

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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-THIRD SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 12A (A/43/12/Add.1)



UNITED NATIONS

New York, 1988

NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 12* (A/43/12).

[26 October 1988]

Report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work
of its thirty-ninth session

(Geneva, 3 to 10 October 1988)

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 18	1
A. Election of officers	5	2
B. Representation on the Committee	6 - 11	2
C. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters	12 - 14	4
D. Opening statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee	15 - 18	5
II. GENERAL DEBATE (items 4-11)	19 - 21	6
III. DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE	22 - 36	7
A. General conclusions on international protection	22	7
B. Promotion and dissemination of refugee law	23	8
C. International solidarity and refugee protection	24	9
D. Stowaway asylum-seekers	25	10
E. Refugee women	26	10
F. International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees	27	12
G. International Conference on Central American Refugees .	28	12
H. Conclusions on the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa	29	13
I. Conclusions and decisions on assistance activities	30	13

CONTENTS (continued)

	Paragraphs	Page
J. Decisions and conclusions on the role of UNHCR in promoting durable solutions	31	15
K. Conclusions and decisions on refugee aid and development	32	16
L. Decisions on administrative and financial matters	33	18
M. Decisions on the report and summary records of the Executive Committee	34	23
N. Decision on participation by government observer delegations in the Executive Committee	35	23
O. Interpretative declarations or reservations relating to the conclusions and decisions of the Committee	36	24

Annexes

I. OPENING STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME AT ITS THIRTY-NINTH SESSION ON 3 OCTOBER 1988	25
II. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FORTIETH SESSION	37
III. PARTICIPATION BY GOVERNMENT OBSERVER DELEGATIONS IN THE SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS, AS WELL AS IN THE INFORMAL SESSIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DURING 1989	38

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

(Geneva, 3-10 October 1988)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its thirty-ninth session at the Palais des Nations at Geneva from 3 October to 10 October 1988. The session was opened by the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Mr. R. H. Robertson of Australia.

2. In his introductory statement, Ambassador Robertson underlined the numerous refugee developments during the past year. He referred to the situation in Africa, where 800,000 new refugees have been added to an already heavy caseload; to the preparations for the return home of Afghan refugees; to the Indo-China region where possibilities exist for new and comprehensive solutions; to preparations for a conference on Central American refugees; and finally to Europe and North America where the search for pragmatic solutions continues.

3. The outgoing Chairman also emphasized that the international community has no humane alternative to confronting new and long-standing situations with imagination and persistence; he added that countries contending with long-standing caseloads should not be given grounds to fear that international attention to new situations would be at their expense. He also stated that Governments must be more ready to confront not only the consequences but also the causes of refugee flows. The outgoing Chairman continued by referring to the need for the international community to ensure that the international protection mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is fearlessly upheld and indeed reinforced.

4. He expressed support for the reforms and improvements of the Office in the programme, financial and general management areas. He stated that these changes require an element of flexibility to enable UNHCR to respond effectively to emergencies. The recent emergencies, he added, have meant higher financial requirements for 1988, which in turn call for greater rationalization and prioritization. He concluded by observing that an effective response to global refugee problems depended on a series of crucial relationships: between the High Commissioner and his staff; between the Office and the Executive Committee; between the Office and its implementing partners and the international organizations. Positive developments were evident in all these relationships.

* Previously issued under the symbol A/AC.96/721.

A. Election of officers

5. Under rule 10 of the rules of procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Mr. Amir Habib Jamal (United Republic of Tanzania)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Fredo Dannenbring (Federal Republic of Germany)

Rapporteur: Mrs. Marilia Sardenberg Zelner Gonçalves (Brazil)

B. Representation on the Committee

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

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

7. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Afghanistan	Iraq
Angola	Ireland
Bahrain	Jamaica
Bangladesh	Jordan
Bhutan	Kenya
Bolivia	Kuwait
Botswana	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Brunei Darussalam	Malawi
Bulgaria	Malaysia
Burundi	Mexico
Cameroon	Mozambique
Chile	New Zealand
Costa Rica	Panama
Côte d'Ivoire	Peru
Cuba	Philippines
Cyprus	Portugal
Democratic Kampuchea	Romania
Democratic Yemen	Saudi Arabia
Djibouti	Senegal
Egypt	Singapore
El Salvador	Spain
Ethiopia	Sri Lanka
Gabon	Swaziland
Ghana	Syrian Arab Republic
Guatemala	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Honduras	Uruguay
Hungary	Viet Nam
India	Yemen Arab Republic
Indonesia	Zimbabwe

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

8. The United Nations system was represented as follows: Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, Co-ordinator for United Nations Assistance Programmes relating to Afghanistan, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), World Food Programme (WFP), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

9. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers: the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, Commission of the European Communities, League of Arab States, Organization of African Unity and the Islamic Development Bank.

10. Some 60 non-governmental organizations were represented by observers, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

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

C. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

12. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda (A/AC.96/706):

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. Review of developments in UNHCR activities relating to:
 - (a) Assistance;
 - (b) Durable solutions;
 - (c) Refugee aid and development.
 7. Review of UNHCR programmes financed by voluntary funds in 1987-1988 and adoption of the revised 1988 budget and proposed programmes and budget for 1989.
 8. Administrative and financial questions:
 - (a) Status of contributions and overall financial needs for 1988 and 1989;
 - (b) Administration and management.
 9. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the fortieth session of the Executive Committee.
 10. Any other business.
 11. Adoption of the draft report of the thirty-ninth session.
13. The Committee considered document A/AC.96/711 (the report and summary records of the Executive Committee) and decided to adopt by consensus the proposals contained therein. The Committee then approved an amendment to rule 31 of the rules of procedure (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.5), in order to give effect to paragraph (ii) of document A/AC.96/711.

14. The Committee also considered document A/AC.96/110 (the report of the Working Group on the Participation of Observers in the Executive Committee) and decided to adopt by consensus the proposals contained therein. The Chairman then declared open the list for applications by observer government delegations to attend the sub-committees and informal meetings during 1989.

D. Opening statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

15. In his opening statement, the newly-elected Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Amir Habib Jamal of the United Republic of Tanzania, expressed his gratitude for his election as Chairman of the thirty-ninth session. He added that this honour was a recognition of his country's contributions towards alleviating the plight of refugees. He said that he was heartened to see the demonstration of international solidarity as epitomized by UNHCR. He also underlined the following as core issues of the work of UNHCR: promptness of relief, certainty of protection, restoration of self-reliance and durability of solutions. The Chairman particularly emphasized the need for a refugee to be trained and to rely on his own resourcefulness.

16. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the High Commissioner for carrying out his important tasks and stressed that it is the duty of the Executive Committee to help the High Commissioner to continue to do so. This assistance includes the mobilization of needed resources through successful fund-raising efforts. He added that sound management and use of funds should always be demonstrated, as should the full participation by asylum countries in the entire relief programme.

17. The Chairman stated that despite everyone's best efforts, refugees will be among us for the foreseeable future. This will, therefore, require continued international burden-sharing which, in the final analysis, is a moral issue. He emphasized that the major and first impact of the presence of refugees is felt by poor countries that are unable to meet the essential needs of their own populations. The Chairman added that root causes notwithstanding, the fact remains that many human beings are in need of prompt and adequate services.

18. The Chairman concluded by expressing his satisfaction over the revolving reserve fund worth some 10 per cent of the Office's annual programme. As such, he added that there exists an overwhelming case for more services being made available by industrialized countries. The Chairman expressed his belief that the generosity of these countries would continue and that resources made available to refugees, compared to other non-productive global expenditures, is the minimum humanity can do for itself.

II. GENERAL DEBATE

(items 4-11)

19. The High Commissioner's opening statement to the Executive Committee is reproduced in the annex to the present report.

20. Following the Executive Committee's decision of 3 October 1988 to adopt a new format for its report, a full account of the deliberations of the Committee under these items is available in the summary records of the session (A/AC.96/SR.425-436).

21. Under item 10, the Chairman announced that consultations on draft conclusions on irregular movements have been in progress among interested delegations, but consensus has not yet been achieved. He added that consultations would continue with a view to reaching agreement, if possible, at the fortieth session of the Executive Committee, taking into account the 1985 draft text on the subject.

III. DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

A. General conclusions on international protection

22. The Executive Committee:

(a) Reiterated the primordial nature and fundamental importance of the High Commissioner's protection responsibilities;

(b) Noted the direct relationship between the observance of human rights standards, refugee movements and problems of protection;

(c) Stressed that States must continue to be guided, in their treatment of refugees, by existing international law and humanitarian principles and practice bearing in mind the moral dimension of providing refugee protection;

(d) Emphasized the cardinal importance of dealing with the underlying causes of refugee movements, not only to avert new flows of refugees, but to facilitate the resolution of existing problems;

(e) Noted the close nexus between international refugee protection and durable solutions and called upon the High Commissioner to continue his efforts to provide international protection through voluntary repatriation, local integration in countries of first asylum or resettlement in third countries;

(f) Expressed concern about the lack of adequate international protection for various groups of refugees in different parts of the world, including a large number of Palestinians, and hoped that efforts would continue within the United Nations system to address their protection needs;

(g) Recalled its Conclusions No. 6 (XXVIII) and No. 7 (XXVIII), respectively, on non-refoulement and expulsion, and expressed deep concern that the fundamental prohibitions against expulsion and refoulement are often violated by a number of States and appealed to all States, to abide by their international obligations in this regard and to cease such practices immediately;

(h) Reaffirmed, in the context of the continuing violations of the rights and safety of refugees and asylum-seekers in different areas of the world, its Conclusion No. 48 (XXXVIII) adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the Executive Committee;

(i) Called upon States, the High Commissioner and other concerned parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that refugees are protected from arbitrary detention and violence;

(j) Recognized that the enhancement of basic economic and social rights, including gainful employment, is essential to the achievement of self-sufficiency and family security for refugees and is vital to the process of re-establishing the dignity of the human person and of realizing durable solutions to refugee problems;

(k) Encouraged all States hosting refugees to consider ways in which refugee employment in their countries might be facilitated and to examine their laws and practices, with a view to identifying and to removing, to the extent possible, existing obstacles to refugee employment;

(l) Noted the close connection between the problems of refugees and of Stateless persons and invited States actively to explore and to promote measures favourable to Stateless persons, including accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 1/ and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 2/ as well as the adoption of legislation to protect the basic rights of Stateless persons and to eliminate sources of Statelessness;

(m) Emphasized the need, in the context of improving the general protection of refugees, for increased public awareness and information activities, bearing in mind the particular requirements of each country concerned and the valuable contribution which non-governmental organizations are able to make in this, as in other, areas of refugee protection;

(n) Noted with concern the growing phenomenon of refugees and asylum-seekers who, having found protection in one country, move in an irregular manner to another country, and called upon the High Commissioner to implement paragraph (j) of Conclusion 36 (XXXVI).

B. Promotion and dissemination of refugee law

23. The Executive Committee,

Reaffirming that the promotion and dissemination of refugee law is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and is directly related to the effective international protection of refugees,

Recalling Conclusion No. 42 (XXXVII) on accession to international instruments and their implementation and Conclusion No. 43 (XXXVII) being the Geneva Declaration on the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 3/ and the 1967 Protocol 4/ adopted at its thirty-seventh session,

1. Reiterated the need for promoting a wider knowledge and understanding of the principles of refugee law and protection and for intensified activities by UNHCR in the area of the promotion and dissemination of refugee law subject to the availability of sufficient resources for this purpose and with the active co-operation and support of States;

2. Called upon all States that have not yet done so to accede to the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and, if applicable, to the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 5/ in order to ensure the widest possible application of the basic principles of refugee law;

3. Welcomed the various initiatives undertaken by the High Commissioner in regard to the dissemination of refugee law, including through publications and the various information services offered by the Centre for Documentation on Refugees, as well as through co-operation with non-governmental organizations, which play an indispensable role in the promotion of refugee law;

4. Underlined the need to develop practical applications of refugee law and principles and the importance of training courses in refugee law and protection to be undertaken or facilitated by UNHCR for governmental and other officials involved in refugee activities, and urged States to initiate or collaborate in the organization and implementation of such courses as well as to undertake similar promotional activities to benefit other interested target groups;

5. Requested UNHCR to provide information to the Executive Committee on specific promotional activities worldwide, including their financial implications on a regional basis.

C. International solidarity and refugee protection

24. The Executive Committee,

Remaining deeply concerned about the gravity and complexity of refugee problems throughout the world, the serious violations of human rights which accompany them and the dislocation and distress they cause for the millions of individuals involved;

Reaffirming that refugee problems are the concern of the international community and their resolution is dependent on the will and capacity of States to respond in concert and wholeheartedly, in a spirit of true humanitarianism and international solidarity;

Noting that States have obligations or responsibilities to accord protection and a basic standard of treatment to refugees and that these must be performed in good faith;

Noting also that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was created in the context of an urgent need to provide protection to refugees and that it is this protection function that uniquely characterizes the Office;

1. Underlined that States, which have defined the protection role of the Office, have a responsibility to co-operate with it in the fulfilment of its mandate on the basis of the fundamental, humanitarian principles that motivate its work;

2. Noted that States and UNHCR are joined in the common pursuit of solutions for refugee problems and the international protection of the fundamental rights of refugees;

3. Stressed that the principle of international solidarity has a fundamental role to play in encouraging a humanitarian approach to the grant of asylum and in the effective implementation of international protection in general;

4. Recalled that, in all circumstances, the respect for fundamental humanitarian principles is an obligation for all members of the international community, it being understood that the principle of international solidarity is of utmost importance to the satisfactory implementation of these principles;

5. Invited all States to continue actively to support the protection functions of the High Commissioner through all appropriate means, both bilateral and multilateral, as well as to abide by their own humanitarian responsibilities towards refugees, including, particularly, to safeguard the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution and to ensure full respect for the principle of non-refoulement.

D. Stowaway asylum-seekers

25. The Executive Committee,

Recognizing that stowaway asylum-seekers often find themselves in a particularly vulnerable situation in need of international protection and durable solutions;

Recalling its Conclusion No. 15 (XXX) on refugees without an asylum country adopted at the thirtieth session of the Executive Committee;

Reaffirming the necessity of giving proper attention to the needs of stowaway asylum-seekers, including arranging for their disembarkation, determining their refugee status and, whenever required, providing them with a durable solution;

Noting that there are at present no general and internationally recognized rules dealing specifically with stowaway asylum-seekers and at the same time recognizing that asylum-seekers should be given the special consideration that their situation demands;

Recommended that States and UNHCR take into account the following guidelines when dealing with actual cases of stowaway asylum-seekers:

1. Like other asylum-seekers, stowaway asylum-seekers must be protected against forcible return to their country of origin;
2. Without prejudice to any responsibilities of the flag State, stowaway asylum-seekers should, whenever possible, be allowed to disembark at the first port of call and given the opportunity of having their refugee status determined by the authorities, provided that this does not necessarily imply durable solution in the country of the port of disembarkation;
3. Normally, UNHCR would be requested to assist in finding a durable solution for those found to be refugees, based on all relevant aspects of the case.

E. Refugee women

26. The Executive Committee,

Expressed appreciation for the note on refugee women (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.1), particularly its emphasis on the interdependence of the problems and special needs of refugee women in regard to assistance, protection and durable solutions;

Recognised that with regard to international protection, there are situations in which refugee women face particular hazards, especially, threats to their physical safety and sexual exploitation;

Called for the reinforcement of the preventive measures initiated by the Office and concerned agencies to enhance the physical security of refugee women;

Called on host Governments to strengthen their support of the Office's protection activities as they relate to women, and for relevant Governments to support the Special Resettlement Programme for Women-at-risk;

Supported the High Commissioner's recognition of refugee women as a vital economic force and of the need to promote their participation as agents, as well as beneficiaries, in the planning of protection and assistance programmes;

Requested the High Commissioner to introduce further effective measures towards the integration of women's issues within the programme planning cycle at all stages, in particular: check lists within technical sector guidelines, gender issues in the Executive Committee country chapters, detailed reference in the UNHCR Programme Manual; also requested that all project documents submitted for funding purposes include a paragraph on its impact on the problems and special needs of refugee women and that the periodic narrative reports refer to this aspect as well;

Stressed the ongoing need for an active senior level Steering Committee to co-ordinate, integrate and oversee the process throughout UNHCR;

Urged the High Commissioner to explore and build upon the experience obtained by other United Nations organisations, donor community and non-governmental organisations, and adapt this information to the specific orientation of UNHCR;

Encouraged the High Commissioner in his public information activities on refugee women and called upon him to expand this area in the future;

Encouraged the High Commissioner to develop training modules to be offered to UNHCR staff and implementing partners in order to increase their awareness of the specific needs of refugee women and practical means of addressing these needs;

Requested the High Commissioner to provide, at the fortieth session of the Executive Committee, a detailed progress report on the implementation of the Office's policies and programmes for refugee women, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of the UNHCR internal guidelines relating to the international protection of refugee women;

Called upon host countries, the donor community and non-governmental organizations to actively support the High Commissioner in the implementation of this programme.

F. International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees

27. The Executive Committee,

1. Welcomes the proposal for the convening of an International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees to find comprehensive and durable solutions to the continuing outflow of refugees and those seeking refuge;

2. Calls upon the international community and the United Nations, intergovernmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations to give full support to the preparations for and organisation of this Conference, so that consensus may be achieved on conference objectives such as the preservation of first asylum, determination of refugee status, maintenance of adequate resettlement levels, repatriation, orderly departure, control of illegal departure and other issues of importance to the parties concerned.

G. International Conference on Central American Refugees

28. The Executive Committee,

Recalling the decision adopted by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at its thirty-eighth session, entitled "The Central American refugees and the 'Procedure for the establishment of firm and durable peace in Central America'", in which it expressed concern over the problem of Central American refugees and affirmed the importance of organizing a conference on this subject as a contribution to peace in the region;

Taking into account the high priority given by the United Nations General Assembly to the problem of refugees, returnees and displaced persons from this part of the world in its resolution 42/110, entitled "Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons of Central America";

1. Reiterates its concern over the need to deal with the problem of the Central American refugees, who have mainly found asylum in the countries of Central America and Mexico, through measures contributing to the search for solutions beneficial to the refugees and to the communities of asylum and origin;

2. Welcomes the decision taken by the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua at the meeting held in San Salvador, El Salvador, on 8 and 9 September 1988 to convene an International Conference on Central American Refugees, at Guatemala City in May 1989;

3. Emphasizes the importance of the decisions adopted at that meeting, and, in particular, the formal commitment assumed by those countries in the Humanitarian Communiqué of San Salvador to approach the preparatory work and the Conference itself on a purely humanitarian and apolitical basis;

4. Urges the international community, the United Nations, universal and regional intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations to provide all necessary co-operation for the Conference so that it may attain its objectives;

5. Expresses its confidence that the Conference will find a solution to the problem of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Central America, having due regard to the development requirements of the areas and countries directly affected by the massive presence of refugees and returnees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/204 entitled "Special economic assistance to Central America" and General Assembly resolution 42/231 of 12 May 1988;

6. Invites the High Commissioner to make every effort so that his Office may provide, with the collaboration of the agencies of the United Nations system, the necessary support to the preparation, organisation and realization of the said Conference.

H. Conclusions on the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action
on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced
Persons in Southern Africa

29. The Executive Committee,

1. Welcomed the convening and successful conclusion of the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, as well as the adoption of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action;

2. Commended UNHCR for its substantial contribution towards the preparation, convening and conclusion of the Conference;

3. Requested the High Commissioner to ensure the effective implementation of the said Declaration and Plan of Action with respect to refugees and returnees; and, in consultation with the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and of the Organisation of African Unity, participate in the formulation of appropriate strategies for rendering adequate humanitarian assistance to those persons who as a result of the root causes identified in Part B of the Oslo Declaration are internally displaced;

4. Requested further the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee at its fortieth session on the role of UNHCR in the implementation of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons.

I. Conclusions and decisions on assistance activities

30. The Executive Committee,

(a) Took note of the progress achieved by the High Commissioner in the implementation of his General and Special Programmes in 1987 and the first five months of 1988 as reported in documents A/AC.96/708 (Parts I to V) and A/AC.96/709, as well as related addenda and corrigenda;

(b) Took note of the allocations made by the High Commissioner from his Emergency Fund during the period 1 June 1987 to 31 May 1988;

(c) Took note with appreciation of the observations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions submitted in document A/AC.96/715;

(d) Took note of the change in the presentation of the 1989 programme and budget as detailed in paragraphs 265 and 266 of document A/AC.96/709;

(e) Reviewed section X of document A/AC.96/709 and its Addendum I (paras. 274 to 277) and approved the following:

(i) The "new and revised" allocations under the 1938 General Programmes, for both operations and programme support and administration, as summarized in table III, column 12 of document A/AC.96/709, and amended with documents A/AC.96/708 (Part I and Part II)/Add.1 and A/AC.96/709/Add.1, amounting to a revised financial target of \$420,062,500 (including the \$10 million Emergency Fund).

(ii) The country and area programmes and the overall allocations for the 1989 General Programmes, as summarized in column 13 of table III of document A/AC.96/709, and as amended with documents A/AC.96/708 (Part I and Part II)/Add.1 and A/AC.96/709/Add.1, pertaining to operations (emergency assistance, care and maintenance, voluntary repatriation, local settlement and resettlement), as well as to programme support and administration, amounting to a financial target of \$428,772,000 (including the \$10 million Emergency Fund).

(iii) The proposal set out in paragraph 277 of section X of document A/AC.96/709.

(f) Recognizing the need for additional resources in the face of several new emerging situations, at the same time expressed concern about overall funding prospects and stressed the need for the High Commissioner to identify continuously realistic requirements, life-saving priorities and attainable economies;

(g) Confirmed the desirability of increasing the Programme Reserve to the traditional level of 10 per cent at the earliest reasonable time;

(h) Within the framework of strengthening programme planning, implementation, and monitoring, endorsed the High Commissioner's efforts in terms of specific programmes for refugee women and children, the training of staff and counterparts, the provision of technical support and evaluation services, and the specifications and means of delivery of supplies and food aid;

(i) Called upon the High Commissioner to address the issue of "major trends of UNHCR's assistance activities" under a separate agenda item of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters;

(j) Recalled the Conclusion from its thirty-sixth session that UNHCR consider holding consultations with members of the Executive Committee to discuss ways and means to ensure a better understanding of the Office's programmes in relation to the objectives that are pursued; commends the High Commissioner for consultations in this regard; and invites the High Commissioner to pursue his consultations on the Office's programmes in relation to the objectives that are pursued;

(k) Noted with appreciation from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/AC.96/715, para. 18) the recommendations in regard to the format and presentation of UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds (see A/AC.96/708 (Parts I to V) and A/AC.96/709), and encourages the High Commissioner to pursue his efforts to further improve the quality of this documentation;

(l) Called upon the High Commissioner, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and in conformity with the usual practice of the High Commissioner, to continue assistance to refugees under the care of national liberation movements recognised by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.

J. Decisions and conclusions on the role of UNHCR
in promoting durable solutions

31. The Executive Committee,

(a) Took note of the relevant sections of documents A/AC.96/709, A/AC.96/708 (Parts I-V) and related addenda and corrigenda relating to the search for durable solutions; commended the High Commissioner's initiatives in this area and reaffirmed its strong support for the measures undertaken to give renewed impetus and coherence to the promotion of durable solutions, in particular voluntary repatriation; and called on the High Commissioner to encourage further study of the important issue of durable solutions;

(b) Appealed to Governments to continue providing all possible support to the High Commissioner by taking concrete measures to create and promote conditions conducive to the attainment of durable solutions;

(c) Noted with satisfaction the continuing interest shown by non-governmental organisations in the promotion and implementation of durable solutions, in co-operation with concerned Governments and the High Commissioner, and appealed to all concerned to increase the involvement of non-governmental organisations in such programmes;

(d) Commended UNHCR's activities relating to the implementation of voluntary repatriation which is the preferred durable solution wherever possible, and expressed full support for the Office's priority concern to actively promote this solution, and called for a greater proportion of UNHCR resources to be devoted to voluntary repatriation, if circumstances so permit;

(e) Took note of the relevant sections of documents A/AC.96/709 and A/AC.96/708 (Parts I-V) on durable solutions for refugees and encouraged UNHCR to promote, wherever appropriate, local integration and resettlement when voluntary repatriation is not a feasible durable solution;

(f) Appealed to Governments to respond adequately to the need for resettlement of individual refugees, in full cognizance of and conformity with the conclusions on resettlement of the thirty-eighth session.

K. Conclusions and decisions on refugee aid and development

32. The Executive Committee,

Welcoming the report by UNHCR on refugee aid and development (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.3 and CRP.3/Add.1) as tangible recognition of the need to ensure the compatibility of refugee aid and national development plans of developing refugee-asylum countries;

Recalling the principles of action in developing countries adopted at the thirty-fourth session of the Executive Committee, the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) and emphasizing the importance of adequately implementing these plans;

Recalling that the task of caring for refugees and finding solutions to their problems is a matter of international concern in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments in particular the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol;

Recalling also that the condition of refugees and returnees is a global responsibility of the international community and emphasizing the need for equitable burden sharing by all its members;

(a) Recognized that durable solutions for refugees in developing countries can, in the majority of cases, be achieved through a development-oriented approach, and that the heavy burden placed on a host country as a result of growing refugee influxes requires sufficient resources to redress the negative impact and the strain on its socio-economic infrastructure in rural and urban areas;

(b) Agreed on the role of UNHCR in identifying projects, in full co-ordination with concerned Governments, the appropriate development agencies and non-governmental organizations, as well as on its catalytic role in mobilizing resources for host countries or for returnees;

(c) Emphasized that UNHCR should play the lead role in assessing needs and formulating plans of action and concrete projects, jointly with development partners;

(d) Stressed that, whenever refugees as a target group are concerned, UNHCR should maintain its fundamental responsibilities for protection and monitoring of its assistance activities, while leaving the actual execution of the projects to development agencies, Governments of host countries and voluntary agencies;

(e) Commended UNHCR for having advanced the conclusion of agreements and memoranda of understanding with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and for further formalizing co-operation with these agencies, and requested the High Commissioner to inform the Executive Committee of the results of this co-operation;

(f) Agreed that UNHCR engage in joint identification, preparation and formulation of projects with developmental agencies, and approved the funding of these related costs - preferably as an advance - from the Annual Programme, to the extent that such costs cannot be met adequately from special contributions which may be solicited from donors by the High Commissioner, and on the use of which he will report to the Executive Committee;

(g) Broadly supported the purpose of a Project Planning Fund, and requested UNHCR to consult further on the practical character of the Fund for joint projects envisaged with development agencies;

(h) Made the following recommendations concerning refugee aid and development:

- (i) The High Commissioner should remain a focal point for pursuing durable solutions for refugees, and for encouraging refugee-related technical assistance and capital investment;
- (ii) Underlined that low-income asylum countries should be provided with assistance to strengthen their social and economic infrastructure so as to enable them to cope with the burden of dealing with large numbers of refugees and returnees;
- (iii) Drew attention to the "Proposed action to be taken by members of the Executive Committee" as outlined in document A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.3;
- (iv) Calls upon Governments and the High Commissioner to provide technical support to developing countries in needs assessments, formulating concrete projects and plans of action aimed at practical solutions in areas hosting large numbers of refugees;
- (v) Urged the High Commissioner to further strengthen the understanding among host Governments, donor agencies and the United Nations system, of the need to ensure the compatibility of refugee-related projects with the host country's development plans;
- (vi) Called upon the High Commissioner to pursue further his efforts to widen the basis of co-ordination through involving more multilateral development agencies and non-governmental organisations on the one hand, and the increasing number of developing asylum countries in order to reach that degree of co-ordination between the UNHCR programmes and development plans of developing countries;
- (vii) Recommended that there should be closer co-ordination between refugee and development services in the donor countries in order to address more adequately the refugee problem in its development context;
- (viii) Called upon the Governing Councils of development agencies to consider the refugee and returnee element to be integrated in their programme planning and to examine funding mechanisms enabling effective and complementary programme implementation;
- (ix) Underlined also that the assistance provided to strengthen social and economic infrastructure of asylum countries should be additional to and not at the expense of that specifically earmarked for the concerned country's development programmes;

(c) Urged that the current efforts to streamline staffing levels be vigorously continued on the basis of guidelines adopted at the thirty-eighth session, while retaining the flexibility of the Office to respond to unanticipated contingencies;

(d) Noted the High Commissioner's intention to respond to the long-standing request for the presentation of a consolidated staffing structure showing both permanent and temporary posts regardless of their category;

(e) Supported the High Commissioner's position, as detailed in paragraphs 18 through 22 of EC/SC.2/1988/CRP.1/Rev.1, on the retention of D-2 posts in the field where major programmes are implemented, and concurred with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that this issue be resolved with the Secretary-General, while drawing attention to its general conclusion on reclassification;

(f) Urged the Office to further develop the proposal to place emergency teams on call drawn from within existing resources as a cost-effective means to ensure rapid response;

E

(a) Supported the revision of the terms of reference of the Fund for Staff Housing and Basic Amenities;

(b) Approved an increase in the working capital of the Fund for Field Staff Housing and Basic Amenities from currently \$3,500,000 to a ceiling of \$5,100,000 to be funded through transfers from the 1988 and 1989 General Programme Reserve as and when needed, bearing in mind that such transfers, when necessary, should be studied carefully in the future;

(c) Encouraged the use of the Fund in the most difficult hardship posts as direct support to staff to improve living conditions in such duty stations;

(d) Endorsed the commitment of the Office to administer the Fund in conformity with the United Nations common system;

(e) Approved the change of name from Revolving Fund to the Fund for Staff Housing and Basic Amenities, while acknowledging that any reimbursement or recovery of costs would be credited to the Fund;

F

(a) Noted the various documents on support costs made available in response to requests previously made;

(b) Expressed its satisfaction with the current initial turn-around in the trend in support costs towards more acceptable levels as compared to previous years, but at the same time stressed the need for further efforts to reduce the support cost part of the total budget;

(c) Having recalled that the reorganization as supported by the Executive Committee at its thirty-seventh session is characterized by a field-oriented structure, including a direct line of command from the High Commissioner through the Head of Regional Bureaux responsible for overall decision-making based on information and advice provided by functional support services, and decentralisation of responsibility from Headquarters to the field;

(d) Supported the intention of UNHCR that the results of reclassification facilitate the changes required by the reorganization, in particular to strengthen the field structure;

(e) Noted with concern the upward grade creep at the higher levels, particularly at Headquarters, and the decrease in the average level in the field which could compromise the objectives of the restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner, full implementation of its field rotation policy and its attempts to enhance the status of service in the field;

(f) Called upon UNHCR in its follow-up to the job reclassification exercise, to achieve a reduction in the average grade level at Headquarters and an increase in the average grade level in the field (A/AC.96/714), inter alia, through the reallocation of senior management posts from Headquarters to the field, especially where major programmes are executed and called for a periodic report on the progress made.

(g) Requested UNHCR, in the light of the above concerns, to introduce further measures within the framework of the reorganization to give practical effect to the widely supported principle of devolution of authority and responsibility to the field and called for a report by UNHCR on these measures at the fortieth session of the Executive Committee;

(h) Supported the findings of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the inappropriateness of using project personnel category posts to overcome the difficulties of introducing the National Professional Officer category in Europe, and asked that UNHCR explore other possibilities to find alternatives compatible with the United Nations system;

(i) Approved, on the basis of the above concerns, for implementation on 1 January 1989, the recommendations resulting from the job classification exercise in the Director, Professional, Project Personnel and National Professional Officer categories in UNHCR funded from voluntary funds (A/AC.96/714), with the exception of the proposed upgrading of 12 posts in Europe from the General Service to the Project Personnel category (paras. 21-25, and corresponding part of annex III of document A/AC.96/714);

D

(a) Reaffirmed the importance of the High Commissioner's commitment to return by the first quarter of 1990 to 1 January 1986 staffing levels, exclusive of 293 posts that the Executive Committee authorized for guards and cleaners as of January 1988;

(b) Expressed satisfaction with the results to date of the staffing review exercise which should continue to address the concerns expressed during the thirty-eighth session of the Executive Committee;

H

- (a) Expressed concern about UNHCR's current financial shortfall of \$107 million under the General Programmes (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.7) and the need for some \$5 million to cover immediate special programmes requirements, as well as for some \$35 million for the Afghan Repatriation Programme;
- (b) Noted with appreciation the continued strong donor support of UNHCR in 1988 and called upon Governments to make further funds available to ensure that the needs of persons of concern to the High Commissioner are fully met;
- (c) Encouraged the High Commissioner to take further initiatives to broaden the donor base beyond traditional contributors into other governmental, non-governmental and private sources, while making maximum use of resources made available by host Governments;
- (d) Welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to improve its ongoing assessment of priorities and the mechanisms established for identifying possibilities for redeployment of resources from lower to higher priority areas and urged the Office to further intensify these efforts;
- (e) Also supported the High Commissioner's transparent funding presentation in consolidating programme requirements to the extent possible and adapting the funding appeals to actual and expected rates of implementation;
- (f) Requested the Office to address the problem of an excessive breach between programme requirements and projected contributions so that the financial viability of its programmes is ensured;
- (g) Called upon Governments to do their utmost to announce financial support to UNHCR for 1989 at the annual Pledging Conference in November 1988 and to make payments as early as possible in the new programme year;

I

- (a) Noted with appreciation that the creation of the Staff Management Group, the establishment of a Senior Postings Board in replacement of the Ad Hoc Advisory Board, the granting of indefinite appointments, the reform of the revolving fund, the classification exercise, and the training effort had led to improved staff-management relations;
- (b) Urged that this trend be maintained and strengthened by resolving pending issues and remaining problems and, in a process of genuine dialogue, by acting in compliance with United Nations regulations, rules and practices designed to safeguard staff rights and their career development;
- (c) Urged the High Commissioner to pursue a personnel policy which reflected the broadest possible geographical representation of States based on the highest standards of competence and integrity;
- (d) Called upon the High Commissioner to provide a report on staff, indicating levels and gender of occupants;

(c) Supported the measures taken to cover partially the additional 1988 programme requirements from reductions in support costs and the re-scheduling of non-priority activities and expressed its expectations of the continuation of this trend;

(d) Requested, in keeping with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions thereon, clear definitions of Programme Support and Administration (PSA) and Project Administration (PAD), resulting in the presentation of a simpler, more unified support cost structure that relates support costs to programme and protection activities in a more identifiable manner;

(e) Supported the establishment of an informal working group of the Executive Committee, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to review future methods of presentation of support costs;

(f) Appreciated the need to invest in the new technologies used in Management Information Systems Services (MIS) and Financial Management Information System (FMIS), but requested a more precise assessment of expected results with regard to future budgetary requirements and a thorough cost-benefit analysis of the investments made, to be submitted to the Executive Committee at its fortieth session;

G

(a) Expressed its appreciation for the reports of the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and noted the positive remarks made by both on UNHCR efforts to improve operational and financial management controls and systems;

(b) Expressed concern with certain financial and administrative shortcomings identified in the Board of Auditors' report and hoped that the corrective action being taken would prevent their repetition;

(c) Acknowledged that some of these deficiencies referred to had occurred prior to the restructuring of the Office, and others as being attributed to the responsibilities of implementing partners;

(d) Stressed that implementing partners, be they governmental or non-governmental, share with UNHCR the responsibility of ensuring efficient and cost-effective utilization of resources put at their disposal for the benefit of refugees;

(e) Regretted the serious shortcomings reported by the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the contracting for consultancies, whereby the auditors and the Advisory Committee had determined procedures followed as being contrary to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, and concurs with the opinion of these two bodies in this respect;

(f) Noted that corrective action had been taken in mid-1987 in order to avoid similar problems in the future;

(g) Concurred with the priority the auditors placed on the further strengthening of programme planning and implementation and the monitoring of projects at the field level to ensure maximising delivery of assistance to refugees vis-à-vis contributions;

H

(a) Expressed concern about UNHCR's current financial shortfall of \$107 million under the General Programmes (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.7) and the need for some \$5 million to cover immediate special programmes requirements, as well as for some \$35 million for the Afghan Repatriation Programme;

(b) Noted with appreciation the continued strong donor support of UNHCR in 1988 and called upon Governments to make further funds available to ensure that the needs of persons of concern to the High Commissioner are fully met;

(c) Encouraged the High Commissioner to take further initiatives to broaden the donor base beyond traditional contributors into other governmental, non-governmental and private sources, while making maximum use of resources made available by host Governments;

(d) Welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to improve its ongoing assessment of priorities and the mechanisms established for identifying possibilities for redeployment of resources from lower to higher priority areas and urged the Office to further intensify these efforts;

(e) Also supported the High Commissioner's transparent funding presentation in consolidating programme requirements to the extent possible and adapting the funding appeals to actual and expected rates of implementation;

(f) Requested the Office to address the problem of an excessive breach between programme requirements and projected contributions so that the financial viability of its programmes is ensured;

(g) Called upon Governments to do their utmost to announce financial support to UNHCR for 1989 at the annual Pledging Conference in November 1988 and to make payments as early as possible in the new programme year;

I

(a) Noted with appreciation that the creation of the Staff Management Group, the establishment of a Senior Postings Board in replacement of the Ad Hoc Advisory Board, the granting of indefinite appointments, the reform of the revolving fund, the classification exercise, and the training effort had led to improved staff-management relations;

(b) Urged that this trend be maintained and strengthened by resolving pending issues and remaining problems and, in a process of genuine dialogue, by acting in compliance with United Nations regulations, rules and practices designed to safeguard staff rights and their career development;

(c) Urged the High Commissioner to pursue a personnel policy which reflected the broadest possible geographical representation of States based on the highest standards of competence and integrity;

(d) Called upon the High Commissioner to provide a report on staff, indicating levels and gender of occupants;

(e) Called upon the High Commissioner to provide a plan at the fortieth session of the Executive Committee to address the issue of equitable representation of women at all levels within the organisation;

(f) Expressed its strong support for the maintenance and further development of the principle and practice of staff rotation between Headquarters and field and requested a short analytical report of the progress made;

J

(a) Requests that consultations take place to assure ways and means that the more detailed matters on administration, finance and personnel come before the appropriate Executive Committee Sub-Committee only after sufficient consultation and discussion have been conducted. This would allow the major concerns of Executive Committee members to be taken into account in the proposals, thus avoiding complicated discussions on detailed matters and freeing the way for the Sub-Committee to concentrate on the major trends and issues.

M. Decisions on the report and summary records of the Executive Committee

34. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the current format of the report of the Executive Committee and being aware of the need for further streamlining and cost efficiency,

- (i) Decides that the report should henceforth contain an organisational part, a reference to the summary records for an account of the deliberations of the Committee, the conclusions and decisions reached by the Committee, including any interpretative declarations or reservations relating thereto, as well as the High Commissioner's opening statement to the Committee which will be annexed to the report;
- (ii) Decides that summary records should now also be produced in the Spanish language;
- (iii) Requests that the UNHCR secretariat ensure that an adequate supply of summary records, in at least one working language, as well as copies of the reports of the two Sub-Committees, are available in New York in time for the debate in the Third Committee of the General Assembly on items relating to refugees;
- (iv) Decides to review the effectiveness of these arrangements at the first Informal Meeting of States members of the Executive Committee in 1989.

N. Decision on participation by government observer delegations in the Executive Committee

35. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed existing arrangements for participation by Observer delegations in the work of the Executive Committee and wishing to take positive measures to enhance that participation;

Seeking to achieve this objective without compromising the Committee's mandate and the humanitarian, non-political nature and effectiveness of its deliberations:

(a) Decides to open sessions of its two sub-committees and informal meetings to participation as observers by States members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies which are not members of the Executive Committee;

(b) Decides that this participation be accorded in response to applications by the Governments concerned having a demonstrated interest in refugee matters;

(c) Emphasizes that participation by observer Governments should not result in significantly increased costs of or a lengthening of the duration of sessions of the Executive Committee.

O. Interpretative declarations or reservations relating to the conclusions and decisions of the Committee

36. The following interpretative declarations or reservations relating to the conclusions and decisions of the Committee were made:

1. General conclusions on international protection (see para. 22 (f) above)

The delegation of Israel objected to the inclusion of the words "including a large number of Palestinians".

2. Stowaway asylum-seekers (see operative paragraph 2 in para. 25 above)

The delegation of Greece proposed the deletion of the words "whenever possible" (on the second line) and the phrase (beginning on the fourth line) "provided that this does not necessarily imply durable solution in the country of the port of disembarkation".

Notes

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 360, No. 5158, p. 117.

2/ Ibid., vol. 989, No. 14458, p. 175.

3/ Ibid., vol. 189, No. 2545.

4/ Ibid., vol. 606, No. 8791.

5/ Ibid., vol. 1001, No. 14691.

Opening statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees to the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme at its thirty-ninth session on 3 October 1988

1. I should like to extend to you a very warm welcome on the opening of the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. We have among us today, for the first time, two new members of the Committee, Pakistan and Somalia, countries whose generosity towards refugees is well known to us and to whom I extend a particularly warm welcome. The impact of world events on refugees since the last formal meeting of the Executive Committee has been so dramatic and profound that our deliberations during this year's session have acquired an even greater significance than would normally be the case. Even since our last informal meeting only three months ago, there have been resounding developments affecting the world's well over 12 million refugees.

2. For the first time in many years, there is a real hope for solutions for nearly half of our entire caseload. We are in the long-awaited position that allows us not merely to contain human misery, but to put an end to it. For the millions of others for whom an immediate solution is not in sight, imaginative medium and long-term approaches must be energetically sought. The times demand it. I trust, therefore, that our deliberations during this session of the Executive Committee and, indeed, my own remarks today, will be seen not just as a catalogue of activities but as a catalogue of challenges. It is my hope that in the end we will have taken up the gauntlet and pledged ourselves to muster the necessary will to contribute positively to these events. I invite you to join the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in taking full advantage of the fruits of peace. UNHCR, as a contributor to the United Nations family's, and especially the Secretary-General's, untiring efforts towards peace, commits itself to pursue this wave of hope sweeping all corners of the planet with renewed vigour and singlemindedness.

3. As such, I remain more convinced than ever that my Office's ongoing dialogue with members of the Committee, other Governments and humanitarian organizations present today, serves a necessary purpose for promoting confidence among the international community in addressing refugee issues. Overall, this unique and, in many respects, historic period has been underlined by events lending hope for solutions for millions of refugees; by a series of successes in finding lasting solutions to the plight of many others; by the unfortunate emergence of new and often dramatic refugee situations; and finally by the complication and worsening, in some cases, of long-standing refugee problems.

4. These events have, in turn, had a direct bearing on UNHCR's own efforts in attempting to meet successfully the new challenges and opportunities resulting from them. UNHCR's tasks under its mandate to protect and assist refugees and find solutions to their problems have become increasingly difficult and complex. The Office's workload and range of responsibilities have registered a growth and intensity that has severely strained our resources and in some cases stretched our resourcefulness to even greater limits. Whether it has been to organize or plan a new repatriation exercise or to respond effectively to a new refugee influx, it is clear that my Office's means and mandate have been put to a severe test involving the well-being of millions of uprooted human beings.

5. To properly focus on these important and diverse developments, I believe that a number of key illustrations would be in order. These would demonstrate where we stand today and what the magnitude of the task is before us. We will see, ultimately, the international community demonstrating some of its best instincts in the form of political accommodations and understandings, setting the stage for millions of refugees and displaced persons to regain their dignity. Unfortunately, we will also see examples of mankind's unabating perpetration of hostile and violent acts against his fellow man, as a result of which large numbers of people become dependent on international protection and assistance as their only means of survival.

6. I should like to direct your attention first to some of the encouraging initiatives that have raised the prospects for millions to return home under conditions of safety and dignity, as well as to instances where lasting solutions have already been found.

7. On the African continent, organized or spontaneous repatriation to Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe over the last 12 months continued. The return of Ugandans from southern Sudan is all but complete. I believe we can all take encouragement from the fact that, in very difficult circumstances, over 200,000 Ugandans have returned home from the Sudan since the first half of 1986, 60,000 of them this year. In addition, we expect that the resumption of the two-way repatriation operation between Angola and Zaire will take place shortly.

8. The recently concluded International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa is further demonstration of the keen awareness of the international community to address the critical aspects of the tragic and inhumane situation that prevails in that region. It is our hope and, indeed, expectation, that the objectives of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Conference will receive the undivided attention they deserve, and that the abolition of apartheid, the promotion of national independence and the improvement of socio-economic conditions will continue to be core considerations during the follow-up. UNHCR, for its part, will continue to call for and provide additional material resources for urgent relief assistance, while at the same time pursuing its efforts to promote self-sufficiency within the framework of the linkage between relief and development assistance. Efforts to this end by the United Nations family will, I trust, contribute considerably to overcoming the difficulties that have plagued the process of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. As I mentioned at the Conference, it is only through such aid that the States of the region can be supported as they keep their doors and their hearts open to refugees.

9. Another source of encouragement on the continent has been the progress in the negotiations on the situations in Angola and Namibia. We have been following closely developments that might lead to an early implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) and independence for Namibia. UNHCR has a clear and specific role to play in ensuring the timely repatriation of Namibians. We have reviewed our plans, adjusted them as necessary and are ready to play our full part within the framework of the implementation of the United Nations plan. UNHCR staff are currently participating in the United Nations Technical Mission to Namibia, which, we hope, will swiftly be followed by full deployment of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group.

10. I would be remiss if I did not mention briefly the equally welcome news emanating from North Africa. The recent developments concerning the referendum and the acceptance of the Secretary-General's peace plan by the parties concerned is a source of satisfaction, particularly as it should yield encouraging results for several thousands of persons being assisted by UNHCR.

11. As I am sure everyone is aware, among the most prominent and promising developments of this past year was the signing in April of the bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This agreement makes special reference to the return of Afghan refugees and to UNHCR's role therein. The agreement represents, therefore, a much-awaited opportunity for millions of Afghans voluntarily to return home under international supervision.

12. You will recall that a UNHCR fact-finding team visited Afghanistan already in February. In March, a Task Force and Operational Unit at Headquarters were established; and as at 15 May, on the day the terms of the Geneva Agreements took effect, a presence in Kabul was created through the dispatch of a mission team. These efforts are being complemented by an increase in our field presence in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

13. In other words, UNHCR has acted swiftly. To play its proper role in the event of a large-scale return, my Office has embarked on extensive preparations and contingency planning. In order to fulfil its protection mandate, and in line with the role foreseen for my Office in the Geneva Agreements, including the definition of the general modalities of assistance, UNHCR has taken a number of measures to reconfirm with all parties their commitment to the voluntary character of any repatriation and to intensify its monitoring presence in the field.

14. Since the appointment by the Secretary-General on 11 May of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan as the Co-ordinator for United Nations Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes relating to Afghanistan, my Office enjoys the closest involvement and participation in his work. The appeal in June by the Secretary-General for assistance to Afghanistan contains some \$387 million, nearly one-third of the total amount, which are related to returnee needs. The food component of these needs is considerable, and I should add that the implementation of this portion of the appeal is being planned in close consultation with the World Food Programme.

15. As an active participant in the United Nations co-ordination process, we have enhanced our dialogue with the main actors concerned. Moreover, nearly \$12 million has been allocated for immediate requirements, pre-positioning of relief items and pilot projects for health and small-scale agriculture. As you are aware, immediate requirements for 1988 amount to nearly \$50 million, of which \$15 million has been received. I appeal, therefore, for additional pledges and payments to meet these requirements as soon as possible.

16. Nevertheless, as the course of future events in Afghanistan is difficult to predict, my Office intends to continue assistance programmes in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan at their current levels until such time as a need for an adjustment becomes clearly apparent. UNHCR is also aware of the need for any organized return programme to contain built-in flexibility which would allow for timely adjustments in the face of unpredictable circumstances.

17. Another significant development in a nearby region was the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Agreement. This event led to the establishing of a UNHCR presence in Sri Lanka late last year, and by doing so, my Office has been able to assist some 25,000 Sri Lankan Tamils to return home from India. UNHCR has determined the voluntary nature of the return and has become fully operational. In addition, it is expected that the experience of the last 10 months would allow us to plan and implement the voluntary repatriation of the remaining 100,000 Tamils currently in India. Moreover, the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan peace agreement and the stabilisation of the security situation, combined with the confidence generated from the existing programme, should go a long way towards facilitating the voluntary return of Sri Lankans from other regions of the world as well.

18. I must also refer to another promising and recent development in the region. At the request of the Government of Bangladesh, UNHCR established, in May 1988, a presence in Dhaka in order to provide limited assistance pending elaboration of a durable solution for Biharis who have not availed themselves of the possibility of obtaining Bangladeshi nationality. The recent affirmation by Pakistan that these persons could return home provides a climate of optimism. This, together with the creation of a Trust Fund co-sponsored by Pakistan and RABITA, a Muslim welfare organisation, will facilitate the voluntary repatriation and eventual reintegration of tens of thousands of such persons. UNHCR will remain in close contact with the two Governments concerned and with RABITA in the furtherance of this undertaking.

19. I reported to the Committee during its thirty-eighth session that voluntary repatriation of Central American refugees had started to get off the ground and that prospects for the future appeared promising. I also referred to our hope that the reduction of tensions in the region, as demonstrated by the Peace Agreement of Esquipulas II, would allow UNHCR to explore every possibility to seek humanitarian solutions for refugees. In this context, I also drew the attention of the Committee to efforts then underway to convene an international conference to facilitate concrete solutions. I am pleased to inform you today that considerable progress has been achieved both on continued voluntary repatriation and in the convening of the proposed Conference. Regarding the former, during the first eight months of the year, some 12,200 persons voluntarily returned home with UNHCR's assistance. This is already a higher figure than that of 1987, when some 11,000 persons repatriated. The contributions of the Tripartite Commissions continued to play a major role in these accomplishments. However, these movements have not been tension-free and have required a fresh review to reinforce the humanitarian character of UNHCR involvement. A clear agreement among the countries of asylum and origin regarding their respective responsibilities and competence, in conformity with established humanitarian principles and the mandate of my Office is essential. This having been established, practical modalities should be determined by UNHCR and governmental authorities, in full compliance with the humanitarian and non-political role of my Office, and free from outside interference. This being said, what has been achieved remains a source of optimism for the future.

20. As for the Conference, I am very pleased to announce that only a few weeks ago, the Intergovernmental Committee composed of the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua, as well as UNHCR, reached agreement on fundamental issues. It has been agreed that the Conference will take place in Guatemala in early May 1989. It is also of the utmost importance that the countries sponsoring the Conference have agreed on maintaining its humanitarian and non-political character. This will allow a diagnosis of the magnitude of the

problems affecting refugees, returnees and related categories of Central Americans; define strategies to deal with their problems; and establish a plan of action for solutions linked to development programmes, which would take account of refugees, returnees and displaced persons as contained in the United Nations Special Economic Plan for Central America. Regarding the latter, a UNHCR Technical Mission recently visited the region to elaborate designs and means, which include wider co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme and other agencies. The technical/programming aspects of the Conference have already begun and my Office will spare no effort in doing its utmost towards the success of the Conference.

21. I believe it is necessary at this juncture to say a few words with respect to the southern portion of this hemisphere. This region, which perhaps does not receive the necessary recognition for its generosity towards refugees, plays an important role in providing asylum to individual cases. I should, therefore, like to renew my appreciation to countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay for their continued humanitarian contributions.

22. As a further illustration of our solutions-oriented work in the midst of what had seemed to be an intractable problem, I should like to draw your attention to another region, namely South-East Asia. International burden-sharing in this region had for many years been considered as an unparalleled achievement by the international community. More than 1.1 million Indo-Chinese have found new homes through resettlement after being granted temporary first asylum. Yet, 13 years of uninterrupted influx of Indo-Chinese asylum-seekers has led to unavoidable frustrations among asylum countries in the region. Doubts cast on the bona fides of these asylum-seekers and on the commitment of the international community to resettlement has heightened these frustrations. As a result, steps to deter arrivals were taken or contemplated by Governments in the region. These measures had unfortunate and unacceptable consequences, as they led to loss of life and caused much human suffering. The net result has been a deterioration in the humanitarian practice of asylum in the region which has undermined the consensus reached during the 1979 conference on Indo-Chinese refugees.

23. Largely in anticipation of this crisis, UNHCR initiated a process of consultations that has been in motion for nearly 18 months, designed to develop a new international consensus. This required not only new ideas to bolster the 1979 structure, but a consciousness among all parties involved to assume their roles and responsibilities in finding effective and humane solutions to this protracted problem. As a result, certain worthwhile developments did give rise to a degree of optimism. In April 1988, at Ottawa, some key resettlement Governments arrived at a broad understanding on elements of a new package that could provide the framework for dialogue. In July, the Foreign Ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathered at Bangkok and issued a declaration on the subject of Indo-Chinese refugees, in which they called for an international conference to deal with this issue. They also signalled their belief that the resolution of the humanitarian problems in the region was an important element in the peace equation in South-East Asia.

24. For its part, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, through letters addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to myself, on 1 July, confirmed its willingness to work, through dialogue, with other parties to find a solution to the problem of illegal departures. Bilateral discussions have subsequently taken place in July and August between Viet Nam, Malaysia, Hong Kong and UNHCR and a series of consultations are scheduled in order to prepare the

ground for a meaningful and solution-oriented conference next year. This groundwork should include a joint search for a consensus that would, in effect, include a "package" of solutions encompassing asylum, resettlement and voluntary repatriation.

25. UNHCR is ready to do its utmost in its efforts to play a catalytic role in this encouraging process of dialogue and will continue to take an active part in this process in the coming months. At the same time, it is my firm belief that a successful outcome could only be expected if the Governments involved act in harmony and cease and desist from taking measures and actions that undermine existing norms and procedures. It is in this vein that I call on all parties concerned to co-operate with my Office during this crucial period, in full confidence that together we can achieve satisfactory results, in conformity with humanitarian norms.

26. As an illustration of this type of co-operation, my Office can point to the understanding recently reached with Hong Kong on the boat people. This understanding, which marked a commitment by Hong Kong to improve the treatment and living conditions of refugees and asylum-seekers, has enabled my Office to perform its traditional role of monitoring a mechanism of refugee eligibility determination which the authorities unilaterally decided to establish in June this year. I should like to underline my appreciation to the authorities in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the spirit of co-operation that prevailed in our discussions.

27. As I mentioned at the outset, these initiatives and achievements were, regrettably, offset by worrisome developments in many parts of the world. New and continuing emergencies, combined with an exacerbation or complication of older problems, have confronted us with daunting challenges on several fronts.

28. The region most affected by the new influxes is Africa. It is a fact that the overall situation of refugees in Africa has deteriorated markedly in the last 12 months as a result of continuing new exoduses. Some 800,000 refugees have been added to the Continent's already staggering refugee population. An indirect, but very significant, cause of this lamentable situation is the economic plight of Africa, reminding us of the vital link between relief and development assistance.

29. Large-scale influxes of refugees continue from Mozambique into neighbouring countries, the largest numbers of whom are in Malawi, where numbers now exceed 650,000 and from southern Sudan into western Ethiopia, where numbers now exceed 320,000. Since the middle of 1988, over 250,000 refugees from north-west Somalia have arrived in eastern Ethiopia, and in the last two months over 60,000 refugees from Burundi have arrived in Rwanda. If the emergency operations in Malawi and Rwanda can be said to be under control, this is not yet the case in Ethiopia where - despite the efforts of the Government, UNHCR and our operational partners - the complete lack of natural resources and especially water at the sites in the east, the severely malnourished state of many new arrivals in the west, and the enormous logistic difficulties in supplying both groups, have meant that progress has been slow. This calls for renewed and urgent efforts to bring the situation under control. I would note that the nature of the two most recent influxes, from Somalia and Burundi, allowed no time for contingency planning. Yet despite this, UNHCR was able to respond in a timely manner to two dramatic emergencies only a few months apart.

30. Against this tragic backdrop which confronts many African countries, it is clear that, until real economic recovery on the Continent starts, promoting durable solutions will continue to be a very difficult proposition. Yet this cannot be achieved without urgently addressing and eradicating the root causes which have led to conflict and violence. Governments that have for years borne the burden of refugees are finding the strain greatly increased. Not least that of the spontaneously settled who may be major contributors to national economies in good times, but are among the first to suffer, and thus put pressure on services, in bad times.

31. As you know, UNHCR deals with the results of the actions of man, the primary cause of flight of those falling within the competence of my Office. While UNHCR must contend with the human consequences of these actions, the need for the international community to address causes and to mobilize much greater support to host countries in a way that has a lasting benefit cannot be emphasized enough. Humanitarian assistance in the areas of origin of many of the refugees thus remains of, literally, vital importance. It is important to avoid penalizing those who are rich in generosity but poor in resources by ignoring or minimizing their contributions or their needs.

32. UNHCR, for its part, while recognizing these realities, has sought to respond effectively to them within the terms of its mandate. First, with respect to resources, our General Programmes in Africa for this year have more than doubled that of only two years ago. While I will refer to the question of resources in more detail later, suffice it to say here that the long-term consequences resulting from a lack of emergency assistance to refugees in asylum countries with scarce resources could be catastrophic. Second - concerning the need to link refugee aid and development in order to strengthen the absorptive capacities of host countries and to enhance the refugees' contribution to their host States - UNHCR has taken important measures to improve its catalytic role in this area and to provide these efforts with a more solid policy/institutional base. These efforts, from an operational and policy viewpoint, are described in greater detail in the Conference Room Paper before you. I trust that, in the course of the coming days, the Committee will devote sufficient time to this very important dimension of our work.

33. Another situation that continues to be complex and rapidly evolving is that of Europe and North America. I outlined my preoccupation with the situation, within the framework of our intergovernmental consultations, in my statement to the Executive Committee last year. As events have been fast moving and important, they warrant another up-to-date review.

34. As you may be aware, changes proposed in national legislation and procedures affecting asylum-seekers and refugees are accompanied by efforts aimed at harmonization in regional intergovernmental institutions. UNHCR has welcomed opportunities to offer its expertise and express its views in this ongoing process. Our central concern can be simply stated: new laws, new procedures, new agreements can be introduced by any Government or group of Governments at any time - but none must, in theory or practice, in any way erode or minimize the institution of asylum. Unilateral actions to close doors to those in need of international protection is not the answer to the challenge of these times - a subject I will refer to in greater length later in my remarks. The best approach remains a frank and open dialogue among Governments and those humanitarian organizations directly concerned; in other words, a common effort to pave the way to real solutions.

35. Of course, it is important to recognize that this region too has been confronted with the massive arrival of people. It has also become increasingly obvious that additional efforts are required to safeguard the rights of asylum-seekers fleeing persecution or violence. While for other categories of persons other solutions ought to be found, this should not be done at the expense of asylum-seekers. Therefore, further efforts are required until such time as this goal is achieved.

36. In this spirit, I must reiterate that UNHCR attaches great importance to the process of consultations with Governments in the region which began in 1985. While a degree of tension and differences existed at the outset, these consultations now include working groups where specific problems in Europe and North America are discussed in a constructive and solution-oriented manner. This positive co-operation has led to the identification of valid solutions, both in offering temporary asylum to even those who do not fully qualify and in contributing to bringing about conditions in countries of origin that would facilitate voluntary repatriation. Thus, Governments have, for example, been encouraged to lend their support to programmes in Sri Lanka which could help to consolidate the progress toward peace in that country, creating conditions to permit a steady expansion of voluntary repatriation. In the same context, progress has also been made during 1988 in an intensified joint effort to find solutions for refugees in Turkey. Non-governmental organisations have equally played their part and should be encouraged to continue to do so. The European Consultations on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), a forum for some 45 non-governmental organizations in Europe, comes to mind as an example of the positive contribution that can be made by non-governmental organizations. While concerted action by all concerned will be required to negotiate further progress beyond that already attained by the European consultations, what we have achieved is notable. In fact, given the resulting progress in the treatment by States of certain refugee groups, I trust that this approach could now be systematically applied in comparable situations.

37. I can only reiterate here UNHCR's concern that fair and efficient asylum procedures, ensuring full access by those in search of asylum, be the undisputed corner-stone for all future developments. As I indicated to you a year ago, recent history has demonstrated that any asylum being sought could very well be of a temporary nature. The various peace initiatives that have taken place over the past year and the real or potential benefits for refugees resulting from them lend further credence to this fact. I am confident that a growing recognition of this fact, coupled with the region's long-standing tradition of burden-sharing and asylum, will serve our collective efforts well.

38. I have said on numerous occasions that international protection remains the primordial task of my Office. May I reiterate that our daily endeavours in all fields are predicated on this fundamental consideration. All our functions, including the search for solutions, are related to our international protection function. Therefore, the protection issues confronting the Office must be taken very seriously. The nature of these issues, as well as our concerns about them, are reflected in the documentation before you, particularly as contained in the note on international protection. I should, nevertheless, wish to say a few words in complementarity with this information, given the importance of the subject.

39. In grappling with the difficulties of providing international protection to refugees, we need to acknowledge two elements: that this is a fundamental responsibility entrusted by the community of nations to the multilateral forum that

cannot be compromised, and that it is of a temporary nature. It is a task that is required only during that interim phase where new exiles lack any other form of protection. The ideal protection is acquisition of a new nationality or return to the protection of a former one. The proximity of solution consequently determines the duration of international protection. Protection is, therefore, not an end in itself, but an essential safeguarding of basic human rights until a State takes over this role.

40. The connection between human rights and the refugee problem is a fundamental one, and is one which deserves to be particularly re-emphasized in this year which celebrates the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The philosophy and the objectives of this Declaration are integral to the work of UNHCR. Refugees are created by violations - either specific or general - of basic human rights and the international protection structures are intended to safeguard them from further violations of their rights while in exile. Refugees are a victimized minority with the unique characteristic of being unable to return home in safety and dignity. Four decades ago, the international community deemed that the basic rights of this vulnerable minority should be entrusted to the international community through the agency of UNHCR. These historical milestones - the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, followed next year by the twentieth anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity Refugee Convention, and the first international treaty referring to asylum, the Treaty on International Penal Law signed a century ago in Montevideo - should serve to remind us all of the magnitude of this undertaking and its historical dimensions.

41. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that this undertaking has a moral imperative, as others have often emphasized. It is, ultimately, not so much dependent on international conventions and national legal structures as it is on the collective conscience of the community of nations. This moral dimension is what makes the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees unique among international organizations and what makes our task at the same time often extremely difficult. Yet, we make no excuses for undertaking it, as we do so on your behalf - on behalf of all States Members of the United Nations. I have often said that my preference in performing this function is for discreet persuasion rather than public pronouncement, as I believe it must be in such a sensitive area. There may, however, be times when this is not enough and, in these instances, the moral imperative of our protection responsibility insists that we use all means at our disposal to safeguard those individuals for whom we are the last resort. This does not mean that we should adopt lofty, unrealistic positions that ignore the political realities of an often harsh world. But it does mean that our search for solutions must be circumscribed by the basic rules of natural justice and accepted norms in the treatment of one of the most vulnerable groups amongst us. These international norms have always stood apart from and above national preoccupations and they will continue to do so. In appealing for the protection of refugees we are appealing for the respect of these long-established traditions, and we are appealing to the conscience of nations. I remain confident that this is an appeal which all members of the Executive Committee, and all other States represented here, will fully endorse.

42. It is against this daunting background of increasing and ever challenging tasks that my Office must continue its work. The growing complexities of our endeavours, be they in meeting vital and urgent human needs or in becoming more and more involved in delicate solution-oriented undertakings require even greater international support.

43. For one, my Office will require the necessary resources to cope with the reality that confronts it. As you are aware, the new demands on UNHCR have necessitated an upward revision of some \$42.6 million in the budget of the 1988 General Programmes, from \$377.5 million as approved in October 1987 to \$420.1 million. This revised budget was only arrived at after a thorough review of global requirements and economies. The most recent review was undertaken as recently as mid-September when, primarily, developments in Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda and Hong Kong required us to do so. In fact, the General Programmes' target has followed a continued rising curve since the beginning of the year and numerous appeals for additional funds have had to be launched. I must say here how grateful I am to the donor community for having, throughout these difficult times, been supportive of the Office's work and made sufficient resources available. I would not be frank, however, if I told you that the financial situation of the Office is not preoccupying. We all fully understand that, although the dedication and the commitment of Governments are infinite, their financial resources have clear limits. While the availability of the required funds is thus a source of concern, I am confident that we can count on maximum support from donors.

44. As I speak today, UNHCR is still looking for some \$120 million to cover projected needs, which, as I mentioned, is a source of real concern. I should like to assure you that we are sparing no efforts to identify, within existing resources, funds that may be saved, diverted, recouped, or redeployed. Yet, given my Office's prevailing serious financial situation, I must take this opportunity to reiterate our urgent appeal for generous contributions as soon as possible.

45. We are also aware that to meet the refugees' needs your confidence must be earned; and that it is not enough simply to come up with financial targets or figures, no matter how thoroughly they are arrived at, but that my Office must demonstrate sound management of its human and material resources. This subject has, of course, been a matter of highest priority for me since I assumed office nearly three years ago. I was entrusted with a mandate to overhaul and radically improve the management and effectiveness of UNHCR, a task I took up with the utmost seriousness. This was especially required given the fast-evolving refugee situation in the world. Accordingly, urgent attention was given to areas such as financial and programme control, personnel and management in general. The reorganization of the Office in 1986 was embarked upon with a real perception that by streamlining staff, reducing support costs and modernizing programme delivery/control, a greater dynamism would be generated throughout UNHCR, which would allow it to carry out its vital tasks more cost-effectively and efficiently.

46. The measures that have been taken are well known to you, so I will not dwell on them at length here. They have been the subject of ongoing and detailed dialogue between the Executive Committee and my Office for some time now. The goals and implications of the Operational Support Plan (OSP) and its precursor, the Plan of Action, have been shared with the Committee on a regular basis. The development and/or refinement of the Financial Management Information System, the Technical Support Service, Supplies and Food Aid Service are but a few important components of the Plan that have already borne fruit. While more remains to be achieved, there is no doubt that, as a result of our cumulative efforts, great improvements have been made in the Office's process of assessing needs; in enhancing the quality and scope of financial planning and budgeting; and in refining the evaluation, reassessing and reviewing of programmes. These have become a regular feature of our work.

47. Another essential component of improvements in the financial and administrative areas is personnel: its quality, level and management. I have often said, and I repeat it here again, that the quality of our programmes is only as good as the quality of the people who administer them. In this respect, I wish to pay tribute to the staff of UNHCR who have selflessly dedicated themselves to the often difficult tasks entrusted to them. Particularly at a time of an expanding workload, on the one hand, and system-wide administrative and fiscal constraints on the other, the resulting demands on the energies and dedication of our staff have multiplied; I cannot express enough my admiration for the remarkable way the staff have handled these new demands and pressures. This commitment was confirmed by the Chairman of the Staff Council in his statement before the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters last week, which included an acknowledgement of the constructive staff/management dialogue that currently exists. The management, for its part, will continue to work in a most positive spirit with the Staff Council on matters of common interest.

48. At the same time, in addition to institutional reforms and the quality of our staff, we must ensure that adequate levels of human resources are available to meet the requirements of new or expanding refugee situations. As the Committee is aware, every effort has and will continue to be made to redeploy posts and staff and to tap the resources of operational partners to meet unanticipated needs, though in several instances this has not been feasible. Particularly when the protection of refugees is at stake and when programme delivery, be it for emergency care and maintenance or solutions-related work, need to be assured by our staff, we call on the continued support and understanding of the Executive Committee to endorse additional resources as may be required. In this respect, the words of support last week during the meetings of the Sub-Committees are a source of encouragement for which we are grateful.

49. This is not to say that we have relegated the need to streamline our staffing levels and reduce support costs to a secondary consideration. In keeping with the recommendations of the Group of 18 (Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations) ^{a/} and the 1987 conclusions of the Executive Committee relevant to the issues of management, programme support and administration, my Office has sought to fulfil its commitments to reduce staff and related support costs. These efforts have been regularly brought to the attention of the Executive Committee in a systematic and transparent manner. At the same time, while we are taking all the necessary steps to fulfil our commitments, the necessary flexibility entrusted to the High Commissioner to respond to unanticipated situations has proven to be indispensable.

50. Mr. Chairman, much more can be said on the subject of management, but I believe our regular dialogue over the course of the past year and the information in your possession cover the spectrum of related topics and issues. I look forward to a most constructive discussion of these issues over the next few days. Permit me to say now much I and my staff have valued the guidance and insights that members of the Committee have provided to us in this difficult time of belt-tightening throughout the United Nations and the growing demands on organisations such as UNHCR to do yet more for humanitarian causes.

51. I should like to assure you that we will spare no effort in continuing along this multi-laned road of work: responding to ongoing and unforeseen care and maintenance; protecting and simultaneously seeking solutions for refugees; and

reforming and streamlining the organization. Although the balance is often a delicate one to achieve, it is one from which there is no turning back.

52. Mr. Chairman, before I conclude, I must congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Committee. You bring not only vast experience and diplomatic talents to this position, but you also represent a country with a distinguished record of receiving and assisting refugees. Your guidance and counsel will, therefore, be especially valuable. Your predecessor, Ambassador Robertson of Australia, has left behind a remarkable legacy of leadership and dynamism. While I cannot review all his accomplishments here, I must pay special tribute to him for his efforts in contributing to a marked qualitative improvement in the dialogue between my Office and the Executive Committee. His hard work and dedication on the question of observers is another example of his energy and skills. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Ambassador's staff for their hard work in support of the outgoing Chairman's efforts on behalf of the Office.

53. Mr. Chairman, as I said at the outset, we are faced with unique circumstances: opportunities that cannot slip away and challenges that cannot be ignored. Many of these I have outlined today, and will, undoubtedly, be discussed at greater length during this session. At the same time, we must acknowledge that peace and hope require a considerable degree of commitment and, at least temporarily, clear costs in terms of resources. The costs of the alternative are painfully known to us. The choice is, therefore, clear: we cannot hesitate nor can we succumb to narrow interests. We must be poised and ready to build on what has recently been achieved. The decade of the eighties has often been described as the decade of the dispossessed and the destitute. Yet, as we approach the end of this decade, there exists an excellent opportunity to make amends for these disturbing and turbulent past years. Let it be said one day that the period that followed was marked by a massive reversal in the fortunes of millions of these people. We owe them no less.

Notes

a/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

ANNEX II

Provisional agenda for the fortieth session

Under agenda item 9, the Executive Committee considered and adopted the following provisional agenda for the fortieth session of the Committee:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organisational matters.
4. General debate.
5. International protection.
6. Review of UNHCR programmes financed by Voluntary Funds in 1988-1989 and adoption of the revised 1989 budget and proposed programmes and budget for 1990.
7. Review of developments in UNHCR activities relating to:
 - (a) Assistance;
 - (b) Durable solutions;
 - (c) Refugee aid and development.
8. Administrative and financial questions:
 - (a) Status of contributions and overall financial needs for 1989 and 1990;
 - (b) Administration and management.
9. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the forty-first session of the Executive Committee.
10. Any other business.
11. Adoption of the draft report of the fortieth session.

ANNEX III

Participation by government observer delegations in the
Sub-Committees of the Whole on International Protection
and on Administrative and Financial Matters, as well as
in the informal sessions of the Executive Committee
during 1989

Under agenda item 10, the Executive Committee considered and approved the applications submitted by the following government observer delegations (as contained in A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.14 and Add.1-3) for participation in the Sub-Committees of the Whole on International Protection and on Administrative and Financial Matters, as well as in the informal sessions of the Executive Committee during 1989:

Afghanistan
Angola
Bangladesh
Bulgaria
Burundi
Cameroon
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Cyprus
Democratic Kampuchea
Djibouti
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Gabon
Ghana
Guatemala
Honduras
Hungary
India
Indonesia

Ireland
Jordan
Malawi
Malaysia
Mozambique
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea
Peru
Philippines
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Romania
Rwanda
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Spain
Sri Lanka
Swaziland
Syrian Arab Republic
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Viet Nam
Zimbabwe