

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

(24 - 26 June 2003)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency, Ambassador Fisseha Yimer (Ethiopia), who extended a special welcome to the delegations of Cyprus, Kenya and Yemen as three new members of the Executive Committee. He informed the Committee of requests for observer status from Mali, Senegal and the Syrian Arab Republic. In accordance with the decision on observer participation taken by the Executive Committee at its fifty-third session,¹ the Standing Committee agreed to these requests.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Committee observed a minute of silence in memory of former High Commissioner, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, who had recently passed away. The Chairman announced that a memorial service would take place at the close of proceedings on 24 June 2003.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/53/SC/CRP.7/Rev.1) was adopted.

III. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING

4. The draft report of the Committee's twenty-sixth meeting, held from 4-6 March 2003, (EC/53/SC/CRP.6) was adopted.

IV. HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

5. In a brief introductory statement, the High Commissioner touched on issues of current concern. His first point concerned the Office's recent efforts to revise human resources policies in order to achieve better performance, and to diminish the number of staff awaiting assignment due to rotation. He then spoke of the need for innovative measures to help overcome the problem of under-funding. In this context, he drew attention to a proposal to introduce greater flexibility within the unified budget, to allow for additional contributions by donors. Another innovative

¹ A/AC.96/973, para.29(b)

approach would be to involve UNHCR's NGO partners in the budget planning exercise, seeking complementarity whenever feasible.

V. PROGRAMMES AND FUNDING

A. Update on annual programme budget 2002 and funding projections for 2003

6. The Deputy High Commissioner presented an update on programme and funding in 2002 and funding projections for 2003, contained in document EC/53/SC/CRP.8. She confirmed that final expenditure figures for 2002 amounted to \$926.4 million, and that the amount of \$48.2 million borrowed from the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund during the year had been fully reimbursed. Measures were being taken to manage the anticipated 2003 funding shortfall in the face of challenges such as the falling value of the US dollar and the impact of the United Nations General Assembly decision to increase the salaries of certain categories of staff. At the time of the meeting, the projected budget shortfall for 2003 was \$10 million. Measures to manage this shortfall included the application of cuts of 7 per cent to the operational budget and of 17 per cent to the administrative budget as well as a partial freeze of the Operational Reserve. UNHCR would endeavour to use funds from other sources and to refrain from borrowing money from the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund to cover the shortfall. However, she hoped that sufficient donor support would be forthcoming to avoid painful measures that might have to be taken as a result of the shortfall. An impact paper on this subject had been made available to delegations. The Deputy High Commissioner also encouraged comments on the measures proposed by the High Commissioner to increase the flexibility of the unified budget, details of which were presented in a background document made available at the meeting.

7. The Director of the Department of Communication and Information (DCI) thanked donors for the contributions already received, and trusted that pledged amounts would be maintained in local currencies to avoid a lower value because of the weakening of the dollar against some currencies. By limiting earmarking, particularly in the second half of the year, donors could help reduce end-of-year funding constraints. Moreover, new emergency appeals were about to be launched - for Iraq and for a number of situations of concern in Africa - which would require additional funding. The Director of DCI acknowledged that there had been a welcome broadening of the donor base with contributions from the Russian Federation, Kuwait and Botswana.

8. A large number of delegations expressed concern over the continuing situation of projected shortfalls in the budget, urging for improved responsibility and burden-sharing. Several delegations expressed special concern about underfunded programmes, mentioning in particular the Afghanistan operation for which only \$41 million had been received. Donor countries were encouraged not to reduce their support for the programme at this stage, as any interruption in the repatriation and settlement of returnees in Afghanistan could trigger a reverse movement back into Pakistan which would be disastrous. The importance of strengthening protection functions in Africa and maintaining the Protection Surge Capacity project was highlighted by one delegation. Another area which merited urgent attention was Kakuma camp in Kenya, where 12,000 refugees were homeless after their accommodation had been destroyed by floods.

9. There were several calls for moves to a needs-based budget, including the suggestion that UNHCR should consider making a more concerted effort to assess total global refugee needs. Several donors expressed appreciation of the informal donor consultations held in May 2003, and approved of the choice of Kenya to illustrate a needs-based assessment for funding.

10. Two delegations recommended strict discipline in limiting the number of supplementary budgets, and in reintegrating these rapidly into the annual programme budget - in line with the principle of the unified budget. The Deputy High Commissioner gave an assurance that all of the current supplementary budgets, including the Afghanistan programme, would be incorporated into the 2004 Annual Programme Budget. She also confirmed that consideration would be given to the call by some delegations for an earlier meeting of the September Standing Committee in future years in order to have more time to discuss the budget document.

11. The NGOs welcomed the comments made by the High Commissioner on the importance of partnerships. However, they called for improvements in the implementation of the framework agreement on partnership and more joint strategic planning workshops, and joint monitoring missions. They also supported the concept of a needs-based budget and suggested joint fundraising efforts for protracted refugee situations which risked being forgotten.

12. On the topic of burden-sharing, one delegation proposed that further consideration be given to the concept of donors allocating a percentage of their GDP as a basis for compensating host countries which suffer environmental damage due to the long-term presence of refugees. In his response, the Assistant High Commissioner commented that a study on this issue had already been commissioned by UNHCR and the findings would be discussed with members of the Executive Committee.

13. One delegation enquired why UNHCR had a \$43.7 million carry-over from 2002 when, in November, donors had been informed of budget cuts that would restrict the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including food. The Controller explained that this was mainly due to the high level of earmarking. Moreover, the carry-over from 2002 was lower than it had been from 2001, and represented less than 5 per cent of the total Budget. UNHCR was trying to ensure that the carry-over into 2004 would be minimal.

14. One delegation asked for further clarification of the level of the Operational Reserve balance, as presented in the Update document EC/53/SC/CRP.8 (para 6). The Deputy High Commissioner explained that, following the decision to freeze 50 per cent of the Reserve, the remaining balance amounted to some \$17 million. A deduction of \$8 million in loans to Supplementary Budgets, and a new allocation to cover needs in Chad, put the remaining available balance at \$6 million.

15. Some lengthy discussions took place on the draft decision annexed to the update documents, in particular the reference it contained to the proposed introduction of greater flexibility in the unified budget. It was agreed to resume discussion of this draft decision later in the meeting (see para. 47 below).

B. Global Report on Activities in 2002

16. The Director of DCI presented the Global Report for 2002 which, this year had been made available in both English and French in time for the meeting. He recalled that the Global Report was designed to meet the reporting requirements of as many of UNHCR's donors as possible, and encouraged delegations to complete and return a questionnaire provided at the meeting with the aim of gathering ideas for further improvement.

17. Delegations unanimously welcomed the Global Report 2002 as a clear, transparent and useful reference document, and congratulated UNHCR on its quality. Some delegations requested that reporting against global objectives and indicators of progress should appear in both the Global Report and Global Appeal. One delegation suggested the inclusion of information on the implementation of the High Commissioner's five commitments to refugee women in each country chapter. Another delegation would have liked to see credit given for broader earmarking, such as regional contributions, while two others felt that there should have been more detail in the country chapters. One delegation wished to record its Government's concern over the timing and modalities of UNHCR's phase-down of activities in their country, regretting that full consultations between the Office and the Government concerned had not taken place. Both the Assistant High Commissioner and the Director of DCI acknowledged this concern, and referred to detailed discussions held prior to UNHCR's decision.

C. Report on Chairman's Mission to Africa

18. The Chairman of the Executive Committee presented a brief report on his mission to Africa in May 2003, during which he had visited Ethiopia, including the headquarters of the African Union, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. He had also had a brief stopover in Kenya. In the course of this trip he was able to meet with senior Government officials, members of the diplomatic corps and NGO implementing partners, as well as UNHCR staff and refugees. The mission had revealed many of the serious problems and frustrations facing refugees, local communities and host governments in a continent that has so many protracted situations, compounded by chronic underfunding of assistance efforts. Nevertheless, the Chairman noted the continuing efforts of governments to protect refugees and collaborate with UNHCR and its NGO partners in the search for solutions, and commented on the determination and courage shown by the refugees he had met.

19. He observed that he had been particularly struck by the inadequacy of the levels of assistance, due to funding cuts affecting food rations and the enrolment of children in primary schools in particular. He had also been impressed by the strong desire of the majority of refugees to return home, even after many years in exile, and called for maximum support – moral as well as material – for integration and reintegration activities as well as development activities for affected local communities. He cited the Zambia Initiative as an impressive example of government collaboration in the search for solutions for refugees which incorporated recognition of the need to provide support also to local communities affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees. The Chairman commended the good working relations that he had encountered between UNHCR and its operational partners among other United Nations agencies and NGOs alike, and in closing looked forward to an active role of the African Union in the

work of the Executive Committee, thus raising the profile of the refugee issue within the organization.

VI. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

20. Introducing this agenda item, the Director of the Department of International Protection presented both the Note on International Protection (EC/53/SC/CRP.9) and the Update on Implementation of the Agenda for Protection (EC/53/SC/CRP.10). She emphasized that international protection was not an abstract legal concept, but an action-oriented function, directly affecting the lives of millions of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR. She regretted the widening gulf between theory and practice, noting that while protection was the preferred activity of UNHCR in terms of rhetoric, it was the most actively disliked in practice. She outlined the wide range of practical challenges faced in the field, and drew attention to steps being taken in the “doing of” protection, as well as the tools needed to meet these challenges. She recalled that Conclusions scheduled for consideration at the forthcoming session of the Executive Committee would include, in addition to the general conclusion, texts on the return of rejected cases, protection safeguards in interception measures, and the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation.

A. Note on International Protection

21. In the course of a wide-ranging discussion on various issues highlighted in the Note on International Protection, many delegations reiterated the importance of the 1951 Convention, and the 1967 Protocol as the cornerstone of international protection and fundamental legal standard of international protection. They welcomed the recent accessions of Ukraine and Timor Leste and called on remaining non-parties to accede to these instruments. Several delegations announced recent moves to approve legislation establishing or reforming refugee status determination procedures, while others reported on steps towards the transfer of responsibility for refugee status determination from UNHCR to national authorities. One delegation observed that initiatives under Convention Plus were complementary to the Convention and Protocol should not supplant them. Two others reiterated the importance of the OAU Refugee Convention and of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration.

22. Many delegations reiterated that international protection was a core function of UNHCR that was not static, but continued to evolve. A number of delegations affirmed that responsibility for providing protection was shared by States and UNHCR, and called on UNHCR to collaborate closely with partners in the field in providing protection. Many States reaffirmed that the core principles of the 1951 Convention continued to be of relevance today and should not be dismissed. One delegation regretted incidents of *refoulement* and reported on corrective measures that had been put in place, asserting that these incidents did not imply a shift of policy. Another delegation noted that the danger of *refoulement* contributed to compelling refugees to move on in search of personal security.

23. Numerous delegations welcomed the publication of *Refugee Protection in International Law*, bringing together the expert papers and summary conclusions reached at the “second track” roundtable meetings of the Global Consultations. An observer delegation, speaking on behalf of

NGOs, recalled the value of drawing on international humanitarian and international human rights law, including economic, social and cultural rights, when seeking to secure international protection for refugees. Others reiterated the importance of showing respect and tolerance towards refugees, and combating xenophobia towards refugees and asylum-seekers.

24. Several delegations expressed concern over UNHCR's protection resources and staffing, given the current funding constraints, reaffirming that protection was UNHCR's *raison d'être* and that States had a responsibility to protect refugees, including by funding the budget they have adopted. One delegation observed that it was important for the organization to focus on its core mandate and to define priorities, after the many new initiatives of recent years. Some reaffirmed that ensuring more protection staff in the field remained a top priority. In this respect, several delegations reiterated their support for the protection surge capacity and refugee status determination projects.

25. The recent focus on registration and documentation was widely welcomed, notably the progress of Project Profile and of the handbook on registration, since proper registration was to be seen as both an assistance and a protection tool. Some delegations drew attention to the importance of a gender-sensitive approach, and of taking account of the situation of children and unaccompanied minors. One delegation raised data protection concerns. Several others reported that successful registration exercises had been undertaken or were ongoing in their countries, both in camp situations and for urban refugees. They also acknowledged the importance of protecting the civil status of refugees by issuing death, birth and marriage certificates.

26. Security problems were mentioned by several African delegations, particularly in the context of conflict situations such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Northern Uganda and Sudan. The infiltration of armed elements into refugee camps was of special concern. UNHCR's activities to ensure the security of refugees were welcomed by these delegations, some of whom described measures they were taking in cooperation with UNHCR to separate armed elements from refugees, and to reduce the number of small arms found in camps. These measures included the UNHCR "security package" as well as amnesties/buy backs to reduce levels of crime and violence, but were hampered though a lack of funding. Some States reiterated that staff security was also key to providing protection on the ground and expressed great concern at recent deaths of NGO humanitarian staff. One delegation also stressed the need for an integrated, holistic approach to security issues, based on concerted and coordinated efforts.

27. The issue of food security was also raised by several delegations, given recent reports of reductions of food rations by as much as 50 per cent in some refugee camps. They called for an update on implementation of UNHCR's revised MOU with the WFP in a number of designated countries. This might be through a joint presentation at ExCom.

28. Several delegations affirmed that an age and gender-sensitive approach to international protection was essential, while one delegation reported that it was seeking to achieve this by introducing legislation on unaccompanied minors, and to ensure that victims of gender-related persecution qualified for refugee status. Some other delegations requested more systematic reporting on the implementation of the High Commissioner's five commitments, and welcomed UNHCR's follow-up activities on the three evaluations on women, children and community

services. Some delegations stressed the importance of involvement at senior level in management level in following through on these five commitments. One delegation expressed some concern over UNHCR's plans to review the structure of the units responsible for refugee women and refugee children and suggested reconsidering these plans. Some delegations welcomed the introduction of UNHCR's Code of Conduct, as a means of addressing sexual and gender-based violence. This violence was seen not simply as a matter of sexual and reproductive health, but also as a legal protection concern. Some delegations recommended, moreover, an expansion of the "women-at-risk" resettlement programme.

29. The analysis of asylum/migration nexus issues contained in the Note was generally welcomed and some delegations referred to the outcome of the Lisbon roundtable on effective protection held in December 2002, even though it only represented expert opinion rather than that of States. They asked UNHCR to pursue this issue. One delegation observed that it was necessary to look at the root causes of flight, including the reasons for onward movement from their first country of asylum, noting that addressing root causes was largely a political function and therefore a primary responsibility of States. In the context of discussions on asylum and migration, some delegations insisted on the importance of partnerships, welcoming UNHCR's cooperation with IOM through the Action Group on Asylum and Migration, and asking to be informed of progress.

30. Several delegations made particular mention in their interventions of the value of capacity-building and training and of empowering local communities to enhance their own protection. Some welcomed especially the review of protection capacities in African States, undertaken by UNHCR in cooperation with the African Union.

31. On the question of burden and responsibility-sharing, some delegations emphasized that, without assistance to host developing countries, the whole asylum system would be jeopardized by host country fatigue. One delegation warned that burden-sharing could not be only a voluntary undertaking and called for binding, burden-sharing agreements. Another affirmed that asylum-seekers should have their claims assessed in the country where they make their claims and that the processing of asylum applications should not take place in transit countries. On the question of the transition from relief to development, another delegation observed that this required a sense of mission and shared responsibility, as had been shown in the conference on reconstruction in Afghanistan in Japan, in the autumn of 2002.

32. With regard to durable solutions, several delegations noted the large-scale voluntary repatriations to Afghanistan over the last year, although acknowledging that the situation in Afghanistan remained fragile. It was hoped that these returns, as well as those that could be expected to Iraq once the situation there had stabilized, could lead to a refocusing of protection activities on Africa. A number of protracted refugee situations in Africa might lend themselves to approaches under Convention Plus Special Agreements. The beginning of voluntary repatriation operations to Angola was also welcomed by a number of neighbouring countries. One delegation nevertheless stressed the need for political commitment to peace by the international community, in order to resolve ongoing conflicts in West Africa and the Great Lakes region.

33. One delegation welcomed the aid and assistance it was receiving in the form of development through local integration (DLI), which benefited refugees as well as local populations. This delegation called for development partners to be identified in similar situations in other countries so as to enable the reestablishment of schools and other infrastructure. On the other hand, some delegations observed that DLI was not feasible in those countries having hosted refugees for long periods of time, or those hosting large numbers of refugees. One delegation pointed out that local integration was a political as well as a humanitarian act, and needed cautious application. Several delegations acknowledged that local integration was nonetheless a useful solution, especially where other durable solutions were not available. Some delegations reported on progress in their own countries in terms of naturalization and/or the granting of property deeds to returning refugees.

34. In answer to the question raised by the Director of the Department of International Protection in her opening statement as to how delegations might wish to revitalize protection discussions, and how UNHCR should best fulfil the reporting responsibility entrusted to it, some delegations drew attention to the risk of finger-pointing and politicization, of which the Executive Committee's debates had so far been free. One delegation suggested that a regional approach could be adopted, while another was of the view that there could be scope for more focused presentation of problems and challenges from a field perspective.

35. Responding to observations and questions raised during the debate under this item, the Director of International Protection first reiterated that primary responsibility for providing protection lay with States, but that UNHCR also had responsibilities under its mandate. Partnership was an essential aspect of its work, firstly with governments, but also with other organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Food Programme, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Partnerships with NGOs included those with implementing partners as well as with professional associations such as the International Association of Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ) and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC). Regarding the work undertaken by the Action Group on Asylum and Migration (AGAMI), she explained that this body had so far met five times and had examined questions of basic data requirements, how to collect it, as well as preparations for and outcome of meetings on migration issues such as Bali II, the Berne Initiative, the Lisbon meeting on effective protection, and the issue of onward movement. She acknowledged, in conclusion, the many contemporary challenges to providing international protection to refugees, such as maintaining security in camps, continued insurgencies, ongoing conflict, state vulnerability to terrorism, and managing the transition to development.

36. Responding to a question concerning obstacles to voluntary return, the Chief of the Protection Policy and Advice Section indicated that a major problem was that of the repossession of property. UNHCR's activities to address such problems involved, firstly the establishment, preferably at local level, of a fair and equitable framework to resolve property questions; secondly of enforcement mechanisms that can be monitored internationally; and thirdly the formulation of solutions for those not able to return to their own property and for those vacating property.

B. Implementation of the Agenda for Protection

37. Several States welcomed progress made by UNHCR in implementing the Agenda both at Headquarters and in the field, as described in the update (EC/53/SC/CRP.10). The Agenda was described as an important planning tool and a practical plan for action, using the implementation schedule which was a useful annex to the update. One delegation offered to translate the Agenda into German, complementing the existing English, French and Spanish editions. This delegation also observed that the yearly update would allow regional and goal-specific analysis. An observer delegation representing the NGOs expressed concern, however, as to how the Agenda and any agreements that might emerge from the Convention Plus process might interface

38. Specific items of the Agenda mentioned by delegations included progress in the field of registration, and the importance of registering and issuing documentation to refugee women and children. Delegations expressed particular interest in Project Profile and proposed to set up a small support group to provide financial and technical assistance. One delegation stressed the importance of a full and inclusive interpretation of the refugee definition, including gender-based persecution. Another delegation welcomed continued efforts by UNHCR in addressing and reporting on sexual and gender-based violence. Several delegations observed that the action points under goal 2 of the Agenda offered a useful framework in which to address asylum and migration issues, including irregular, secondary movements, noting that the Agenda could help to anchor protection safeguards within migration control measures. Some delegations indicated their willingness to assist other States in enhancing their capacity to ensure effective protection. A number of delegations recalled the importance of reviewing long-standing refugee situations, which might then lead to comprehensive durable solutions, a prime objective of Convention Plus special agreements. In this context, one delegation recalled that the region-by-region review of protracted situations was scheduled to be shared with the Standing Committee in 2003, and requested that it should be taken up at the next meeting of the Committee dealing with implementation of the Agenda for Protection. Regarding voluntary repatriation operations, delegations emphasized that general security and basic services were the key to sustainable repatriation. One delegation also observed that adequate numbers of protection-sensitive staff in the field were essential for implementation of the Agenda.

39. The Chairman for the Working Group for Resettlement presented a paper on the strategic use of resettlement (EC/53/SC/CRP.10/Add.1). He explained that, with the expansion and diversification of countries with annual resettlement programmes, appropriate expertise and advice was needed by emerging resettlement countries, and UNHCR could play an important catalytic role here. The report also examined whether the use of resettlement could be enhanced and made more strategic if States acted more collectively in pursuing agreed goals. It looked at how the resettlement process could be made more efficient, for instance, through multi-year pledges, through different approaches to identifying persons in need of resettlement, possibly on a group basis, and to selection criteria. The report proposed that resettlement States would need to consider how broader linkages could be achieved through partnerships with first asylum countries. Lastly, he suggested that resettlement was an issue lending itself to treatment within the Convention Plus framework.

40. Several delegations welcomed the Working Group's paper and proposed that the role of resettlement as a durable solution be developed further. Some regretted the recent slowing down of the processing of individual resettlement cases and hoped this was only temporary, welcoming the ongoing commitment to resettlement and current initiatives on group resettlement. One major resettlement country affirmed that its commitment to resettlement was as strong as ever but that it needed help from UNHCR in identifying cases. On group resettlement, several delegations reported that they were working with UNHCR and IOM to enable group resettlement from Dadaab Camp, Kenya. One delegation, however, stated that it could not support group resettlement.

41. In her closing intervention, the Director of International Protection regretted that only five of the 64 member States of the Executive Committee had reported to the Standing Committee on their priorities under the Agenda, and their implementation, although others had indicated their intention to prepare such a report. She mentioned in this context, the European Commission's paper on the common asylum policy and the Agenda for protection, as a valuable contribution.² Another example of best practice was that of one State that had chosen to involve national NGOs in consultations on priorities and strategies to implement the Agenda.

C. UNHCR's activities in the field of statelessness

42. The Deputy Director responsible for Protection Operations Support presented the Conference Room Paper on Statelessness (EC/53/SC/CRP.1), outlining key aspects of UNHCR's role with respect to statelessness, and providing a summary of ongoing activities. He also drew attention to the questionnaire on statelessness, sent to all States in April 2003, as part of follow-up to the Agenda for Protection, and informed the Committee of the status of replies received from States.

43. Delegations expressed their strong support for UNHCR's efforts to expand its activities in the field of statelessness globally. Some noted with concern the link between displacement and refugee flows, and situations of statelessness, and encouraged UNHCR to continue to cooperate closely with States in preparing and implementing nationality laws in order to avoid or resolve instances of statelessness. They noted that cooperation with States through the provision of expertise on nationality laws was essential to creating and implementing durable solutions. For the future, they encouraged UNHCR to provide an outline of nationality issues specifically impacting women and children, and drew attention to the importance of birth registration and support for States in implementing effective registration systems, as key to avoiding and reducing statelessness. They also encouraged UNHCR to continue its training and information dissemination activities in support of these objectives. An observer delegation representing the NGOs proposed a set of recommendations highlighting the need to improve registration practices and raising the possibility of the resettlement of stateless persons in appropriate cases.

44. In responding, DIP's Senior Legal Officer (Statelessness) noted these various recommendations and recalled the invitation to States to give priority to responding to the questionnaire. This would help identify gaps and best practices as part of the analysis being

² European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the common asylum policy and the Agenda for protection", 26 March 2003, COM(2003)152 final.

undertaken. She noted the interest expressed by delegations in receiving this report, if possible at the Executive Committee's next session.

VII. RESUMED DISCUSSION WITH THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

45. A number of questions were raised by delegations during the resumed dialogue with the High Commissioner. They related mainly to human resources issues, including staffing levels and the feasibility of external recruitment. Concern was also expressed by one delegation over the process that had been applied when making budgetary reductions. Another delegation expressed support for the partnership approach outlined by the High Commissioner in his opening statement, pointing out that there were already examples of successful joint fund raising initiatives. Two delegations also recalled their support for the principle of introducing greater flexibility into the budget through the kind of measures he had described, but wished to receive greater details.

46. Responding to these interventions, the High Commissioner confirmed that some form of external recruitment already existed through the JPO programme, the use of UNVs and secondments between agencies. These various channels would be maintained. On the question of prioritizing needs when faced with funding shortfalls, he recalled that parameters had been fixed under Action 1, and that priorities were identified through a consultative process involving Directors of the Regional Bureaux. He insisted that this was no easy task, however, and invited States to come forward with their own perception of priorities. Finally, on the proposed adjustment to the Operational Reserve, he undertook to provide fuller details in writing, as basis for further discussions by the Committee. He recalled that it was his prerogative, as High Commissioner, to take an exceptional measure such as the one he proposed. He intended to introduce this adjustment into the Annual Programme Budget for one year, on a trial basis.

VIII. RESUMED DISCUSSION OF ITEM 3(i)

47. At the invitation of the Chair, the Standing Committee resumed its consideration of sub-item 3(i) on Programme and Funding. Delegations mainly welcomed the principle of introducing greater flexibility into the annual budget by adjusting the Operational Reserve in order to allow for the receipt of additional contributions for expanded or new activities not foreseen in the approved annual programme budget. They considered, however, that more time was needed to discuss the measures proposed in greater detail. The Chairman instructed the Secretariat to convene consultations for this purpose. The draft decision on overall programme and funding projections for 2003 was then adopted, as amended (see Annex).

IX. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE STAFF COUNCIL

48. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Staff Council Chairperson delivered a statement in which he first expressed concern for the security of local staff colleagues in the UNHCR Office in Liberia. He drew attention to areas of progress in joint staff-management discussions on human resource management issues – notably those relating to recruitment, assignment and promotion of personnel, but regretted the delay in addressing a number of aspects of human resources questions, in particular those concerning the management of staff in-between assignments and the need for greater geographical diversity. He acknowledged the commitment

of the High Commissioner to place human resource issues high on the agenda and to maintain regular dialogue between Management and Staff in order to resolve outstanding matters. In closing, he reminded delegations that above all, UNHCR needed greater stability as an organization, and that this could come only through more predictable funding.

X. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

49. Under this item, one delegation wished to record the need for additional staff and resources to strengthen the UNHCR Office in their country.

DRAFT DECISION ON OVERALL PROGRAMME
AND FUNDING PROJECTIONS FOR 2003

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its fifty-third session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/973, para. 26) as well as its discussions under the programme and funding item at the twenty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee;

Recalling also, with appreciation, the burden shouldered by developing countries hosting refugees;

1. *Notes* that UNHCR's overall needs under its Annual Programme for 2003, based on currently known requirements, amount to US\$836.3 million, as approved by the Executive Committee at its fifty-third session (which includes the amount of \$20.2 million from the United Nations Regular Budget and \$7 million for Junior Professional Officers);
2. *Notes* that Supplementary programme budgets that were not foreseen at the time of the approval of the Annual Programme, and which are therefore exceptional in nature, currently amount to \$320.6 million;
3. *Notes* with concern that projected income for the year 2003 stands currently at only \$701.7 million under the Annual Programme Budget and at \$200.2 million under the Supplementary Programmes, which could jeopardize the implementation of operations at field level;
4. *Emphasizes* the importance of adequate and flexible funding for UNHCR's programmes on the part of the international community, and calls for firm indications of additional pledges as soon as possible;
5. *Recalls* the decision taken on funding mechanisms by the Executive Committee at its fifty-third session³, requesting the High Commissioner in his financial reports to the Standing Committee to inform it of reductions to the budget both in financial terms and in terms of the programme activities that have been eliminated or reduced, so that the Standing Committee may fully understand the context of the reductions and their impact on programmes as well as on refugee well-being in the field.

³ A/AC.96/973, para. 25 (c)