

No. 39 (XXXVI) - 1985 - Refugee Women and International Protection

The Executive Committee,

- (a) Welcomed the initiative of the Office in organizing the Round Table on Refugee Women in Geneva in April 1985;
- (b) Welcomed further the recommendations regarding the situation of refugee and displaced women adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women held in Nairobi (Kenya) in July 1985;
- (c) Noted that refugee women and girls constitute the majority of the world refugee population and that many of them are exposed to special problems in the international protection field;
- (d) Recognized that these problems result from their vulnerable situation which frequently exposes them to physical violence, sexual abuse, and discrimination;
- (e) Stressed the need for such problems to receive the urgent attention of Governments and of UNHCR and for all appropriate measures to be taken to guarantee that refugee women and girls are protected from violence or threats to their physical safety or exposure to sexual abuse or harassment;
- (f) Noted with satisfaction the measures already undertaken by UNHCR to address the protection problems of refugee women and to ensure that they are adequately protected;
- (g) Called upon States to continue to support UNHCR programmes established with a view to securing protection for refugee women, and UNHCR assistance programmes for refugee women, especially those aimed at helping refugee women become self-sufficient through educational and income-generating projects;
- (h) Recommended that States, individually, jointly and in co-operation with UNHCR, redefine and reorient existing programmes and, where necessary, establish new programmes to meet the specific problems of refugee women, in particular to ensure the safeguard of their physical

integrity and safety, and their equality of treatment. Women refugees should participate in the formulation and implementation of such programmes;

(i) Stressed the importance of a more detailed knowledge and understanding of the special needs and problems of refugee women in the international protection field and of gathering statistical, sociological and other data concerning refugee women and girls in order to identify and implement appropriate mechanisms to ensure their effective protection;

(j) Requested the High Commissioner to report regularly to members of the Executive Committee on the needs of refugee women, and on existing and proposed programmes for their benefit;

(k) Recognized that States, in the exercise of their sovereignty, are free to adopt the interpretation that women asylum-seekers who face harsh or inhuman treatment due to their having transgressed the social mores of the society in which they live may be considered as a "particular social group" within the meaning of Article 1 A(2) of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention.