

Executive Committee Conclusions

Family Reunification

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The Executive Committee,

Adopted the following conclusions on the reunification of separated refugee families.

1. In application of the Principle of the unity of the family and for obvious humanitarian reasons, every effort should be made to ensure the reunification of separated refugee families.
2. For this purpose it is desirable that countries of asylum and countries of origin support the efforts of the High Commissioner to ensure that the reunification of separated refugee families takes place with the least Possible delay.
3. The generally positive trends in regard to the reunification of separated refugee families are greatly to be welcomed but a number of outstanding problems still need to be resolved.
4. Given the recognized right of everyone to leave any country including his own, countries of origin should facilitate family reunification by granting exit permission to family members of refugees to enable them to join the refugee abroad.
5. It is hoped that countries of asylum will apply liberal criteria in identifying those family members who can be admitted with a view to promoting a comprehensive reunification of the family.
6. When deciding on family reunification, the absence of documentary proof of the formal validity of a marriage or of the filiation of children should not per se be considered as an impediment.
7. The separation of refugee families has, in certain regions of the world, given rise to a number of particularly delicate problems relating to unaccompanied minors. Every effort should be made to trace the parents or other close relatives of unaccompanied minors before their resettlement. Efforts to clarify their family situation with sufficient certainty should also be continued after resettlement. Such efforts are of particular importance before an adoption -- involving a severance of links with the natural family -- is decided upon.
8. In order to promote the rapid integration of

refugee families in the country of settlement, joining close family members should in principle be granted the same legal status and facilities as the head of the family who has been formally recognized as a refugee.

9. In appropriate cases family reunification should be facilitated by special measures of assistance to the head of family so that economic and housing difficulties in the country of asylum do not unduly delay the granting of permission for the entry of the family members.