



**ORGANIZATION OF  
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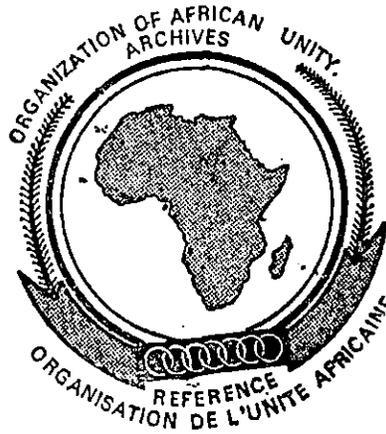
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اديس ابابا \* Addis Ababa

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
25TH ORDINARY SESSION  
KAMPALA / UGANDA

CM/659

REPORT ON REFUGEE PROBLEM



REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BPEAR  
FROM FEBRUARY TO JUNE 1975.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In presenting this report on its activities to the 25th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, the BPEAR wishes to pinpoint the problems encountered in executing its mandated tasks, to stress the adverse effects these problems have on its efficacy and to express its views as to how these difficulties can be surmounted. The Secretariat hopes that this document will act as a basis for a general discussion and expression of the views of the Member States on the problems faced in assisting African Refugees and that the task of formulating concrete suggestions will be entrusted with the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugees.

2. The report covers the activities of the BPEAR for the period mentioned in the fields of Education and Placement, the implementation of the Resolutions of the 24th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers by the Bureau and the information received, so far, on programmes drawn by the International Community to assist in the repatriation and resettlement of refugees from the former Portuguese colonies.

II. PLACEMENT AND EDUCATION

3. For the period covered by this report, the Bureau had continued to perform its normal duties of placing African refugees in Africa and of assisting them in furthering their education.

4. In the field of Placement, the applications for resettlement in Africa by African refugees did not exceed the normal number recorded by the Bureau over the years. The Bureau has received some tentative offers of employment by some Member States and by such organisations as CAFRAD in Tangiers (Morocco) and UNESCO, even though the recruitment of the refugees nominated by the Bureau has to be finalised. It should, however, be stressed that finding employment for the Bureau's nominees within Africa had continued to be as difficult as before.

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5. In the case of CAFRAD's offer of recruitment to African refugees, the finalisation is awaiting the acceptance of the offer by the Bureau's nominees. Unfortunately, the refugees concerned showed a regrettable lack of cooperation by not communicating their decision, up to the time of writing this report, either to CAFRAD or the Bureau.

6. As for UN 300, despite the decision to suspend new recruitments within the Secretariat of that organisation, it made an exception for refugee applicants, whose dossiers were submitted by the Bureau. In this connection, it should be mentioned with immense appreciation that the possible recruitment of the refugees concerned has been rendered feasible by the agreement of the Governments of the Republics of Burundi and of Chad to place the selected refugees on their national quotas with that organisation.

7. The Government of the People's Republic of Congo offered a teaching post to an Angolan refugee, who had accepted the offer, and who will assume his duties in September this year.

8. It should be mentioned that some African Governments had employed refugees, who had applied to the Ministries concerned directly. While this represents a positive contribution to the solution of the refugee problem, the Secretariat feels that more consideration should be given to the applications submitted through it. The acceding to the Bureau's requests by the Member States will have a positive effect on the credibility of the Bureau, within refugee circles, and will enhance the Bureau's authority vis-a-vis international organisations and voluntary agencies, that are engaged in refugee work.

9. Since the BPEAR has been primarily set up to deal with individual refugee cases, it may not be amiss here to mention the generous gesture of the Government of the Republic of Rwanda to reintegrate, on the Bureau's intercession, one of its refugees within its society. In the same way, the assistance given by the Bureau in repatriating four Angolans and Mozambiquans from the Republics of Ghana and of Equatorial Guinea to their countries of origin, on their express requests, should also be mentioned.

10. In the field of Education, the Bureau has received, during the period under consideration, over one hundred and fifty applications for scholarship awards and financial assistance from refugee students. As the Bureau becomes more widely known to refugee scholarship-seekers, the number of applicants increases, while offers of awards by African Governments and international organisations remain at their present level. The only new grant of bursaries has been the award by the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee of five scholarships to African refugees.

11. It should be pointed out, in this connection, that, even when African Governments generously offer bursaries to refugees, there is usually a delay between the offer and the materialisation of the awards. The submission of refugee dossiers for selection by the donor government invariably remains unacknowledged, and even though offers had been made, the bursaries continue to be unutilised.

12. The applications received by the Bureau raised a considerable number of problems related to the place of study especially for those refugees wishing to undergo training in certain technological fields, which are not given by African institutions of learning, to the transportation of married refugee students with their families to their places of study, to the payment of dependency allowances and to the issuance of passports and other travel documents.

13. It is the view of the Bureau that, while refugees should be encouraged to pursue studies that would enhance their chances of getting employment in future in Africa, abuses of this policy should be curtailed as much as possible, and refugees should be encouraged to study in Africa.

14. As for the travel expenses of the students' families to their places of study, the Bureau should meet these costs, only when both spouses have been enrolled for studies. The Bureau cannot support a non-studying partner, given the limited resources at its disposal. The Bureau should, however, cover the cost of travel of any children under school age, should both parents be enrolled at institutions of learning.

15. In this connection, it should be stated that the UNHCR, which deals with all aspects of refugee problems, and not merely with placement and education as is the case with the BPEAR, places non-studying dependents of its beneficiaries under its Supplementary Programme of Assistance.

16. Still in the field of Education, the BPEAR has participated in the 1975/76 Inter-African Universities Scholarship Programme (INTER.F) Selection and Referral Committee Meeting in Accra and sponsored the candidature of forty-two refugee students. It has also endorsed the submission of a list of fifty-six Rwandese refugees sponsored by the representatives of the National University of Bujumbura at the meeting. Out of this total, sixty-eight refugees have been granted university places, although scholarships have to be found for them. Thirty candidates have failed to be placed in any institution because of the inflexibility of African Universities in their entrance requirements, with which most refugees (due to their sketchy educational background) cannot comply and also because of the universities' lack of space, which militates against the acceptance of non-Nationals. It will be recalled that the Council of Ministers had on previous occasions called upon its Member States to facilitate the enrollment, on a percentage basis, of refugees in institutions of learning and training.

17. It should be mentioned in this connection, that the Association of African Universities, which sponsors the majority of the Bureau's nominees, is going to face a big crisis in its finances. The USAID, which is the main contributor to the Scholarship Programme of the Association, has given notice to the General Secretariat of the Association that it will stop its subventions with effect from the academic year of 1976/77. Such a move would greatly affect the Bureau's ability to assist the refugees in the educational field.

18. It would, therefore, be advisable for the African Governments to contribute more to the scholarship programme of the Association, since nationals of independent African states also benefit from it, and since the programme is geared towards the fostering of African Unity and understanding.

19. It may be of interest to the Council of Ministers that the other contributor to the funding of the scholarship Programme of the Association is the United Kingdom Ministry of Overseas Development, although negotiations are in progress with other countries in order to internationalise the financial support of the Programme. It should be remarked, however, that African governments also contribute indirectly to the Programme through subsidies and subventions to their respective universities and directly by paying part of the travel cost of each student, they nominate.

20. In the realm of Legal Protection, the Bureau encountered very difficult problems in finding alternative countries of asylum for those refugees, who, for a variety of reasons, had been detained or had been considered as undesirable by their first countries of asylum. Member States have shown great unwillingness to accept, within their borders, refugees, who might have proved troublesome in their sister countries. Very often, the countries approached for asylum to such refugees requested the Secretariat to state the reasons for the expulsion of the refugees concerned. Since the Secretariat is rarely apprised of the reason, its task of finding a solution is rendered very difficult.

21. Another major difficulty, which should be mentioned here, is the question of passports for refugees. There have been many instances of refugees, who were given UN Travel Documents by a first country of asylum, and who had to travel to another country either for employment or education, at a time when the validity of their documents had expired. In such circumstances, the country of asylum of the refugee concerned would invariably decline to renew the document or to provide a "return clause", causing the refugee to lose his chance of getting employed or furthering his education.

22. To circumvent these difficulties, the Secretariat suggests that the absence of a "return clause" in a refugee's travel document should not constitute an obstacle in accepting the refugee. Furthermore, the receiving country should study the possibility of issuing the arriving refugee with a travel document of its own.

23. Another possibility which should be considered by the Council of Ministers is that of issuing special OAU passports or laissez-passers for refugees.

24. Since refugees are forced to travel around in search of employment or education, the importance of the foregoing cannot be overemphasised. The Secretariat is particularly anxious to note the views of Member States on this topic and to receive clear directives, through the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugees, as to its future action.

### III. IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS

25. The OAU Council of Ministers in its 24th Ordinary Session adopted four resolutions on the Rules of Procedure of the Coordinating Committee of the BPEAR, the withdrawal of the Tropical Africa Refugee Service (TARS) from the Coordinating Committee of the BPEAR, Africa Refugee Day and on Voluntary Repatriation of African Refugees.

26. The contents of the resolution on the Rules of Procedure were communicated to all the Members of the Coordinating Committee, while TARS was, furthermore, requested to honour the financial commitments, it had made to the BPEAR, before its withdrawal from the Coordinating Committee, but as yet no reply was received.

27. With regard to the resolution on Africa Refugee Day CM/Res./(' (XIV) the Bureau circulated the text as well as the Programme suggested for the observance of the Day to all the OAU Member States. The Bureau, in particular, requested the Member States "to set up committees comprising Government Ministries, OAU/BPEAR National Correspondents. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International and non-governmental organisations that are engaged in refugee work in order to implement, where possible the programme drawn up by the Commission of Ten on Refugees for the observance of the Day for the first time on 20th June 1975". The Bureau has similarly contacted its National Correspondents and the Members of its Coordinating Committee, requesting their active participation in the preparations and the celebrations.

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28. It is not possible for the Secretariat to give, at the moment, a comprehensive report on the activities undertaken in various countries to commemorate the Day, since the OAU/BPEAR National Correspondents, with the exception of those for Ghana, Niger and Senegal, did not respond to the Bureau's cable sent after June 20th 1975, requesting such information. The Bureau can, therefore, only give an incomplete account of activities of the Africa Refugee Day.

29. In the Republic of Ghana, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement informing the populace of the complex refugee problem in Africa. The Republic of Ghana had fittingly used the occasion to ratify the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa, thus bringing to sixteen the number of ratifications. (It would be recalled that the Convention has been already ratified by the following countries : Algeria, Central African Republic, Congo, Dahomey, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, the Sudan, Togo, Zaire and Zambia).

30. In the Republic of Niger, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, made an important speech in which he touched on all the aspects of the refugee problem and which increased public awareness of the problem.

31. In the Republic of Senegal, a diversified programme of activities has been put on by the Government authorities, which lasted for three days, with the active participation of the students and the Senegalese Red Cross. The Press, Radio and the Television networks undertook a massive campaign to educate the people on the problems of African refugees, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed the nation on Radio and Television. Banners, with the appropriate slogans were hung in the streets. A photographic exhibition on the situation of refugees was held in the premises of the Chamber of Commerce. Films on the repatriation operations in the Sudan and Guinea Bissau were shown on Television. An interview with the OAU/BPEAR National Correspondent (who is also the President of CNAS) and the UNHCR Representative were published in all the newspapers of the country.

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A round table discussion, in the vernacular, of African refugee problems was organised with the active cooperation of the Senegalese United Nations Association. Sermons were preached in Mosques and Churches and traditional chiefs actively participated in publicising the event in at least six Provinces.

32. In the Republic of Uganda, the Bureau was informed that the President was scheduled to give an address on the Day at one of the refugee settlements in the countries.

33. In Ethiopia, the OAU General Secretariat in conjunction the Ethiopian authorities had organised opening ceremonies in Africa Hall, a reception by the OAU Administrative Secretary General at African Unity House, a dinner dance at Addis Ababa Hilton Hotel, a football match between teams of OAU staff and of African diplomate accredited to Ethiopia and a film show at the National Theatre. These functions had been organised with a view to raising funds for assistance to African refugees.

34. The Preparatory committee set up for this occasion comprised representatives from the BPEAR, YWCA, Ethiopian Ministry of Interior, Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Women's Association.

35. The Secretariat feels duty bound to express its gratitude for the zeal and dedication shown by members of the Committee as well as for the cooperation of the Ethiopian Mass Media, the newspapers, the radio and television in conjunction with the Radio Voice of the Gospel in publicising the event.

36. In his opening address to the official ceremonies marking the Africa Refugee Day, His excellency Brigadier-General Teferi Bante, Chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council of Ethiopia remarked on the many instances throughout History whence people had to flee their homelands as a result of religious and political persecution, of alien domination or in the wake of upheavals caused by wars and natural calamities. He stressed that the most serious refugee problem in Africa today was the one rising from colonial and racial oppression and the injustices of foreign domination. General Teferri concluded by reminding his audience that "the refugee problem is a problem affecting all of us; and that in as much as it is a common problem; its solution calls for a recognition of joint responsibility."

37. Mr. Kamanda wa Kamanda, the Acting OAU Administrative Secretary General, in his speech at the function linked the solution of the African refugee problem with the total decolonisation of the continent. He hoped that the accession of Mozambique and Angola to independence would greatly alleviate the seriousness and magnitude of the refugee problem.

38. In his speech to the gathering, Mr. Gunnar Kaelenius, the UNHCR Regional Liaison Representative for Africa, briefed Assembly on the activities of his organisation in favour of African refugees. He invoked African Governments' support in effectively implementing the provisions of the OAU and UN Conventions on Refugees, and requested African States to be generous in granting asylum to the uprooted refugees.

39. It should be mentioned at this juncture that the BPEAR had published a magazine entitled "Africa and its Refugees", which had been already distributed to the Member States, in order to bring to focus the myriad problems of refugees in the diverse fields of Education, Placement and Legal matters. The BPEAR has also supplied Member States with posters, carrying appropriate captions to be displayed in public places.

40. In the aforementioned magazine, attention should be drawn to two messages by the OAU Administrative Secretary General and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The OAU administrative Secretary General in his message outlined the root-causes of the refugee problem in Africa, the preoccupation of the OAU with this humanitarian problem and the efforts deployed by Member States in overcoming it. He pledged Africa's continuous involvement in the service of the cause of refugees and assured the latter of the Continent's complete devotion to the improvement of their lot and to the insuring of their voluntary return and reinstallation in their countries of origin. In his message, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees commented on the yearning of the refugee for a better and more tolerant world and commended African countries of asylum for their generosity in receiving refugees. He expressed his hope that more African countries would ratify the OAU and UN Conventions on refugees as being "the ideal legal framework in which to resolve the refugee problem".

41. To mark the occasion, the Lutheran World Federation issued a Declaration of support for Africa Refugee Day in order to promote awareness of the Day among its ninety-two Member Churches. The text of the Declaration reads as follows:

" Recognising that the plight of refugees constitutes one of

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Recalling the concerns to which it has given expression through its programmes of service to African refugees;

Expressing its conviction that the ultimate solution to the refugee problem lies in its prevention through the elimination of all forms of discrimination and, where refugee situations already exist, through the creation of conditions which facilitate voluntary repatriation,

the Commission on World Service of the Lutheran World Federation, assembled in Geneva from 22-25 April, 1975 on the occasion of its annual meeting, calls the attention of LWF member churches to the celebration of African Refugee Day on 20 June 1975, proclaimed by the Organisation of African Unity, and

Seeks their support and that of their related agencies for all endeavours designed to enable the refugees to rebuild their lives in justice and dignity and to find permanent solutions, and also

Resolves to manifest its commitment to the objectives of African Refugee Day through its endeavours for the benefit of African refugees in close cooperation with its member churches, the Governments concerned, the Organisations of African Unity and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

42. The Day has also been marked by a generous and deeply appreciated financial donation from H.E. El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo, President of the United Republic of Cameroon of 500,000 FCA. The representative of the Holy See has also made a symbolic contribution of fifty Ethiopian dollars, in order to express the Holy See's awareness of this humanitarian problem. It should be mentioned, in this connection, that the Lutheran World Federation had previously donated US\$ 2,500 as a contribution to the preparation for the Day.

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43. With regard to the implementation of Resolution on Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees, the Bureau apprised Member States, the members of the Coordinating Committee and the transitional Governments and the Liberation Movements concerned of the contents of the Resolution.

44. In its circular Note Verbale to the Member States the Secretariat had requested the Ministries of Foreign Affairs "to form committees comprising Government Ministries and agencies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Inter Governmental and non-governmental organisations that are engaged in refugee work in order to study the number of refugees that would be involved in the eventual repatriation, the needs of the refugees concerned and the cost of repatriating such refugees." It was felt by the Bureau that this information would greatly assist the OAU General Secretariat and other organisations in raising the funds needed for the operations and in effecting the repatriation of refugees from Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola in accordance with the said Resolution.

45. While this Note Verbale was copied to the National Correspondents, the Bureau addressed a circular letter to the members of its Coordinating Committee, requesting them to participate in the work of the suggested committees.

46. In its Note Verbale to the Embassy of the United States of America in Ethiopia, the Bureau referred to the 390 Southern African refugees, staying in that country after the completion of their studies. It requested for information on these refugees regarding their countries of origin, their educational qualifications, areas of specialisation and on other relevant particulars as to how many of them wish to return to their home countries.

47. The Notes cited above have remained unanswered and unacknowledged up to the time of writing this report.

48. Attention should be drawn here to paragraphs 4,5,6, of the Resolution CM/Res 399 (XXIV) on Repatriation which are quoted below for easy reference:

- "4. MANDATES the Commission of Ten to make contacts with the leaders of the Liberation Movements and the Governments concerned on the question of repatriating their compatriots;
5. REQUESTS the Administrative Secretary-General of the OAU to study the possibility of assisting financially in the repatriation of the refugees as well as in their resettlement;
6. INVITES to this end the Liberation Movements and Governments concerned to define their priorities and needs to repatriation and to communicate such information to the OAU

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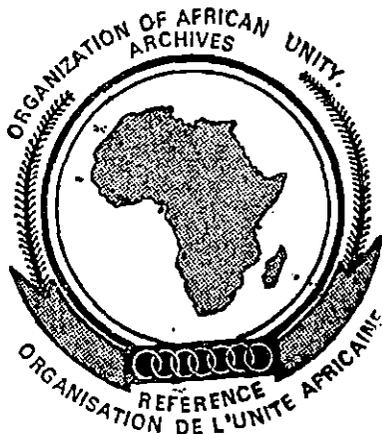
Administrative Secretary-General as soon as possible."

49. In compliance with this resolution, the Secretariat planned a mission to meet with the Government of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, the Transitional Governments of Mozambique and Angola and the Liberation Movement Leaders of the territories concerned in order to study the form that OAU assistance to those countries would take. The mission was to have been led by the Chairman of the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugee Matters and would have included representatives of the said Commission and of those of the General Secretariat. It was, however, found unpropitious to undertake such a mission to the countries of Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola.

50. In the case of Angola, the situation prevailing there in the last few months is too well known to be set down here. The OAU/UN joint mission to Angola immediately after the 9th Extraordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) had advised that the sending of any mission to the territory to discuss questions of repatriation should be deferred to a later date.

51. With regard to Mozambique, it was felt necessary to postpone the mission since the FRELIMO leaders were preoccupied with their forthcoming independence and with the setting up of the appropriate structures after the independence. This view was further bolstered by the feeling of the resident members in Ethiopia of the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugee Matters, who stated that the question of repatriating refugees to their respective homelands was not all that urgent and that the new Governments, where they exist, should be given time to settle down.

52. While it was possible to visit the Republic of Guinea Bissau and ascertain its repatriation needs, the Secretariat felt that it would reduce expenses if the three countries concerned were visited during the same mission.



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IV. INFORMATION ON UN AGENCIES' ASSISTANCE IN REPATRIATION

53. The Secretariat, therefore, felt it duty bound to bring to the attention of the Council of Ministers information received from the UNHCR on the steps that organisation had taken to facilitate, at the appropriate time, the repatriation of refugees from Guinea Bissau and Mozambique.

54. The UNHCR in accordance with the recommendation made by its executive committee at its twenty-fifth session and at the request of the Government of Guinea-Bissau had "accepted full responsibility for the voluntary repatriation, immediate relief and resettlement in Guinea-Bissau of refugees and displaced persons. "However the mid-and long-rang plans will be the responsibility of UNDP. After a UN inter-agency mission to Guinea-Bissau, the UNHCR drew up a detailed programme for immediate assistance to returnees and displaced persons that would cost the sum of US \$4,025,000. It appealed to 52 countries, including 12 African States to help raise the amount required. The UNHCR and the UNDP hope to help 150,000 refugees to return to Guinea Bissau on top of their contributions to the tasks of reconstruction and development in the country.

55. A similarly detailed programme estimated at US\$ 7,150,000 has been drawn up for Mozambique and an appeal for funds has already been sent by the UNHCR to the member countries of the United Nations. The UNHCR hopes to resettle more than 50,000 returning Mozambiquans.

56. Since the re-integration of returning refugees will impose a heavy burden on the economy of the countries concerned, the UN system with its specialised agencies plans to take a concerted action in the various spheres of development in the affected countries. The projected programmes will be mainly in the areas of transporting returnees to their new settlement areas, food and other immediate relief, land settlement, health facilities and other urgently required infrastructures such as access roads and buildings.

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# Report on Refugee Problem

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