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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 105: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: questions relating to refugees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*) (A/53/12 and Add.1, A/53/325, 328, 413 and 486)

1. **Mr. Satoh** (Japan) said that, as outlined in the High Commissioner's report (A/53/12 and Add.1), refugee problems posed a number of complex challenges and were often long-lasting, since refugees often fled from their countries before the outbreak of conflict and would only return to them long after the conflict had ceased. The fact that there were currently more internally displaced persons than refugees compounded the difficulties facing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

2. A broad range of efforts was required, including conflict prevention, refugee protection, conflict settlement, repatriation, rehabilitation and post-conflict development. In that regard, development efforts were essential to ensuring both post-conflict stability and prevention of further conflict. Close coordination and cooperation between the United Nations, related organizations and international partners was vital.

3. In Africa, the outlook for refugees and displaced persons was particularly gloomy. Recurring and seemingly insoluble conflicts reduced the prospects for resettlement, while internal and cross-border displacement produced a situation of exceptional suffering.

4. In October 1998, the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) had adopted the Tokyo Agenda for Action, calling for support for Africa's efforts to ensure stability through conflict prevention. The Agenda stressed the importance of good governance and a smooth recovery from the effects of conflict. It also drew attention to the link between lasting development and effective conflict prevention as mutually reinforcing themes, and characterized good governance, conflict prevention and post-conflict development as the basic foundations for development.

5. The Agenda identified conflict prevention goals and mechanisms for African States and their development partners. They included the need for the latter to be better prepared in the areas of emergency and post-conflict relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in order to facilitate the transition from emergency relief to development assistance.

6. While many obstacles remained to the implementation of the Tokyo Agenda, it offered opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination among all actors involved in refugee problems in Africa. Those opportunities should be seized in order to tackle refugee problems more effectively.

7. The unprecedented increase in attacks on UNHCR humanitarian personnel over the year had produced a larger number of casualties among United Nations civilians than among its military personnel. The safety and security of civilians working for UNHCR was a matter of top priority, and efforts in that area would redound to the benefit of refugees, displaced persons and other civilians. In the light of the recent attack on staff of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), his delegation called on all States which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. The Statute of the International Criminal Court clearly stated that attacks against personnel involved in a humanitarian assistance mission could constitute war crimes.

8. The establishment of the Trust Fund for Security of United Nations Personnel was encouraging, and Japan intended to contribute \$1 million to it in the hope that training and other measures could reduce the number of attacks against humanitarian personnel.

9. UNHCR required more cooperation and support to meet its increasingly complex challenges, including those in the area of policy coordination. For its part, Japan would continue to support that body, despite its own economic difficulties. It hoped that the international community would follow suit.

10. **Mr. Benevides** (Brazil) said that the report of the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/53/12 and Add.1) highlighted a series of positive developments, including the overall reduction in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons in 1997. In that year, there had been no massive refugee flows and well over 600,000 refugees had returned to their homes.

11. Brazil commended the Office of the High Commissioner for its work over the year and welcomed the fact that it had strengthened its institutional capacity to manage voluntary repatriation.

12. Despite the positive developments, there was a potential for large-scale displacement in several regions of the world, given the increase in the number and intensity of ethnically based conflicts within States. Moreover, the granting of asylum was increasingly subject to restrictions, including severely limited admission, adoption of legal measures that automatically excluded certain categories of asylum-seekers

from refugee status, and stringent criteria applied to individual asylum-seekers.

13. The international community should strengthen its commitment to the institution of asylum and to the principle of non-refoulement, which represented the legal and moral bases of international protection for refugees. The refugee issue was a global problem and required the commitment and cooperation of all States.

14. At the national level, measures to curtail illegal immigration should be balanced with the need to safeguard the rights of refugees. Physical and legal barriers to entry or asylum should be removed, and manifestations of racism, xenophobia and violence against refugees should be condemned.

15. For its part, Brazil fully subscribed to the main international instruments for the protection and assistance of refugees and of individuals subjected to persecution on the grounds of race, religion, political beliefs or nationality. Brazil had interpreted the instruments more broadly to include protection of individuals fleeing from situations of open violence within and between States. Brazil believed that it was the fundamental right of every human being to seek and to be granted refugee status, and called on all States that had not yet done so to become parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

16. In Brazil, refugees enjoyed the full exercise of their civil rights, within the limits of the law. Their access to the labour market was facilitated through the provision of entry visas, identity papers and work permits, while access to social security and health care was also assured. In a move that went beyond the 1951 Convention, new legislation had been enacted which recognized, *inter alia*, that refugees who were victims of serious violations of human rights were eligible for asylum.

17. Brazil had established a national commission for refugees, including both governmental and non-governmental representatives with the authority to shape government policies and to deal with all matters relating to refugees in Brazil. UNHCR had recognized that initiative as the most advanced legal proposal in that field in Latin America.

18. Brazil enjoyed close and highly valuable cooperation with non-governmental organizations on the issue of refugees and looked forward to continuing its cooperation with and support for the High Commissioner and her Office.

19. **Mr. Ren Yisheng** (China) said that, despite the difficulties facing UNHCR, its staff continued to display exceptional courage and dedication. During the past year, UNHCR had been forced to cut back its activities both at

headquarters and in the field because of a lack of finance. At the same time, the situations in Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone had deteriorated, resulting in an increased need for UNHCR assistance. In certain areas, refugee camps remained heavily militarized, and refugees and humanitarian workers alike had been attacked and even murdered. When minimum levels of security could not be guaranteed, UNHCR had been compelled to withdraw its staff and suspend its operations.

20. The adoption by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner of "International solidarity and burden-sharing" as its theme for the year (A/53/12/Add.1, annex III) had been most timely. The problem of refugees was a global one requiring global efforts. Currently, developing States hosted the majority of the world's refugees, often with grave implications for their political, economic, social and environmental conditions. It was unrealistic and unfair to ask those countries to continue to bear a disproportionate share of the burden, and he therefore appealed to the international community, particularly the developed States, to increase assistance to host countries and to provide refugees with more opportunities for resettlement.

21. The refugee problem must be tackled not only by providing humanitarian assistance, but also by addressing its root causes, which were foreign aggression and occupation, internal conflicts, racism, abject poverty and underdevelopment. To that end, the international community must promote respect for State sovereignty and territorial integrity; facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes; combat racism; and endeavour to bridge the gap between the North and the South, notably by increasing official development assistance, which currently accounted for only 0.25 per cent of GDP, its lowest-ever level.

22. In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone had the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. However, certain Western countries were pursuing restrictive asylum policies in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. He appealed to those countries to respect the basic human rights of asylum-seekers and urged States to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. China, which was a party to those instruments, had faithfully implemented their provisions. It had admitted and resettled some 300,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, as well as providing assistance to refugees in other regions through bilateral and multilateral channels. It was committed to further strengthening its relations with UNHCR.

23. China welcomed the increased cooperation between UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly their joint efforts to promote tolerance, achieve cultural pluralism and protect the asylum regime. It was important, however, that each body should continue to operate solely within its own unique mandate, thus avoiding duplication of work.

24. **Mr. Sfeir-Younis** (World Bank) said that conflict and poverty were inextricably linked: unequal access to productive resources such as land, capital and skills and to basic services such as health care and education could inflame social and ethnic tensions. Accordingly, the World Bank focused on prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

25. The Bank's post-conflict strategy laid great emphasis on poverty reduction. Sixteen of the world's poorest States were post-conflict countries and they accounted for a growing share of the Bank's lending. The Bank had played a major role in providing finance and external assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Gaza and the West Bank. Work in Africa was particularly significant, since almost half of the world's post-conflict States were African. The Bank also played an important coordinating role, chairing donor groups and providing economic advice. Recognizing that the removal of landmines was a prerequisite for re-establishing normal development activities, the Bank had developed operational guidelines for financing landmine clearance. As far as prevention was concerned, the Bank had included the reduction of violence as an aim of its country-assistance strategies in States such as Colombia.

26. Turning to the Bank's future work, he said that a new policy framework for post-conflict reconstruction had recently been approved. Within that framework, the Bank would conduct analysis and monitor developments in conflict areas allowing it to intervene swiftly and effectively as soon as the hostilities ceased. The Bank was also planning to expand its post-conflict unit established in 1997, which was currently supporting country teams undertaking strategic operational work in some 20 countries in four continents. The new post-conflict fund would shortly begin to disburse grants to support early catalytic work in those countries, as well as financing analytical projects on conflict resolution and demilitarization. The Bank was also seeking ways to overcome the complex problem of post-conflict debt.

27. The Bank was expanding its coordination with organs of the United Nations system, including UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and with various governmental organizations. Coordination was especially important at the point when hostilities ceased and

reconstruction could begin. After internal conflicts, people formerly at war had to learn to live together, share limited natural resources, form a common government and tolerate ethnic and cultural differences. With enhanced coordination and a clear division of labour, peacekeepers and development organizations could make a real difference. They must work together to ensure a fluid relief-to-development transition.

28. **Mr. Linati-Bosch** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that concern for refugees and internally displaced persons was one of the Sovereign Order's highest priorities. Said to number more than 40 million worldwide, they were the victims of Governments' inability or unwillingness to afford their citizens protection. Yet the growth in the number of refugees over the years had begun to tire the patience of some people. While the peaceful resolution of disagreements was the best means to prevent conflict, the world was far from ideal: conflicts continued to occur. Thus, organizations such as the Sovereign Order were left to respond to the sufferings of persons who had been displaced.

29. The Sovereign Order had a long history of helping refugees, sponsoring research and providing aid, shelter, medical care and counselling for refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Ethiopia, Hungary, Kosovo, the Sudan, Uganda and Yugoslavia. Its volunteers worked in different parts of Africa, Asia and Europe. The Order had recently opened an office in Uganda and would shortly open an office in Montenegro. It had also modified the statutes of the Emergency Corps of the Order of Malta (ECOM) to encompass objectives that were not strictly confined to emergency situations.

30. While the huge numbers involved made it impossible for the Order to solve the problems of all refugees and internally displaced persons, it could provide assistance that made the difference between life and death. Its sovereign status also gave it a comparative advantage in providing help where it was most needed.

31. There was a need to strengthen international solidarity in order to end armed conflicts that obliged people to flee their homes. Internal or cross-border displacement should be considered a grave violation of human rights. A peace plan and a global solidarity plan with refugees and displaced persons were urgently required, particularly in Cambodia, Central Europe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

32. There was a danger that States offering the first asylum in the context of mass exoduses lost sight of the plight of individuals who had a well-founded fear of persecution if they were forcibly repatriated. That was a serious threat, even in

traditional host countries in the developed world; it involved freedom of conscience. The process of appeal to international tribunals in such cases needed to be reinforced.

33. Most mass exoduses occurred in developing countries, which lacked the resources to offer emergency relief. In that situation, repatriation was the ideal solution, if peaceful conditions could be guaranteed in the home country. The recent example of Guinea-Bissau underscored the need for greater stability and peace to avoid a repetition of what had happened in that country when thousands of persons who had been repatriated had again been forced to flee only two months later.

34. The Sovereign Order of Malta reiterated its support for the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and looked forward to continuing its cooperation with other international organizations.

35. **Mr. Carranza** (Guatemala) said that, through the efforts of the National Commission for Services to Returnees, Refugees and Displaced Persons, over the past decade nearly 40,000 Guatemalan refugees had been repatriated from neighbouring countries, especially Mexico. As indicated in the High Commissioner's report (A/53/12, para.106) in the past 12 months steady progress had been made in the search for definitive solutions for the Guatemalan refugees. In the past one and a half years alone, nearly 6,000 refugees had been repatriated with UNHCR assistance. His Government welcomed the fact that the organized collective repatriation was coming to an end; 4,300 more refugees were projected to return before June 1999.

36. While welcoming the reduction in the number and magnitude of conflicts in recent years, he said that the international community should make greater efforts to avert ethnic conflicts, which could give rise to large-scale refugee flows.

37. He noted that the repatriation and rehabilitation work of UNHCR had greatly contributed to the consolidation of peace and the refugees' full integration into society.

38. Guatemala recognized the importance of international protection and of UNHCR efforts to encourage greater accession to the relevant international instruments. It shared the High Commissioner's view (A/53/12, para.11) that the protection of refugees was linked to the search for and attainment of durable solutions.

39. On the regional level, he wished to mention the intergovernmental dialogue on migration issues, commonly referred to as the "Puebla Process" (A/53/12, para.112),

which had been initiated in 1996 and in which his country was participating.

40. Guatemala had ratified the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1984 Cartagena Declaration. The Congress had also adopted legislation making it easier for returning Guatemalan refugees to obtain identity documents.

41. His delegation was deeply concerned about the acts of violence perpetrated against refugees and appealed to States hosting refugee camps to ensure adequate protection and to prevent the infiltration of armed elements into the camps.

42. **Mr. Mwakawago** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his country had continued to extend protection to hundreds of thousands of refugees, and contributed towards finding political solutions to the refugee problems in the case of Burundi through its support of the political dialogue within the Arusha framework.

43. His country had been optimistic a year earlier because of the repatriation of some 500,000 Rwandan refugees and because some 70,000 Congolese refugees had registered for repatriation and the process had been going well. However, with the new outbreak of civil strife in August 1998 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the process had had to be halted, and his country had had to deal with new influxes of refugees. By 20 September, more than 10,000 refugees had already entered Tanzania, and refugee outflows from Burundi had not stopped. The refugee population in his country was currently estimated at more than 300,000, constituting the region's largest single refugee group.

44. Tanzania would continue to meet its international obligations of hosting the refugees. However, the burden was heavier than ever before. Assisting refugees had pushed countries of asylum, including Tanzania, towards new risks and had even exacerbated tensions between States. In recent times, those countries had been the subject of undue criticism and had been required to make concessions beyond the call of duty. He was referring to the alleged militarization of refugee camps, the armed elements to be found in some camps, and about the failure of the international community or host Governments to separate the genuine refugees from the others. While the possibility of having armed elements in refugee camps had not been foreseen in 1951, it was now imperative to look at the matter comprehensively to see how international guidelines could be developed to deal with those elements. Even where capacity existed, there were both legal and moral considerations that militated against such action.

45. Closely related to the maintenance of the civilian nature of refugee camps was the issue of locating camps away from

border areas. In his Government's view, the presence of refugee camps near the border was necessary and would continue. Locating refugee camps away from the border area would deny the refugees the opportunity to be repatriated early; proximity to their homeland was an incentive to early return with fewer logistical problems.

46. **Mr. El-Aas** (Sudan) said that the Sudan shared the view that voluntary repatriation was the ideal solution for many of the world's refugees. For over 30 years, the Sudan had been host to almost one million refugees from neighbouring countries, providing them with assistance and with opportunities to be voluntarily repatriated. The fact that the Sudanese people shared their very limited resources with those refugees was testimony to their cultural heritage and principled stance on refugee questions.

47. There had been a sharp decline in recent years in the level of international assistance for refugee projects in the Sudan, currently covering only 20 per cent of the costs incurred. The international community should do more to share the burden, which the Sudan was unable to bear alone.

48. There were glaring inconsistencies in the allocation of funds for refugees. The allocation to the Sudan did not reflect the numbers of registered refugees in that country, while other States had been allocated much larger sums for considerably fewer refugees.

49. The result was that some refugees in the Sudan lived in misery. The majority did not live in camps and so could not be afforded international assistance. The Sudan appealed to the High Commissioner to undertake a survey of those refugees and to provide them with assistance. It further urged the international community to supplement the assistance which the Sudan provided to refugees.

50. The Sudanese Government had appealed in vain to the international community to help deal with the economic, social and environmental impact of refugee situations. Projects which the Sudan had proposed for the revitalization of affected areas were unlikely to get started, while others had been launched and then abandoned without warning or explanation. The Sudan was convinced of the need to avoid politicization of refugee questions and distortion of their humanitarian nature. Donor States should renew their commitment to revitalization projects in the Sudan.

51. For its part, while the Sudan would spare no effort to achieve the voluntary repatriation of refugees, it faced many difficulties of a practical nature. In the case of Ethiopian nationals in the Sudan, it had been impossible to meet the deadline for voluntary repatriation because of external circumstances. Food shortages and other problems had halted

the operation earlier in 1998. His delegation hoped that account would be taken of those problems and a new deadline established.

52. Some 320,000 Eritreans in the Sudan seeking voluntary repatriation continued to face obstacles. The Sudan appealed to Eritrea to fulfil its international commitments and to take measures to welcome the return of its nationals. In that regard, it was pleased to note that Eritrea had concluded an agreement concerning the caseload for reintegration programmes.

53. The Sudanese Government was extremely concerned for its own citizens who had become refugees in neighbouring States because of the war in the Sudan. Those refugees suffered from shortages of food and medicines and were vulnerable to attack in certain countries. The Sudan appealed to the international community to provide them with the assistance and protection they required, thereby ensuring that rebel groups were unable to press them into military service. It wished to be afforded the opportunity to visit Sudanese refugees in their camps and to inform them about current conditions in the Sudan in order to clear the way for their voluntary repatriation, following the signing of a peace accord in 1997 and the adoption of the requisite constitutional amendments.

54. The situation of unaccompanied minors forced to flee from armed conflict was of particular concern to the Sudan. Those children were especially vulnerable to human rights violations, including enforced military recruitment and their use as human shields. Such had been the fate of tens of thousands of children in southern Sudan who had been captured by rebel forces. The Sudan hoped that the provision of assistance to unaccompanied minors would continue.

55. The Sudan would host a ministerial conference on refugee problems, organized by the Organization of African Unity, in December 1998. The conference would consider questions concerning refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees in Africa. The Sudan would contribute its experience in that field in order to secure a successful outcome.

56. **Mr. Plorutti** (Argentina) said that, even though the causes of widespread violence were no longer to be found in southern South America, the number of requests for refuge in his country had doubled since 1996, most of them coming from other regions. Argentina was seeking to improve its procedures for the integration of refugees who had been granted asylum.

57. A series of activities was also under way, in coordination with the UNHCR regional office, located in Buenos Aires, some of them involving the participation of neighbouring countries. They included training courses for

police officers on peacekeeping missions, and courses to promote greater awareness of refugee issues.

58. Argentina's assistance to refugees went beyond the regional framework and was aimed at burden-sharing with countries in other regions. That included family reunification, which should be considered a fundamental right of refugees

59. **Ms. Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that one of the root causes of the ethnic conflicts in Africa was to be found in the colonial era, when the continent had been carved up by the colonial Powers, which had shown utter disdain for the borders formed by nature or by distinct ethnic or cultural groups. The 1963 decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to maintain the colonial borders had avoided territorial conflicts but had resulted in uncontrolled factionalism. The new States had not had enough time to instil patriotic values in their peoples and to forge a nation before confronting the challenge of factionalism. That factionalism, frequently confused with tribalism, had inflamed latent antagonisms, sometimes leading to armed conflicts over the exercise of political power, which frequently went hand in hand with economic power.

60. The international community had not reacted to the conflicts in Liberia and, later, in Rwanda. The indifference of the developed countries following the disastrous intervention in Somalia had led African leaders to take the initiative to bring peace to those lands. In Liberia, in the face of the inertia of the Security Council, the countries of the subregion had committed themselves, within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to working to restore peace. However, resources and logistics were needed to achieve peace and development in Africa; otherwise, progress would be slow and crises would persist.

61. Her Government had been able to cope with the problem of the Liberian refugees by integrating them into host communities. Voluntary repatriation had been encouraged, but in recent days some supporters of Mr. Johnson, the opponent to the elected President, had begun to return. That was cause for concern, and Côte d'Ivoire fervently hoped for the peace and reconciliation that would enable all Liberians to return to their homeland in safety.

62. **Mr. Arda** (Turkey) said that the causes of population displacement had changed considerably, while diversified conflict situations had created new categories of displacement, which constituted major challenges to the protection and assistance mandates of UNHCR. Flexibility and creativity were necessary to meet those challenges. His delegation believed that voluntary repatriation remained the preferred solution. The role of UNHCR in that area consisted

in acting as a facilitator between the country of origin and the host country and as a guarantor with respect to refugees themselves. When voluntary repatriation was not possible, the option of third country resettlement should be considered, particularly in situations where developing countries were hosting large numbers of refugees.

63. The principle of international solidarity notwithstanding, it was the States bordering conflict areas, generally developing countries, which bore the primary burden of hosting refugees, often having to divert considerable resources from their development programmes. Turkey itself had experienced the inadequacy of international solidarity when some half a million refugees had crossed its borders in a few days in 1991. It shared the view of the High Commissioner that, while human displacement was an outcome of conflict, it could also be a cause of new conflicts. It must be stressed, however, that, even in the absence of burden-sharing, States must still fulfil their fundamental protection obligations.

64. In order to facilitate post-conflict voluntary repatriation, due regard must be given during peace talks to creating conditions conducive to the peaceful coexistence of communities, and international assistance must continue even when the humanitarian crisis was over, through the provision of development aid.

65. Turkey was committed to regional cooperation on refugee issues. It was supporting the follow-up to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Relevant Neighbouring States (A/53/413) and the regional consultations in the Central Asia, South-West Asia and Middle East region (A/53/12, paras. 146–153). There was a danger, however, that such cooperation might result in individual regions having to cope with the problem of refugees in isolation, and regional burden-sharing must therefore be complemented by initiatives at the global level.

66. **Ms. Lutfallah** (Canada), noting that security in refugee camps was a pressing issue, said that her delegation looked forward to the forthcoming joint report on that problem by UNHCR and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Special attention must be paid to the protection needs of the most vulnerable refugees, including women and children. There was also a need to enhance the safety of UNHCR staff and other humanitarian personnel, who often had to work in isolation in highly insecure areas.

67. Humanitarian action to alleviate the suffering of refugees must be complemented by political action to address the root causes of conflicts. The enhancement of respect for

human rights was vital in that regard, and she welcomed the cooperation between UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in that area. Greater attention must be given to post-conflict situations in order to ensure safe returns, rehabilitation and durable peace.

68. Her delegation supported the goal of achieving universal accession to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and called upon the international community to reaffirm its commitment to upholding the spirit and principles of those instruments.

69. Her delegation applauded the efforts of States which were hosting large refugee populations. Burden-sharing was vital, since not all States had the capacity to cope with the political, economic, social and environmental implications. The adoption by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme of "International solidarity and burden-sharing" as its annual theme was a positive step.

70. In order to protect the integrity of the international asylum system, it was vital to differentiate between illegal migrants and genuine asylum-seekers. International cooperation was needed to combat migrant trafficking. While border control was a necessary function of sovereign States, genuine asylum-seekers must continue to have access to protection and assistance.

71. **Mr. Schatzer** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that he wished to focus on the cooperation between IOM and UNHCR. In recent years, the international community had come to realize that some of the most serious problems and challenges posed by migration and population displacement required regional approaches. A pertinent example was the ongoing follow-up to the 1996 CIS Conference and the implementation of its Programme of Action. In that regard, IOM was mainly concerned with the need for technical cooperation to develop the institutional capacity of the Governments of the CIS countries to achieve durable solutions. National migration management programmes had been established in eight countries and were beginning to bear fruit: border controls had been strengthened, and migration and refugee legislation in line with international standards had been enacted or was in the pipeline, although a gap remained between the provisions of that legislation and the capacity of States to implement them. Despite the many positive developments, the need for international technical assistance would continue beyond the year 2000, the date set for the end of the follow-up process. That was because overall donor support had been disappointing, although certain States had contributed.

72. Many of the underlying causes of migration fell outside the mandates and capacities of migration organizations. One significant outcome of the CIS Conference had been the participation of a growing number of international and non-

governmental organizations in tackling those problems alongside IOM and UNHCR. Another example of regional cooperation was the Asia-Pacific consultations, which provided the Governments of that region with an informal framework for discussing migration issues. He hoped that the similar processes taking shape in other regions would serve their participants equally well.

73. IOM and UNHCR, in their joint annual consultations had discussed two main themes, return and security, and how to enhance their cooperation in those areas. They had a common responsibility to ensure that repatriation of refugees and return of migrants conducted under their auspices did not exacerbate the crisis that refugees or migrants had fled.

74. The bulk of IOM staff worked in the field. While the Organization was grateful to the United Nations for agreeing to include IOM staff within the United Nations staff security system, it remained extremely concerned about threats to their safety.

75. Referring to the tremendous devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch, he said that a swift and concerted response by the international community was vital in order to prevent major population displacement, which would serve only to worsen the situation.

76. The international community had created a complex system of organizations involved in humanitarian relief. It was imperative that they should coordinate their activities efficiently in order to make optimum use of scarce resources. Moreover, cooperation, rather than competition, between those organizations was the best means of achieving what their principal stakeholders — victims, recipient countries and donors — deserved and expected, namely timely help through joint approaches.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.