

DRAFT REPORT OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
(7-9 March 2006)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki (Japan), opened the meeting by welcoming the Deputy High Commissioner and newly appointed Assistant High Commissioners for Protection and Operations, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including national NGOs from various regions and other observers.

II. CHAIRMAN'S FIELD MISSION TO BURUNDI

2. The Chairman reported on his visit to Burundi from 22 to 25 February 2006 and provided a background document on the visit. Describing Burundi as being at a crossroads for reconstruction in 2006, the Chairman called on the international community to provide support to Burundi, where UNHCR was engaged in one of its most important repatriation operations. Coordination between relevant international organizations needed to be improved and he encouraged Executive Committee member States to send a consistent message to this end to the executive boards of relevant agencies. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Government of Burundi for its hospitality and collaboration, as well as to the staff of UNHCR and other organizations who had contributed to the mission.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING
AND 2006 WORK PROGRAMME

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/57/SC/CRP.1/Rev.2) was adopted. The Standing Committee's work programme for 2006 (EC/56/SC/CRP.2), as approved at the planning meeting held on 5 December 2005, was also adopted.

IV. MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL CONTROL, ADMINISTRATIVE
OVERSIGHT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Update on management reforms

4. The Deputy High Commissioner presented the Office's further consideration of the recommendations of the independent review of the senior management structure conducted by Mannet (EC/57/SC/CRP.3), and provided an updated interim organigramme to reflect developments in UNHCR's management structure. She outlined the major change initiative being undertaken, noting that the High Commissioner had appointed a Senior Advisor for Structural and Change Management and was

committed to consulting the Executive Committee throughout the change process. She then summarized the measures UNHCR had taken over the past two years to implement suggestions contained in the Marnet Report, as well as other reviews such as those by the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as well as audit recommendations.

5. Delegations affirmed their support for the core principle of UNHCR as a field-based organization and supported the policy of no net growth at Headquarters. Many delegations welcomed the change initiative and expressed support for the new Senior Advisor for Structural and Change Management. More information was requested on several points, including the organigramme; how the terms of reference for the new Advisor related both to the Marnet recommendations and the current financial situation of UNHCR; and how reform in UNHCR fitted in with broader United Nations reform initiatives. One delegation encouraged donors to limit their reporting requirements to assist the Senior Advisor.

6. Delegations supported devolution of authority to the Field, but several had reservations about incentive-based fundraising in the Field. One delegation appreciated the creation of the new Resettlement Service. Another delegation urged UNHCR to consult staff in the change process, observing that the review should not focus simply on income generation, but also on cost cutting.

7. The Deputy High Commissioner welcomed the broad support for the High Commissioner's change initiative. She explained the rationale for encouraging local fundraising, citing the emphasis placed on this by some other United Nations agencies, and committed UNHCR to better monitoring of implementing partners and rationalizing decision-making structures. She appreciated the support for needs-based assessments and undertook to provide further feedback on this in 2007.

8. The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection outlined some of the anticipated benefits of the restructuring of the Departments of International Protection and Operations, while noting that it was too early to comment on the full implications at the field level. While there were no savings in this restructuring, there was no growth either, and she expected that it would be possible to "do more with less", including with regard to UNHCR's new role in internal displacement situations. Restructuring would facilitate closer links in the Field, for instance in the process of ensuring a more coherent and strategic use of resettlement in Latin America. The long-term vision for operationalizing protection would be influenced by the outcome of the structural changes. In the interim, it was important to strengthen UNHCR's protection capacity, including by creating regional protection hubs in the Field, assisting Representatives with external advocacy, and building partnerships with key organizations.

9. The Senior Advisor for Structural and Change Management thanked delegations for their support, noting their request for ongoing and close consultation within and outside UNHCR. Outlining his objectives, he described the reform process as having a moral as well as a survival imperative. He described the need to rationalize processes and workforce management and stressed he would look carefully at previous reform work undertaken. The 2007 budget planning was now well under way and thought needed to be given already to how adjustments could be made in 2007. It was indeed essential not to sacrifice mid- to long-term targets for short-term constraints. He also updated delegations on UNHCR's efforts in management training as well as with regard to staff-in-between-assignment (SIBAs).

B. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors

10. The Controller presented the Follow-up to the Recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the Accounts for 2002, 2003 and 2004 (EC/57/SC/CRP.4). This was a first attempt to respond to Members' requests for a more analytical summary report, highlighting key issues, overall implementation status, and UNHCR's assessment of its internal control systems. He provided implementation rates of audit

recommendations. He noted that UNHCR was conscious of the need to have better risk assessment and management systems and was committed to pursuing its efforts to improve implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations.

11. Delegations welcomed the accessibility of the new information, but believed more detail was required and urged UNHCR to find a way of consulting about implementation of Board of Auditors recommendations more regularly. One delegation requested some thematic comment under each year on what had not been implemented. Several delegations queried the value of providing percentages of implementation rates, but rather thought UNHCR should focus on what was most important.

12. The Controller welcomed feedback from delegations and undertook to take comments into account in future updates. He acknowledged that the update was a quantitative rather than qualitative exercise, but considered it was nevertheless important to monitor implementation rates.

C. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

13. The Inspector General provided a summary of the main activities undertaken by his Office (IGO) since the previous October's Executive Committee report and the Informal Consultative Meeting in February 2006. He explained that the revised terms of reference for the IGO aimed to respond to the views expressed by the Committee in 2005 with regard to enhancing the independence of the IGO. They also reflected the High Commissioner's unequivocal commitment to oversight principles. To ensure effective complementarity of cooperation on investigations and inspections with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) clarified the division of responsibilities between the two offices. The Deputy High Commissioner also drew attention to new measures to counter misconduct, including ad hoc inspections and the Accountability Portal on UNHCR's intranet.

14. Several delegations expressed support for pursuing measures to strengthen the role and functions of the IGO, including to ensure its staff have relevant expertise in investigative work and to reduce the rotation obligation. There were several requests for the sharing of reports on best practices and information on steps being taken to address recurrent problems reported in audits. One delegation continued to be concerned about duplication of work with OIOS; another requested a written report on IGO activities.

15. The Inspector General reminded delegations that the current oral presentation was a new development to supplement the annual written report to the ExCom plenary in October; he nevertheless offered to share a fuller analysis of current practices and problems with delegations. He reiterated that the intent of the MoU on collaboration with OIOS was to avoid duplication of effort and enhance complementarity. As regards staffing in his office, the aim was to have one expert (non-rotational) position in each of the Inspection and Investigation Units. The Director of the Division of External Relations (DER), in response to a question, clarified that there was no official UNHCR policy on regional representation quotas because there were no assessed contributions by member States.

V. PROGRAMME BUDGETS AND FUNDING

A. Programme budgets and funding in 2005, and projections for 2006

16. Introducing document EC/57/SC/CRP.5, the Deputy High Commissioner commented that 2005 had been the most challenging year financially since the inception of the Unified Budget. The Annual Budget's unearmarked reserves were depleted, and the positive carry-over of \$7.6 million under the Annual Budget had all been earmarked. This had necessitated the borrowing of \$12.1 million from the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund.

17. The Deputy High Commissioner and the Controller presented a number of charts to illustrate various factors contributing to the current financial difficulties. These included rising staff costs and foreign exchange fluctuations. The Controller explained that the steadily increasing staff costs reflected changing demands, including the need to have more protection staff and security officers in the Field. He also pointed out that UNHCR could not engage in large-scale staff reduction exercises at times of acute funding shortfalls since 85 per cent of UNHCR staff members held indefinite contracts. A further factor affecting the 2005 budget was the diversion of contributions to other major humanitarian emergencies.

18. Management responses to these challenges had included a 2005 mid-year review of implementation rates and reallocation of funds; however this had only had a limited effect in view of the parameters of the current planning and budgetary system. Another adjustment mechanism used was the five per cent capping of operations and non-staff administrative budgets in January 2005, followed by further reductions in June. In addition, after the unforeseen mid-year impact of foreign exchange losses, severe cutbacks were applied to end-of-year purchases.

19. UNHCR had thus begun 2006 in a difficult financial position with depleted Annual Budget fund reserves and the obligation to reimburse \$12.1 million to the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund. Other complicating factors in 2006 were the large number of Supplementary Budgets (13) and the absence of a carry-over under the Annual Budget. Furthermore, the ExCom-approved 2006 Annual Programme Budget was some 16.7 per cent (\$163.7 million) larger than in 2005, due mainly to the incorporation of the former Supplementary Budgets for Chad and Burundi (\$115 million).

20. In November 2005, the High Commissioner had asked all managers to prioritize their 2006 programmes in three tranches of 80, 10 and 10 per cent. In spite of these early measures, best estimates of funding trends and needs still left a sizeable shortfall. UNHCR was thus taking a number of immediate cost-cutting measures. Reform measures should re-establish a firm financial footing in 2008 but 2007 would still be a difficult year.

21. The Director of DER provided an overview of the contributions in 2005, and a preview of projections for 2006. He acknowledged donors' strong support, with many early pledges and total voluntary contributions amounting to \$1.1 billion in 2005. However, this had still not been sufficient to cover the Office's financial requirements and many of the challenges faced in 2005 had been carried over into 2006. A further challenge would be funding the internally displaced persons (IDP) programmes envisaged for 2006 and beyond. Strategies would include accessing complementary sources of funding for durable solutions by strengthening UNHCR's partnership with regional development banks and agencies, and closely coordinating with other United Nations agencies in approaching the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and pooled funding mechanisms. Representatives in the Field would fundraise at the local level; if UNHCR wanted to benefit from the CERF and pooled funding, this had to start at the field level. In closing, he reiterated his plea for additional contributions, especially for

Supplementary Programmes, including IDP programmes, so that new developments would not divert funds from the already planned and approved programmes.

22. Several delegations commended UNHCR for managing what at one stage had looked like being a much more substantial shortfall in 2005, but some felt that there was a need for better forecasting. There was considerable concern over the financial situation and fears that the current funding projections did not reflect the needs of the refugees. New measures were required to secure sufficient funding in a timely manner, and burden sharing had to be improved. A number of delegations commented on exchange rate management, and queried whether the United Nations could change or adapt its rules in this regard.

23. There was broad support for early and prudent budgetary reductions in 2006, but delegations requested more information on the process and the likely negative impact of such cuts on the beneficiaries. One delegation said that prioritization should be in accordance with agreed standards, and called for the Committee to be engaged in this process. Another delegation hoped that the introduction of results-based management (RBM) would be to allow for easier decisions on reductions.

24. Several delegations expressed concern over the high number of Supplementary Programmes, and notably that IDP programmes might divert funds from the Annual Budget. More information was requested on the relationship between the internal displacement activities under Supplementary Programmes and those under the Annual Budget.

25. The Deputy High Commissioner agreed that an RBM process would indeed be preferable to the capping measures. She explained that 20 per cent of the budget covered activities which were more strategic and longer term, for example preparations for voluntary repatriation, income-generating activities, training of government officials and partners, community services and education grants. If reductions had to go below 80 per cent, this would have a more profound impact on the lives of beneficiaries.

26. The Controller explained that 72 per cent of costs (covering some 3,000 posts) represented programme costs which included direct inputs for projects affecting refugees, including protection officer posts and offices in the Field. Programme support costs (covering some 2,400 posts) covered the backstopping of development, formulation, delivery and evaluation of programmes including protection and operational support functions at Headquarters as well as field support positions which are technical, thematic, logistical or administrative. Management and administrative costs for functions found only at Headquarters represented some 500 positions, some 40 per cent of the costs of which were covered by the United Nations Regular Budget. The ratio of staff at Headquarters compared to the total number of staff had remained stable at 14 per cent.

27. The Director of DER recalled that UNHCR had already been dealing with some 5.3 million IDPs before the cluster leadership approach had been agreed upon. In response to a question on the financial implications of being an agency of "last resort", he explained that "last resort" meant that an extra effort was needed to find the money, but it did not mean a diversion of funds from the Annual Budget.

28. The Committee subsequently adopted the decision on programme budgets and funding in 2006 with the inclusion of new text reflecting recognition of the contributions of countries hosting refugees, as well as a paragraph requesting UNHCR to provide details of the impact of reductions in response to anticipated funding shortfalls on activities under the 2006 Annual Programme Budget (Annex I).

VI. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

A. Oral update on implementation of the Agenda for Protection

29. In his oral update on implementation of the Agenda for Protection, the Acting Director of the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS) observed that mainstreaming of the Agenda into all facets of UNHCR's work had become an integral part of UNHCR's global strategic objectives. Examples included the way in which the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy was promoting a multifunctional team approach to meeting the protection needs of refugee women and children; UNHCR's active participation in preparations for the General Assembly's September 2006 High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development; progress made on the Strengthening Protection Capacities Project; and implementation of the 2004 Mexico Plan of Action. He also highlighted DIPS' role in developing programmes to benefit IDPs while cautioning that poor funding would have a direct impact on some activities and result in cutbacks in basic assistance, which would disproportionately affect refugees.

30. Delegations welcomed the emphasis on women, girls and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). One speaker asked whether UNHCR had in place a system of accountability to ensure the success of initiatives relating to women, girls and SGBV. Some congratulated UNHCR on the Strengthening Protection Capacities Project. The Quito Meeting on Resettlement was cited as an excellent example of inter-regional cooperation, and more information was requested on the Working Group on Resettlement as well as on UNHCR's preparations for the General Assembly's High-Level Dialogue. One delegation asked for more information on cases where refugees had contributed to development in countries of asylum.

31. The Acting Director said that UNHCR would provide additional information on the issues raised to the Standing Committee in June. The Working Group on Resettlement was composed of resettlement countries and provided a forum to assess progress on resettlement and to prepare for using resettlement more strategically as a tool of protection and a durable solution. The Acting Director observed that refugees could become agents of development in the country of asylum and also upon return home if given the means and tools to do so.

32. The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection added that one of the High Commissioner's priorities was to ensure that the High-Level Dialogue was not conceived solely as a border control and management exercise, and that it promoted a focus on the rights at stake and the beneficial impact of migration. She confirmed that an accountability mechanism for AGDM was being set in place.

B. Statelessness

33. The Head of DIPS' Statelessness Unit introduced the paper on statelessness (EC/57/SC/CRP.6), which proposed activities in four broad areas aimed at reinforcing the capacity of States, and the United Nations – in partnership with NGOs – to respond to situations of statelessness. He closed his presentation by observing, with appreciation, that a number of States had adopted legislation regulating the legal status of stateless persons residing on their territory.

34. Speakers generally welcomed the paper as a good basis for a conclusion on statelessness. Many speakers agreed on the need to further map statelessness situations in order to enhance understanding of the root causes and the problems faced by stateless people. UNHCR was encouraged to prioritize its activities on statelessness in light of budget constraints, to adopt an inter-agency approach to statelessness, and to deepen cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union as well as NGOs. A number of speakers emphasized the importance of registering stateless people and adopting legal provisions to grant them certain basic rights. Some made specific recommendations

regarding a possible conclusion on this topic, observing that it should build on and add value to ExCom Conclusion 78 and focus on concrete recommendations.

35. The Deputy Director of DIPS pointed out that statistics on stateless persons were incomplete and emphasized the need for UNHCR to continue to map many statelessness situations while focusing on advocacy and provision of technical support. He encouraged delegations to adopt a conclusion in 2006 and pointed to the need to encourage additional accessions to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. The Head of the Statelessness Unit added that work on statelessness had been fully integrated in regional objectives and mainstreamed into the work of the regional bureaux. While UNHCR's advocacy work was important, it was also necessary to select specific statelessness situations where the Office could play a positive role. He agreed with the importance of adopting an inter-agency approach, referring to cooperation already envisaged with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

C. Issues related to women at risk

36. The Deputy Director of DIPS introduced the paper on women at risk (EC/57/SC/CRP.7), which explored the scope of a potential ExCom conclusion on the issue. Important objectives would be to move away from labeling all refugee women as being vulnerable and broaden common understanding of specific risk factors in the legal, social and economic environment which heighten vulnerability to harm. This would make it easier to identify and monitor women at risk, including in situations of internal displacement, and to craft responses which address such risk factors.

37. There was broad agreement on the proposal to adopt a conclusion on this issue. A number of delegations supported the move away from seeing women as being vulnerable *per se* towards viewing them as vulnerable to specific types of harm. Recommendations regarding the scope and content of a possible conclusion on this issue included avoiding a definition of women at risk which might restrict applicability. Instead, many speakers highlighted the importance of elaborating a non-exhaustive listing of risk factors, drawing up an operationally-oriented conclusion, and using registration as a means to facilitate the identification of women at risk. A number of speakers underlined the need to identify ways to enhance the use of the women-at-risk criterion in resettlement, reiterating the specific social service needs of resettled women and girls at risk, and encouraging resettlement States to introduce specific women-at-risk programmes.

VII. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

38. The Assistant High Commissioner for Operations reviewed regional activities and global programmes overall, stressing the need to overcome the financial constraints faced by UNHCR while avoiding the risk of taking action that might be detrimental to efforts to protect and assist persons of concern. She reported on her first field mission, to Chad, and outlined some priority areas of work, namely UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity and systematic engagement with IDPs through the cluster leadership approach.

A. CASWANAME

39. The Director of the CASWANAME Bureau underlined the priority goal of identifying and implementing durable and comprehensive solutions for refugees across the region, recalling the example of the return of 4 million refugees to Afghanistan since 2002. He commented on several emergency relief efforts in which UNHCR had been involved in the preceding year, and expressed concern about refugee groups in Iraq whose precarious situation might necessitate their relocation to safer areas. With regard to the growing problem of attempted sea-crossings by asylum-seekers, often exacerbated by people-

smuggling operations, the Director stressed that little progress could be made to reduce this without tackling the root causes of such flight. In Egypt, UNHCR was reviewing policy options to help the Government to protect and assist the Sudanese of concern in the country, following the tragic events in December 2005. Despite progress towards identifying solutions for protracted refugee situations in Central Asia, the number of asylum-seekers and refugees was increasing, creating further protection challenges.

40. Delegations commended UNHCR's role in the South Asia earthquake relief efforts; its efforts to find solutions for the 3.5 million remaining Afghan refugees; and its protection work in Central Asia. Concerning the Saharawi refugees in Tindouf camps, one delegation, supported by others, requested a registration to ensure the protection of these refugees. Another delegation called on UNHCR to re-evaluate the revised levels of assistance provided to refugees in Tindouf camps. One delegation asked the international community to provide more assistance to refugees in Yemen and to take action to prevent the "boats of death" crossing the Gulf of Aden to Yemen.

41. The Director provided additional information about assistance being provided after the floods in Tindouf and other situations raised by delegations as well as staff security. He confirmed UNHCR was paying attention to statelessness in the region and expressed appreciation for support provided for voluntary repatriation activities in Afghanistan. He expressed concern about some instances of *refoulement* in the region.

B. Europe

42. The Director of the Europe Bureau presented four major strategic priorities for UNHCR's work in Europe: preserving asylum, and access to asylum, in an age when population flows are increasingly complex; combating rising intolerance; finding solutions to internal displacement; and expanding strategic partnerships. While the fall in numbers of asylum-seekers arriving in Europe was a positive trend, the imposition of tighter migration controls penalized those genuinely seeking refuge and contributed to an increase in irregular migration trends including smuggling and trafficking. UNHCR's efforts included encouraging the development of more effective, rapid and fair procedures, ultimately through a common European Union (EU) asylum system with consistent standards and shared responsibilities and burdens. Measures to combat intolerance targeted both governmental integration policies and the general public. Recalling the huge scale of internal displacement, estimated at some 2 million persons in Europe alone, the Director called for close cooperation and partnership with other agencies, notably to ensure that solutions were part of larger peace-building and conflict-resolution mechanisms pursued by the United Nations. Finally, the Director noted that the streamlining of UNHCR's presence in Europe was being aligned with efforts to develop more coordinated strategies among countries that shared common challenges and characteristics.

43. Several delegations emphasized the importance of greater collaboration and burden sharing amongst EU member States, and welcomed the growing cooperation between UNHCR, other agencies and individual governments. One very positive example cited was the establishment, with the support of the Italian Government, of a joint IOM-Italian Red Cross-UNHCR monitoring and screening mechanism on the island of Lampedusa, where 22,000 spontaneous arrivals were recorded in 2005. While a number of delegations applauded the positive international collaboration on the evacuation to Romania and subsequent resettlement of the Uzbek refugees, one delegation called for more countries to join the common EU Resettlement Programme and use resettlement more as a strategic tool. Several delegations expressed the hope that the negotiations on the final status of Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) would have a positive outcome and that they would not trigger new population outflows.

44. The Director acknowledged delegations' calls for greater collaboration and burden sharing and reiterated thanks to the countries involved in helping resolve the Uzbek refugee crisis. She confirmed that discussions on the 3x3 initiative were accelerating and hoped that the process would soon be drawing to an end, enabling UNHCR to reduce its presence in the Balkans region as anticipated at the end of 2006. In response to several queries regarding the regionalization exercise for UNHCR's representation in Europe, she pointed out that it was too early to calculate the financial impact.

C. Africa

45. The Director of the Africa Bureau recalled the main developments in 2005, notably the voluntary repatriation operations to Liberia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. She highlighted a number of challenges that still affected the successful completion of those processes, in particular volatile security situations, food shortages and lack of reintegration opportunities. The Director underlined that funding shortfalls were the main cause for the declining levels of assistance in Africa, preventing UNHCR from meeting basic standards. Among the most significant developments in 2005 was the more prominent role that UNHCR played in IDP operations. In highlighting the increased responsibilities assigned to UNHCR under the cluster leadership approach, the Director pointed out the urgent need for predictable and adequate funding to enable the Office to fulfil its commitments.

46. Delegations welcomed the positive developments and achievements of 2005, particularly in pursuing voluntary repatriation and in addressing IDP protection concerns, as well as with regard to the signature of tripartite agreements for repatriation to Sudan and the proposed Comprehensive Plan of Action for Somalia. Following the High Commissioner's participation in a joint mission with World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF Chief Executives, several delegations encouraged UNHCR to pursue partnerships and strengthen the existing cooperation with other agencies and regional organizations, particularly the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union.

47. There was widespread concern regarding the likely negative impact on UNHCR's operations of the current critical financial situation, particularly in terms of assistance to camp-based refugees as well as to IDPs. Several delegations called for increased contributions to sustain the Office's efforts. While expressing appreciation for the accomplishments to date, delegations encouraged UNHCR to accelerate repatriation operations, particularly to Liberia. Similarly, UNHCR was invited to adopt strategic plans for sustainable reintegration and other durable solutions to protracted refugee situations and forgotten crises.

48. A number of delegations sought more information on implementation of the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, the AGDM initiative and new registration mechanisms. Questions were also posed on UNHCR's strategic plans for resettlement, on the restructuring in the Field in connection with the progress of voluntary repatriation operations, and on the impact of the cluster leadership approach on the protection of IDPs. Some delegations voiced their concerns over continuing population displacements, particularly in northern Uganda and from Rwanda into Burundi.

49. The Director expressed gratitude for the support provided so far; but shared the concerns over the declining levels of assistance in Africa and appealed to donor countries for support to enable UNHCR to fulfil its mandate and meet basic standards. She recalled that the provision of protection also required a sense of shared responsibilities among all stakeholders to meet the challenges and fill the gap between relief and development. The Director stressed the Office's commitment to pursue durable solutions by continuing voluntary repatriation and by planning and using resettlement strategically as a protection tool and a durable solution. She reiterated UNHCR's determination to meet its obligations towards IDPs and to share information on developments in this respect. On partnership, she cited the example of the

agreement in December 2005 to renew the MoU concluded in 2000 between UNHCR and the African Union and to redefine the modalities for its implementation. The Director confirmed that UNHCR would readjust its presence in the Field in proportion to the progress of voluntary repatriation movements, and in closing reiterated her appeal for funding to ensure adequate levels of assistance and sustainability of durable solutions.

D. Chad/Sudan Special Operations

50. The Director for the Chad/Sudan Special Operations gave a brief overview of the different situations in Sudan and Chad. Positive developments in the west Darfur region of Sudan in 2005 had led to hope for the return of displaced populations; however by early 2006, conflict had spilled across the Sudan/Chad border causing new refugee displacements. Security problems in both Darfur itself and in the refugee camps in Chad were restricting UNHCR's access, leaving serious protection problems. With deteriorating living conditions in the IDP camps and the prospect of food supplies running out by mid-March, the Director appealed for supplementary funding as well as international commitment to push for a political solution, without which there was little hope of progress. Elsewhere in Chad, significant logistical challenges and the presence of armed rebels in camps were hampering protection and assistance to refugees from the Central African Republic. With the peace agreement holding in South Sudan, many refugees were eager to return. UNHCR had opened 10 offices and participated in the drawing up of four tripartite agreements with Sudanese refugee-hosting countries. Despite security problems, the Office was trying to enable the return of those refugees who wished to do so, as well as IDPs from Khartoum. The requirements to support such return operations were set out in the Supplementary Appeal for South Sudan which had just been launched together with the Appeal for the Darfur operation.

51. Commending UNHCR's efforts to protect and assist refugees and IDPs in the different Chad and Sudan operations, delegations deplored the difficult conditions and urged renewed efforts to relocate refugees from camps in precarious situations. Several called for more support and conflict resolution through regional bodies. Although delegations acknowledged the need for additional funding for return operations, some asked for more information on how reintegration of returnees, notably IDPs, would be carried out in the South, and how their protection could be assured. One delegation expressed concern that returns to South Sudan might not be of a voluntary nature in view of the lack of information regarding safety and security.

52. In his responses, the Director commented on the question of carrying out protection despite security restrictions and underlined that this was possible only if access was enabled by security forces. He commended the close cooperation with NGOs and the African Union forces on the ground, but with regard to the likely impact of a transition from an African Union to a United Nations Peacekeeping force, he observed that first there had to be peace in order to keep it. Staff safety was an ongoing preoccupation in these circumstances. Further details of progress and proposed activities in South Sudan were outlined in the appeal documents, and the Director clarified that the efforts in respect of the return of IDPs were in support of return and basic reintegration needs.

E. The Americas

53. The Director of the Americas Bureau provided an update on developments in both North and Latin America. UNHCR continued to work with the Governments in the region to better define the magnitude of forced displacement in the region and to have more information on the socio-economic profile of the people in need of protection. He described 2006 as a year of elections in the Americas which presented both opportunities and challenges. Internal displacement continued to be a major source of concern in parts of Latin America. UNHCR's involvement in the Caribbean went beyond contingency planning for potential emergency phases to developing responses to protecting refugees in mixed migratory movements. He stressed the need for UNHCR to consolidate its protection networks

throughout the region and for donor support to implement all the components of the Mexico Plan of Action which offered an innovative vision of how things could be changed for the better. Fundraising, protection and resettlement continued to be the main areas of focus for UNHCR in North America.

54. Delegations expressed strong support for the Mexico Plan of Action, commended UNHCR for the organization and concrete results achieved at the Quito resettlement meeting, and sought financial support from donors for implementation of the Plan, for which they received some commitments. One delegation asked if contingency planning had been conducted in the context of the nine elections taking place in the Americas. UNHCR's was commended for its involvement in the region, notably with regard to capacity building and its efforts to assist urban refugees and internally displaced persons.

55. The Director thanked delegations for the political support expressed with regard to the Mexico Plan of Action and hoped for corresponding financial backing. He reiterated the need to focus protection strategy more on the non-registered refugees in Colombian border areas.

F. Asia and the Pacific

56. The Director of the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific emphasized a focus on enhancing protection through expanding the asylum and humanitarian space; redoubling efforts to find solutions for protracted refugee situations; reinvigorating engagement in regional fora; and preparing for expanded engagement by UNHCR with internally displaced and stateless situations. She highlighted significant progress in expanding protection activities and improving the quality of protection, especially for women and children. Efforts towards implementing national asylum systems, extending rights and access to services for refugees and asylum-seekers and progress in reducing confinement and detention were positive advances. Results in the roll-out and implementation of AGDM and initiatives to prevent and respond to SGBV were placed in the context of UNHCR's overall response to protection and assistance needs specific to the profiles of the persons of concern in the region.

57. Delegations commended UNHCR's work in the region, notably its creative and practical approach to protection activities and durable solutions, as well as its assistance to governments with regard to stateless persons. Recent improvements in the situation of refugees in one country were cited as an example of "best practices" in the region, particularly for the use of resettlement as a strategic protection tool in resolving protracted situations. UNHCR's focus on long-term urban refugees also drew praise from some delegations, and further pursuit of its consultative approach and partnership efforts was encouraged. While one longstanding issue had been resolved through a trilateral agreement, several delegations expressed considerable concern for another particular protracted refugee situation and urged the governments concerned to take practical steps to implement agreements for return as part of a comprehensive approach to solutions. Deep concern was also expressed for the deplorable camp situation in another country and the need for increasing international engagement in identifying durable solutions.

58. In response to a specific query regarding the lessons learned from UNHCR's tsunami response and possible diversion of resources from regular programmes, the Director commented that it was already clear that UNHCR's assumptions at the beginning of the tsunami emergency had required constant re-evaluation as beneficiaries' needs and requests changed with time and the arrival of an overabundance of assistance.

59. The Director expressed appreciation for delegations' support as well as governments' proactive engagement and the positive dialogue established in order to increase the quality of protection for refugees in the Asia-Pacific region. She acknowledged that results in the strategic use of resettlement and moves to resolve protracted situations in several countries in the region had positively influenced the protection climate in the region; outstanding issues would equally require a broader range of solutions.

G. Global Programmes and Partnerships

60. The Director of the Division of Operational Services (DOS) described developments in programmes considered of a priority nature to the overall, global work of UNHCR. The field implementation of these activities was carried out in partnership with the regional bureaux and in close cooperation with governments, other United Nations bodies and NGOs. To improve the quality of its programmes, UNHCR continued to develop a range of tools, including: registration; more structured participatory planning of programmes and analysis of needs, especially for women and children; and a more consistent use of standards and indicators. The Office was also working to apply an RBM approach to all Global Programmes.

61. Several delegations expressed interest and appreciation for AGDM efforts; the anticipated roll-out of a framework for accountability; the development of standards and indicators for refugees in the urban context; and the ongoing training on standards and indicators. One delegation requested clarification on how UNHCR staff were using the anti-fraud tools and on the steps being taken to better address management issues and problems. Project Profile was considered a high-priority activity by one delegation. Another delegation expressed the need to support efforts to address malnutrition in refugee camps while yet another requested further information on steps are being taken to address the needs of Less Developed Countries (LDCs)

62. The Director responded that the AGDM roll-out would not be affected by current financial constraints and more than 50 staff had already been trained. The accountability framework was being finalized. Education served as an important protection tool, and UNHCR would continue to ensure it stayed as a priority within UNHCR. The High Commissioner had committed himself to review the existing MoU with UNICEF with the purpose of strengthening cooperation between the two organizations. Concerning durable solutions for refugees, the Director noted that the legal aspects would be analysed by DIPS, while on the operational side UNHCR would have to strengthen its partnership with other agencies.

VIII. PROGRAMME/PROTECTION POLICY

A. Emergency preparedness and response

63. The Director of DOS recalled that one of UNHCR's measurable performance targets for 2006 was the completion of the first of two phases of the Action Plan to increase UNHCR's global emergency response capacity in order to be able to respond to an emergency of 500,000 persons. The Acting Deputy Director of the Emergency and Technical Support Service (ETSS) then presented the paper (EC/57/SC/CRP.8) outlining the key measures being taken to strengthen the Office's capacity, notably in the evolving operational environment with regard to the new cluster leadership approach to IDP situations. Staffing of the Emergency Preparedness and Response section had been increased, new equipment purchased and training pursued. The Emergency Roster continued to be the primary source of emergency response personnel, including staff provided by partners on standby agreements, which were renewed and expanded in 2005.

64. Some delegations asked for more information on UNHCR's participation in the cluster leadership approach. They expressed interest in the Plan of Action, notably the Action Alert system, and asked which indicators would be used for the determination of activities and assessments. Several hoped that emergency response would be given the appropriate level of attention within UNHCR, particularly in the three clusters for which UNHCR was lead agency. One delegation queried the strategy envisaged for the Tokyo eCenter in the coming years and called for a review of lessons learned from pilot IDP operations.

65. The Acting Deputy Director answered that UNHCR would continue to coordinate the use of stock piles with the aim of full inter-operability with partners and reaffirmed UNHCR's commitment to the cluster leadership approach and to improving coordination, strengthening regional capacity within the context of the Plan of Action and developing Action Alerts. UNHCR valued the eCenter contribution and would try to build on this in the future.

B. HIV/AIDS and refugees

66. The Director of DOS presented the update on UNHCR's HIV/AIDS activities and recommendations of the Global Task Team (GTT) of UNAIDS (EC/57/SC/CRP.9). HIV was a cross-cutting issue and UNHCR had introduced a mechanism in programme planning to ensure that this was adequately considered in programme development. UNHCR had created a separate HIV Unit in order to expand its HIV programmes within Africa and Asia. Since becoming a UNAIDS co-sponsor, UNHCR had deepened its partnership with numerous United Nations agencies and NGOs, and strongly supported the recommendations of the Global Task Team on improving AIDS coordination among multilateral institutions and international donors.

67. Delegations congratulated UNHCR on building its collaboration with other agencies, NGOs as well as Governments. They encouraged the Office to scale up the universal access to prevention/treatment and care, prioritizing refugee women and children as the most vulnerable categories of refugees. One delegation asked how UNHCR's increased involvement as cluster lead for IDP situations relating to conflict would affect the overall budget.

68. The Director responded that UNHCR would provide technical coordination with regard to IDPs. Despite many efforts, persons of concern to UNHCR had not been included in universal access to antiretroviral therapy (ART); nevertheless UNHCR aimed to include refugees in national ART programmes and appealed to governments and donors for additional funds for this purpose. At camp level, HIV/AIDS committees had been established with equal representation of women and adolescents and HIV prevention and awareness activities focused on women and children.

69. Delegations adopted a decision on UNAIDS Global Task Team recommendations, with the inclusion of two amendments proposed by one delegation.

IX. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE STAFF COUNCIL

70. The Chairperson thanked the Chairman of the Executive Committee for his report on his visit to Burundi and welcomed the importance he gave to the wellbeing of staff. The Office was facing an unprecedented financial situation at a time when great challenges lay ahead. The Staff Council was deeply concerned by the gap between the real needs of persons of concern to UNHCR and available resources. The Staff Council appreciated the appointment of a Senior Advisor for Structural and Change Management and had offered its support in the comprehensive review and reform of UNHCR's structures and processes. The Council was particularly concerned to ensure a fair, transparent and equitable outcome, especially where it involved staffing. The Chairperson expressed appreciation for the regular dialogue the Staff Council had with the High Commissioner and his senior managers.

X. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

71. Under this item, the Chairman brought to the attention of the Committee various resolutions of relevance to UNHCR that had been adopted at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, including the 'omnibus' resolution endorsing the report of the fifty-sixth session of the Executive Committee (A/RES/60/129); a resolution on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/RES/60/128); and a resolution for the enlargement of the Executive Committee (A/RES/60/127).

72. The Chairman also reminded the Committee of forthcoming informal consultative meetings on the 2006 Conclusions on International Protection; issues relating to UNHCR's budget, including the review of the Financial Rules in relation to biennialization of the Programme Budget, criteria for mainstreaming Supplementary Programmes and the 2007 Budget outline; and UNHCR's expanded role in internal displacement situations.

73. The Chairman then declared the 35th meeting of the Standing Committee closed.

DECISION ON PROGRAMME BUDGETS AND FUNDING IN 2006

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its fifty-sixth session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1021, para. 23) as well as its discussions under the programme and funding item at the thirty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee,

Reaffirming, the importance of international burden and responsibility sharing in reducing the burden of host countries, especially developing ones,

1. *Notes* that UNHCR's overall needs under its Annual Programme for 2006, based on currently known requirements, amount to \$1,145.3 million, as approved by the Executive Committee at its fifty-sixth session (which included \$32.9 million from the United Nations Regular Budget and \$8.5 million for Junior Professional Officers);

2. *Notes* that 2006 Supplementary Programme Budgets currently amount to \$294.5 million, including \$46.6 million for programmes benefiting internally displaced persons;

3. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding during 2006 may result in the need for additional or expanded Supplementary Programmes and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs;

4. *Recognizes* that the important role played by host countries, and in particular developing countries hosting refugees, represents a significant contribution to UNHCR's activities; and *therefore calls* on the international community to support these countries in order to reduce the burden borne by them in the context of burden and responsibility sharing;

5. *Notes with continuing concern* that the High Commissioner has been compelled to reduce the activities under the Annual Programme Budget in reaction to anticipated funding shortfalls; and

6. *Calls* on UNHCR to provide Member States with details of the impact of said reductions, in response to anticipated funding shortfalls, on its refugee programmes; and

7. *Urges* Member States, in light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, to respond generously and in a spirit of solidarity, and in a timely manner, to his appeal for resources to meet in full the approved 2006 Annual Programme Budget, as well as the requirements of the 2006 Supplementary Programme Budgets.

DECISION ON UNAIDS GLOBAL TASK TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's 2003 General Decision on administrative, programme and financial matters (A/AC.96/987, para. 24 (h)) which welcomed the decision of the High Commissioner to request cosponsorship of UNAIDS, and decided to keep issues regarding HIV/AIDS and refugees under regular review as part of the programme of work of the Standing Committee,

Further recalling the Executive Committee's 2005 General Conclusion on International Protection (A/AC.96/1021, para. 20 (w)) as well as its discussions under the programme/protection policy item on the Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS for 2005-2007 at the thirty-second meeting of the Standing Committee (EC/55/SC/CRP.8),

Reaffirming the importance of recognizing that access to HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment, as far as possible in a manner comparable with the services available to the local hosting community, is an essential component in the protection of refugees, returnees and other persons of concern,

1. *Takes note* of document EC/57/SC/CRP.9 on HIV/AIDS and Refugees which provides an update on UNHCR's HIV and AIDS policies and activities since the introduction of its Strategic Plan for 2005-2007 and presents the recommendations of the Global Task Team of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS);
2. *Endorses* the recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors and furthermore *endorses* all the related decisions of the Programme Coordinating Board;
3. *Requests* UNHCR to develop appropriate action plans, in collaboration with the UNAIDS Secretariat and other cosponsors, and to maintain the momentum created by the Global Task Team, within the specified timeframes;
4. *Requests* UNHCR, together with UNAIDS and other relevant development partners, to report on progress in implementing the Global Task Team recommendations at a special session during the June 2006 meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board;
5. *Notes* the emphasis on support to country-level action and strengthening national responses and *encourages* UNHCR to provide effective technical support to national Governments and focus on their respective areas of comparative advantage;
6. *Encourages* UNHCR to pursue collaboration with UNAIDS and other relevant partners on developing subregional initiatives such as the Great Lakes Initiative on AIDS; and
7. *Notes* that this will require coordination and harmonization of efforts and a clear division of responsibilities with the UNAIDS Secretariat and with other cosponsors as well as coordination with national and global stakeholders.

LIST OF POINTS
FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTION

1. Regular briefings on management reforms;
2. Clear and precise information on funding and about the criteria for and impact of budget cuts; the Bureau to consult with the Office on how to improve the depiction of UNHCR's resource allocation;
3. More detail and annual thematic comments on follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on previous years' accounts;
4. Regular information on UNHCR's new commitments to internally displaced persons under the cluster leadership approach, including an evaluation of lessons learned in pilot countries;
5. Information by the June Standing Committee on measures foreseen for risk management with regard to cluster leadership issues (e.g. provider of last resort), including how emergency deployments will be undertaken;
6. More information by the June Standing Committee on preparations for the General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in September 2006, and the re-launching of the UNHCR Working Group on Migration.