

2nd Meeting

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DOCUMENTATION

I. BACKGROUND

1. The subject of Executive Committee documentation was one of the issues considered by the Working Group on Executive Committee Working Methods which met in the first part of 1995. It presented its report to the last session of the Executive Committee (EC/SC.2/76). Underlying the decisions adopted was a concern for conciseness, timeliness, clarity, the facilitation of effective decision-making, and cost savings.

2. A parallel series of Informal Consultations on Budgetary Questions (EC/SC.2/75) also made recommendations on documentation. These Informal Consultations also focused on the question of governance. Reflecting the Executive Committee's concern to ensure increased governance over programmes and funds, the following two conclusions were adopted:

In addition to the broad review of General and Special Programmes at the time of the Executive Committee, inter-sessional meetings shall consider updates on programme needs and funding; at inter-sessional meetings, there shall also be a review of all country programmes (General and Special) in a particular region or regions (e.g. Asia/SWANAME; Europe/Americas; Africa), and of any Special Programmes covering a number of countries in the region (s) (A/AC.96/860, para 22 (l));

The regular, systematic review of UNHCR programmes at the country level by the Executive Committee at inter-sessional meetings shall be based on agreed documentation (see below), and will include presentations by the senior staff of the Bureau concerned (A/AC.96/860, para.22(m)).

3. The "agreed documentation" referred to in this last conclusion refers to, and comments on, the extensive documentation (often referred to as "country chapters") prepared for the annual session of the Executive Committee. In 1995, sixty-two country chapters were prepared. Most of these "chapters" covered one country e.g. Afghanistan. Twelve of the sixty-two "chapters", however, grouped a number of countries together in one "chapter" e.g. Western Europe. The sixty-two chapters presented to the Executive Committee covered some 550 pages. Although these chapters were referred to in the annotated agendas for the October 1995 Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters meeting and the Plenary Session of the Executive Committee, as in previous years, they were not the subject of consideration by the Executive Committee, and indeed elicited no substantive references from delegations.

II. NEW FORMAT AND PROPOSAL

4. In preparing for the April 1996 review by the Standing Committee of UNHCR country/regional programmes covered by the Regional Bureaux for Europe and SWANAME, the Secretariat felt it necessary to revisit the question of documentation.

5. These new regional reviews are intended to provide the Standing Committee with an opportunity for a more thorough examination of the country and regional programmes for each region than was possible at the annual plenary meeting of the Executive Committee. Rather than rely for background documentation on outdated "country chapters", it was decided to present new, more concise "country chapters", integrating country-specific information on areas of

concern to the Standing Committee. This has been done in a single document per region EC/46/SC/CRP.24 for Europe and EC/46/SC/CRP.25 for South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (SWANAME). Each document includes updated budgetary and staffing tables.

6. Even if the Secretariat had the resources to produce these new-style regional documents for the Standing Committee reviews in addition to the "country chapters" usually presented to the Executive Committee, to do so would represent a major increase in documentation, rather than the reduction sought by the Executive Committee and the Secretariat. The Secretariat believes that the new documentation, with certain adjustments to existing practice (described below), should suffice.

7. The Secretariat would therefore appreciate guidance on the following proposals:

- the new "country chapters" prepared for each regional review by the Standing Committee in April, June and September will replace the "country chapters" prepared at the time of the Executive Committee;
- for the Executive Committee and the Standing Committee immediately prior to it, the Secretariat will continue to prepare the Overview document which will still cover in summary form the various regions (as well as Headquarters and the category "Other Programmes"); (see Annex II for an extract from the Overview document dealing with SWANAME). This Overview document will have in an additional annex the country tables which currently are included in each of the Executive Committee's "country chapters" (see Annex III for a typical country table);
- the annual document on Voluntary Repatriation which is before the Standing Committee for its April 1996 meeting (EC/46/SC/CRP.23) will be discontinued; for 1997, information on the various voluntary repatriations will be integrated into the new "country chapters" to be prepared for the regional reviews undertaken by the Standing Committee.

III. CONCLUSION

8. It is the view of the Secretariat that the proposed new-style "country-chapters" (which would also integrate, as of 1997, information on voluntary repatriations) provide a sound basis for the Executive Committee to ensure greater governance over UNHCR's programmes through the regular review by its Standing Committee of country and regional programmes. The documentation to be presented to the annual session of the Executive Committee (and to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), while more concise, yet nevertheless comprehensive, will provide an equally sound basis for the Executive Committee's broad review of UNHCR's global activities (country/area programmes, Other Programmes and Headquarters budgets) and its related decisions, including the approval of General Programmes.

Annex I

DRAFT DECISION ON EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DOCUMENTATION

The Standing Committee

Recalling its earlier decisions on Executive Committee Working Methods (A/AC.96/860, para.32) and on Budget Structure and Governance (A/AC.96/860, para.22), as they relate to documentation,

OP1 Decides, in the light of experience of its systematic review of UNHCR programmes at the country level and of the need to ensure efficiencies in relation to associated documentation, to modify the range of documentation prepared for the Executive Committee;

OP2 Decides further, in accordance with the proposals set out in document EC/46/SC/CRP.26, para.7, that:

- (i) the "country chapters" prepared for each regional review by the Standing Committee will replace those that have been traditionally prepared for the annual session of the Executive Committee;
- (ii) the Overview document prepared by the Secretariat for the annual Executive Committee session and the Standing Committee immediately prior to it will continue to cover in summary form the various regions (as well as Headquarters and the category "Other Programmes"); this Overview document will have in an additional annex the country tables which have traditionally been included in each of the Executive Committee's "country chapters";
- (iii) the annual document on Voluntary Repatriation will be discontinued; information on the various voluntary repatriations will be integrated as of 1997 into the new "country chapters" prepared for the regional reviews undertaken by the Standing Committee;

OP3 Decides also to review these new arrangements at the first session of the Standing Committee in 1997.