

No. 47 (XXXVIII) - 1987 - Refugee Children

The Executive Committee,

(a) Expressed appreciation to the High Commissioner for his Report on Refugee Children (EC/SCP/46) and noted with serious concern the violations of their human rights in different areas of the world and their special needs and vulnerability within the broader refugee population;

(b) Recognized that refugee children constitute approximately one half of the world's refugee population and that the situation in which they live often gives rise to special protection and assistance problems as well as to problems in the area of durable solutions;

(c) Reiterated the widely-recognized principle that children must be among the first to receive protection and assistance;

(d) Stressed that all action taken on behalf of refugee children must be guided by the principle of the best interests of the child as well as by the principle of family unity;

(e) Condemned the exposure of refugee children to physical violence and other violations of their basic rights, including through sexual abuse, trade in children, acts of piracy, military or armed attacks, forced recruitment, political exploitation or arbitrary detention, and called for national and international action to prevent such violations and assist the victims;

(f) Urged States to take appropriate measures to register the births of refugee children born in countries of asylum;

(g) Expressed its concern over the increasing number of cases of statelessness among refugee children;

(h) Recommended that children who are accompanied by their parents should be treated as refugees if either of the parents is determined to be a refugee;

(i) Underlined the special situation of unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents, who are in the care of other families, including their needs as regards determination of their status, provision for their physical and emotional support and efforts to trace parents or relatives; and in this connection, recalled the relevant paragraphs of Conclusion No. 24 (XXXII) on Family Reunification;

(j) Called upon the High Commissioner to ensure that individual assessments are conducted and adequate social histories prepared for unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents, who are in the care of other families, to facilitate provision for their immediate needs, the analysis of the long term as well as immediate viability of existing foster arrangements, and the planning and implementation of appropriate durable solutions;

(k) Noted that while the best durable solution for an unaccompanied refugee child will depend on the particular circumstances of the case, the possibility of voluntary repatriation should at all times be kept under review, keeping in mind the best interests of the child and the possible difficulties of determining the voluntary character of repatriation;

(l) Stressed the need for internationally and nationally supported programmes geared to preventive action, special assistance and rehabilitation for disabled refugee children and encouraged States to participate in the "Twenty or More" Plan providing for the resettlement of disabled refugee children;

(m) Noted with serious concern the detrimental effects that extended stays in camps have on the development of refugee children and called for international action to mitigate such effects and provide durable solutions as soon as possible;

(n) Recognized the importance of meeting the special psychological, religious, cultural and recreational needs of refugee children in order to ensure their emotional stability and development;

(o) Reaffirmed the fundamental right of refugee children to education and called upon all States, individually and collectively, to intensify their efforts, in co-operation with the High Commissioner, to ensure that all refugee children benefit from primary education of a satisfactory quality, that respects their cultural identity and is oriented towards an

understanding of the country of asylum;

(p) Recognized the need of refugee children to pursue further levels of education and recommended that the High Commissioner consider the provision of post-primary education within the general programme of assistance;

(q) Called upon all States, in co-operation with UNHCR and concerned agencies, to develop and/or support programmes to address nutritional and health risks faced by refugee children, including programmes to ensure an adequate, well-balanced and safe diet, general immunization and primary health care;

(r) Recommended regular and timely assessment and review of the needs of refugee children, either on an individual basis or through sample surveys, prepared in co-operation with the country of asylum, taking into account all relevant factors such as age, sex, personality, family, religion, social and cultural background and the situation of the local population, and benefiting from the active involvement of the refugee community itself;

(s) Reaffirmed the need to promote continuing and expanded co-operation between UNHCR and other concerned agencies and bodies active in the fields of assistance to refugee children and protection, including through the development of legal and social standards;

(t) Noted the importance of further study of the needs of refugee children by UNHCR, other intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies and national authorities, with a view to identification of additional support programmes and reorientation as necessary of existing ones;

(u) Called upon the High Commissioner to develop further, in consultation with concerned organizations, guidelines to promote cooperation between UNHCR and these organizations to improve the international protection, physical security, well-being and normal psychosocial development of refugee children;

(v) Called upon the High Commissioner to maintain the UNHCR Working Group on Refugee

Children at Risk as his focal point on refugee children, to strengthen the Working Group and to inform the members of the Executive Committee, on a regular basis, of its work.