

Chapter XII

Refugees and displaced persons

In 1999, the global population of concern to, and receiving assistance from, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) totalled more than 22 million. They included almost 11.7 million refugees, 5.4 million internally displaced persons, 2.5 million repatriated refugees, 1.2 million asylum-seekers and 1.5 million affected by humanitarian and other crises.

The major challenges posed by the conflicts in Chechnya, East Timor and Kosovo, which generated new movements of refugees and displaced persons totalling almost 2 million, absorbed a large portion of UNHCR's resources.

While world attention was focused on those crises, African countries continued to host the world's largest refugee populations, internally displaced persons and other people of concern, totalling almost 6.3 million in 1999. The main refugee groups on the continent included half a million Sierra Leoneans in West Africa, 280,000 Burundians in the United Republic of Tanzania and 180,000 Congolese who had fled from the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to various countries. More than 370,000 Sudanese were still refugees in Ethiopia and Uganda; 165,000 refugees from Western Sahara were in camps in Algeria and other countries; and 150,000 Angolan refugees were mostly based in the DRC. Guinea continued to host more than half a million refugees. The situation in the east and Horn of Africa continued to be dominated by the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In Europe, the Kosovo crisis sparked one of the largest and most rapid refugee exoduses in modern times, with almost 850,000 Kosovar Albanians forced from their homes at the outbreak of hostilities in March. However, more than 400,000 voluntarily repatriated within two weeks following the restoration of peace. Elsewhere in Europe, the situation in Chechnya deteriorated in the second half of the year, forcing the displacement of more than 200,000 persons.

In Asia, East Timor experienced a fresh outbreak of violence, following the announcement of the results of the August referendum on independence, provoking the displacement of 75 per cent of the population, about 500,000 inside East Timor and an estimated 200,000 to West Timor and other areas of Indonesia. In October, UNHCR conducted a large-scale voluntary repa-

triation operation and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Indonesia establishing a framework for protecting refugees and affirming the voluntary nature of the repatriation programme. In the Americas, a major displacement occurred in Colombia where 300,000 persons were forced to flee their homes because of the deteriorating conflict.

In October, the UNHCR Executive Committee considered as its annual theme "Strengthening partnership to ensure protection, also in relation to security". It recognized that all levels of partnership, including with States, other international organizations, regional organizations, local populations and other elements of civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were important. The Committee reaffirmed that the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol remained the foundation of the international refugee regime. It recognized, however, that complementary forms of protection might need to be developed, and encouraged UNHCR, in consultation with others, to examine all aspects of the issue.

In December, the General Assembly urged that resources be mobilized to reduce the burden borne by States, in particular developing countries, that had received large numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees, and called on UNHCR to continue playing its catalytic role in mobilizing assistance from the international community to address the economic, environmental and social impact of large-scale refugee populations, especially in developing countries.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Programme policy

Executive Committee action. At its fiftieth session (Geneva, 4-8 October) [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee of the UNHCR Programme recognized that the presence of massive refugee populations in developing countries was putting considerable strain on their economies and environment and called on UNHCR to mobilize assistance from the international community to address

the situation. Serious breaches of internationally recognized rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern over the past year were strongly deplored by the Committee, which remained preoccupied that systematic violations of human rights, blatant disregard of international humanitarian law, and policies of wholesale expulsions of populations and "ethnic cleansing" had caused significant displacement around the world. The Committee called on all interested parties to concentrate on revitalizing old partnerships and building new ones to support the international refugee protection system. Noting the fiftieth anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the law of armed conflict, it also called on States and other parties to armed conflicts scrupulously to observe international humanitarian law. The Committee also addressed issues pertaining to access to protection, special protection needs, security of refugees, durable solutions, stateless persons and internally displaced persons and protection of the refugee's family.

For consideration of its annual theme, "Strengthening partnership to ensure protection, also in relation to security", the Committee had before it a note [A/AC.96/923] that raised issues and gave examples of how partnerships with a variety of actors had contributed to improving the protection of asylum-seekers, refugees and others of concern to UNHCR. The note contained suggestions as to both the potential limits of partnership and elements of success.

In her opening statement to the Committee, the High Commissioner said that 1999 had experienced one of the highest rates of deployment of emergency staff since UNHCR's response system was established in 1992. The year had also been marked by fresh conflicts and refugee crises in which civilians had been particularly targeted. The crises in Kosovo and East Timor had particularly challenged the international community. In Kosovo, the outflow of people was staggering and the return, only 10 weeks after the outflow started, was an even faster exodus in reverse. Despite the obstacles, the response to the crisis did meet immediate needs of safety and survival. The displacement situation in both East and West Timor was of extreme concern to UNHCR. It was imperative that the Office maintain its presence in West Timor with free and secure access to East Timorese refugees. Africa and the area stretching from the Black Sea to Central Asia were two other critical regions where the refugee problem had intensified.

With regard to management changes, the High Commissioner stated that the Office had completed a reorganization that had streamlined

its overall management and was continuing to develop a comprehensive operations management system. The 2000 budget had abolished the separation between General and Special Programmes and a new human resources management package was scheduled to be launched in January 2000. The High Commissioner also addressed issues of humanitarian action and international responses to crises, stressing that while regional initiatives to bring peace to troubled areas were welcome, new complex aspects of the interventions needed to be addressed, particularly the role of the military in humanitarian operations and the overcrowding of humanitarian space in high-profile emergencies.

By **decision** 1999/288 of 30 July, the Economic and Social Council took note of the High Commissioner's report for 1998/99 [E/1999/21 & Corr.1].

Coordination of humanitarian assistance

UNHCR concluded global or country-specific agreements with several partner organizations in 1999, as outlined in the Commissioner's 1999 report [A/55/12], including one with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Croatia and one with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges to jointly promote and encourage national systems for the identification, treatment and protection of asylum-seekers. The annual UNHCR/IOM meeting reviewed advances made and constraints faced in implementing the memorandum of understanding between them. The framework for cooperation with the World Bank was complemented by an agreement further defining the staff exchange programme. Secondments and staffing were the subject of three other cooperation agreements signed in 1999 with international organizations, NGOs and government agencies. UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Organization of La Francophonie, whereby the latter would fund, recruit and deploy Junior Professional Officers from francophone countries and other members of the organization. Emergency staffing and other standby arrangements were the subject of cooperation agreements signed with the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils and the Russian State entity for civil defence, emergency response and disaster mitigation. Although UNHCR had no global cooperation agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), annual meetings were held to review specific situations. The 1999 meeting addressed operating principles in large-scale humanitarian crises and the relationship between humanitarian, political and military actors.

UNHCR continued to strengthen cooperation and coordination with other UN agencies, funds and programmes, both bilaterally and within inter-

agency forums. The annual meeting between UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) addressed cooperation and implementation of programmes in the field. Guidelines to the field were issued concerning UNHCR participation in the resident coordinator system and the potential for inter-agency development management tools for strengthening humanitarian programmes and for addressing the matter of the gap from relief to development.

UNHCR continued to promote the UNHCR/NGO Partnership in Action process in 1999. Regional meetings on the process for national NGOs took place in Argentina and Sri Lanka.

In October [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee called on UNHCR to further strengthen its collaboration with ICRC, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

Evaluation and inspection activities

By a 19 August report [A/AC.96/918], the Executive Committee was informed that in February responsibility for evaluation was transferred to a new Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit and the Inspection and Evaluation Service was renamed the Inspector General's Office (IGO). During the 12 months ending 31 July, inspections were carried out in 14 countries. IGO inspected the Division of Human Resources Management in the second half of 1998 and undertook management reviews in response to specific requests. A report with recommendations for restructuring headquarters was issued in February and options for the new management structure for the regional bureau for Africa were proposed.

Evaluation activities were outlined in a 20 August report [A/AC.96/919], in which it was noted that the new Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit had reviewed the UNHCR housing programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina; problems of access to land and its ownership in repatriation operations; UNHCR's strategy in the European Union (EU); the Mali/Niger repatriation operation; UNHCR's rehabilitation activities in the Great Lakes region of Africa; compliance with UNHCR's policies on refugee women, children and the environment; and UNHCR staff training.

The Executive Committee, in a general decision on administrative, financial and programme matters [A/54/12/Add.1], took note of the reports.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 83], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) Committee

[A/54/600], adopted **resolution 54/146** without vote [agenda item 111].

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the activities of her Office and the report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work of its fiftieth session and the conclusions contained therein,

Recalling its resolution 53/125 of 9 December 1998,

Commending the High Commissioner and her staff for the competent, courageous and dedicated manner in which they discharge their responsibilities, paying tribute to those staff members whose lives have been endangered in the course of their duties, and deploring the injuries and deaths of staff members as a consequence of generalized as well as targeted violence,

Commending States that have successfully implemented durable solutions,

1. *Endorses* the report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work of its fiftieth session and the conclusions contained therein;

2. *Strongly reaffirms* the fundamental importance and the purely humanitarian and non-political character of the function of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of providing international protection to refugees and seeking permanent solutions to the problem of refugees, and reiterates the need for Governments to continue to facilitate the effective exercise of this function;

3. *Reaffirms* the fundamental importance of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, in particular their implementation in a manner fully compatible with the object and purpose of those instruments, notes with satisfaction that one hundred and thirty-nine States are now parties to one or to both instruments, and encourages the Office of the High Commissioner and States to strengthen their efforts to promote broader accession to these instruments and their full implementation;

4. *Notes* that the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions on the law of armed conflict is being commemorated in 1999, and calls upon States and other parties to armed conflict to observe scrupulously international humanitarian law;

5. *Also notes* that the thirtieth anniversary of the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa is also being commemorated in 1999, and acknowledges the contribution made by that Convention to the development of regional standards for the protection of refugees;

6. *Reaffirms* that, as set out in article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution, and calls upon all States to refrain from taking measures that jeopardize the institution of asylum, in particular by returning or expelling refugees or asylum-seekers contrary to international standards;

7. *Emphasizes* that the protection of refugees is primarily the responsibility of States, whose full and effective cooperation, action and political resolve are re-

quired to enable the Office of the High Commissioner to fulfil its mandated functions, and calls upon States, the Office of the High Commissioner and all interested parties to turn concentrated attention towards revitalizing old partnerships and building new ones in support of the international refugee protection system;

8. *Stresses the importance of international solidarity and burden-sharing in reinforcing the international protection of refugees, urges all States and relevant non-governmental and other organizations, in conjunction with the Office of the High Commissioner, to cooperate and to mobilize resources with a view to reducing the burden borne by States, in particular developing countries, that have received large numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees, and calls upon the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to play its catalytic role in mobilizing assistance from the international community to address the economic, environmental and social impact of large-scale refugee populations, especially in developing countries;*

9. *Condemns all acts that pose a threat to the personal security and well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers, such as refoulement, unlawful expulsion and physical attacks, and calls upon all States of refuge, in cooperation with international organizations where appropriate, to take all necessary measures to ensure respect for the principles of refugee protection, including the humane treatment of asylum-seekers;*

10. *Urges States to uphold the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, inter alia, through effective measures to prevent the infiltration of armed elements, to identify and separate any such armed elements from refugee populations, to settle refugees in secure locations and to afford the Office of the High Commissioner and other appropriate humanitarian organizations prompt, unhindered and safe access to asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons of concern;*

11. *Welcomes the coming into force of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel as well as the consideration of initiatives to widen its *ratione personae*, and calls upon States and all concerned parties to take all possible measures to safeguard the physical security and property of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner and other humanitarian personnel, to investigate fully any crime committed against them and to bring to justice persons responsible for such crimes;*

12. *Urges all States and relevant organizations to support the High Commissioner's search for durable solutions to refugee problems, including voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in a third country, as appropriate, reaffirms that voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution to refugee problems, and calls upon countries of origin, countries of asylum, the Office of the High Commissioner and the international community to act in a spirit of partnership to enable refugees to exercise their right to return home in safety and with dignity;*

13. *Calls upon all States to promote conditions conducive to the voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and with dignity, including conditions furthering reconciliation and long-term development in countries of return, and to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees by providing countries of origin*

with necessary rehabilitation and development assistance in conjunction, as appropriate, with the Office of the High Commissioner and relevant development agencies, and urges the Office of the High Commissioner to strengthen its cooperation and coordination with relevant entities, including international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations;

14. *Reiterates the right of all persons to return to their country of origin, emphasizes in this regard the obligation of all States to accept the return of their nationals, calls upon all States to facilitate the return of their nationals who have sought asylum and have been determined not to be in need of international protection, and affirms the need for the return of persons to be undertaken in a humane manner and with full respect for their human rights and dignity, irrespective of the status of the persons concerned;*

15. *Acknowledges the desirability of comprehensive approaches by the international community, including comprehensive regional approaches, to the problems of refugees and displaced persons, and notes in this regard that capacity-building in countries of origin and countries of asylum can play an important role in addressing the root causes of refugee flows, in strengthening emergency preparedness and response and in providing effective protection and achieving durable solutions;*

16. *Urges States, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and other relevant organizations, to explore and support fully capacity-building initiatives as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing refugee issues and to take necessary measures to promote sustainable development and to ensure the success of capacity-building activities, and reiterates that such initiatives may include those which strengthen legal and judicial institutions and civil society, those which promote the observance of human rights, the rule of law and accountability and those which enhance the capacity of States to fulfil their responsibilities with respect to persons of concern to the Office of the High Commissioner;*

17. *Reiterates its support for the role of the Office of the High Commissioner in providing humanitarian assistance and protection to internally displaced persons on the basis of criteria enumerated in paragraph 16 of its resolution 53/125, and underlines the continuing relevance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;*

18. *Calls upon States to adopt an approach that is sensitive to gender-related concerns and to ensure that women whose claims to refugee status are based upon a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons enumerated in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, including persecution through sexual violence or other gender-related persecution, are recognized as refugees, and encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to continue and to strengthen its efforts for the protection of refugee women;*

19. *Urges States and relevant parties to respect and observe principles of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law that are of particular relevance to safeguarding the rights of child and adolescent refugees, notes the particular vulnerability of refugee children to being forcibly exposed to the risks of injury, exploitation and death, in particular in the context of armed conflict, and to abduction with a view*

to their forced participation in military activities, and urges all States and concerned parties to take all possible measures to protect child and adolescent refugees, including, in particular, from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse and forced military service, and to prevent their separation from their families;

20. *Recognizes* the special role of elderly refugees within the refugee family, and, bearing in mind that 1999 has been declared the International Year of Older Persons, calls upon States and the Office of the High Commissioner to make renewed efforts to ensure that the rights, needs and dignity of elderly refugees are fully respected and addressed through appropriate programme activities;

21. *Recalls* that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and that it is entitled to protection by society and the State, and calls upon States, working in close collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner and other concerned organizations, to take measures to ensure that the refugee's family is protected, including through measures aimed at reuniting family members separated as a result of refugee flight;

22. *Notes* that forty-eight States are now parties to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and that twenty States are parties to the 1961 Convention on the reduction of statelessness, recalls paragraphs 14 to 16 of its resolution 50/152 of 21 December 1995, and encourages the High Commissioner to continue her activities on behalf of stateless persons;

23. *Calls upon* Governments and other donors to demonstrate their international solidarity and burden-sharing with countries of asylum, in particular developing countries, countries with economies in transition and countries with limited resources that, owing to their location, host large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, stresses the need for the Office of the High Commissioner to be given adequate resources to fulfil its mandated functions, and in this regard calls upon Governments to contribute generously to the unified annual programme budget of the Office of the High Commissioner, to support efforts to widen the donor base so as to achieve greater burden-sharing among donors and to assist the High Commissioner in securing additional and timely income from traditional governmental sources, other Governments and the private sector to ensure that the needs of refugees, returnees and displaced persons of concern to the Office of the High Commissioner are fully met.

Enlargement of the Executive Committee

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

In accordance with decision 1998/302 [YUN 1998, p. 11] the Economic and Social Council considered a note verbale from Côte d'Ivoire requesting admission to membership of the UNHCR Executive Committee [E/1998/97] and a draft decision on enlargement of the Committee [E/1998/L.53]. By **decision 1999/207** of 2 February, the Council took note of the request by Cote d'Ivoire and recommended that the General Assembly take a decision at its resumed fifty-third (1999) session on the

question of enlarging the Committee's membership from 54 to 55.

At its substantive session in July, the Council had before it notes verbales from Chile [E/1999/112] and the Republic of Korea [E/1999/76] requesting membership of the Committee.

By **decision 1999/282** of 30 July, the Council took note of the requests from Chile and the Republic of Korea and recommended that the Assembly take a decision on the question of enlarging the Committee's membership from 55 to 57 States at its fifty-fourth (1999) session.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 83], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/54/600], adopted **resolution 54/143** without vote [agenda item 111].

Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The General Assembly,

Taking note of Economic and Social Council decisions 1999/207 of 2 February 1999 and 1999/282 of 30 July 1999 concerning the enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

Taking note also of the requests regarding the enlargement of the Executive Committee contained in the note verbale dated 13 August 1998 from the Permanent Mission of Cote d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the note verbale dated 26 May 1999 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the note verbale dated 20 July 1999 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General,

1. *Decides* to increase the number of members of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from fifty-four to fifty-seven States;

2. *Requests the* Economic and Social Council to elect the additional members at its organizational session for 2000.

Financial and administrative questions

For 1999, UNHCR's initial budget (covering both General and Special Programmes) was \$915 million [A/55/12], 10 per cent lower than that of 1998 (\$1.1 billion). Of that amount, \$413 million was allocated for General Programmes and \$482 million for Special Programmes. The year was characterized by three successive emergencies (Kosovo, East Timor and the northern Caucasus) and by budget reductions due to funding shortfalls in several other General and Special Programmes, particularly in Africa. In the course of the year, overall requirements increased to \$1,183.7 million, due mainly to the Kosovo emergency. Total contributions reached \$911.6 million,

an increase of \$142.6 million over 1998. Despite the fact that the initial budget was \$27 million lower than in 1998 and that some donors increased their contributions, General Programmes again faced a funding shortfall and UNHCR had to borrow \$7.5 million from the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund to maintain the Emergency Fund at its statutory level. The Office was also forced to restrict or cancel a number of non-life-saving activities both in the field and at headquarters. Limited recourse to the Programme Reserve and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund also helped to match budgets with income.

During the year, the initial needs for Special Programmes were increased to \$770.7 million, due mainly to the Kosovo debacle, and to small increased needs in Africa and in Asia. Some individual programmes began with little carry-over funds from 1998 and received only partial funding, resulting in the need to continually readjust operational budgets and programme implementation. Programmes particularly affected were the repatriation/rehabilitation programmes in West Africa, Rwanda, the Great Lakes region of Africa and Liberia. Programmes for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Horn of Africa and south-eastern Europe also received insufficient funding to cover planned activities. Against the revised target, only \$584.7 million was received during the year.

UNHCR continued informal consultations on a unified budget structure and on pledging mechanisms, scheduled to begin in January 2000. It also published its first *Global Report* (covering the 1998 programme year), providing comprehensive documentation for donors and others on programme implementation, achievement of objectives and financial reporting. Increased contributions from private and corporate sources reached \$31.8 million, nearly three times more than in 1998.

UNHCR expenditures by region in 1999 were as follows: Africa, \$292.2 million; Asia and the Pacific, \$78.2 million; Europe (including the countries of the former Yugoslavia), \$437.3 million; the Americas, \$26.4 million; Central and South-West Asia, and North Africa and the Middle East, \$76.1 million.

For 2000, the Executive Committee approved budgetary requirements of \$933.5 million. By 31 December, total needs had increased to \$965.2 million through the addition of supplementary programmes for Sierra Leonean refugees and for the situation in East Timor.

In October [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee approved the revised 1999 General Programmes budget amounting to \$413 million and noted the new revised Special Programmes budget of \$741.2 million. It also approved the (uni-

fied) programmes and budgets for regional operations, global operations and headquarters for 2000 (annual programme budget) amounting to \$933.6 million, including an operational reserve of \$82.1 million (representing 10 per cent of programmed activities). It requested the High Commissioner, within the resources available, to respond flexibly and efficiently to needs currently indicated under the annual programme budget for 2000 and as outlined in the Global Appeal.

Accounts (1998)

The audited financial statements on voluntary funds administered by UNHCR for the year ending 31 December 1998 [A/54/5/Add.5] showed total expenditures of \$974.3 million and total income of \$820.1 million, with a reserve balance of \$190.6 million.

The Board of Auditors' main findings were: the financial statements and schedules of the voluntary funds generally conformed to UN accounting standards, except for recognition of income for trust funds and disclosure of liabilities for end-of-service benefits; of the \$346.4 million advanced to implementing partners during 1998 and recorded as expenditure, financial reports had not been received for \$92.8 million as at 31 March 1999, and audit certificates had not been received in respect of \$97 million advanced to government partners and \$234.5 million advanced to other implementing partners; projects reviewed at headquarters and in the field did not contain work plans or milestones for project implementation; of 2,565 projects implemented between 1994 and 1997, 2,123 (83 per cent) had not been closed as at November 1998; and although action in many of the key areas of Project Delphi was scheduled to have been completed by October 1997, the activity was either at the draft stage or was yet to commence as at April 1999.

The Board recommended that the Administration should: treat advances to implementing partners as accounts receivable at the time they were made and clear the advances to expenditure on receipt of satisfactory financial reports; assess the reasons for non-compliance by governmental and non-governmental implementing partners with the requirement to render audit certificates as prescribed in the sub-agreements and draw up a strategy for securing audit certificates; ensure that work plans were programme-specific and were prepared as an integral part of the project-planning and monitoring process; exercise stricter control of the progress of work of implementing partners in order to ensure achievement of stated objectives; review completed projects to ensure that they were promptly closed; and update plans still to be implemented under Project Delphi.

Reporting on measures taken or proposed to respond to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors [A/AC.96/917/Add.1], UNHCR noted that balances due from partners had been significantly reduced due to intensified efforts to obtain reports and the introduction of measures to withhold further instalments if those reports were not forthcoming. As to work plans, it was pointed out that while the requirement to prepare work plans was integral to the Office, many UNHCR projects covered recurrent activities to assist refugees and thus work plans would be repetitive. Also, in emergency situations, UNHCR needed to respond rapidly and work plans could easily become ineffectual when situations were volatile. Nevertheless, it was projected that a template would be provided for implementation, whenever applicable, in 2000. With regard to Project Delphi, it was recognized that actions foreseen in the 1996 Action Plan were overly ambitious in terms of the estimated time frame.

In an October report [A/54/441], the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) noted that, although considerable progress had been made in clearing outstanding balances of cash advances to implementing partners, the problem of timely receipt of audit certificates, especially from government implementing partners, persisted. It expressed concern that UNHCR referred to its influence over government partners as limited. The certification process was an important element of accountability and before a decision was made to pay government auditors, the cost effectiveness of such an option should be determined after all others had been explored. ACABQ recommended that UNHCR formulate the criteria for and conditions under which such assistance should be granted, including guidelines to ensure delivery of services to concerned implementing government partners.

In its general decision on administrative, financial and programme matters [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee asked to be kept informed of measures taken to address the recommendations and observations raised by ACABQ and the Board of Auditors.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 23 December [meeting 88], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee [A/54/506/Add.1], adopted **resolution 54/13 B** without vote [agenda item 117].

Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

The General Assembly,

Having considered, for the year ended 31 December 1998, the audited financial statements and the report of the Board of Auditors on voluntary funds adminis-

tered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, the report of the Board of Auditors on the implementation of its recommendations, the report of the Secretary-General on the year 2000 compliance issue, the report of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat and the comments of the Board of Auditors thereon, and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,

1. *Notes* the measures taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors;

2. *Accepts* the audited financial statements and the report of the Board of Auditors on voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

3. *Approves* all the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the Board of Auditors, and endorses the observations and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, subject to the provisions of the present resolution;

4. *Commends* the Board of Auditors for the improvement in the format of its report;

5. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors;

6. *Accepts the* report of the Board of Auditors on the implementation of its recommendations;

7. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat and the comments of the Board of Auditors thereon;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to implement the guidelines for the hiring and use of consultants and individual contractors in the Secretariat, in full conformity with the provisions of section VIII of its resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999;

9. *Requests the* Board of Auditors to monitor the implementation of the guidelines for the hiring and use of consultants and individual contractors in the Secretariat as revised by the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of section VIII of its resolution 53/221;

10. *Also requests* the Board of Auditors to monitor the implementation of the provisions of section VIII of its resolution 53/221 on consultants and individual contractors.

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee held three meetings in 1999 (9-11 February [A/AC.96/913]; 28 June-1 July [A/AC.96/924]; and 28-29 September [A/AC.96/927]). It considered a number of recurrent items and conducted in-depth reviews of UNHCR programmes and activities in different regions. Africa and Central Asia, South-West Asia, and North Africa and the Middle East were reviewed in February; the Americas, Europe and the former Yugoslavia, in June; and Asia and the Pacific, in September. Updates on overall programme and funding issues, including a proposal for a new UNHCR budget structure, were also discussed. Programme/protection policy issues were re-

viewed, as were UNHCR's efforts on behalf of refugee women, the Office's emergency preparedness and response capacity, the economic and social impact of massive refugee populations on host developing countries, and issues relating to detention and family protection. In September, the Standing Committee received an update on the independent evaluation of UNHCR emergency preparedness for and response to the Kosovo refugee crisis.

In October [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee requested UNHCR to include in the documentation on each item of the Standing Committee's 2000 programme of work the relevant audit and recommendations of ACABQ, as well as steps taken to implement those recommendations and related Executive Committee decisions and conclusions. It authorized the Standing Committee to add and delete items, as appropriate, to its inter-sessional programme of work. The items adopted for the 2000 programme of work were: international protection; programme/protection policy; programme and funding; governance; co-ordination; and management, financial, oversight and human resources.

Safety of staff

At its fourteenth meeting (9-11 February) [A/AC.96/913], the Standing Committee discussed the issue of staff safety, including the release of Vincent Cochetel, head of the UNHCR office in the northern Caucasus, after 11 months of captivity. In that context, it noted that training remained an important element of UNHCR's efforts to protect its staff, but the responsibility of States and authorities on the ground was also crucial. The recent entry into force of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 49/59 [YUN 1994, p. 1289], was welcomed.

Refugee protection and assistance

Protection issues

In her annual report covering 1999 [A/55/12], the High Commissioner said that many States, particularly in Africa, continued to honour their humanitarian obligations towards refugees and generously offered protection to those in need. Other countries provided generous financial and material support or established special admission programmes. Despite those positive trends, however, systematic violations of human rights,

blatant disregard of humanitarian law, wholesale expulsions of populations and large-scale ethnic cleansing caused significant displacement both internally and across borders in many regions. Denial of access to protection, including through closure of borders, non-admission to territory or to asylum procedures, or through direct or indirect refoulement and other acts that seriously endangered the life and physical security of refugees and asylum-seekers, continued to occur. Large numbers of individuals within UNHCR's mandate were also subject to detention or similar restrictive measures in different parts of the world.

In a July note [A/AC.96/914], the High Commissioner stated that the sheer magnitude of post-cold-war problems, the levels of national and regional insecurity they generated and State reluctance to continue to meet what were seen as the rising financial, political, environmental and social costs of maintaining large refugee populations or receiving a continuous flow, had a negative impact on countries' willingness to provide asylum.

UNHCR had detected a distinct trend in an increasing number of States to move away from a law- or rights-based approach to refugee protection towards more discretionary and ad hoc arrangements that gave greater primacy to domestic concerns rather than to international responsibilities. Some States blamed the present refugee problem on conflicts rather than on persecution as defined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees [YUN 1951, p. 520]. Consequently, calls had been made for an alternative refugee protection regime to that Convention. However, the General Assembly and the Executive Committee had continued to emphasize the primacy of both the Convention and its 1967 Protocol [YUN 1967, p. 477] and had confirmed that they formed the international legal basis for protecting refugees.

The High Commissioner pointed out that sovereign discretion as to the granting of protection to refugees was circumscribed by a plethora of human rights and refugee law responsibilities freely entered into. In balancing States' interests against those standards, it was fundamental to define clearly which responsibilities, irrespective of financial and political costs, could not be departed from. UNHCR had organized a series of regional seminars at which proposals were made for improving asylum activities and diminishing related costs. A consistent theme emanating from the discussions was the need to revitalize old and build new partnerships in support of the international refugee protection system. To that end, during 1999, UNHCR continued to promote collaboration on refugee protection through the "Reach Out" consultative process, initiated in

1998 to engage non-State actors in dialogues on the nature and dimensions of current protection challenges. UNHCR hoped that by the end of the century, a global partnership for refugee protection would re-emerge.

The High Commissioner also outlined the situation regarding refugee groups with special protection needs, such as women, children, the elderly, those with HIV/AIDS, those caught in situations of armed conflict and internally displaced persons. Other issues addressed included voluntary repatriation, resettlement and integration, statelessness and temporary protection.

In an October conclusion [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee reaffirmed that the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol remained the foundation of the international refugee regime. However, it recognized that there might be a need to develop complementary forms of protection. In that context, it encouraged UNHCR to consult with States and relevant actors to examine all aspects of the issue. The Committee called on States to promote and protect the rights of all refugees and expressed concern that refugees with special protection needs, including women and children, were increasingly targets of exploitation, forced military service and various forms of violence. The Committee reiterated that voluntary repatriation, where and when feasible, remained the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations.

International instruments

In 1999, Georgia and Kazakhstan became parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees [YUN 1951, p. 520] and its 1967 Protocol [YUN 1967, p. 477], bringing the number of States party to one or both instruments to 134. Chad, Latvia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Swaziland became parties to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons [YUN 1954, p. 416], bringing the number of States party to that instrument to 49. With the accession of Chad and Swaziland, the number of States party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness [YUN 1961, p. 533] reached 21.

UNHCR continued its two-year global campaign, launched in 1998 [YUN 1998, p. 1114], to promote States' accession to the 1951 Convention and its Protocol, as well as to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions.

Promotional activities

UNHCR's promotional activities in 1999 were directed at raising public awareness and strengthening knowledge and understanding of refugee issues, in addition to fostering implementation

of international legal standards on behalf of refugees, returnees and other persons of concern. Activities were also undertaken to strengthen linkages between refugee law, human rights law and international humanitarian law aimed at ensuring better measures to protect refugees. Those activities also aimed to promote incorporating relevant international legal standards into national legislation and administrative procedures. UNHCR increased its regional promotional activities and engaged in dialogue with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The publication of a *Field Protection Guide for NGOs* was one result of those efforts.

UNHCR continued to strengthen its relationship with human rights bodies, monitoring the work of the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission's Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the six UN treaty bodies. It strengthened its monitoring of and collaboration with human rights components of regional bodies such as the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee to reinforce understanding of international refugee protection within those groups.

Assistance measures

The global population of concern to UNHCR increased slightly during 1999, reaching 22.3 million, compared with 21.5 million in 1998. Those assisted included asylum-seekers, refugees, returning refugees in the early stages of their reintegration, internally displaced persons and other populations of concern, mainly victims of conflict. However, the global figure did not reflect the dramatic and massive humanitarian crises that arose during the year. Conflicts in Kosovo, East Timor and Chechnya dominated media reports and absorbed a large portion of UNHCR's resources, while many other humanitarian crises around the world, particularly in Africa, received less attention.

In Kosovo, some 350,000 people were displaced in the first three months of the year, and between March and June, more than 850,000 ethnic Albanians fled to other parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) or to neighbouring countries, mainly Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The humanitarian challenges temporarily exceeded the capacities of UNHCR and its humanitarian partners. Following the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (see PART ONE, Chapter V), the majority of the refugees returned to Kosovo almost as swiftly as they had fled.

UNHCR quickly transformed its programme from a refugee relief operation into an equally ambitious repatriation and reintegration effort. The eruption of violence in East Timor following the 30 August referendum on independence (see PART ONE, Chapter IV), provoked the displacement of some 500,000 persons within East Timor and an estimated 200,000 fled to West Timor and other areas of Indonesia. UNHCR responded to their immediate humanitarian needs by providing emergency relief, transportation and petrol. From October, UNHCR conducted a large-scale voluntary repatriation operation. With the outbreak of conflict in October in Chechnya, over 200,000 people fled into neighbouring republics, particularly Ingushetia. UNHCR provided assistance through a UN inter-agency emergency assistance programme (see PART THREE, Chapter III).

Meanwhile, in the absence of international support for other smaller but equally urgent humanitarian disasters, situations of fragile peace often deteriorated into renewed conflict and unresolved regional wars led to the outbreak of smaller sub-conflicts, precipitating further population displacements. The persistence of those situations underscored that stabilization and post-conflict recovery were essential if the consequences of conflicts were to be adequately addressed. UNHCR encouraged the international community to adopt broader, regionally based peace-building approaches to assist regions and countries aspiring to emerge from the spiral of conflict, poverty and human displacement. However, the gap between humanitarian and reconstruction activities continued to be very wide, which UNHCR sought to narrow both within the context of the Brookings process and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. It also reviewed its responsibility to internally displaced persons, adopting a policy of preparedness to respond to calls by the international community to assist them, for example in Angola.

In 1999, UNHCR received over \$900 million in voluntary contributions towards its General and Special Programmes. Assistance included emergency preparedness, response and assistance; care and maintenance; voluntary repatriation; local settlement; and resettlement. Following the emergency phase of an operation, the basic needs of refugees were covered by care and maintenance activities, which provided essential services such as the provision of food, household goods and cooking/heating materials; shelter; construction and maintenance of drinking water sources; and construction and operation of health and education facilities, among others.

Voluntary repatriation remained the preferred solution to refugee problems, but, unless

convinced that refugees could return to their countries of origin in reasonable safety, UNHCR did not actively promote return. However, the Office did organize and facilitate a number of existing spontaneous return movements after ensuring that the legal framework existed to protect the rights and interests of returnees. It also facilitated reintegration of those who returned. Resettlement to third countries was promoted when no other durable solution was feasible.

Refugees and the environment

In 1999, responding to the need for improved monitoring of its environmental activities, UNHCR launched a three-year project to develop appropriate methods for conducting environmental assessments and monitoring in different phases of refugee operations and in varying environmental situations. The project, which used a combination of practical and sophisticated tools, ranging from simple participatory appraisals to remote sensing, focused primarily on Guinea and Uganda, while preliminary outputs were scheduled to be extensively tested in other countries. Expected outputs were a tool kit for UNHCR staff and implementing agencies, functional databases and a specially designed training component. With input from training events and feedback from the field, a training manual, *Environmental Management within Refugee Operations*, was revised.

Tailor-made demonstration projects, patterned after the 1996 *Environmental Guidelines* [YUN 1996, p. 1108], were designed and supported in Afghanistan (environmental protection and management), Djibouti (gender and environment), Liberia (strengthening environmental issues), the Sudan (community integration) and Zimbabwe (permaculture). Other projects provided essential support to natural resource management initiatives, forest-related activities, promotion of energy-saving devices and practices, environmental education, data collection and analysis, and environmental mapping.

Refugee women

During 1999, UNHCR continued to implement a targeted strategy for the advancement of refugee women and gender mainstreaming. A gender equality perspective was integrated in several key training packages, field guidelines and checklists, and the new project description format that specifically required field staff to indicate how each project would address the particular needs and rights of refugee women was introduced. Four senior regional advisers for refugee women were appointed to coordinate im-

plementation of region-specific strategies. In Africa, those activities included a project targeting five sub-Saharan countries to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, reproductive rights-awareness training campaigns to eliminate harmful traditional practices, and gender-sensitive mine-awareness training.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, strategic frameworks for gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive performance indicators were developed. In addition, income-generation projects for urban refugee women and rights-awareness seminars on issues such as domestic violence and human rights were held. In Mexico, migratory documents were provided to both female and male refugees and legislative reforms regarding land ownership by women refugees were adopted. In the Middle East, health programmes for women, education for girls, rights-awareness training and microcredit schemes for women remained priorities.

Promotion of gender-sensitive asylum procedures in countries of asylum included training and support to Governments and NGOs.

In October [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee encouraged States, UNHCR and other concerned actors to promote wider acceptance and inclusion in their protection criteria of the notion that persecution could be gender-related or effected through sexual violence. It encouraged UNHCR and other actors to develop, promote and implement guidelines, codes of conduct and training programmes on gender-related issues.

Refugee children and adolescents

UNHCR's activities relating to refugee children and adolescents included an increasingly concerted follow-up to the UN study on the impact of armed conflict on children (the Machel Study) [YUN 1996, p. 663], which improved its response in particular areas of concern. The Office made progress in the Action for the Rights of Children training and capacity-building project, a collaborative effort initiated in 1997 by UNHCR and the Save the Children Alliance. In 1999, it was extended to include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Child rights-based performance objectives for all phases of its operations in complex emergencies, with a fundamental requirement that girls and boys benefited equally from all programmes, were established, as were plans of action on protection and assistance measures at the country level, sexual exploitation and violence, underage military recruitment, education, and unaccompanied minors and adolescents.

Inter-agency coordination and cooperation with NGOs was actively pursued through initiatives, including the joint UNHCR and Save the Children Alliance Separated Children in Europe programme, UNHCR's participation in forums such as the Inter-Agency Group on Separated Children and through the Office's support for a study on the untapped potential of adolescents affected by armed conflict, undertaken by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Four regional policy officers for refugee children oversaw UNHCR's protection and programming on behalf of refugee children and adolescents, and a senior regional policy officer was appointed in September to oversee the work of the Separated Children in Europe programme.

Report of Secretary-General. In response to General Assembly resolution 53/122 [YUN 1998, p. 1117], the Secretary-General submitted a September report on assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors [A/54/285], defined as those who were separated from both parents and were not being cared for by a legally responsible adult. The report reviewed new developments in family tracing and reunification, the Separated Children in Europe programme, the Action for the Rights of Children project, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Assembly in resolution 44/25 [YUN 1989, p. 560], action on behalf of internally displaced children and child soldiers, and efforts to strengthen UNHCR's field network. It also addressed issues of concern, such as the girl child (see p. 1090) and adoption of separated children.

The Secretary-General noted that a major outstanding challenge concerned the criteria for selecting foster families and systematic follow-up, for which resources were often limited. Although community-based strategies went some way in addressing the issues, separated children, particularly girls, remained at risk for some form of exploitation. Until civilians in general were protected from the impact of warfare or from serious human rights violations, increasing numbers of children would continue to be exposed to the additional trauma and danger of separation. Member States were urged to adhere to and promote the 1989 Convention.

Successful efforts by the United Nations and other agencies and organizations to assist unaccompanied refugee minors included the reunification of 62,000 children with their families in Rwanda by UNHCR, together with UNICEF and ICRC. However, 5,000 still remained in centres, many of whom were small children unable to give any information. The joint UNHCR/UNICEF Liberian Children's Initiative had been instrumental in reuniting 78 children with their families. In

1999, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict (see p. 674) proposed a "neighbourhood initiative", which aimed to obtain commitments from Governments and insurgency groups to protect children from cross-border threats and abuse. Three such neighbourhoods, in West Africa, East Africa and Kosovo, were proposed for implementation of the initiative. The Special Representative had also been active in seeking a solution to the problem of the abduction of children from northern Uganda to southern Sudan by members of an armed group, the Lord's Resistance Army. A small number of those children were released and their return to their families in Uganda was then facilitated by UNHCR, in coordination with UNICEF and local NGOs. Inter-agency cooperation involving UNHCR, ICRC and UNICEF also played an important role in tracing efforts during the Kosovo emergency. However, there were fewer child-family separations there than in other recent refugee crises. By early August, only 33 cases were pending solution.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 83], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/54/600], adopted **resolution 54/145** without vote [agenda item 111].

Assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 49/172 of 23 December 1994, 50/150 of 21 December 1995, 51/73 of 12 December 1996, 52/105 of 12 December 1997 and 53/122 of 9 December 1998,

Aware of the fact that the majority of refugees are children and women,

Bearing in mind that unaccompanied refugee minors are among the most vulnerable refugees and the most at risk of neglect, violence, forced military recruitment, sexual assault and other abuses and therefore require special assistance and care,

Mindful of the fact that the ultimate solution to the plight of unaccompanied refugee minors is their return to and reunification with their families,

Noting the revised Guidelines on Refugee Children issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in May 1994 and the development of an emergency kit to facilitate coordination and enhance the quality of responses to the needs of unaccompanied minors by the Office of the High Commissioner, the United Nations Children's Fund and non-governmental organizations,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund in the identification and tracing of unaccompanied refugee minors, and welcoming their efforts in reunifying families of refugees,

Welcoming the efforts exerted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to reunite refugees with their families,

Noting the efforts of the High Commissioner to ensure the protection of and assistance to refugees, including children and unaccompanied minors, and that further enhanced efforts need to be exerted to this effect,

Recalling the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;
2. *Also takes note* of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict;
3. *Expresses its deep concern* at the continued plight of unaccompanied refugee minors, and emphasizes once again the urgent need for their early identification and for timely, detailed and accurate information on their number and whereabouts;
4. *Stresses* the importance of providing adequate resources for programmes of identification and tracing of unaccompanied refugee minors;
5. *Calls upon* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in cooperation with other relevant United Nations bodies, to incorporate into its programmes policies that aim at preventing the separation of refugee families, conscious of the importance of family unity;
6. *Calls upon* all Governments, the Secretary-General, the Office of the High Commissioner, all United Nations organizations, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations concerned to exert the maximum effort to assist and protect refugee minors and to expedite the return to and reunification with their families of unaccompanied refugee minors;
7. *Urges* the Office of the High Commissioner, all United Nations organizations, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations concerned to take appropriate steps to mobilize resources commensurate with the needs and interests of unaccompanied refugee minors and for their reunification with their families;
8. *Calls upon* all States and other parties to armed conflict to respect international humanitarian law, and, in this regard, calls upon States parties to respect fully the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and related instruments, while bearing in mind resolution 2 adopted at the twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held at Geneva in December 1995, and to respect the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which accord children affected by armed conflict special protection and treatment;
9. *Condemns* all acts of exploitation of unaccompanied refugee minors, including their use as soldiers or human shields in armed conflict and their forced recruitment into military forces, and any other acts that endanger their safety and personal security;
10. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Children's Fund, other United Nations organizations and other international organizations to mobilize adequate assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors in the areas of relief, education, health and psychological rehabilitation;
11. *Encourages* the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in his efforts to raise awareness

worldwide and to mobilize official and public opinion for the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including refugee minors;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution and to give special attention to the girl-child refugee in his report.

Elderly refugees

With the observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 (see PART THREE, Chapter XI), UNHCR was provided with an opportunity to re-examine its approaches to the mental and physical needs of elderly refugees and other older persons of concern to the Office. A range of materials featuring the situation of older refugees was published, and the Office, along with the Humanitarian Office of the European Community, jointly commissioned a study on the elderly in refugee emergencies, which covered all sectors, from health to shelter. UNHCR also formulated a policy on older refugees.

In a decision on special protection needs adopted in October [A/54/12/Add.1], the Executive Committee called on States, UNHCR and other concerned actors, taking into account that elderly refugees were particularly affected by social disintegration, chronic dependency and other adverse aspects of the refugee condition, to make renewed efforts to ensure that the rights, needs and dignity of elderly refugees were fully respected and addressed through appropriate programme activities.

Regional activities

Africa

Report of Secretary-General. In a September report on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa [A/54/414], prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 53/126 [YUN 1998, p. 1119], the Secretary-General stated that some 15 African countries were currently embroiled in armed conflict (see PART ONE, Chapter II) and there were some 6 million persons of concern to UNHCR on the continent, namely refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. The main refugee groups on the continent comprised over half a million Sierra Leoneans in West Africa, 280,000 Burundians in the United Republic of Tanzania and 180,000 Congolese who had fled from the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to various countries. Movements also took place from the Republic of the Congo to the DRC and Gabon. Because of security problems in major returnee areas, the Liberian repatriation programme was

interrupted and the planned repatriation of 250,000 people was put on hold.

Referring to older, unresolved conflict situations in Africa, the report noted that more than 370,000 Sudanese were still refugees in Ethiopia and Uganda; 165,000 Saharawi refugees were still in camps in Algeria and other countries; and there were 150,000 Angolan refugees, mostly in the DRC. In Angola and the Sudan, as well as in the war-torn areas on the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, were tens of thousands of internally displaced people. In the DRC, UNHCR was providing assistance to 700,000 displaced persons in accessible areas within the country, while another 180,000 refugees were being assisted in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In Liberia, 280,000 refugees had returned home and it was hoped that the remaining quarter of a million would be repatriated by mid-2000.

The situation in the Great Lakes region in 1999 continued to be volatile, engendering new waves of population movements. Consequently, with little prospect of rapid solutions for the resulting groups of refugees, UNHCR continued to provide care and maintenance assistance. Meanwhile, return movements had dwindled in Burundi because the optimism that accompanied the lifting of sanctions in January and improved relations with the United Republic of Tanzania gave way to disappointment as insecurity spread to provinces bordering Tanzania. Following a tripartite agreement signed in April by UNHCR with the Governments of the Republic of the Congo and the DRC, repatriation of refugees who had entered the DRC from the Republic during the conflict there was underway.

During 1999, countries in West Africa were hosting 2.1 million refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. Political situations in some parts of the area remained unstable, notably in Liberia where an armed confrontation had a destabilizing effect, leading to additional displacements and halting returns to Lofa county. However, repatriation to other counties continued. In Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, UNHCR continued to protect and assist large numbers of refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone and other countries; 350,000 Sierra Leoneans were residing in two provinces of Guinea alone. In Sierra Leone, the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement (see PART ONE, Chapter II) opened prospects for the gradual return of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. Another positive development was the improved situation in Guinea-Bissau as of May, when most of the over 350,000 internally displaced persons had returned to their homes. Elsewhere, notably in the Central

African Republic, Chad and Gabon, the year witnessed new refugee influxes resulting from conflict in the Republic of the Congo, the DRC and the Sudan.

In the East and Horn of Africa, the resumption of hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia caused population displacements in both countries and had repercussions on internal conflicts in Somalia, leading to new hostilities there. OAU mediation efforts revived hopes of greater stability and resumption of voluntary repatriation movements. The main groups concerned were Eritreans (mainly in the Sudan) and Somalis (with the largest groups in Ethiopia and Kenya).

Nearly 300,000 refugees, returnees and asylum-seekers were living in countries in the southern Africa region. In general, they were persons of rural background residing in villages and settlements, the largest single group being Angolans located mainly in Zambia (150,000). Also in Zambia, a new refugee emergency occurred with the arrival of some 25,000 Congolese refugees as of mid-June. In Botswana, there was an influx of Namibians from the Caprivi region.

There was little change in the refugee situation in North Africa, where UNHCR continued to provide basic care and assistance to refugees in countries of the region, pending voluntary repatriation and other long-term solutions. The slow process of implementing the UN settlement plan in Western Sahara (see PART ONE, Chapter II) caused further delays in UNHCR preparatory activities for repatriating Saharawi refugees from Algeria and Mauritania.

The Secretary-General stated that inter-agency cooperation had been of particular note in the specific areas of security, sustainable return, access to populations of concern, coordination of resources and unaccompanied minors. There had also been significant UNHCR cooperation with OAU and the Southern African Development Community.

The Secretary-General concluded that the human displacement problems in Africa were a source of concern for the United Nations, requiring coordinated action by UNHCR and other agencies. That was particularly true at a time when major emergencies elsewhere had drawn the world's attention and made heavy claims on available resources. Despite the serious situation in Africa, there had been some encouraging signs in 1999, such as the ceasefire agreements in the DRC and Sierra Leone, and the Framework Agreement in the dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia (see PART ONE, Chapter II). However, the lasting success of such agreements, as well as solutions in other conflict situations that caused

population movements, would require a renewed commitment by African Governments to take their future, and the future of their peoples, more resolutely into their own hands. The determination that lasting solutions to problems, including refugee problems, would only come through negotiations rather than force, was a fundamental precondition for international support. The international community, for its part, had to do all in its power to back such efforts.

Report of High Commissioner. In her annual report covering 1999 [A/55/12], the High Commissioner stated that a number of management changes had taken place in the structure of the UNHCR Africa Bureau that had resulted in the creation of three regional directorates based in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Pretoria (South Africa). By subregion, there were: 3.2 million persons of concern to UNHCR in Central and West Africa, who received \$85 million in agency expenditures (Guinea continued to host by far the largest refugee population in the area; care and assistance was provided to more than half a million refugees there); 2.5 million of concern in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, who received \$186 million; and 311,160 of concern in southern Africa, who received \$21 million.

Communication. By a 13 December letter [A/54/682], Algeria transmitted the Khartoum Declaration and the Recommendations on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, adopted by OAU at its December 1998 ministerial meeting.

Central African countries

In response to General Assembly resolution 53/1 N [YUN 1998, p. 1122], the Secretary-General submitted a September report on special assistance to Central and East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons [A/54/421]. The report made particular reference to women and children, security access to populations in need and the environment. It also focused on the activities undertaken in areas where large numbers of refugees had repatriated. Activities consisted of providing emergency relief and assistance to thousands of refugees fleeing conflicts in the region and were undertaken in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the DRC, Gabon, Kenya, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. UNHCR, in collaboration with other UN agencies including WFP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Population Fund and the Office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), together with international and local NGOs, also strove to lessen the political, economic and social impact of forced population movements.

Lack of funding remained a concern, said the Secretary-General, and the multiplication of smaller conflicts, with movements of refugees and displaced persons affecting a number of countries, posed particular challenges.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 83], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/54/600], adopted **resolution 54/147** without vote [agenda item 111].

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 53/126 of 9 December 1998,

Recalling also the provisions of its resolution 2312(XXII) of 14 December 1967, by which it adopted the Declaration on Territorial Asylum,

Recalling further the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa of 1969 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,

Recalling the Khartoum Declaration and the Recommendations on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa adopted by the Organization of African Unity at the ministerial meeting held at Khartoum on 13 and 14 December 1998,

Welcoming decision CM/Dec.459(LXX) on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its seventieth ordinary session, held at Algiers from 8 to 10 July 1999,

Commending the First Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Africa of the Organization of African Unity, held at Grand-Baie, Mauritius, from 12 to 16 April 1999, and welcoming the attention paid to issues relevant to refugees and displaced persons in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the Conference,

Recognizing the contributions made by African States to the development of regional standards for the protection of refugees and returnees, and noting with appreciation that countries of asylum are hosting refugees in a humanitarian spirit and in a spirit of African solidarity and brotherhood,

Recognizing also the need for States to address resolutely the root causes of forced displacement and to create conditions that facilitate durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons, and stressing in this regard the need for States to foster peace, stability and prosperity throughout the African continent,

Convinced of the need to strengthen the capacity of States to provide assistance and protection for refugees, returnees and displaced persons and of the need for the international community, within the context of burden-sharing, to increase its material, financial and technical assistance to the countries affected by refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

Acknowledging with appreciation that some assistance is already rendered by the international community to

refugees, returnees and displaced persons and host countries in Africa,

Noting with great concern that, despite all the efforts deployed so far by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and others, the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa, especially in the West African and Great Lakes regions and in the Horn of Africa, remains precarious,

Stressing that the provision of relief and assistance to African refugees by the international community should be on an equitable, non-discriminatory basis,

Considering that, among refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, women and children are the majority of the population affected by conflict and bear the brunt of atrocities and other consequences of conflict,

1. *Takes note of the reports of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;*

2. *Notes with concern that the declining socio-economic situation, compounded by political instability, internal strife, human rights violations and natural disasters, has led to increased numbers of refugees and displaced persons in some countries of Africa, and remains particularly concerned about the impact of large-scale refugee populations on the security, socio-economic situation and environment of countries of asylum;*

3. *Notes the commemoration in 1999 of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa of 1969, appeals to African States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention, and calls upon States parties to the Convention to reaffirm their commitment to its ideals and to respect and observe its provisions;*

4. *Also notes the commemoration in 1999 of the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and, bearing in mind that armed conflict is one of the principal causes of forced displacement in Africa, calls upon States and other parties to armed conflict to observe scrupulously the letter and spirit of international humanitarian law;*

5. *Notes the need for States to address the root causes of forced displacement in Africa, and calls upon African States, the international community and relevant United Nations organizations to take concrete action to meet the needs of refugees, returnees and displaced persons for protection and assistance and to contribute generously to national projects and programmes aimed at alleviating their plight;*

6. *Also notes the link, inter alia, between human rights violations, poverty, natural disasters and environmental degradation and population displacement, and calls for redoubled and concerted efforts by States, in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity, to promote and protect human rights for all and to address these problems;*

7. *Encourages the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, within their respective mandates, in the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa;*

8. *Notes with appreciation* the positive outcome of all mediation and conflict resolution efforts carried out by African States, the Organization of African Unity and subregional organizations, as well as the establishment of regional mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, and urges all relevant parties to address the humanitarian consequences of conflicts;

9. *Expresses its appreciation and strong support* for those African Governments and local populations that, in spite of the general deterioration of socio-economic and environmental conditions and overstretched national resources, continue to accept the additional burden imposed upon them by increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons, in compliance with the relevant principles of asylum;

10. *Expresses its gratitude* to the international community and to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the humanitarian assistance they have continued to render to refugees and displaced persons and to countries of asylum;

11. *Expresses its concern* about instances in which the fundamental principle of asylum is jeopardized by unlawful expulsion or refoulement or by threats to the life, physical security, integrity, dignity and well-being of refugees;

12. *Calls upon* States, in cooperation with international organizations, within their mandates, to take all necessary measures to ensure respect for the principles of refugee protection and, in particular, to ensure that the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps is not compromised by the presence or the activities of armed elements;

13. *Urges* States and all other actors to take all necessary measures to protect activities related to humanitarian assistance, to prevent attacks on and kidnapping of national and international humanitarian workers and to ensure their safety and security, and requests organizations and aid workers to abide by the national laws and regulations of the countries in which they operate;

14. *Calls upon* the Office of the High Commissioner, the Organization of African Unity, subregional organizations and all African States, in conjunction with United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the international community, to strengthen and revitalize existing partnerships and forge new ones in support of the international refugee protection system;

15. *Calls upon the Office of* the High Commissioner, the international community and other concerned entities to intensify their support to African Governments through appropriate capacity-building activities, including training of relevant officers, disseminating information about refugee instruments and principles, providing financial, technical and advisory services to accelerate the enactment or amendment and implementation of legislation relating to refugees, strengthening emergency response and enhancing capacities for the coordination of humanitarian activities;

16. *Reaffirms* the right of return and also the principle of voluntary repatriation, appeals to countries of origin and countries of asylum to create conditions that are conducive to voluntary repatriation, and recognizes that, while voluntary repatriation remains the pre-eminent solution, local integration and third-country resettlement, as appropriate, are also viable options

for dealing with the situation of African refugees who, owing to prevailing circumstances in their respective countries of origin, are unable to return home;

17. *Notes with satisfaction* the voluntary return of millions of refugees to their homelands following the successful repatriation and reintegration operations carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner, with the cooperation and collaboration of countries hosting refugees and countries of origin, and looks forward to other programmes to assist the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of all refugees in Africa;

18. *Reiterates* that the Plan of Action adopted by the Regional Conference on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes Region, held at Bujumbura from 15 to 17 February 1995, as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/149 of 21 December 1995, continues to be a viable framework for the resolution of the refugee and humanitarian problems in that region;

19. *Appeals* to the international community to respond positively, in the spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing, to the third-country resettlement requests of African refugees, and notes with appreciation that some African countries have offered resettlement places for refugees;

20. *Welcomes* the programmes carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner with host Governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the international community to address the environmental impact of refugee populations;

21. *Calls upon* the international donor community to provide material and financial assistance for the implementation of programmes intended for the rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructure affected by refugees in countries of asylum;

22. *Expresses its concern* about the long stay of refugees in certain African countries, and calls upon the Office of the High Commissioner to keep its programmes under review, in conformity with its mandate in the host countries, taking into account the increasing needs of refugees;

23. *Emphasizes* the need for the Office of the High Commissioner to collate statistics, on a regular basis, on the number of refugees living outside refugee camps in certain African countries, with a view to evaluating and addressing the needs of those refugees;

24. *Urges* the international community, in a spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing, to continue to fund generously the refugee programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner and, taking into account the substantially increased needs of programmes in Africa, to ensure that Africa receives a fair and equitable share of the resources designated for refugees;

25. *Requests* all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to pay particular attention to meeting the special needs of refugee women and children and displaced persons, including those with special protection needs;

26. *Calls upon* States and the Office of the High Commissioner to make renewed efforts to ensure that the rights, needs and dignity of elderly refugees are fully respected and addressed through appropriate programme activities;

27. *Expresses grave concern* about the plight of internally displaced persons in Africa, calls upon States to

take concrete action to pre-empt internal displacement and to meet the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons, takes note in this regard of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and urges the international community, led by relevant United Nations organizations, to contribute generously to national projects and programmes aimed at alleviating the plight of internally displaced persons;

28. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, taking fully into account the efforts expended by countries of asylum, under the item entitled "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions", and to present an oral report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2000.

The Americas

In 1999, deterioration of the conflict in Colombia led to the massive forced displacement of almost 300,000 persons, as well as cross-border movements into Panama and Venezuela. Ecuador and Venezuela were both hosting large populations of undocumented Colombians who preferred to remain anonymous. Those influxes triggered a shift in the Office's humanitarian interventions from advocacy and promotional activities to technical advice and legal expertise for adopting or amending national legislation, capacity-building and emergency response at the national and local levels. Consequently, UNHCR established a liaison office in Ecuador and a field presence on Venezuela's common border with Colombia.

In southern South America, about 30 per cent of refugee needs were met by civil society institutions in Argentina and Brazil and, in Argentina, the foundation *Argentina con ACNUR* was established in December to support UNHCR activities worldwide.

The last collective return of Guatemalan refugees in July signalled the closure of UNHCR's repatriation programme there. Some 43,000 refugees had benefited from the programme since 1992. UNHCR intensified its efforts to involve returnees and their communities in government and civil society and advocated for their inclusion in national and regional plans. The migratory stabilization plan for 20,000 Guatemalan refugees in south-eastern Mexico continued to be implemented by the Government of Mexico, UNHCR and NGOs. In Chiapas, 96 per cent of the refugee population had received their migratory documents and remaining refugees in Mexico requesting naturalization were expected to benefit from UNHCR's assistance towards self-sufficiency. UNHCR facilitated acquisition of residency per-

mits and naturalization for refugees in all countries of the sub-continent, and Belize and Costa Rica offered amnesty programmes for illegal aliens who had arrived in those countries during the Central American conflict in the 1980s.

In Canada and the United States, UNHCR continued to advocate for the application of international protection principles, promoting resettlement as a durable solution and reinforcing public awareness of and support for refugees and the Office's humanitarian programmes. In the Caribbean, UNHCR focused on building the foundation for refugee protection.

Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States

South Asia

As a result of procedural difficulties in the clearance by the Myanmar authorities of those willing to repatriate, only 1,500 Muslim refugees returned from camps in Bangladesh to Myanmar in 1999 under the voluntary repatriation programme, which had resumed in November 1998. UNHCR urged both Governments to expedite returns. Following discussions with UNHCR, Bangladesh agreed to introduce refugee self-help activities within camps for those unable or unwilling to return in the near future. UNHCR also facilitated the establishment of a five-year UN integrated development plan in Myanmar, which was expected to allow development agencies to take over UNHCR-funded activities in northern Rakhine State by the end of 2000. As a precursor, FAO, UNICEF and the United Nations Office for Project Services were engaged as implementing partners for UNHCR activities.

Bilateral talks between Bhutan and Nepal on the 97,000 refugees in camps in Nepal had made slow progress during the year. In Sri Lanka, the continuation of armed conflict between the Sri Lankan authorities and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam sparked further population displacements in the northern Vanni region where an estimated 600,000 persons were displaced. UNHCR attempted to facilitate access to national protection for persons in the region affected by the conflict; an open relief centre, maintained with the Office's support, provided an area of relative safety. An estimated 70,000 Sri Lankan refugees also remained in camps in India during 1999. UNHCR's efforts to promote self-reliance among 16,000 urban refugees in India, mainly from Afghanistan, were impeded by difficulties in issuing and renewing residential permits by the Indian authorities due to security considerations.

East Asia and the Pacific

As planned, UNHCR phased out its local settlement assistance to Vietnamese refugees in China at the end of 1999, maintaining, however, a revolving credit scheme, initiated in 1994, through which refugees achieved self-reliance and which allowed them and host communities to continue to benefit from employment opportunities created under the scheme. In July and August, tripartite consultations between the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and UNHCR led to the organized return of the remaining 1,160 Lao in Thailand who did not meet internationally recognized refugee criteria, marking the end of the former Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees in Thailand. Returnee reintegration and monitoring assistance were scheduled to continue in Laos throughout 2000, and UNHCR was expected to seek resettlement solutions for the remaining 116 refugees in the Ban Napho camp.

In May, UNHCR completed registering almost 98,000 refugees, mainly of Karen and Karenni origin from Myanmar, located in 11 camps along the border between Thailand and Myanmar. The Office also continued to cooperate actively with the Thai Government on the admission of new arrivals to the camps. Despite several security incidents during the year, Thailand reiterated its policy of providing temporary asylum to Myanmar refugees. In addition, the repatriation of the remaining 47,000 Cambodian refugees in camps in Thailand was completed in March, and UNHCR continued to monitor protection of returnees in Cambodia and to promote their reintegration through community-based projects.

Timor

The eruption of violence in East Timor following the August referendum on independence (see PART ONE, Chapter IV) provoked the displacement of 75 per cent of the population, about 500,000 inside East Timor and an estimated 200,000 to West Timor and other areas of Indonesia. There was also large-scale destruction of private housing, public buildings and utilities. UNHCR responded to immediate humanitarian needs by providing emergency relief, transportation and petrol for the displaced persons and refugees. In October, the Office launched a large-scale voluntary repatriation operation and concluded a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia, which established a framework for protecting refugees and affirmed the voluntary nature of the repatriation programme to East Timor. Nevertheless, access to refugees in West Timor remained problematic and it was difficult to determine how many were located there.

UNHCR was neither deterred by the difficulties, nor by threats and intimidation by militias, and continued its activities in West Timor, including mass information campaigns to promote repatriation.

Central Asia, South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East

Despite the lack of political settlement and general peace in Afghanistan, more than 160,000 Afghan refugees returned home in 1999, but a large majority of the 2.6 million Afghan refugees remaining in Pakistan and Iran were unlikely to return to Afghanistan in the near future. UNHCR's main operation in Central Asia was the repatriation of 4,670 Tajik refugees from Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. In North Africa, pending implementation of a durable solution for the Saharan refugees, UNHCR continued its protection role and provided care and maintenance assistance.

UNHCR protected and assisted some 132,000 refugees in the Middle East in 1999. Most lived in urban settings, although there were also camp-based refugee populations in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. During the year, UNHCR attempted to strengthen its refugee status determination and resettlement processing capacities in the region, which resulted in enhanced protection, more opportunities for durable solutions for eligible refugees and reduced frequency of irregular movements of asylum-seekers in the region. As a result, almost 5,500 refugees were resettled in third countries from the Middle East and 17,000 returned home.

Europe

South-Eastern Europe

The conflict in the Kosovo province of FRY led to renewed displacement and suffering on a massive scale in 1999. Some 350,000 people had already been displaced when, on 24 March, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched airstrikes against FRY (see PART ONE, Chapter V) and almost 1 million Kosovo Albanians fled their homes. Between March and June alone, more than 850,000 ethnic Albanians fled to other parts of FRY or to neighbouring countries, mainly to Albania and FYROM.

Despite the difficulties of one of the most complex and intensely political refugee emergencies in history, the humanitarian operation achieved its objective, namely to ensure the security and meet the immediate life-sustaining needs of the refugees. However, the humanitarian challenges posed by the size of the crisis initially overwhelmed the response capacity of the host Gov-

ernments and temporarily exceeded the capacities of UNHCR and its humanitarian partners.

In addition to the relief efforts of civilian agencies, NATO's rapid logistical support proved vital to ensure refugee admission and to bring the humanitarian crisis under control. Other important factors included Albania's liberal asylum policy; the hospitality extended by host families in Albania, FYROM and Montenegro; and international burden-sharing through a humanitarian evacuation programme under which some 90,000 refugees were assisted in moving temporarily from FYROM to third countries.

Following the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the majority of the recently displaced refugees returned to Kosovo, almost as swiftly and dramatically as they had fled. UNHCR quickly transformed its programme from a refugee relief operation into an equally ambitious repatriation and reintegration effort, including a major emergency shelter programme for the hundreds of thousands who returned before the winter. Despite logistical difficulties, including bottlenecks at the border between FYROM and Kosovo, a humanitarian crisis during the winter was avoided.

Regrettably, the massive return of refugees to Kosovo resulted in an exodus of hundreds of thousands of non-Albanians, mainly to other parts of FRY, and there was a climate of violence and impunity, as well as widespread discrimination and intimidation directed against non-Albanians. That situation remained a major concern for all humanitarian agencies in Kosovo.

A critical protection issue for UNHCR in western Europe in 1999 was the outflow of thousands of refugees from Kosovo. In June alone, nearly 20,000 Kosovars arrived spontaneously to seek asylum. Although western European Governments generally responded positively and generously to the Kosovo crisis, UNHCR followed with concern the legislative, judicial and policy developments that had an impact on asylum possibilities. At the national level and at the level of the EU, policy directions continued to focus on restrictive practices designed to control migration.

Although 1999 was the fourth year of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia, and despite sustained efforts to promote return and reconciliation, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons in and from the region remained high. In the second half of the year, some encouraging progress was achieved. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a steady increase of minority returns to areas considered to be particularly difficult. Returns to and within Croatia numbered some 100,000. UNHCR played a cata-

lytic role in establishing special return projects for both countries.

In **resolution** 1239(1999) of 14 May (see PART ONE, Chapter V), the Security Council invited UNHCR and other international humanitarian relief organizations to extend assistance to the internally displaced persons in Kosovo, the Republic of Montenegro and other parts of FRY.

Eastern Europe

The situation around Chechnya in the Russian Federation deteriorated in the second half of 1999, causing the displacement of more than 200,000 persons who fled into neighbouring republics, particularly Ingushetia. While several thousand Chechens returned home to parts of Chechnya under Russian control, many left again due to ongoing insecurity, the destruction of their homes and the poor state of the infrastructure. UNHCR provided assistance to approximately 180,000 persons in Ingushetia through a UN inter-agency emergency assistance programme.

The UNHCR assistance programme in Armenia increasingly focused on promoting naturalization of ethnic Armenian refugees, adopting relevant legislation and building local implementation capacity to reduce statelessness and facilitate integration of refugees into Armenian society. UNHCR also assisted in drafting a national refugee law, which was passed by the Armenian Parliament in March.

In Azerbaijan, UNHCR placed stronger emphasis on integration of refugees and internally displaced persons, which entailed closer inter-agency cooperation with the World Bank, UNDP and government agencies in efforts to rehabilitate territories of the country damaged by war. Azerbaijan passed a new law on refugees in May and UNHCR assisted the Government with developing implementation procedures.

The conflict in Georgia over the status of Abkhazia remained unresolved, but the situation in South Ossetia showed some signs of progress. UNHCR provided limited material assistance to 7,000 refugees who had fled to Georgia as a result of the Chechnya conflict.

Conference on refugees of CIS countries and neighbouring States

Report of Secretary-General. In an August report [A/54/286] submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 53/123 [YUN 1998, p. 1125], the Secretary-General described follow-up to the 1996 Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Inde-

pendent States and Relevant Neighbouring States (CIS Conference) [YUN 1996, p. 1117]. Regarding implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference, the Secretary-General, citing the mechanisms established within UNHCR and IOM, working in cooperation with concerned States, observed that perhaps the major achievement of the CIS Conference process might have been the establishment of an international forum to exchange information and pursue constructive dialogue on a broader humanitarian and migration agenda. It had served to galvanize international attention on issues relevant to refugees, forced migration and other migratory movements in the region.

In 1999, the third of the four years of the follow-up process, stakeholders had begun to concentrate on its sustainability and consolidation beyond 2000, and States in the region had recognized that refugee problems needed to be addressed by creating legislative and institutional frameworks consistent with international standards. Capacity-building and training activities intensified to assist States in implementing the Programme of Action and, with the support of IOM, national management systems were established in eight countries in the region. Headway was made in addressing the situation of formerly deported people, a group specifically identified in the CIS Conference process as requiring a durable settlement solution. States in the region also demonstrated greater readiness to tackle problems relevant to citizenship and statelessness. UNHCR and the Council of Europe actively promoted recognition of the role of NGOs in civil society, the establishment of a legal framework at the national level defining their status and the creation of an environment that would enable NGOs to play a more active role in CIS Conference follow-up. The World Bank, UNDP and OCHA were supporting follow-up efforts.

The Steering Group established to monitor follow-up to the CIS Conference met on 24 and 25 June.

UNHCR Executive Committee action. In an October conclusion [A/54/12/Add.1], the UNHCR Executive Committee, noting that a number of provisions of the Programme of Action could not be achieved by 2000, endorsed establishment of a working group to address the issue of the follow-up and hoped that the Steering Group would work out concrete proposals for the next meeting on modalities of the conference process after 2000. It called on all CIS Governments to strengthen their practical and political commitment to implementing the Programme of Action for more consistent and far-reaching progress.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 17 December [meeting 83], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/54/600], adopted **resolution 54/144** without vote [agenda item 111].

Follow-up to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 48/113 of 20 December 1993, 49/173 of 23 December 1994, 50/151 of 21 December 1995, 51/70 of 12 December 1996, 52/102 of 12 December 1997 and, in particular, 53/123 of 9 December 1998,

Having considered the reports of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

Recognizing the ongoing acuteness of the migration and displacement problems in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the necessity to follow up the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States and the subsequent conclusions of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

Reaffirming the view of the Conference that the primary responsibility for tackling population displacement problems lies with the affected countries themselves and that these issues are to be regarded as national priorities, while at the same time recognizing the need for enhancing international support for the national efforts of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States aimed at the effective implementation of such responsibilities within the framework of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference,

Noting with satisfaction the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in developing strategies and practical tools for more effective capacity-building in countries of origin and enhancing programmes to address the needs of various categories of concern to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States,

Welcoming the contributions of those countries that responded to the 1999 appeal launched by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, and appreciating this tangible encouragement to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and to further inter-agency cooperation,

Taking note of the positive results emanating from the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference,

Bearing in mind that a number of the provisions of the Programme of Action are still at the stage of practical formulation and cannot be achieved by 2000,

Taking into account the decision made by the steering group of the Conference to establish a working group to address the issue of follow-up to the Conference,

Convinced of the necessity of continuing to maintain the regional approach for the achievement of effective implementation of the Programme of Action,

Recalling that the protection and promotion of human rights and the strengthening of democratic institutions are essential to prevent mass population displacement,

Mindful that the effective implementation of the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action should be facilitated and can be ensured only through cooperation and coordinated activities undertaken in this respect by all interested States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other actors,

Noting and reaffirming the importance of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees,

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

2. *Calls upon* the Governments of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to strengthen their efforts and mutual cooperation relating to the follow-up to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States, and welcomes the positive results achieved by them in the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference;

3. *Endorses the* broad consensus reached by the participants in the steering group of the Conference that implementation of the issues outlined in the Programme of Action should be continued and that consideration should be given to a continuation of the follow-up to the Conference after 2000;

4. *Calls upon the* countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and other interested States, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to elaborate concrete proposals for a mechanism for possible follow-up to the Conference after 2000;

5. *Invites* all States that have not yet done so to accede to and implement fully the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, while welcoming the accession of Georgia and Kazakhstan to the Convention;

6. *Calls upon* States and interested international organizations, in a spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing, to provide appropriate forms and levels of

support for the practical implementation of the Programme of Action;

7. *Invites* international financial and other institutions to contribute to the financing of projects and programmes within the framework of the implementation of the Programme of Action;

8. *Invites* the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States to intensify bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation in maintaining the balance of commitments and interests in the process leading up to the implementation of the Programme of Action;

9. *Calls upon* the Governments of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States to continue to strengthen their commitment to the principles underpinning the Programme of Action, in particular principles of human rights and refugee protection, and to lend high-level political support to ensure progress in its implementation;

10. *Invites* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to enhance their mutual relationship with other key international actors, such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission and human rights, development and financial institutions, in order better to address the wide-ranging and complex issues in the Programme of Action;

11. *Welcomes the* progress made in building civil society, in particular through the development of the non-governmental sector and the development of cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the Governments of a number of countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and notes in this regard the relationship between the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action and the success in promoting civil society, especially in the field of human rights;

12. *Encourages* the involvement of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the follow-up to the Conference, and invites them to demonstrate stronger support for the process of multinational constructive dialogue among a wide range of countries concerned and further action with a view to the full implementation of the recommendations of the Conference;

13. *Emphasizes* the necessity of fulfilling the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action relating to ensuring respect for human rights as an important factor in the management of migration flows, the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and stability;

14. *Recognizes* the importance of taking measures, on the basis of strict adherence to all of the principles of international law, including humanitarian law and international human rights standards, to prevent situations that lead to new flows of refugees, displaced persons and other forms of involuntary displacement;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on the progress achieved in the follow-up to the Conference;

16. *Decides to* continue its consideration of the question at its fifty-fifth session.