countries. The teams are to take all possible factors into account, such as the refugee situation, the government policy toward refugees, the socio-economic situation, the impact of the presence of refugees. Projects being prepared so far, extending over three to five years, aim to be reasonable, realistic and technically sound. Reports will be produced for each country, with the respective Governments' concurrence. UNHCR's active involvement in all preparations is guided by our confidence that the Conference will lay a solid foundation for future concerted action.

25. Let me take one more example of the comprehensive efforts under way, on another continent. The response to the refugee situation in South-East Asia has been unprecedented. It is almost hard to believe that more than a million Indo-Chinese have been resettled outside the region, in less than a decade. Still, there remain today almost 200,000 refugees in the area for whom solutions are increasingly difficult to find. We have, therefore, attempted to study the situation in all its aspects in order to suggest an integrated overall approach. We know that third country resettlement cannot provide a total solution to the problem. Settlement efforts today, after an outstanding achievement, barely exceed the increase in numbers. Particularly, the number of boat people in camps has remained virtually unchanged for two years now. We know that self-sufficiency in the region is not a realistic option at this juncture. We know that voluntary return home has yielded comparatively small results so far.

26. So, while there are no obvious solutions in sight for sizeable numbers, while 3,000 new arrivals reach first asylum countries each month, in addition to natural increase, what can UNHCR do? First create and maintain awareness of the situation, which is no longer in the headlines. I have contacted several Governments emphasizing that, in spite of the response from the international community, the continuation of joint efforts is still badly needed. It seems that some measures are indeed under consideration for maintaining and possibly increasing the present resettlement rate, for speeding up intake of those accepted, and for relaxing admission criteria.

27. Experience shows that, for a large number of Khmer and Lao refugees in Thailand, we must look for other options than resettlement. For Lao refugees, departures during the first six months of this year have decreased by 50 per cent, as compared to the same period in 1982. Voluntary repatriation, especially for lowland Lao, while modest, is encouraging, and must increasingly be explored as a solution; all Governments concerned should work toward this objective, including the provision of assistance in returnees' villages of origin. For Kampuchean, concrete practical steps must be taken by the parties concerned and, when the

repatriation programme is undertaken - for those who freely wish to return - several countries also should assist with reintegration assistance in villages of origin. UNHCR is acting or prepared to act at any stage of the process within its competence.

28. For all groups and whenever possible, since resettlement and voluntary repatriation do not appear to be the total answer, self-sufficiency schemes on a regional level should be envisaged and vigorously pursued within the context of regional burden sharing. Time is pressing. Some refugees have wasted years in camps. Some strive unsuccessfully for their well-being. Some fear for their safety. We are trying to enter into each detail of a particularly complex problem, in a renewed effort to seek durable solutions of a humanitarian nature.

29. Among the encouraging aspects of the overall problem, I would mention the momentum gradually gained by the Programme of Orderly Departures from the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. In 1983, up to 30 September, 12,918 persons left Viet Nam under the programme as against 10,057 for the whole of 1982. Last week for the third consecutive year, we had talks with a delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam during which the evolution of this programme was the main concern. These talks, which also give the opportunity for conversations with all interested parties including resettlement countries, have proved fruitful in tackling difficulties, consolidating progress, and improving results.

30. I would also mention the problem of unaccompanied minors. There are currently some 4,000 of them in refugee camps in South-East Asia. Many do not have relatives in third countries and may not qualify for current resettlement programmes. Some have been rejected by several countries and have been in camps for a number of years. Initiatives such as the recently liberalized processing of minors by the United States will help in providing solutions for some of them. We cannot, however, allow unaccompanied minors to remain in refugee camps indefinitely. New initiative must be provided to cope with this special problem.

31. We have just held a well-attended Seminar on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, with the participation of government officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations from 19 countries, and a number of observers. The Seminar debated social and practical problems relating to refugee integration. These problems, as you will see from the report, do exist. They must be solved by efforts of all those concerned. It was, in any event, a useful venture and a rewarding experience to see how countries can meet and try, in a positive spirit, to analyse an integration process in all its aspects.

32. In northern Latin America, present situations and future prospects are widely diverse according to countries and to the location of refugees. While in some areas we are in a position to turn to local integration of urban and rural refugees, in others only holding operations are possible for the time being, with limited activities in the form of handicrafts or vegetable gardens. With the authorities and all those concerned, we are in the process of trying to open up avenues which should bring the refugees closer to some degree of self-sufficiency.

33. These were the introductory remarks I wished to make. Refugees count in today's world. In certain countries or regions they exceed 15 per cent of the local population. In others, their political weight is important. Refugees are an element in international negotiations of wider scope.

34. The refugee problem is increasingly difficult. In many places on earth, some of the poorest people in the world knock at the poorest countries' door. In spite of the often great hospitality given by so many developing countries, the needs remain colossal. Industrialized countries receive refugees and lend support; developments are showing that the level of their response, in many instances highly generous, is not to be taken for granted.

35. In a world situation which is chaotic in many ways, UNHCR tries to mobilize energies and put them to good use. We have developed patterns, and try to improve them, for emergency and more durable response, for implementing, monitoring and for vital support to our field offices which is crucial. We are now trying to develop analyses in depth for comprehensive action-oriented planning, in full awareness that all situations have their new and unusual characteristics. We must continue to increase our immediate sensitivity to complexities and not be caught unprepared. When we look at problems, we must also consider all options for solutions. When no real solution is in sight, self-sufficiency, income-generating activities, skills training and strengthening of local infrastructure are so many partial answers to the problem. We must be innovative and we hope you can help us to this effect. The solutions are ultimately produced by Governments, not by UNHCR.

36. I shall now be glad to hear your views.

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