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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Fifty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 606th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 5 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. FUJISAKI (Japan)

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MEETINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE IN 2007

CONSIDERATION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION  
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
(agenda item 5) (continued)

(b) PROGRAMME BUDGETS, MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL CONTROL AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE OVERSIGHT (continued) (A/AC.96/1022, 1023 and Add.1,  
1025 and Add.1, 1027, 1032, 1033 and 1034)

1. Mr. SHIRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran), after recalling that the Islamic Republic of Iran, a developing country, had taken in over 1 million refugees, denounced the harmful effects of underfunding of the UNHCR budget. He expressed concern about the 20 per cent reduction in funds in the 2007 programme budget for refugee assistance, which would be particularly damaging to elderly persons, children and women. Care and maintenance activities for refugees, mainly Afghan, in camps in the Islamic Republic of Iran had been discontinued in 2006. The Islamic Republic of Iran and UNHCR had debated the issue and concluded that it was imperative to return to the same situation as before. UNHCR should also resume its assistance programme on food, health and education. He wished to know whether the proposed figures in the 2007 programme budget covered resumption of the programmes.

2. Ms. CHAMBERLAIN (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) replied that UNHCR intended to hold talks with delegations on how to budget for and manage activities concerning internally displaced persons (IDPs), in order to decide whether to continue in 2008 the current practice of having a specific budget for each situation, or to share out funding for those activities over the whole of the annual budget. It was an urgent decision since heads of service would be instructed in November 2006 to prepare their budget estimates and plans for 2008. The High Commissioner, in his introductory statement, had declared himself in favour of the second solution. However, it was easier for managers if activities for IDPs were separated from those for refugees. Overall implementation of the Management Systems Renewal Project (MSRP) would further facilitate management by making information transparent and accessible to everybody; the results-based management software would be tested in 2007 and fully operational in 2008.

3. She thanked all the delegations that had expressed support for the stringent budget submitted. She would detail measures in that area in her statement under agenda item 7, but indicated that the 2007 budget was US\$ 100 million less than the requested amount, representing a cut of 9 per cent. She thanked the delegations that had shown support for results-based management and she expressed her own regret that the 2007 budget was not results-based. She welcomed the fact that some delegations had praised staff members working in dangerous conditions; the latter would have the occasion to appreciate the encouragement when they were briefed on the report on the work of the Executive Committee. She also noted a request for the operation in Lebanon to be evaluated, which would be acted on. She welcomed efforts to achieve sexual equality and transparency, which had not gone unnoticed.

4. Concerning the project for evaluating UNHCR managers, it was clear that quality management required quality managers. A tool for evaluating managers' skills had therefore been developed, with the help of the United Kingdom among others, in order to be able to redeploy staff members to more demanding posts that matched their skills and to identify target areas for training.

5. Many delegations had expressed support for participatory assessment of requirements, a new process which was highly valued by managers because it enabled them to draw on the experience of persons who had tackled the same problem from different angles; UNHCR programmes were enriched by contributions from all partners. It was nevertheless clear that the requirements identified, amounting to US\$ 2.3 billion, could not currently be covered, despite the contributions received from Governments and the private sector. UNHCR was well aware that accepting the lead role in coordinating activities for IDPs did not mean providing for the entirety of their funding, and its new duties would not distract it from its primary mandate of protecting refugees.

6. On the subject of the report by the Board of Auditors, a special team had been set up, whose mission was to analyse and evaluate UNHCR aid programmes following the tsunami in order to learn from them, and that work would naturally be discussed. Although budgets were decreasing overall, there had been a marked increase in the budget for the Americas, in order to allow implementation of the Mexico Plan of Action, among others. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the budget situation would not have negative effects on the refugee camps. Refugees there would not be obliged to return home, and returns would be carried out on a voluntary basis only. She expressed her appreciation to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their very interesting and pertinent statements, and her wish to hold further consultations with them focusing on the points that had been raised, some of which were already being discussed, particularly on the financial aspects. UNHCR would examine the problem expressed by local NGOs that they felt they were in a disadvantaged position in relation to international NGOs, which had not been intentional. Exchanges with local NGOs fell more within the purview of teams in the field rather than headquarters, but she was sure that the teams at headquarters respected the established procedures. As the High Commissioner had stressed, it was vital to create partners; UNHCR would therefore continue to do so and would help local NGOs to strengthen their capacities.

7. Ms. CHENG-HOPKINS (Assistant High Commissioner for Operations) said that during the eight months since she had started her job she had travelled extensively in order to find out about what UNHCR was doing in the field, to gather the opinions and ideas of those working there (refugees, Governments, NGOs and other partners), to solve certain problems and sometimes to see if UNHCR could operate more effectively. In Sudan, for example, the targets set had appeared to be too ambitious and staffing had needed to be reorganized. The team had decided to adopt more realistic targets. One third of posts had been cut or frozen, and the funds saved had been allocated to assistance programmes for the return of refugees. In Uganda, she had done everything in her power to remove bureaucratic obstacles and to combat the inertia that was sometimes found at headquarters. The visit had taken place five months previously, and to date four sub-offices had been opened in the north, where most IDPs were located. A strategy based on common sense had been initiated successfully, consisting firstly in working with the Government to promote voluntary returns and freedom of movement and secondly in helping those remaining in the camps to be self-sufficient.

8. She had set herself three priorities for her mandate. The first was to enhance emergency response: it was essential to react during the first few days by bringing humanitarian aid to IDPs and refugees, bearing in mind the way in which UNHCR was perceived by the media, donors and member States. In complex emergencies, an experienced team of specialists must be sent

out, working under a strong team leader. Resource allocation must also be streamlined to make funds available when needed. The second priority related to IDPs. Given that no organization could work alone, partnerships must be set up with United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), Governments, NGOs and non-State actors. The cluster approach was too recent for UNHCR to be able to measure all its effects. The third priority related to protracted situations, such as that of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, which often required political solutions. UNHCR could act as an objective intermediary and United Nations agencies, even if they were not best placed, could play a strategic role.

9. As an operations officer, her role as Assistant High Commissioner consisted in supervising five regional offices and the Division of Operational Support (DOS), and it complemented the role of the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

10. Mr. WEBSTER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) expressed his unreserved support for the main priorities identified by the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations but invited UNHCR to hold closer consultations with Executive Committee members on the issue of IDPs.

11. Ms. POLLACK (United States of America) expressed support for the view of the United Kingdom on the need to hold consultations on the issue of IDPs. She welcomed the fact that UNHCR had considerably improved its capacity for emergency intervention, as had been recently demonstrated in Lebanon.

12. Mr. IBRAHIM (Sudan) thanked the Assistant High Commissioner for the operations carried out in his country to examine the situation of refugees and IDPs. It must be recognized, however, that the voluntary return programme set up with UNHCR support had not yielded the anticipated results in Sudan and the services provided in the camps, particularly in the east of the country, had deteriorated through lack of resources. In addition, more and more refugees were leaving the camps to go to cities, which posed security problems for the authorities.

13. Ms. GONZALES ARIZA (Colombia) paid tribute to the remarkable work carried out by UNHCR in her country and to the support of donor countries.

14. Ms. CHENG-HOPKINS (Assistant High Commissioner for Operations) thanked the delegations for their unswerving support for UNHCR operations and assured them that UNHCR would hold unofficial consultations with Executive Committee members on the new policy regarding IDPs.

#### REPORTS RELATING TO INSPECTION AND EVALUATION (agenda item 6) (A/AC.96/1028 and 1029)

15. Mr. ASOMANI (Inspector General) presented the report on activities carried out by the Inspector General's Office (IGO) since August 2005. IGO had established three main objectives: (a) to strengthen inspection capacities; (b) to accelerate the inspection schedule so that each field office was inspected once every three years on average; and (c) to carry out more rigorous follow-up to inspections.

16. In order to attain the first objective, the inspection unit had been reinforced through the creation of three Senior Inspection Officer posts. In addition, inspection methods had been updated and a handbook compiled. An inspection training module had been offered in the current year to all those participating in inspections. The unit had also established a roster of highly competent staff from different divisions. Regarding the second objective, 17 inspections had been planned for the year but only 13 would be carried out due to budgetary constraints. Five inspections had already been carried out; five more were scheduled before the end of the year and the remaining three had been postponed due to security problems. IGO had encountered two problems regarding the inspections. Firstly, inspection teams were essentially made up of staff members who returned to their unit as soon as their mission was completed, which made for a difficult and lengthy post-mission phase, particularly regarding the preparation of inspection reports. Secondly, inspected offices had raised objections about the new policy of publishing full inspection reports on the grounds that such reports tended to reflect an unfairly negative image of their operations. Concerning the third objective, IGO had taken on a senior officer to ensure follow-up to inspections and to ensure compliance with recommendations. For the first time, IGO was undertaking follow-up missions in Botswana, Malawi and Sierra Leone.

17. Over the previous year, IGO, which had spared no effort in perfecting its techniques, had been given 70 cases of alleged misconduct by UNHCR staff to investigate. Approximately 25 per cent of the cases had involved irregularities in refugee status determination or resettlement fraud. Two cases of sexual exploitation had come to light, one unfounded and the other resulting in dismissal of the staff member concerned. IGO was receiving an increasing number of complaints from refugees. The complaints sometimes required investigation but the majority were cases of persons criticizing field offices for lack of attention. In such cases, IGO referred the complaints to regional offices for follow-up. During the reporting period, three cases which did not fall within the competence of IGO had been referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). Inquiries into incidents that affected the credibility, integrity or assets of UNHCR were also part of monitoring activities. During the period, IGO had conducted three such inquiries, in each instance at the request of the High Commissioner. Further information on the issue was provided in the annual report.

18. IGO had made progress in strengthening the UNHCR internal oversight system. Since the adoption of its new mandate in November 2005, which aimed to increase transparency and accountability, it had enjoyed greater independence. IGO and OIOS had also signed a memorandum of understanding on 21 September 2006, which aimed to reinforce their cooperation in conducting inquiries and inspections.

19. Mr. CRISP (Head of Policy Development and Evaluation Service - PDES) presented the report on evaluation and policy development (A/AC.96/1029). PDES, which had replaced the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU), came under the Executive Office and was directly answerable to the High Commissioner. It was in charge of the design, setting up and implementation of organization evaluation activities and ensured that information, analyses, recommendations and lessons resulting from the UNHCR evaluation programme were used for policy development, strategic planning and programme design. The Service advised UNCHR and its collaborators on worldwide issues, ensuring that UNHCR policies were coherent, compatible, clearly defined and widely disseminated. In addition, it coordinated UNHCR relations with external evaluation and policy development bodies.

20. The creation of PDES had been accompanied by a review of UNHCR evaluation policy, in order to take into account the evaluation rules and regulations adopted by the United Nations Group in charge of evaluation. Within the framework of the new policy, more effective mechanisms were planned in order to implement evaluation recommendations, which would also be collated into a database. Measures would also be taken to ensure that the division of labour between UNHCR evaluation, inspection and audit departments was clearly defined and rational.

21. The Service did not currently have sufficient capacity to discharge its duties since many posts had not yet been filled. In addition, budgetary constraints limited the ability of the Service to turn to independent external consultants. That being so, efforts would be made to make best use of the competence of other administrative units and to enter into partnerships with other organizations.

22. The Service should regularly exchange views with Executive Committee members, who were invited to formulate specific proposals on evaluation and policy development projects for possible inclusion in the 2007 work programme. NGOs were also invited to contribute.

23. Ms. GAERTNER (United States of America) welcomed the importance that UNHCR had attached to internal oversight. She noted with satisfaction that the reports of the United Nations Board of Auditors and the Internal Auditors indicated that UNHCR resource management had improved. However, she expressed concern about the limited utility of MSRP for audit purposes. In its recommendations, OIOS had highlighted unclear UNHCR policies and procedures as well as inadequate internal controls. UNHCR should pay particular attention to those problems as part of the current review process.

24. Her delegation welcomed the creation of the International Professional Roster, as well as UNHCR's commitment to meeting Project Profile goals. It also agreed with the OIOS recommendation that UNHCR must take measures to ensure the viability and development of the project. Her delegation welcomed with interest the IGO report, which reflected how reviewing the IGO mandate should strengthen its independence, the transparency of its activities and its expertise. It also welcomed the decision by UNHCR to publish its future inspection reports. Since UNHCR continued to entrust a major part of its day-to-day field activities to junior staff and to United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), it should ensure that those persons received adequate supervision and training and were not given responsibilities beyond their capacities.

25. In order to consolidate its new results-based approach to programme planning, UNHCR should identify more specific and more measurable objectives, standards and indicators. Regarding protection management, the emphasis should be placed on wider participation in decision-making. The new Policy Development and Evaluation Service was urged to play a vital role in reviewing UNHCR programmes and policies with the aim of improving operations. Its project on refugee livelihoods had provided very useful information on the effectiveness of work carried out in that area.

26. Ms. HIRATA (Japan) expressed sincere condolences on behalf of her Government to the families of UNHCR staff members killed in Sudan in March 2006 and expressed the wish that the inquiry currently being carried out would contribute to improving the general security of field staff. The Japanese delegation, warmly welcoming the IGO report, stressed the importance of the role of heads of field offices in improving financial and human resource management.

27. Mr. WEBSTER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) welcomed the review of the IGO mandate and the signing of the memorandum of understanding aimed at clarifying the links between IGO and OIOS. Regarding policy development and evaluation roles, he expressed full support for the statement made by Canada under agenda item 5 (b). Considering that strengthening evaluation roles remained necessary, the British Government would make that objective one of its priorities within the framework of its partnership with UNHCR.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL PROGRAMME BUDGET  
(agenda item 7) (A/AC.96/1026 and A/AC.96/1026/Add.1)

28. Ms. CHAMBERLAIN (Deputy High Commissioner), introducing the UNHCR annual programme budget for 2007, said that the budget was based on three key principles: it should be predictable, transparent and appropriate for the resources available. It had been established on the basis of clearly defined objectives and priorities that had been designed to avoid capping and budget adjustments. In order for UNHCR to be flexible enough to respond to emergencies, Operational Reserve I had been increased to its authorized ceiling of 10 per cent of the budget. In order to limit the impact on UNHCR's financial situation of fluctuations in the United States dollar, US\$ 1 million would be spent in 2007 on setting up a centralized financial management system, which would help reduce exchange risks.

29. With a view to increasing transparency, Country Operations Plan instructions would be revised to make it possible to base programme budget submissions for 2007-2009 on Global Strategic Objectives (GSOs) and priorities. MSRP would provide for more complete information on UNHCR's financial, budgetary, logistical and human resources management. MRSP budget allocations would not be reduced in 2007, in order not to jeopardize its general implementation in the field. UNHCR FOCUS, the results-based management software program, would also continue to be implemented. Following consultations with the Standing Committee over the year, Operational Reserve Category II would be replaced with a new budget category entitled "New or additional activities - mandate-related".

30. UNHCR must be able to deliver activities as planned without mid-year budget adjustments. The proposed 2007 budget was therefore less than the approved 2006 budget in order to correspond better to expected donor contributions and to take more account of available resources. It had become essential to increase the number of donors and appeal more to private funding sources; that objective had been duly reflected in the 2007 budget.

31. The changes to the 2007 budget would have a significant impact on financial and human resources management. The number of posts at headquarters and in the field would be reduced in order to reverse the upward trend in fixed costs. It had also been decided to freeze external recruitments in order to reduce the number of staff in between assignments, especially among General Service staff at headquarters.

32. The CHAIRMAN, recalling that the Standing Committee had approved the draft budget, said that in the absence of comments or observations from the delegations present he would take it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the draft budget.

33. It was so decided.



REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (agenda item 8)

34. Ms. BLOCH, Rapporteur of the Annual Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations, said that 329 representatives of 93 international NGOs and 73 national NGOs had participated in consultations held the previous week in preparation for the annual session of the Executive Committee. A written report had been distributed in the meeting room.

35. While the conclusions on statelessness and on women and girls at risk were to be welcomed, their specific content should now be put into practice in the field. Cooperation between Governments, civil society, NGOs and United Nations agencies would be a crucial element in that respect. Regarding statelessness, the programmes put in place should aim at preventing and reducing statelessness, for example by amending legislation, and protecting stateless persons. Resettlement as a durable solution for stateless persons had been welcomed by NGOs. Regarding protection of displaced women and girls, action should focus on identifying women and girls at risk and analysing risk factors in order to improve prevention. The strategies planned could be based on the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) approach, which attached particular importance to community participation. NGO representatives had also stressed the need to involve more men in examining all issues concerning women.

36. During the Asia regional meeting, NGOs had looked into protracted refugee situations such as those of Burmese refugees in Thailand, Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. The creation of a forum or special mechanism had been discussed, in order to develop new ways of achieving durable solutions to such situations while taking into account the changing political situations in all the countries concerned. There was often a major discrepancy between the standards applied to voluntary repatriation and the reality on the ground; more focus should be placed on peace building, early recovery and reconstruction of infrastructure and the persons concerned should be assisted to rebuild livelihoods in order to promote viable repatriation or return.

37. During the meeting on resettlement, NGOs had looked at ways of strengthening their capacities in order to be better able to meet increasing needs in that area. Cooperation between NGOs and greater partnership with UNHCR were two key elements. UNHCR should promote resettlement opportunities by increasing selection missions in countries of asylum and by encouraging new countries to offer refugees the opportunity to resettle on their territory.

38. In response to information on increasing use of detention as a deterrent by many countries and the inhumane living conditions in many detention centres around the Mediterranean, NGOs had made a number of recommendations, including the creation by European institutions of a migration management system, the ratification by all States of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and the participation of experts on refugee or migration law in the work of the Sub-Committee on Prevention responsible for monitoring application of the Protocol. They had also recommended that UNHCR be allowed access to detention centres in North Africa and elsewhere, and that measures should be taken to strengthen the sharing of information with NGOs.

39. Concerns had been expressed about the current emphasis on measures for border management and control, which had hindered access to asylum procedures, increased

trafficking in and smuggling of persons, increased human rights violations against people on the move and led to misuse of the 1951 Convention by using it as a migration tool. Taking the view that it was just as important to protect the rights of migrants as those of asylum-seekers and refugees, NGOs had recommended that all host countries should ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and adopt a rights-based approach.

40. During their debates on reform, NGOs had focused mainly on the new cluster approach. Many of them had found the approach to be too heavy and bureaucratic and had pointed out that, instead of making them equal partners, it made it difficult for them to participate. A number of NGOs, on the basis of work carried out on child protection, had proposed that joint evaluations such as AGDM should be undertaken.

41. Education was a major problem in the case of IDPs. Although there was a lead agency for education, the lack of collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had prevented significant progress in the area. Many NGOs were therefore calling for the creation of a cluster on education in order to strengthen and ensure better coordination of the action carried out.

42. Ms. CROMPTON (New Zealand) said that it would be preferable for the report on annual consultations with NGOs to be distributed earlier in the Executive Committee session in order to enable more in-depth dialogue. She also encouraged members to attend NGO meetings, as the New Zealand delegation had done that year with great interest.

#### OTHER STATEMENTS (agenda item 9)

43. Mr. TOURÉ (Chairman of the UNHCR Staff Council), recalling the importance that his colleagues attached to security issues and the need to reinforce protection, called for an in-depth evaluation of the security of all humanitarian aid workers and welcomed the fact that the High Commissioner had given his assurance that UNHCR would comply fully with minimum operational security standards. UNHCR staff members deserved to be congratulated for their commitment, professionalism and tireless work in difficult and dangerous situations. However, if the organization made increasing demands on its staff members, it should do more for them.

44. UNHCR had undertaken yet another new reform. The common factor of the reforms was that they had all been resented by members of staff, and had given them a feeling of insecurity. Staff had nevertheless learned some lessons from the reforms, which underlay the concerns expressed at the present meeting. Several meetings had been organized on the basis of the document containing the main proposals for change in management of the organization, and staff had felt that the reform process had not been consultative and that the proposals made by the reform group had not been convincing. It was essential to consult staff when planning and implementing structural changes, or else UNHCR would run the risk of arriving at the wrong decisions and infringing legal rules. On the other hand, good cooperation with staff would maximize the chances of success.

45. In the event, because they had been consulted at a very late stage, staff had the impression that they had been presented with a *fait accompli*. The proposals were not underpinned by any

risk analysis or cost-benefit analysis, and led to very little change in management practices. For example, simply shifting ill-defined back-office tasks from Geneva to another site where they would be carried out in the same way was a waste of donors' money. Moreover, in the words of the United Nations Secretary-General himself, cost was only one of the factors to be taken into account in decisions regarding relocation; quality and reliability of service remained essential. The so-called changes proposed to date appeared to be piecemeal emergency solutions which in the end would prove more costly to Member States. Staff members were afraid that they would be asked to write the management team a blank cheque. Aside from fundamental shortcomings, the plan failed to offer any innovative long-term solution regarding the best ways of managing human resources in the organization, including recruitment, professional training and promotion.

46. It was true that UNHCR needed to be reformed, but it was a complex organization with staff that carried out very diverse tasks with varying degrees of responsibility and changes could be made only very slowly with strong involvement by all parties. Effective staff participation was both a right and a duty, as had been reaffirmed by the Extraordinary General Assembly of Staff the previous week. The Assembly had adopted a series of measures, including the creation of a special group on reform that was planning to meet with members of the Executive Committee.

47. The Staff Council feared that the initial proposals made by management would not be sufficient to cut back on rising costs. Over recent years, management had failed to recruit experienced persons, but had instead hired consultants to carry out tasks that could have been performed by staff. Implementation of MSRP had been very costly because of delays and cost overrun. The Staff Council regretted the fact that there had been no external evaluation of the project, the implementation of which in practice had involved huge expense; by the end of 2007, UNHCR would have spent US\$ 170 million on MSRP and information technology.

48. The CHAIRMAN noted that the Staff Council was opposed not to reform as such but to hasty solutions. Member States were not keen either to introduce reform to the detriment of staff morale or activities. The latest view among Member States was that consultations should continue.

49. Ms. CROMPTON (New Zealand) said that her country by no means wanted a blank cheque to be given to UNHCR management, but it did feel that reform was necessary. Staff members had been consulted, but perhaps not in the way they would have liked. Around 100 people had attended the meeting mentioned by the Chairman of the UNHCR Staff Council, or around 10 per cent of staff. The delegation of New Zealand wondered if the statement by the representative of the Staff Council really reflected the opinion of all staff, for example on the proposals regarding outsourcing.

50. Ms. CHAMBERLAIN (Deputy High Commissioner) said that many consultations had been held with staff. The Staff Council was asking not only to be consulted, but for their proposals to be heard. Consultations should cover the core of the matter. The organization should seize the historic opportunity to carry out a consultation process that could lead to real progress and could be seen through to the end. Staff could and should contribute to improving the organization.

51. Mr. TOURÉ (Chairman of the UNHCR Staff Council) replied that he had based his statement mainly on the reactions communicated to him by staff and not on the meeting held the previous week. Staff concerns were based on past experience: some members of staff had already seen several reforms and had not noted any improvement, and therefore had a sense of déjà vu. At the end of the Action II programme in 2001, 10 per cent of staff members had been made redundant. At the time there had been 4,600 members of staff; within five years, the number had risen to 6,800. The reforms had not, therefore, yielded the expected results. It was for that reason that the Staff Council had sounded the alarm. Changes were necessary, and while staff members, who were very committed to UNHCR, were keen to building a better organization, they needed guarantees regarding the reform process.

52. The CHAIRMAN expressed his relief that staff members were not opposed to reform per se and repeated that it was not a question of giving the management a blank cheque. Consultations on reform would be held as of November 2006.

53. Ms. MMKHWEBONE-TSHEHLA (South Africa) requested further details about the increase in staff over recent years and spending on MSRP. She wondered whether the Staff Council felt that the money had been spent ill-advisedly. The South African delegation took the view that staff must be motivated in order to work well; the lot of refugees depended on it.

54. Mr. TOURÉ (Chairman of the UNHCR Staff Council) confirmed that the sum of US\$ 170 million had been spent over the previous 10 years on MSRP and information technology. In the opinion of the Staff Council, it would have been possible to do better with less money.

55. Ms. CHAMBERLAIN (Deputy High Commissioner) said that for a project such as MSRP the investment in question was not considerable; the cost covered not only the software, but the whole process of installing it in 156 countries and setting up the necessary satellites. Change had been inevitable, because existing programmes had become obsolete and unusable. As to information technology, United Nations agencies had been obliged to modernize their computerized management system in order to comply with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), which would enter into force the following year. Implementation of the system at UNHCR had been progressive, by region and by cluster. It would be possible to reduce staff spending through modernization. Between 1 January 2006 and 1 January 2007, the number of posts could be cut by 612, 132 in the Professional category and 480 in General Services, for a saving of US\$ 28.4 million. Those good results were largely due to the modernization of information systems.

MEETINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE IN 2007 (agenda item 10) AND  
CONSIDERATION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION  
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (agenda item 11)

56. The CHAIRMAN announced that three draft decisions had been referred to the Executive Committee and were contained in the report that would be introduced for adoption on the morning of Friday, 6 October 2006.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.