

**MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLE IN THE  
1990s:  
CHALLENGES  
FOR  
POLICY MAKERS**

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### Preface

### Executive Summary

### Problems, Prospects and New Challenges

### Emergencies, Displacements and Durable Solutions:

### Issues for the 1990s

The Scale and Magnitude of the Problem

### Global Opportunities and International Migration:

### Actions to Achieve a Better Balance

### How to Respond to New Challenges

Capacity-building

Coordination for Action

### Conclusions and Priorities for Action

### Annex: List of Participants and Observers

## Preface

The ending of the cold war along with ever greater globalization of the world economy has prompted a remarkable surge of interest in international issues. As part of this, the North South Roundtable (NSRT) has sponsored meetings on "The Economics of Peace", "Strengthening the United Nations for the 1990s", and "The Challenge of Africa in the 1990s".

As one looks forward to the 21st century, it becomes ever more clear that the unfinished-and sometimes unaddressed -agenda of development priorities in the 20th century will carry forward major problems of even greater consequence and urgency. Among these, the growing inequality between living standards for most of the population in developing countries and those of the majority in the industrialized countries stands high on the list. One of its consequences is the ever increasing pressure for migration from South to North, a pressure exacerbated by the dislocation of war and civil unrest.

Because of this-and as part of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) - a North South Roundtable was organized on the theme "Movements of People in the 1990s: Challenges for Policy Makers".

Some 35 persons from governments, international organizations, agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities and research institutions and voluntary organizations took part.

The discussions were intended to be forward-looking and wide-ranging, covering a review of..

- Mass movements of people in the 1990s: problems, prospects and new challenges;
- Emergencies, displacements and durable solutions: challenges for the 1990s;
- Global opportunities and international migration: action to achieve a more balanced world economy and thus to diminish the pressures for mass movements of people.

The following report summarizes the conclusions and the main lines of discussion. These conclusions were first presented to the 40th anniversary meeting of UNHCR, held at the Palais des Nations on Monday, 17 December 1991. Although these conclusions represent a broad consensus of the NSRT session, it must be stressed that the report is issued on the authority of the NSRT Chairman. No participant, let alone any member of the NSRT, is necessarily in agreement with any particular view presented.

This said, I would like to thank three persons who greatly helped to make this NSRT a most lively and creative exchange.

- Professor Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who first proposed the idea of this Roundtable and who ensured the high level of UNHCR support it received;
- Marie Angelique Savane, at the time special adviser to the High Commissioner and who was responsible for most aspects of the organization;

- Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe, Senior Researcher, International Peace Research Institute in Norway, who was rapporteur for the Roundtable.

A full list of the participants and observers is included as an annex.

The Executive Summary underlines the main conclusions. The 1990s are likely to be a decade of displacement during which mass movements of people across different parts of the world are likely to grow. New policies will be needed to respond - in the short run as well as in the long run - covering all categories of people, displaced persons as well as refugees and others moving within the Third World countries as well as from South to North. It is hoped that the ideas in this report will help the search for such policies and encourage their acceptance.

Richard Jolly  
Chairman  
North South Roundtable

### **Executive Summary**

1. The 1990s will be a decade of displacement during which mass movements of people across different parts of the world are likely to grow.

2. At the same time, numerous opportunities for peace-keeping and peace-making efforts, and possibilities for strengthening international action in these areas, have been created by the end of the cold war and East-West confrontation.

3. New and more effective international policies will be required, which:

- Promote voluntary repatriation and reintegration;
- Encourage prevention and preparedness as well as effective emergency responses;
- Give attention to the less visible human emergencies;
- Reach all categories of displaced persons;
- Encourage a more coherent approach to migration, so that the main emphasis can be placed on the protection of people rather than on the protection of governments.

In this respect, sovereignty is an issue of special sensitivity. The North South Roundtable discussed this issue at length and a consensus was reached on the need for a "minimum of concurrency" or "acquiescence" by governments for international organizations to carry out humanitarian activities.

4. The year 1992 could mark the beginning of a period of repatriation for refugees. The end of the cold war and the consequent resolution of armed conflicts could create opportunities for millions of people to repatriate. Such a prospect poses new challenges for which enormous funds would be required. The North South Roundtable stressed that effective expenditure now will help diminish the number of dependent people in the future, as well as reduce the international costs of responding to their needs.

5. Greater attention should be given to special groups; 75-80 per cent of refugees and displaced persons are women and children who require special care and support, with cultural, legal and regional considerations taken into account.

6. With the ending of the cold war, moves towards democracy in many countries, and increased recognition of the need for international action and of the role and status of the United Nations, a growing consensus has emerged on the need to focus attention on human development, both nationally and internationally. Specific goals have been agreed towards this end in the bodies of many UN organizations, at the World Summit for Children and in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth Development Decade. This opportunity must now be seized.

7. Without question, longer-term solutions depend on the world's achieving a more balanced pattern of development. Aid should go some way towards removing the extreme gaps which exist in welfare and living standards between people in different parts of the world. It is therefore apparent that the problem of mass movements of people is secondary to that of realizing a more balanced and dynamic pattern of global development.

8. There is a need for more serious, coherent dialogue on aid negotiations across the whole range of issues relating to migration, displacement and repatriation. These issues must be addressed at the global level in order to prevent crises before they occur and to ensure cost-effective responses directed towards durable solutions. A role for the UNHCR in stimulating this dialogue was clearly identified. Specific proposals were

made, including a revival of the proposal that a "World Migration Organization" should be created. The suggestion was also made that the UN system needed an "Economic Security Council".

9. Better coordination of international action is required. The North South Roundtable welcomed the proposals under discussion at the General Assembly as an important step forward. It was stressed that the coordinator for emergency assistance should facilitate the organization of rapid and coherent international response. This would not, however, diminish the need for strong, effective capacity to respond to emergencies within the key agencies.

10. The strengthening of international capacity to play a part in these actions is necessary. While appreciating the role of the UNHCR and its record of speed and reliability in responding to so many refugee situations over the past 40 years, which makes it well deserving of two Nobel Prizes, the North South Roundtable nevertheless emphasized the need to boost the funding and staffing of international organizations.

11. There must be greater recognition of the constructive role of NGOs and their wider use in many emergency situations concerning refugees, displaced persons and repatriation. NGOs provide a channel for some US\$ 3 billion of development assistance each year, but more significantly, NGOs - both international and national, in the South as well as in the North - often present models of low-cost approaches, participatory action, commitment and idealism. The United Nations could learn from these models.

12. Much better public understanding of refugee and migration issues must be promoted. The importance of advocacy and of social communication through all forms of media and the fundamental need to improve education were all highlighted.

### **Problems, Prospects and New Challenges**

The North South Roundtable on Movements of People in the 1990s was planned to be a forward-looking symposium to address the problems, prospects and new challenges for the 1990s. The decline of the cold war and the search for a new world order provided a framework for new thinking and for the resolution of some of the more outstanding problems on the global agenda.

The end of the cold war has led to - or has the promise of leading to - the resolution of many conflicts. The nuclear threat is receding and the opportunity for intensive arms reductions could provide peace dividends. A number of regional conflicts, which were themselves the result of proxy wars, are currently being resolved, as in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola and elsewhere. Although other conflicts have intensified, there have been other stronger, more international efforts to settle some of the more intractable conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan, as well as serious attempts to settle internal disputes, as in El Salvador and Guatemala.

A new feature in the global situation is the spread of democracy, as evidenced by the downfall of the former communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as the growth of multi-party systems in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Popular forces are asserting themselves and the process of social transformation has assumed a truly global character - albeit not without differences and often with great strain and difficulties.

We have to take advantage of this window of opportunity in order to truly explore the possibilities of a new global order. Sustained and committed action and fresh global approaches will be required to convert these positive processes into sustainable peace and development.

While acknowledging the positive aspects of recent global development, particularly the expansion and development of democracy, we also need to recognize that new conflicts are emerging which require our urgent attention.

Indeed, the democratic process itself is giving rise to new sources of strife based on a redefinition of the notion of the right to self-determination, minority assertions requiring greater devolution of power, increased competition for scarce resources, environmental degradation and depletion, and political differences over democratization and governance. If we examine the number of wars in recent years, it is obvious that the majority are fought within the boundaries of a given nation state. Such internal armed conflicts are an unfortunate characteristic of the new world order. A distinctive element of emergent conflicts is that they are mainly ethnic and nationality-based. This is largely due to new assertions of self-determination, beyond the decolonization process, with new groups and new nations seeking to define

themselves as peoples. Given that few states are homogeneous and most are multi-ethnic in character, with more than 5,000 minorities and over 9,000 languages in the world, ethnic diversity and nationalist resurgence pose a significant challenge to the international community.

It is to be noted that the post-war international system is based on several important characteristics. Initially it was comprised of a system of states which required the United Nations and other related bodies to manage the decolonization process. The United Nations was therefore broadly concerned with the maintenance of peace and security between independent and sovereign states. However, as already noted, today most wars are of an internal nature and it is precisely the concepts of sovereignty and noninterference in the domestic affairs of states which create problems not only for humanitarian assistance, in coping with mass displacements and refugee flows, but also for the early resolution of these conflicts. Another characteristic is that large numbers of the civilian population are affected by the conflicts, giving rise to massive numbers of civilian casualties and displacements. Also significant is the fact that these armed internal conflicts are not only restricted to the South but are also present in Yugoslavia and have the potential to empty in other parts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, causing new flows of people.

There are other factors which are likely to exacerbate conflicts. The proliferation of conventional weapons and small arms has created a culture of violence and militarization in many regions of the world, taken up and no doubt exacerbated by the media, especially through entertainment films and television. Furthermore, the arms trade has become linked to new transnational actors, such as the expanding drug rings and other criminal networks.

Of the conflicts which are likely to emerge, most are expected to take place against the background of a major demographic explosion of unprecedented proportions and of widening economic gaps between the North and the South. There are no grounds for optimism in the economic relations between the North and the South. Most reports suggest that there will continue to be growing disparities not only between the North and the South, but also within the countries themselves. The level of absolute poverty is currently projected to increase.

### **Emergencies, Displacements and Durable Solutions: Issues for the 1990s**

It was agreed that the refugee phenomenon must be addressed within the broader context of global migration.

Over the years, there has been a blurring of the distinction between refugees and economic migrants which has given rise to controversies in the North. The mixed movements of refugees and economic migrants have led to a situation in industrialized countries whereby the number of asylum applications has exploded and the cost of processing has sky-rocketed, while at the same time the acceptance rate has plummeted.

Lack of understanding of the processes involved has exacerbated xenophobia and racism, thus undermining the important achievements already made with regard to refugee protection. Misinformation by politicians and the mass media has led to a fear psychosis and rising xenophobia and racism, exaggerating the size and nature of the refugee problem in industrialized countries.

Too much attention has been focused on South-North migration and too little on the much larger and more overwhelming movements of people within the South itself, a significant point which needs to be highlighted more. The fundamental issue which needs to be addressed is whether the answer lies in limiting migration movements or in managing them within an expanded system of mobility and opportunity. Furthermore, should refugee movements be exempted from growing moves aimed at limiting the population flows? We should seek to achieve not only a global perspective of migratory movements but also a historical perspective on the positive features of migration which have created the basis of our civilization and the interaction of a plural multi-ethnic community.

### **The Scale and Magnitude of the Problem**

There has been a significant expansion in the numbers of refugees since the Second World War from 2 million, viewed at the time as a temporary phenomenon, to today's figure of over 17 million, which threatens to become a permanent feature of the global situation.

The existence of nearly 20 million displaced persons within their own countries, in addition to refugees, is a matter of serious concern. These displaced people are victims of violence and war, without access to adequate protection or assistance. Furthermore, no international organization possesses the mandate to deal with them. Nor do other mechanisms exist within the countries concerned to deal with this issue.

The majority of the people - whether refugees who have crossed an international border or the internally displaced - are women and children, uprooted as a result of armed hostilities.

A closer look at regional specificities helps to highlight the peculiarities of each region:

- Africa is a continent with major population movements. It has 6 million refugees and a total of nearly 40 million people on the move. These mass movements of people are due to a combination of many compounding and complimenting factors. Apart from armed conflicts, environmental degradation and drought, ecological disasters and endemic poverty are also contributory factors.
- The Gulf War created a total of five million refugees in the Middle East and sparked off a massive movement of people. The major groups affected were the migrant workers in the Gulf States who suddenly lost their employment, the large numbers of refugees created by the war itself, and the Kurds who were forced to flee after their revolt in northern Iraq.
- In Indo-China, almost half a million people in refugee camps are awaiting repatriation and resettlement elsewhere.
- With regard to Central America, the Esquipulas Peace Process which began in 1987 is not only concerned with the laying down of arms, but also with the search for a comprehensive solution to the problem of uprootedness, whether of refugees, returnees, or internally and externally displaced persons.
- In the former Soviet Union, there exists the potential for a large-scale exodus of people. Over one million people have already been displaced as a result of conflicts in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Furthermore, there are over 20 million Russians living outside the borders of the Russian Republic who have suddenly become minorities within newly independent republics. Their status as citizens is likely to become a contentious issue under the new nationalist political order. Each republic has minority groups, and as already seen in Georgia, minority disputes can lead to civil war. Moreover, the increasing incidence of border disputes will require patient negotiation. Although it is impossible to predict the numbers which could be involved in such population movements, the North South Roundtable agreed that over 10 million people could well be affected either as refugees or as internally displaced persons.

What can we say about refugee movements by the year 2000? Today, there is a total of over 40 million refugees and displaced people in the world, a bleak statistic.

Nevertheless, on the positive side, several million will be returning to their countries of origin as a result of political settlement of conflicts, although at the same time new conflicts are likely to emerge, producing new refugee flows and, in particular, internal displacements. The large numbers of returning and displaced people pose new problems of reintegration, while greater early warning and contingency planning capabilities are needed to improve response to future refugee flows.

In terms of assistance to refugees in countries of asylum, there are new challenges with regard to development projects and attitudes. It was noted that when ethnic groups of indigenous peoples cross borders and settle in camps removed from their traditional communal lands and cultures, loss of identity is often the result. It was again noted that large numbers of refugees - 75 to 80 per cent - are women and children.

In the discourse and the language used in respect of these issues, the concept of the refugee remains a static one, i.e., the refugee as a passive victim in need of welfare assistance. The gender issue is rarely recognized or taken into account.

Perceptions and attitudes towards refugees need to be changed: the refugee should be seen as an actor capable of transforming his or her own situation. He or she may even be seen as a valuable resource, and his or her own subjective aspirations, gender and identity should play a central role in the development process.

In terms of repatriation, the scale of the numbers of returnees poses new challenges to the goals of providing a stable and secure environment for returnees and of involving returnees in development projects and employment-generating programmes which

would enable them to sustain themselves over time. This means that refugee agencies must link up with development agencies. However, concern was voiced that the perfect must not become the enemy of the acceptable. Human rights conditions may not be perfect, and the search for perfection may be an unreal one in many developing countries.

Traditional analytical tools are inadequate to deal with the magnitude of the problem. We need to adopt a new approach to the issues and their solution. The magnitude of the problem should encourage us to look for longer-term and more permanent solutions. A comprehensive plan of action is required.

The situation of those applicants who are denied refugee status was also discussed. It was suggested that a humane code of practice be adopted for the return of such rejected persons.

Much of the discussion centered around the concepts of sovereignty and human rights. Human rights not only have universal application but also are binding on states in respect of obligations and conventions to which they are parties. Therefore, a system of accountability or competence has also developed to monitor human rights within the international community. There are, however, new problems which need to be addressed within this domain. While civil and political rights are fairly well covered, this is not the case for economic, collective and cultural rights. Furthermore, as slated earlier, the rights of minorities and the complex issue of self-determination also need to be addressed within the perspective of the new global situation. The concept of sovereignty continues to be a complex and controversial issue. It was recognized that the notion of sovereignty is a dynamic one, evolving over time. The debate on the right of humanitarian intervention has been given a new impetus with the mass flows of Kurds which resulted from the Gulf War. During the crisis, the international system had to extend formerly recognized boundaries of humanitarian intervention in order to address itself to the magnitude of the problem. New concepts such as "safe havens" were developed to meet this contingency. It was felt that the Kurdish question and the forms of intervention used in response may give rise to fresh discussion on the right of humanitarian intervention and the obligations of the international community.

However, there was also a note of caution against any undue enthusiasm created by this new impetus. It was recalled that the Kurdish question may prove to be a special case rather than a model for future operations: no other human tragedy or mass exodus of peoples has ever prompted such an enormous and rapid response. Indeed, many newly emergent, viable nation states, with memories of colonialism and neo-colonial forms of intervention, are very sensitive on the question of "right of intervention". A "right of intervention" proposed by the North raises suspicion and controversy. Perhaps the very terminology itself may be a problem here, since the concern of humanitarian agencies lies with protection and care of victims rather than intervention. Ways must be found to provide refuge and protection for victims of war and gross human rights violations. What is recognized is that more conceptual work needs to be done to obtain a minimum of consensus on the rights of the victim relative to state sovereignty.

There is a greater need for preventive action, which should be seen as complementing action for solutions. On the one hand, the international community must address itself to the issues of conflict prevention, and on the other, it must improve contingency planning and preparedness to meet new refugee flows. A significant point raised in the discussion concerned the space which has been created for peace-making within situations of armed conflict and violence. Examples were provided on how innovative measures have been found for peace-making and peace-building even under conditions of war. It was again observed that modern wars and conflicts are civilian-intensive, often producing massive civilian casualties. It was felt that generally civilians are passive victims of serious and gross violations perpetrated on them during armed hostilities. What then can be done to overcome this passivity, and in what way can humanitarian agencies work under such conditions?

One positive example is the excellent work done by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the innovative ways it has found of working under conditions of armed conflict. At the same time, it was felt that the code of conduct for armed conflicts needs to be further developed in order to cover internal disturbances and that these provisions should be made effective with regard to accountability and adherence to international norms. Here it was noted that the Organization for African Unity (OAU) has initiated a training programme on humanitarian law for African military personnel. Other regional institutions and national governments need to be encouraged to evolve training programmes to diffuse knowledge of humanitarian law. Further work also needs to be done to ensure that non-

governmental, actors conform to the provisions of humanitarian law where they are involved in conflict situations. One example is the "Days of Tranquility" concept developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), whereby de facto cease-fires have been created for such actions as the immunization of children. Similarly "Corridors of Tranquility" have been developed for the delivery of medical and other supplies, and today this is becoming a normative concept used by a number of international agencies. A suggestion was made that the space provided by such humanitarian cease-fires should also be used to expand dialogue and negotiation. Another suggestion was the elaboration of peace zones whereby NGOs and coalitions for peace are able to declare a particular region a zone of peace inside which armed protagonists are required to respect both the laws of war and humanitarian laws. All these cases point to the need to involve civilians in peace-making exercises. New coalitions need to be built wherever it is possible to convert the "vicious circle of violence" into a "virtuous circle of peace".

It was also noted that the new situation and the search for a new world order should aim to guarantee peace and security for all. We should focus not only on the security of the state but also on the security of the peoples. The problems currently on the agenda require the political will of the international community to act decisively. With regard to emerging conflicts, there is a need for new frameworks and mechanisms to address the issues of internal conflicts, ethnic conflicts and minorities. These frameworks should provide opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation. The traditions of the United Nations in peace-keeping need to be extended to encompass peace-making and peace-building. This requires that the United Nations develop coalitions with the humanitarian and non-governmental agencies dealing with conflicts and their transformation.

### **Global Opportunities and International Migration: Action to Achieve a Better Balance**

Implicit in the title of the session is the conviction that it is necessary to ensure that opportunities for human development and economic development are available in all regions of the world, in all nations and for all peoples. It is only in this sense that opportunities can be described as global, and it is only when opportunities are global that migration ceases to be necessary.

The availability of such opportunities, or rather the lack thereof, is directly related to the phenomenon of migration, particularly South-North migration. People leave the South in search of opportunities in the North; or rather, certain people, particularly those who might broadly be described as middle class, move from South to North. This movement takes place against a backdrop of a more significant movement of peoples within the South itself.

Underlying both movements, however, is a common search for better opportunities.

While freedom of movement is a right, the current migratory phenomenon is characterized by what might be termed as a forced or compulsory nature: people are moving in order to live in conditions of human dignity. If balance is to be restored to the movements of people, then this requires that another balance be restored to the availability of opportunities. This latter balance, especially in the context of South-North migratory movements, can be achieved only when the differentials in a range of important human development indicators are redressed. It was in this sense that one participant felt that the issue of migration is subordinate to that of development. In other words, South-North inequalities could nor could they ever-be solved through emigration perse.

In terms of laying the foundation of a more equitable distribution of opportunities in various regions of the world, and thereby implicitly removing the primary motive for migration, the importance of redressing or effectively addressing North-South differentials was discussed. A development package consisting of four elements - namely, trade, debt relief, investment and cooperative aid - was proposed by a participant as one way of creating a global economic environment favorable to the various countries of the South which find themselves at different stages of modernization and/or demographic transition.

Relative to these components, the need for free markets - with regard to capital, services and labour-was stressed. Only free markets are equitable markets. Restrictions in the free markets of capital, trade and labour are among the greatest barriers to the creation of global opportunities. Imbalances in opportunities invariably provoke migratory flows. Other participants questioned the nature of the putative link between development and migration. For some it was not a strong relationship, but merely a secondary one.



Other participants, focusing on various poles of growth throughout the world (each with a North-South dimension), felt that ultimately the North-South problem of differentials would be overcome, while recognizing that in the case of Africa, a concerted effort was needed. Another participant focused on the explosive situation created within a century by differentials in standards of living as being a greater problem. In order to redress the situation, there is an important need to convince policy makers in the North that it is in their interest to do something to redress the imbalance in North-South differentials. Altruism must be combined with pragmatism and self-interest in order to create a meaningful dynamic to address these imbalances. Another strategy will be to build on the presently emerging community of interest in the environment, a concern shared by both the North and the South. In the pursuit of any strategies to create global opportunities, or rather, to redress imbalances in opportunities, the role of UN development organizations and agencies and NGOs needs to be more clearly defined, especially in relation to the displaced. While social development might be the key to economic progress, social development is only possible if it is accompanied by economic progress.

### **How to Respond to New Challenges**

During this session, participants expressed the view that issues pertaining to emergencies, displacement and durable solutions required a fresh look. Concepts relating thereto need to be reviewed and reformulated. Of particular importance is the changing definition of what constitutes a refugee. The notion of a refugee is evolving in relation to the changing situation, and this is obvious if we trace the origins and developments of the concept over time. What is significant in the new situation is the growing numbers of displaced persons and the growing acknowledgement of the need to address this issue. No international agency has a clear mandate to deal with emergent problems of displaced people, while ad hoc solutions have been found, perhaps creating more problems and dilemmas for the future. The UNHCR has been invited to provide assistance to internally displaced persons in specific situations and has been involved in Yugoslavia as well as in Sri Lanka where there has been a substantial internal displacement. These requests have come from the governments themselves, and the UNHCR has responded to these new situations. The crisis which developed as a result of the Gulf War and the Kurdish exodus provided further impetus for UNHCR involvement with nationals within their own country. The role of the UNHCR under the present situation needs to be examined so that discussion can be initiated as to its proper role.

However, a note of caution was sounded with regard to the role of the UNHCR, particularly by other UN agencies which felt that the UNHCR was already overextended in trying to meet existing commitments. The view was also expressed that it is by staying within the boundaries of its mandate that the UNHCR has earned its reputation for efficiency.

There is a strong policy dilemma with regard to the attitude of agencies to "silent" emergencies or "loud" emergencies, in other words, the issues related to structural violence or direct violence. The problems of structural violence (or "silent" emergencies) are the ever recurring tragedies of malnutrition, infant mortality, death, poverty and problems of underdevelopment. On the other hand, the "loud" emergencies (or direct violence) are the violence and war which produce ever increasing numbers of casualties and victims. Any development agency has to face this policy dilemma, to determine its priorities and the extent of its mandate. However, while there was caution as to the nature and extent of involvement of refugee agencies in this area, there was a broad consensus that the problem of internally displaced persons needs to be addressed as a serious humanitarian issue. Furthermore, it was noted that while development agencies may face a policy dilemma as to whether to choose between "silent" or "loud" emergencies, the mandate of the UNHCR requires it to address both issues, if only because it is one of the agencies which is directly affected by the need to address root causes. In this sense, the UNHCR needs to re-examine its mandate under the new dynamic situation.

The experience of working with refugees requires that traditional definitions of the refugee as a passive victim, or as a welfare client, be reviewed, to enable agencies to recognize the refugee as a positive actor in his or her own right whose active participation in the development process is vital in his or her own well-being and identity.

The year 1992 and beyond may well become the "Year of Repatriation". The extent and scale of voluntary repatriation exercises are truly staggering. More public recognition should be given to the fact that millions of refugees are returning to their

countries of origin, itself an outcome of positive developments inherent in the peace process. This is happening in at least 20 locations, ranging from South Africa and Mozambique to Central America and Cambodia. These returnees will face special problems which need to be addressed. They will often be returning to situations where there already exist large numbers of internally displaced persons, as well as continued tension and insecurity. Measures must be taken to ensure their adequate protection and security. It is of paramount importance that the returnees find stable forms of employment and income so that the hope of returning to their homelands does not end in frustration and despair. This is indeed a challenge where the UNHCR needs to work closely with governments, other development agencies and the non-governmental community. It is only through the process of sharing and cooperation that major challenges can be overcome.

### **Capacity-building**

Of fundamental importance in discussing this issue is the need to build a sustainable capability, including money, goods and personnel, all of which are scarce resources. There is no doubt that

a tremendous resource scarcity exists in relation to the magnitude of the challenge confronting agencies. We need to learn the lessons from the last decade, and use systematic assessments and retrospective studies to help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes. A proposal was made to explore the idea of a revolving fund and institutional mechanisms.

How can people be mobilized with special skills and capacities to undertake emergency operations on short notice? In this area, the Nordic countries have made some welcome moves to cooperate with UNHCR in preparing contingency plans for emergencies. The challenge confronting agencies is how to convert limited resources into a positive factor. Ways must be found to utilize existing capabilities to their maximum effect through cooperation and agreed division of labour. Cooperation between the agencies involved in refugee protection and development is vital in order to prepare better contingency approaches to refugee flows in the future, enhance cooperation with governments and develop cooperation with NGOs.

### **Coordination for Action**

Innumerable discussions have been held on the need for greater cooperation among agencies. The post of coordinator for humanitarian affairs at the under-secretary-general level has been proposed for emergencies and humanitarian assistance. There was some discussion on this proposal which was welcomed by all participants, although concerns were expressed as to the role and functions of such a high-level coordinator. It was felt that the coordinator should essentially concentrate on the underlying political problems concerned with humanitarian emergencies, whether to develop capabilities for early warning, to develop a concerted response to emergencies, or to create frameworks for conflict resolution. The role of the coordinator was seen as that of a facilitator who would act as a catalyst and make use of the capabilities of the existing agencies and networks. It was noted that strengthening the role of the coordinator would also mean that institutional capabilities within existing agencies would be further strengthened.

It was also observed by NGOs that an early identification of a lead agency generally helps to improve cooperation and develop a more efficient division of labour. Coordination is critical to small non-governmental agencies, for it is through an agreed division of labour that they are able to make optimal use of their limited resources.

### **Conclusions and Priorities for Action**

The North South Roundtable highlighted, as part of the 40th anniversary commemoration, UNHCR's achievements and exceptional work in creating a global capability for the protection of refugees. UNHCR's mandate has evolved over the years as the organization responding to new challenges. Today the major challenge facing the organization continues to be mass displacements of people, which must be addressed within the context of the political changes which confront the international community at the end of the 20th century.

The work of refugee protection has enormous implications. On the one hand, the voluntary repatriation of millions of people to their homelands imposes new responsibilities of extending protection and stability to those who are returning to war-torn countries. On the other, the organization must develop early contingent planning and better preparedness to

respond to potential new refugee flows. The subject Of internally displaced persons has now been brought onto the international agenda. It must be recognized that today no international instrument exists which can address this issue in its totality. This lacuna must be addressed and must become a major priority for action in the near future.

Internal wars and conflicts have been the major cause of mass refugee outflows as well as of internal displacement. It is therefore necessary that the international community as a whole and the UN agencies pay special attention to dangerous developments and learn from past mistakes.

It was noted that in the area of human rights accountability the protection of victims has assumed universal validity. Furthermore, monitoring, evaluation and developing forms of accountability have become extensive. The role of NGOs in developing forms of accountability has been enormous, and the developments of movements and standards will help in the general prevention and protection of groups and individuals in society.

The Roundtable noted the emergence of new conflicts which may be based on new issues of self-determination, and noted the lack of mechanisms and for addressing these issues. It therefore called for new mechanisms and forms to be developed so that these issues can be addressed in an atmosphere of reconciliation and cooperation. It is not possible for the United Nations alone to address these issues. Not only is a division of labour necessary between NGOs and UN bodies, but closer cooperation will become a vital component in the new global order. Refugee protection agencies can develop coalitions with development agencies on the one hand and humanitarian agencies on the other. They can also cooperate closely with human rights networks and NGOs involved in conflict resolution and transformation. Non-governmental organizations, often called the "third system", have proven abilities in developing low-cost, flexible responses to emergency situations. Together, international NGOs spend over US\$ 3 billion a year. Over the years, the international non-governmental structure has developed a people-orientated development strategy. Others have developed capabilities for peace-making and peace-building. Clear networking possibilities and cooperation across borders are now necessary for effective action.

The positive and negative aspects of the media were noted and participants felt that while on the one hand the media often tend to develop negative stereotypes of disasters and create a feeling of passivity, on the other they have also responded well to emergency situations and have assisted enormously in increasing public awareness and in fund-raising efforts. It was considered important that the concerted action be taken to use the media and their enormous potential in this area of work.

The Roundtable also emphasized the importance of education and the efforts which need to be made to educate children from the school-age onwards in the new issues confronting the next generation. This means the development of innovative curricula and the introduction of these themes- particularly with regard to protection, human rights and peace - at an early age.

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North South Roundtable

The North South Roundtable, established in 1978 under the auspices of the Society for International Development, is an independent intellectual forum in which academics, researchers and policy makers from around the world come together to discuss global development issues.

The Roundtable brings together experts from every continent in many fields, all sharing a commitment to orderly progress in human affairs, for the advancement of a constructive dialogue between North and South, developed and developing, rich and poor nations, in search of a more just and stable world order. In its various sessions, the North South Roundtable seeks to identify and analyze the mutual interest of North and South. The ideas evolved in the Roundtable process are disseminated to the general public, national decision makers, and national and international organizations through Roundtable publications and through direct briefings.

NSRT activities are funded by Governments, international organizations and foundations; its policies are determined by a Steering Committee.

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