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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING (FIRST PART)

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. Cissé	(Senegal)
later:	Mr. Srivihok (Vice-Chairman)	(Thailand)
later:	Mr. Cissé (Chairman)	(Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 99: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/49/12 and Add.1; A/49/380, A/49/533, A/49/534, A/49/577 and Corr.1, A/49/578, A/49/218-S/1994/801 and A/49/287 and Corr.1; A/C.3/49/12)

1. Mrs. SHARFMAN (Israel) said that Israel fully supported the high priority assigned to strengthening the emergency preparedness and response capability of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which throughout the world had demonstrated the need to save lives and prevent the deterioration of already intolerable conditions. Her delegation also agreed with the High Commissioner's assertion that the ultimate objective of international protection of refugees was not to institutionalize exile but to buy time for solutions to refugee problems. The plight of refugees could be prevented or minimized through improved economic and social conditions, as part of a broader process of economic advancement and social development and integration.

2. The unique circumstances of Israeli history had made Israel especially sensitive to the plight of refugees around the world. In the 1930s and 1940s, the nations of the world had closed their gates to thousands of Jewish refugees, condemning them to death in Nazi concentration camps. During the first years of statehood, Israel had been flooded with hundreds of thousands of refugees who had survived the holocaust. They had been quickly followed by over half a million Jewish refugees from Arab countries. One of the highest priorities of Israeli society had been the integration of refugees. Israel was currently receiving hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union. The Israeli experience in absorbing massive waves of refugees could serve as a model for the integration of displaced populations. Its efforts were aimed at turning former refugees into productive citizens who considered themselves at home in Israel and full members of Israeli society. In addition to governmental and non-governmental education and assistance programmes, there were centres for the absorption of new immigrants, residential educational facilities for children and teenagers, generous packages of financial assistance that included rent subsidies, tax exemptions and free medical care.

3. In the light of the connection between development, peace, stability and democracy, programmes of international assistance were an effective long-term means of helping to prevent the factors that caused refugee flows. Through the Centre for International Cooperation and the International Institute of the Federation of Trade Unions, Israel provided development assistance that helped generate economic and social conditions conducive to stability and growth. Israel's emergency humanitarian assistance had brought its experience and know-how to the aid of refugee populations in places as diverse as Cambodia, Armenia, Rwanda and Bosnia. In the case of Rwanda, Israel had been the first country to establish and operate a field hospital, which included medical personnel and supplies, in Goma, Zaire, in cooperation with UNHCR and other international

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organizations. Israel's representative to the United Nations in Geneva had maintained regular contacts with the UNHCR coordinating team and with the Zairian authorities. Israel looked forward to expanded cooperation with the United Nations and had informed the Organization that it was willing, in principle, to contribute a fully staffed field hospital for service with one of the United Nations peace-keeping operations in Africa.

4. Like many other nations, Israel had provided medical and humanitarian assistance to Bosnian refugees and also had airlifted Muslim refugees to safety in Israel. Such assistance had come not only from the Government but also from local communities and private organizations, since the horrors of ethnic cleansing had reminded the Israeli public of their own people's suffering in Nazi-occupied Europe. A number of women's organizations and other groups had petitioned the Prime Minister of Israel and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to recognize rape as a war crime. In that regard, her delegation was pleased that, in her report (A/49/12 and Add.1), the High Commissioner had made substantive recommendations to prevent and address the problem of sexual violence and women refugees.

5. In order to find solutions to the problem of refugees, all nations must learn to identify with the weak and the powerless. To that end, the teaching of tolerance towards strangers must be enhanced; that would also help prevent the rise of extremist right-wing groups, whose political base rested on xenophobia that tore at the fabric of democratic society. Moreover, the problem of refugees affected all States, both developing and developed alike.

6. Mr. MAZLAN (Malaysia) said that the statistics on refugees supported the argument that the problem of refugees and displaced persons must be tackled at the source, before the outflow of refugees. Without determined and coordinated intergovernmental involvement in curtailing a crisis before it happened, it would never be possible to control the problem effectively. The humanitarian tragedy in Rwanda had brought to the fore the constraints vis-à-vis immediate response in cases of that kind and had served to underline the need for UNHCR to strengthen its emergency preparedness and response capacity.

7. His delegation supported the High Commissioner's assertion that UNHCR should not become a hostage to politics and that the impartial and neutral nature of its mandate must be preserved. It also supported the High Commissioner's holistic approach to the issues of protection, repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees and displaced persons. The experience acquired so far had confirmed that refugee problems called for United Nations involvement at multidimensional levels. Attention should also be given to the burden that refugees placed on host countries. Most host countries were developing countries that were hard pressed to meet the requirements of their own people. Those countries should be supported so that they could fully address their problems. It was also important to protect human rights, and his delegation supported the High Commissioner's intention to increase links with the High Commissioner for Human Rights in respect of the protection of the human rights of refugees, especially on their return to their homeland.

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8. His delegation was in favour of convening a United Nations conference for the comprehensive consideration and review of the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants, which had been proposed in General Assembly resolution 48/113. Nevertheless, such a conference should not merely consider the problem but should recommend specific solutions in terms of resources and means of implementation. The causes of the problem of refugees and displaced persons had already been addressed at the World Conference on Human Rights and the International Conference on Population and Development, and would also be addressed at the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

9. Malaysia recognized the importance of regional arrangements in resolving the refugee problem, since such arrangements had the advantage of incorporating all parties involved, including countries of origin. In South-East Asia, the Comprehensive Plan of Action of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees had been a success. Malaysia and Viet Nam had held bilateral talks with a view to solving the refugee problem by the end of 1995. From 1975 to 1994, Malaysia had had to handle a total of 252,461 Indo-Chinese refugees and illegal immigrants; thanks to the work of UNHCR and the cooperation of third countries, and to voluntary repatriation, that number had been reduced to 5,736. Malaysia supported the High Commissioner's proposal to convene an international conference on refugees and displaced persons in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States, as well as the Tripartite Agreement between Rwanda, Zaire and UNHCR regarding Rwandese refugees.

10. Mr. SANTAPUTRA (Thailand) said that, to countries with limited resources, it had become increasingly difficult to meet the enormous needs for humanitarian assistance to the millions fleeing persecution across borders. UNHCR must not be left to shoulder the burden alone, as the refugee problem was the responsibility of the entire international community. With that in mind, Thailand had contributed substantial humanitarian assistance to the people of Rwanda and had responded to the joint UNHCR/WFP appeal for the voluntary repatriation of Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh.

11. Thailand's policy towards refugees had been guided by a tradition of humanitarianism derived from its cultural and religious values. Since 1975, Thailand had been host to hundreds of thousands of refugees from Cambodia, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam. Despite the successful repatriation of 380,000 Cambodian refugees within the framework of the Paris Peace Agreement, there still remained in Thailand 30,000 Indo-Chinese who, according to some rules, were ineligible for resettlement. It was unclear to him why they did not have the right to return to their motherland or other countries of their choice.

12. For many years the international community had recognized resettlement as the only solution to the refugee problem. In recent years, however, the political climate in the countries of origin in South-East Asia had become more conducive to repatriation, which was currently considered a realistic, desirable and durable solution. That position had been confirmed at the Fifth Steering Committee of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees. During that

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meeting, the participants had unanimously agreed that the circumstances which had caused citizens of Viet Nam to seek asylum had changed, and that henceforth anyone leaving that country should not be entitled to benefit from special treatment under the Comprehensive Plan of Action in countries of first asylum, but should be treated in accordance with national legislation and internationally accepted practice. The Thai Government had undertaken extensive efforts to speed up the voluntary repatriation of non-refugee Vietnamese. Plans were also under way to close the Panat Nikom resettlement processing centre by the end of 1994.

13. Despite those efforts, the Thai Government was not satisfied with the current pace of repatriation, and it was possible that it would not meet the target date of the end of 1995 for completion of the process. To achieve that objective, complementary mechanisms must be established in order to increase the number of returnees. His delegation felt that the Steering Committee should meet well in advance of the target date to consider and identify such mechanisms.

14. The Thai Government had also been focusing on the repatriation of Laotian asylum-seekers living in camps in Thailand. The humanitarian situation of that group had been discussed at the tripartite meetings among Thailand, Laos and UNHCR. In order to reach the objective of their repatriation by the end of 1995, an action plan had been drawn up to mobilize the necessary resources from the international community to support and assist the repatriation programme and reintegration project for the Laotians. A tripartite working group had also been set up to monitor the implementation of the action plan and to provide follow-up.

15. His delegation firmly believed that repatriation, although the most durable and viable solution, was not an end in itself. It therefore urged the international community not to be oblivious to the well-being of the returnees once they had returned to their country of origin. It was a shared responsibility to ensure that they would be able to reintegrate themselves successfully into society, but it was the prime responsibility of the country of origin to accept the return of its citizens. The Thai Government's policy concerning illegal immigrants was clear: it would provide appropriate treatment only for those who were truly in need of protection and assistance. It would do its utmost to provide humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter for persons displaced into Thailand as a result of situations of conflict in their countries; however, as soon as the situation returned to normal, the Government would facilitate their safe return.

16. His Government was prepared to grant access to relief agencies to the returnees from Thai territory so that they could receive necessary assistance inside their country of origin. Persons affected by armed conflict who required international assistance, however, should be able to receive it in their own countries without having to cross borders. The time had come for all concerned parties to take preventive measures and to adopt an approach that combined political dimensions and humanitarian assistance with social and economic development measures which would allow all the parties concerned to work

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together supported by sufficient resources to take into account all human needs, and the motives that forced people to flee.

17. In the particular case of Cambodia, the Thai Government once again urged UNHCR, in view of the prevailing instability, to maintain facilities inside Cambodia in collaboration with other humanitarian organizations in order to provide protection and assistance to Cambodians affected or displaced by armed conflict. Along those lines, the Quick Impact Projects should be promoted in refugee-generating countries in order to create productive programmes to promote self-sufficiency. With regard to the Myanmar students who had taken refuge in Thailand, they had been given temporary assistance and shelter, and a safe area had been established for them at a cost to the Thai Government of \$1 million. A budget of \$200,000 had been allocated for their needs. Other Governments could share that burden by offering them scholarships.

18. The Thai Government recognized the importance of non-governmental organizations in solving the problem of refugees and displaced persons. Thailand supported UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies in the creation of the partnership process between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations worldwide known as Partnership in Action (PARINAC). The process culminated in the Global Conference in Oslo, which had adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action containing recommendations that would guide the response to present and future humanitarian challenges. In closing, his delegation called on the international community to remain involved in the refugee question and to continue providing UNHCR with the necessary resources to overcome the problem of displaced persons in South-East Asia and throughout the world.

19. Mr. Srivihok (Thailand), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

20. Ms. BENNANI (Morocco) said that some countries of asylum, concerned by the security problems arising from refugee flows, were applying stricter policies to the admission of refugees and immigration, and were reacting to such population movements with fear and adopting racist and xenophobic attitudes. Thus, the need arose for UNHCR to continue guaranteeing asylum and protection to refugees and to ensure respect for their human rights and for the principle of non-refoulement. The prospects for voluntary repatriation, which continued to be the most effective long-term solution, appeared encouraging and should be facilitated, which required the establishment of the necessary conditions to allow the individuals concerned freely to express their will to choose a voluntary return in dignity and safety.

21. Morocco endorsed the strategy of preventive diplomacy and hoped that it would be applied without delay in areas at risk not only because of political change, but because of the deteriorating economic and social situation. In order to put that strategy into practice, UNHCR must have the full cooperation of other United Nations agencies, such as UNICEF, WFP and WHO, and the regional banks and international financial institutions, and must coordinate its activities with them.

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22. Morocco supported the proposal to convene an international conference on the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants with a view to devising strategies and creating machinery for reaching solutions and preventing new refugee flows and other uncontrolled population movements that could affect political and economic stability both within countries and at the regional and international levels. Morocco welcomed the attention being given in UNHCR programmes to the needs of women and children, who constituted 80 per cent of the world's refugees and were the more vulnerable population groups.

23. Morocco noted with concern the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa, where, according to the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/49/578), prospects for a durable solution were undermined by renewed tensions and conflicts, especially in Angola, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia. Refugee problems in Africa posed insuperable security problems and laid a heavy burden on countries of asylum, which were already contending with economic and social instability. The international community would have to exert itself to assist UNHCR in its work in Africa. An effort of mobilization was also required on behalf of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Notwithstanding its modest resources, Morocco had not hesitated to show its solidarity with the countries concerned and with refugees, extending bilateral assistance and supporting the activities of humanitarian institutions, particularly UNHCR. Governmental assistance (for example, to Angola, Mozambique, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) had in many cases been accompanied by donations from the country's benevolent associations. In addition, Morocco welcomed the close collaboration that was developing between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations.

24. With regard to the voluntary repatriation of Saharans living outside the Sahara and wishing to take part in the referendum on self-determination, Morocco, which had proposed the organization and holding of the referendum, would spare no effort to assist UNHCR in fulfilling the mandate assigned to it by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), in accordance with the settlement plan and the corresponding Security Council resolutions. Morocco noted with satisfaction that the High Commissioner had referred in his statement to the commencement of the activities of the United Nations Identification Commission for the referendum in Western Sahara and that UNHCR had started preparing the repatriation programme for Western Sahara with a view to holding the said referendum in 1995. As had been noted in a number of United Nations forums, the referendum would put an end to the current harsh and unendurable situation of the refugees.

25. Mr. REZVANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that although responsibility for the question of refugees lay with the international community, countries that gave asylum to refugees, particularly developing countries, regrettably continued to have to shoulder the burden single-handed despite the basic principle of burden-sharing clearly stated in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The Islamic Republic of Iran suggested that a new approach should be adopted to achieve full implementation of the existing international instruments. It was also essential to undertake a thorough analysis of the main problems in developing countries, particularly

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economic and developmental problems, that forced people to leave their countries. In that connection, UNHCR could facilitate the opening of a frank and constructive dialogue between countries of origin and host countries.

26. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to experience disproportionate differences between the growing needs of refugees and existing international assistance. National resources that were crucially needed during the difficult post-war reconstruction period had had to be used to bridge the gap. UNHCR's report for 1993-1994 and proposed programmes and budget for 1995 (A/AC.96/808) showed a sharp decline in the funds allocated to the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was to be hoped that the budget would be revised and the allocated funds increased as had been promised. In view of the economic adjustments currently under way in the Islamic Republic of Iran, services for refugees might be adversely affected if those promises were not fully and fairly fulfilled. However, his country remained committed to the principle of humanitarian values and burden-sharing as set forth in the 1951 Convention.

27. With regard to the refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq in the Islamic Republic of Iran, voluntary, dignified and safe repatriation had consistently been sought as the most appropriate durable solution. Despite the continuing tragic war in Kabul, the relative peace and tranquillity prevailing in 20 provinces of Afghanistan had permitted the repatriation of 1,098,950 refugees, of whom only 400,702 had received assistance from UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP). Spontaneous repatriation of Afghan refugees had begun in early 1992, and the tripartite commission had not taken over the operation until December 1992. The Islamic Republic of Iran believed that repatriation could be encouraged in the short term by increasing the assistance package. However, experience in recent years had shown that unfavourable socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan were a major obstacle to the repatriation of refugees. Repatriation to Afghanistan should therefore be planned in both countries in a coordinated way. Currently, 1,701,150 Afghan refugees were residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran, of whom 1,229,150 held residence permits. While the repatriation of the remaining 472,000 was being prepared in the framework of the gradual repatriation arrangements, they would be allowed to remain in the country.

28. With regard to the situation of Iraqi refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, assistance had been provided for the voluntary repatriation of almost 81,900 refugees to the northern part of Iraq, a process that would continue in 1995 if the situation in the area continued to be favourable. However, new refugees continued to arrive from southern Iraq and, unless effective preventive policies were pursued, a larger refugee inflow could be recorded in the months ahead. The country had taken in 2,000 Iraqis who had sought refuge in Saudi Arabia but wished to settle in the Islamic Republic of Iran. A further 3,000 refugees were in the process of being resettled. All the operations were being carried out in cooperation with UNHCR. The total number of refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran was 2,373,250. He also drew attention to the humanitarian assistance provided to displaced Azerbaijanis within their own territory and the management of camps with a capacity of 50,000 persons since the previous year. Lastly, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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welcomed the assistance provided by non-governmental organizations to refugees in the country and had tried to create the requisite facilities for their participation in refugee-related activities.

29. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that the problem of refugees was particularly serious and complex in Africa. He therefore requested the international community to make every effort to provide the necessary assistance, especially in Rwanda, Somalia and Liberia. He also stressed the need for the international community to support the principle of the voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons. In that regard, the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), coordinated with that of the various United Nations agencies, was crucial in guaranteeing the protection and safety of refugees. Egypt wished to emphasize three points - the importance of enhancing UNHCR's capacity to respond promptly to emergency situations caused by natural disasters or armed conflicts, the need to support and strengthen UNHCR's activities and the coordination of human rights agencies in order to avert grave human rights violations that generated refugee flows or the expulsion of persons from their native lands, and the importance of devoting special attention to refugee women and children, who usually accounted for the bulk of the refugee population.

30. Egypt shared the concern expressed by other delegations about the security and safety of persons working with refugees and displaced persons, often in unsafe areas and situations, at the risk of their lives. It therefore supported United Nations efforts to draft an international convention dealing with the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel.

31. The refugee issue was closely linked to the programme of the World Summit for Social Development. Egypt was prepared to cooperate fully with other delegations to achieve the objectives of the Summit through the programme of action proposed for the Summit. Regarding the report of the Secretary-General on a new international humanitarian order (A/49/577), Egypt reiterated the need to establish a new humanitarian order with a view to ensuring respect for the right to self-determination of peoples living under foreign domination and occupation and for the cultural identity of peoples.

32. Egypt shared the concern of UNHCR and other delegations about the paucity of available resources in comparison with the scale of refugee problems. It hoped that the next UNHCR Pledging Conference would demonstrate States' interest and generosity so that UNHCR could carry out its programmes. Despite its economic difficulties, Egypt had always endeavoured to help countries affected by natural disasters. It also wished to express its gratitude to the United Nations and all States that had provided assistance to persons recently displaced in Egypt as a result of the floods.

33. Mr. ALVES (Brazil) said that, geographically remote though it was from most areas of tension, Brazil, as a country of asylum, also felt the direct impact of the growing presence of refugees, to which the Government and national humanitarian agencies had responded by making substantive efforts to accommodate them in their territory. The Government of Brazil thanked UNHCR for its

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support, its cooperation and assistance having been crucial in carrying out that work. Brazil shared the concern of the High Commissioner for Refugees at the growing reluctance of many States to keep their borders open. Attempts to restrict or suppress the rights guaranteed to refugees under the 1951 Convention and by the relevant precepts of international law could not be justified and, in fact, amounted to a crime against human beings in a desperate situation; they were all the more unacceptable when they were made by countries which, despite temporary difficulties, enjoyed the highest living standards in the world. All countries should uphold the principles of non-refoulement, solidarity and burden-sharing enshrined in international refugee law and refuse to condone racist or xenophobic attitudes.

34. Although many of the people seeking asylum today did not fit the exact definition of a refugee or qualify as refugees under the terms of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, it was essential that Governments should apply those terms flexibly in order to prevent further instability on the international scene. In order to tackle the problem, Brazil took note with interest of UNHCR's suggestions regarding the elaboration of a new legally binding instrument of broader scope, along the lines of the 1969 Convention of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and achieving consensus on a commitment similar to the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. Regarding internally displaced persons, Brazil supported UNHCR's policy of intervening only in specific circumstances requiring its particular experience and expertise and under certain conditions, with the consent of the State concerned, and never to the detriment of UNHCR's regular activities.

35. The ultimate causes of the refugee problem lay in social and economic backwardness, which might be either a cause or an exacerbating factor of conflicts that generated population movements. Economic and social factors also undermined the capacity of host countries to deal adequately with refugee influxes. Consequently, when dealing with refugee issues, the international community should envisage appropriate structural solutions to the problems of development and poverty. Humanitarian assistance could not replace the ability or will of Governments to provide effective answers to the structural problems besetting the international community.

36. Ms. FERTEKLIGIL (Turkey) said that in the present context, marked by the resurgence of nationalism and new forms of racism, there was a close link between the problem of refugees and population movements, on the one hand, and peace and stability, on the other, and the consequent interaction between political, economic and social factors. Concerted joint action by the international community and all relevant organizations was the only way of solving that multifaceted problem affecting mankind. Turkey therefore welcomed the operational links established by UNHCR with the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It also noted the conclusions of the Cairo Conference concerning population movements.

37. On the subject of voluntary repatriation programmes as the ideal solution to the problem and their implementation by UNHCR in various regions of the world, she said that between 1991 and 1993 over 30,000 Iraqi refugees of Kurdish origin had been repatriated under one of the assistance programmes that had been most successful thanks to the close cooperation between the country of temporary asylum, UNHCR and other international agencies. On account of its geographical situation and its history and tradition as a land of asylum, Turkey followed very closely situations of tension and their consequences, and efforts to resolve them. In that connection, the situation of the Bosnian refugees was a source of serious concern, and the causes of so much suffering must be addressed without delay. It was gratifying to note the humanitarian relief which UNHCR was continuing to provide to the Bosnian refugees; the importance of ensuring safe passage for humanitarian relief in the region should not be overlooked.

38. With regard to the exodus of 1.2 million persons from Azerbaijan, the situation of Azerbaijani refugees or displaced persons was also likely to worsen with the onset of winter. Turkey had appealed for international emergency assistance and had contributed \$51 million in financial assistance to the country. It was becoming increasingly urgent to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions in order to avert even more serious political and humanitarian consequences. Apart from the conflicts in the region, Turkey was fully aware of the problems besetting Africa, Asia and Latin America, particularly the human tragedy in Rwanda. Turkey also supported the measures taken by UNHCR to protect the most vulnerable groups of refugees, especially women and children, and the drafting of Guidelines that might improve the situation.

39. Turkey had spared no effort in alleviating the suffering of those seeking asylum in its territory, despite its limited means and resources. None the less, it considered that the granting of temporary protection was a matter for the sole jurisdiction of the authorities of the host country and that such protection could only be granted as a special measure and after examining the merits of each individual case. With that reservation, it took note of the definition of temporary protection contained in the conclusions on international protection in the report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work of its forty-fifth session (A/49/12/Add.1). Similarly, that document in no way affected the substance of Turkey's reservation concerning the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

40. Mr. HOXHA (Albania) noted that, in order to deal properly with the refugee problem, preventive measures would have to be introduced, and greater attention paid to respect for human rights and the consolidation of humanitarian law. In that context, he welcomed the initiative of UNHCR concerning cooperation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the refugee problem.

41. For the first time, Albanian law was currently facing the problem of refugees and asylum-seekers. Because it was a country with an economy in transition, Albania was producing economic emigrants rather than attracting refugees. Nevertheless, despite its economic difficulties, it had accepted a

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limited number of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, being situated close to the zone of conflict, Albania was under the constant threat of a massive flight of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, especially from Kosovo. The Albanians of that region were being forced to flee from the general repression, the violation of their human rights and the ethnic discrimination typical of the Belgrade authorities. Young Albanians were continually being threatened with induction into the Serbian army, which they refused to join because of their opposition to the war being waged by Serbia. As a result, a large number of Albanians had no choice but to escape to other countries, generally in Europe. The offices of UNHCR should be urged to continue to assist the voluntary repatriation of refugees and their re-integration in their country of origin. The understanding displayed by various European countries with regard to the problem of Albanian refugees from Kosovo was laudable, and it was to be hoped that they would maintain that attitude until the situation in the region improved.

42. Albania considered respect for the rights of economic emigrants from less-developed areas to be of the greatest importance. During the past three years, the number of temporary workers leaving Albania had continued to increase owing to the difficult situation in that country. Without prejudice to the right of countries to take measures in accordance with their national laws, it was essential to take account of the generally accepted norms and to adopt a humane attitude towards the plight of those persons. The use of emigrants for political ends by the receiving countries was unacceptable and, in the case of the neighbouring countries, represented a threat to stability. The forcible return of Albanian emigrants from Greece whenever tension between those two countries increased, a situation that was exploited for specific political objectives, constituted a violation of the above-mentioned principles. The most recent expulsion of 70,000 Albanians, in addition to being contrary to humanitarian law, did not help to resolve the problem.

43. Mr. NASSIROV (Azerbaijan) said that, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on emergency international assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan (A/49/380), the economic and social situation in the country had continued to deteriorate rapidly in the past year. With a population of 7 million and more than 1 million refugees and persons displaced by conflicts in the region, living conditions were extremely difficult, particularly for the latter, and the Government of Azerbaijan could not cope with an emergency on that scale. The activities of humanitarian organizations were attempting to cover the full spectrum of the refugee problem, but much remained to be done. The Secretary-General's report described those activities as well as the bilateral humanitarian assistance provided by Member States, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The people of Azerbaijan were grateful for the assistance offered by the Governments of Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Finland, Canada, Norway, Egypt and Belgium. He noted especially that the Government of the United States had allocated \$12 million for emergency assistance to Azerbaijan, despite amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act, adopted by the

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United States Congress for the purpose of excluding Azerbaijan from any United States assistance programme.

44. Moreover, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 48/114, entitled "Emergency international assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan", had done much to help draw the attention of the world community to the desperate plight of more than a million Azerbaijani refugees and displaced persons, who were victims of a war that was little known because it had not attracted the attention of the major communications media. Nevertheless, the international community had demonstrated that it was able to respond appropriately to an emergency situation, even one that had not been shown on television.

45. The Government of Azerbaijan strongly believed that, if refugee emergencies were to be resolved, it was necessary to take various approaches to the problem, combining political, humanitarian, peace-keeping and human rights efforts, in order to prevent "ethnic cleansing", alleviate refugee flows, and provide massive relief. The prevention of causes which forced people to flee was obviously the best solution to refugee problems, although in many cases prevention was far beyond the capacity of UNHCR. Nevertheless, that Office had contributed to developing regional approaches which offered the possibility of success.

46. In that regard, the delegation of Azerbaijan supported the efforts made by UNHCR to examine the convening of an international conference in 1995 devoted to the problems of refugees and displaced persons in the newly independent countries, in the spirit and broader context of General Assembly resolution 48/113. Such a conference would be very timely from the point of view of the situation of refugees, displaced persons and migrants in a region which had recently posed a nuclear threat. Since 1991, UNHCR had been involved in problems stemming from conflicts which had produced large-scale displacement of people in a number of newly independent States, including Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, it was important to note that the conference would be successful only if due attention were given to the causes of refugee problems, and not just to the treatment of consequences. The adoption of a global approach for coordination of measures regarding refugees and displaced persons would require a major effort on the part of the international community, and UNHCR could count on the participation of the Government of Azerbaijan in the process. On the other hand, it was necessary to find a solution to the problem of forced displacement, and Azerbaijan also welcomed the initiative of convening a global conference for the comprehensive examination and review of the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants. Lastly, his delegation noted that, as a result of joint efforts conducted by the Parliament of Azerbaijan and UNHCR, a conference on legislation on refugees, human rights and migration would be held in Baku from 21 to 23 November 1994, to which all interested countries and institutions were invited.

47. Mr. KAZHOYAN (Armenia) said that his country was unfortunately all too familiar with the refugee problem in all its gravity. The difficult situation in Armenia was due, among other things, to hundreds of thousands of refugees who

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had fled Azerbaijan as a result of human rights violations, anti-Armenian pogroms and deportations, as well as the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. The Government of the Republic of Armenia had accepted 400,000 refugees, equivalent to 10 per cent of its population, and was taking appropriate measures to deal with their needs of all kinds. That task was hindered by the blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan, the embargo imposed by Turkey, transportation difficulties in neighbouring Georgia, and the existence of the earthquake zone, which had been only partially reconstructed and in which 400,000 people were still living in temporary housing. Added to all that were the enormous problems confronting Armenia as a country with an economy in transition.

48. The Armenian people appreciated the bilateral and international humanitarian assistance extended to the refugees in the country by the donor States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, and particularly the activities of UNHCR and UNICEF directed towards the most vulnerable groups. The Armenian people were aware that there were millions of refugees throughout the world and that the situation in Armenia was no more than a fraction of the overall situation. Nevertheless, long-term assistance could be an important stabilizing factor, facilitating the transition in the Republic. The United Nations Office in Armenia could play an important role in human development and in the development of the social and private sectors, which in turn would increase opportunities for employment and ease social tensions, and, therefore, the integration of refugees into society.

49. The difficult refugee situation in the Trans-Caucasian region, stemming from the armed conflicts there, was a matter of serious concern for the Government of Armenia, which believed that it was the task of the international community to bring an end to those conflicts and search for a broad solution. That seemed the only realistic way to approach the refugee problem and curb the further expansion of forced migratory movements.

50. Mr. Cissé (Senegal) resumed the Chair.

51. Mr. KARAMBIZI (Rwanda) said that his country offered a good illustration of the scale of the problems which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the international community had recently had to face. The situation in Rwanda had caused refugees to flee the country since 1959. As a result of inter-ethnic conflicts, there had been frequent exoduses of refugees who had fled Rwanda in large numbers during the 1960s and up to 1972. In 1990 the number of Rwandese refugees registered by UNHCR had been estimated to be 500,000, although that figure could be doubled or tripled, since in many cases refugees had settled in the countries of asylum without registering with the Office.

52. The Arusha Peace Agreement had contained a detailed plan for the repatriation of refugees and the reintegration in the country of persons who had been displaced by the war. Unfortunately, the Agreement had not been observed and since April 1994 the situation of Rwandese refugees and displaced persons had changed. As a result of the killings perpetrated between April and June 1994 and the defeat of the former Government forces at the hands of the

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forces of the Rwandese Patriotic Front, there were currently more than 2.2 million new Rwandese refugees in neighbouring countries (of whom approximately 1.7 million were in Zaire and 500,000 in the United Republic of Tanzania), while the number of internally displaced persons was between 700,000 and 1 million.

53. With regard to emergency humanitarian assistance, the problem was worsening because the mass exodus of the new refugees was accompanied by the return of former refugees, for whose reception and reintegration no structures had been set up. There were currently between 200,000 and 300,000 returnees and in order to meet their needs the Government of Rwanda would need the assistance of UNHCR and of the international community as a whole. The Government of Rwanda was convinced that the return of new and former refugees was one of the essential conditions for the normalization of the situation in the country and an indispensable factor for peace and reconciliation among the population. Towards that end, it had made repeated appeals in that sense but many difficulties still remained, particularly acts of intimidation against those who wished to return to their country and the widespread insecurity in the refugee camps. Rwanda had requested the assistance of neighbouring countries of asylum in overcoming those obstacles. One way of achieving that goal would be to separate the political leaders, former soldiers and militias from the other refugees in the camps. In that connection, the Government of Rwanda had welcomed the initiatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees concerning the deployment of an international police force or a United Nations force.

54. The return of the refugees would naturally also depend on the situation that prevailed within the country. In that regard, the Government of Rwanda had spared no effort to create the necessary conditions of security. The personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and all other observers moved about the country without any restrictions whatsoever and, when reports were received about acts of reprisals against returnees, those responsible were immediately detained. In addition, the Government had embarked on a campaign to increase public awareness with a view to promoting national reconciliation and reconstruction. Finally, the delegation of Rwanda supported the initiatives of UNHCR and the Organization of African Unity to convene a regional conference for the comprehensive consideration and review of the problems of refugees in the Great Lakes region, because it believed that that was one way of dealing with the root causes of the refugee flows in the region, in other words, racial hatred and political intolerance.

55. Mrs. ROMULUS (Haiti) said that, despite the conclusion of significant agreements and arrangements for voluntary repatriation, particularly in Africa and Asia, the problem of refugees continued to constitute a global crisis. The figures on refugees and displaced persons showed that the exodus of refugees and economic migrants was steadily increasing. The root causes of global conflicts had been aggravated by ethnic, religious and intercommunal divisions, which required a just and lasting radical solution in order to ensure that desperation and insecurity did not lead to insurmountable social crises. In order to reduce refugee flows, Governments everywhere must increase their efforts to eliminate

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major scourges, such as extreme poverty, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, illiteracy, lack of education and health services and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Those problems were compounded by the suffering caused by natural disasters.

56. The Haitian delegation invited UNHCR to continue its work bearing in mind the view expressed by the Office of the High Commissioner in its report (A/49/12) on the interconnectedness of the problems which affected refugee women and children, the link between economic, political and social relations and the interrelationship between the phenomena of global and national development. Close and balanced collaboration between the Commission on Human Rights, the Centre for Human Rights and relevant organizations and bodies would facilitate that task and speed up the solution of the problems that affected the international community as a whole.

57. During the previous few years, many Haitians of all ages had been forced to abandon their country because of terror and violence and had lived in neighbouring countries whose limited resources had not permitted them to receive such persons in a manner consistent with the relevant international conventions. Thanks to the efforts of the international community which had culminated in the restoration of the constitutional order and the return to the country and to power of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haitians were returning to their country and refugees were being voluntarily repatriated from the Guantánamo base. The delegation of Haiti thanked the High Commissioner, the members of UNHCR and the countries of asylum for the assistance provided to Haitian refugees and hoped that the international community and the various organizations would renew their programme of assistance to Haiti in order to revive its economy and permit the Haitian people to achieve the minimum of stability and well-being without which democracy was an illusion.

58. Mr. KHEIR (Jordan) said that his delegation wished to address the question of the new international humanitarian order, since in recent years considerable progress had been made in expanding and adapting the institutional capacity of the United Nations system to respond speedily to emergencies. The delegation of Jordan fully concurred with the view of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs that the Committee should consider many of the issues before it in greater depth within the context of its consideration of the question relating to a new international humanitarian order. The delegation of France had introduced the notion of the right to humanitarian assistance in that context, and the delegation of the Russian Federation had used the item to emphasize international cooperation in the humanitarian field and to introduce separate draft resolutions on the subject. Jordan continued to support that umbrella item in the agenda because it made room for the discussion of new humanitarian problems or new dimensions of old problems as well as innovative thinking in the humanitarian field. In that connection, his delegation wished to draw attention, in particular, to the reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/40/348 and its addenda and in A/41/472.

59. The delegation of Jordan had been in close contact with the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues, which was charged with the follow-up to the work

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of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues. In that regard, mention must be made of the commendable progress made by the Bureau in recent years. With regard to its function of dissemination, the final report of the Commission and its sectoral studies had been published in 55 editions in different languages and its publication in additional languages was also envisaged. Secondly, of the 150 specific recommendations made by the Independent Commission, 80 were now part of national policies or had been acted upon by international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Thirdly, the Bureau had pursued the completion of the unfinished sectoral reports of the Independent Commission. Fourthly, the Bureau had expanded the scope of its work, which would no longer be limited to specific "issues", but would analyse specific "situations" of humanitarian concern. At the request of UNHCR, the Bureau had prepared analytical reports on the States of Central Asia and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Fifthly, the Independent Bureau had evaluated humanitarian projects receiving Government funding. At the same time, it had prepared refugee emergency response training courses with the support of UNHCR, which were tailored specifically to the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union. Consequently, given its independent character and cost-effective method of work, the Bureau could be a useful partner for Governments as well as for the United Nations departments and programmes concerned.

60. His delegation felt that continuity should be ensured in the activities and interest of the General Assembly regarding the promotion of a new international humanitarian order. At the current General Assembly session Jordan would once again be introducing a draft resolution on that issue which had no programme budget implications and was based on the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session. He hoped that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution without a vote and that when the item was taken up again, at the fifty-first session, the international community would have a viable and realistic framework that would make it possible more effectively to alleviate human suffering, to remedy the effects of man-made disasters and, above all, to prevent or contain humanitarian emergencies to the extent possible.

61. Mr. BOUCHMARINOV (Russian Federation) said that at the previous session of the General Assembly, the Russian Federation had submitted a draft resolution concerning the convening of a United Nations Conference for the comprehensive consideration and review of the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants. The report that had been submitted by the Secretary-General in connection with that resolution (A/49/533) showed that many States recognized the global nature of the refugee crisis and wanted to find a comprehensive solution to it. At the same time, many States had expressed their concern at the complexity of convening such a conference and had felt that considerable preparatory work should be done. The Russian Federation agreed with that view and considered that in the forthcoming year the question of convening such a conference should be taken up again. Furthermore, his delegation hoped that one of the first actions in that regard would be an international conference to consider the problem of persons who had been forced to migrate in the territory of the former Soviet Union and thanked UNHCR for the interest it was showing in that issue. In view of the important role played by UNHCR in organizing such activities and the interest shown by countries of the

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region, neighbouring countries, Governments and international organizations in the convening of that Conference, it was to be hoped that an efficient programme of action could be implemented.

62. The problem of population movements had become so widespread that it could lead to situations that threatened the security of entire regions and, as a result, States sometimes enacted laws or adopted other measures in order to protect themselves and restrict the influx of migrants. Nevertheless, it appeared irrational to call into question the very institution of asylum, especially as it was temporary in nature. For that reason, it would be much more reasonable to try to devise a preventive strategy which would take into account regional as well as global approaches. The activities of UNHCR should also be coordinated with those of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. Otherwise, he wondered whether a lasting solution, based basically on voluntary repatriation, could be found.

63. The scope of the activities of UNHCR was the best illustration of the price that the international community had to pay for the consequences of humanitarian crises, massive and flagrant human rights violations, "ethnic cleansing", aggressive nationalism, all kinds of intolerance and political and religious persecution. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action mentioned many of the causes of the humanitarian crises and referred to equitable burden-sharing, and the apportionment of responsibility among nations. The Russian Federation felt that only by adopting such an attitude could the human rights of persons fleeing from violence and persecution be guaranteed and stability and peace be restored in the areas of tension and conflict.

64. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria) said that the question of refugees and displaced persons should be viewed from the twofold perspective of prevention and the search for durable solutions. While the emergency humanitarian activities of UNHCR, non-governmental organizations and the international community were indispensable, they continued to be a limited and inadequate solution. The root causes of refugee flows should be dealt with through the political settlement of the problems regarding human rights violations and the multidimensional and lasting development of the regions affected.

65. Algeria was aware that Africa continued to be the continent most affected by the problem of refugees and displaced persons. In that regard, he supported the appeal by UNHCR for increased assistance to Africa and concerted action among United Nations agencies, international, financial institutions and the international community for the benefit of the region.

66. His country had demonstrated its traditional hospitality by taking in Saharan refugees and cooperating with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for the Western Sahara, which included the repatriation of refugees. Such assistance was combined with UNHCR assistance and international bilateral assistance provided by public and private bodies of various countries. Algeria had also given humanitarian assistance to displaced persons from Mali and had initiated the implementation of the plan of action for the return and resettlement of such persons which had

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been agreed upon in 1993 between the Government of Mali, UNHCR and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). With regard to displaced persons from the Niger, the consultations between the Government of the Niger, Algeria, UNHCR and IFAD had resulted in the adoption of a protocol relating to a plan of action on displaced persons. A global agreement concluded among all the parties concerned in the previous month would help to resolve the outstanding practical issues so as to ensure the repatriation of the refugees to their countries of origin under the best possible conditions.

67. Mr. ALI (Iraq) said that he had noted with interest the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/49/12) and, in particular, the reference to the presence of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. The main reasons why Iraqi citizens had had to request refugee status in those countries stemmed from the difficulties currently facing Iraq. The migratory flow had occurred in two stages: first, in 1991, after the arbitrary bombing by the allied forces that had destroyed cities and civilian shelters in Iraq; and second, after the imposition of the economic embargo that had already been in place for a number of years and had resulted in a complete shortage of food, medicine and basic commodities and had forced those Iraqis who could afford to do so, to flee to neighbouring countries with the hope of returning when living conditions improved.

68. He agreed with the High Commissioner's statement that the best solution to the problem of refugees was prevention of the causes that obliged persons to flee, and he felt that the lifting of the embargo would allow those refugees to return voluntarily. Despite his country's difficult economic circumstances, it played host to a large number of refugees from neighbouring countries, including 45,690 Iranian refugees, who constituted an additional economic burden. The time would come when those refugees would be able to return voluntarily to their country under the supervision of UNHCR and other United Nations agencies.

The meeting was suspended at 6.05 p.m.