

STATEMENT BY MR. K. YERRANNAIDU, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (AGENDA ITEM 104) AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 57TH UNGA ON NOVEMBER 15, 2002

Mr. Chairman,

We wish to express our appreciation to the High Commissioner for Refugees for his statement to the Third Committee on 7 November as also for the Report on the activities of his office. We also wish to thank the Secretary General for his reports under this agenda item.

The High Commissioner reported that in the period December 2000 to December 2001, the number of people of concern to the UNHCR fell by 2 million - from 22 million to 20 million. My delegation is also pleased to note this - every refugee who returns to his or her country is a matter of satisfaction, as that is evidence that the situation has returned, or is in the process of returning, to normal, and that is welcome news indeed.

It is also with some satisfaction that we noted that more than 2 million Afghan people have returned to Afghanistan since the repatriation operation began. As a neighbouring country of Afghanistan that has hosted substantial numbers of Afghan refugees, we wish this process all success and commend the efforts of both the Government of Afghanistan and the UNHCR in this endeavour. At the same time, we are distressed to find new situations of refugee movements in various parts of the world, particularly in areas of conflict.

We have noted the High Commissioner's new initiatives, which

reflects a dynamic approach to resolving some of the long-standing difficulties that this UN body has been faced with, and would like to briefly comment on some of these initiatives.

We recognise the valuable, collective effort that has gone into the framing of the Agenda for Protection. The Agenda provides a timely framework to renew our approaches to the contemporary challenges of refugee protection. Its non-binding nature gives it the flexibility necessary for dealing with humanitarian issues, which are not necessarily amenable to resolution through narrow legalistic approaches.

It is predominantly the developing countries that constitute countries of origin as well as of asylum. Today neither the duty to receive nor the real costs associated with arrival are fairly apportioned across the world. The success of the Agenda depends on the partnerships it can create and foster. We welcome its recognition of the burden borne by developing countries in hosting and protecting refugees, and the need for burden sharing arrangements.

The High Commissioner has in his new approaches for durable solutions proposed a new approach of "4-Rs" - Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. This is an innovative approach. We wish this process success, and await the results of the pilot programmes that have been initiated in four countries.

The proposal for Development through Local Integration, or "DLI" needs to be thought through carefully - in many developing or least developed countries, DLI is unlikely to be viable. The implications of local integration in situations of mass exodus into a developing country are even more far-reaching and need to be considered carefully. We believe that local integration cannot be a sustainable option when dealing with massive refugee flows. The ultimate objective of host countries and refugee populations cannot be considered to be local integration, but repatriation or resettlement, towards which the UNHCR should direct itself.

We welcome the new joint OCHA/UNDG Working Group on transition issues and hope that the initiative will yield concrete results. The High Commissioner's thoughts on cooperation of UNHCR with NEPAD are noteworthy, and hope they will receive wide support.

We agree that the Millennium Development Goals reflect a global consensus on development priorities. It is imperative that the international community commit itself to the realisation of these goals. The benefits of such realisation will be shared by millions of the world's poorest, including refugee populations. In the context of refugee populations, it may be

recalled that international solidarity and burden sharing are the foundations on which refugee protection rests. Similarly, the "UNHCR 2004" process which seeks to strengthen the UNHCR as a multilateral institution deserves our support, particularly if it is not perceived merely as a fund-raising exercise but seeks to further strengthen international solidarity and burden sharing. The 2004 Process acknowledges the widespread concern of the impact of funding shortfalls on the UNHCR's activities and programmes. It is necessary to have a more predictable pattern of funding.

The "Convention Plus" approach is another interesting idea which we feel merits further consideration and whose implications will need to be examined carefully. In this regard, we expect that the contribution of countries not Parties to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol will be given due recognition.

I would like to conclude by placing on record my delegation's appreciation for the excellent manner in which you, Mr. Chairman and the members of your Bureau have conducted the proceedings of this Committee.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.