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REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE  
PROBLEM OF REFUGEES IN AFRICA



The Council of Ministers will no doubt recall the many resolutions that the Organization of African Unity has over the years passed in favour of African refugees, not to mention the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the African Refugees. All these several initiatives on the part of the OAU political organs are a true reflexion of the realisation on the part of OAU Member States of the gravity of the refugee problem on the continent and their desire to find a just and durable solution to this human problem.

2. Of recent interest are Resolutions CM/Res. 536 (XXVIII) passed by the ~~Twenty-Eighth~~ Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers in Lome in February 1977, and Resolution CM/Res.547 (XXIX) passed by the Libreville Twenty-Ninth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers.

3. As will be recalled Resolution CM/536(XXVIII) was adopted against the background of reports of hardship facing young persons fleeing from South Africa as a result of their opposition to the apartheid regime and their participation in the nationalist struggle for the liberation of their country from racist South Africa. In realisation of the magnitude of the problem the OAU by this resolution decided to set up a special programme for the provision of educational, vocational and other training facilities in Africa and other countries in order to prepare these young people to serve their country better after the attainment of independence. To this end the Council set up a Special Committee of Nine experts from Angola, Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria and Swaziland to assess the requirements of these young people in terms of assistance both immediate and long term. By the same resolution the OAU Secretary-General was called upon to organise a meeting of the Committee of Experts.

4. At its ~~Twenty-Ninth Ordinary Session in Libreville~~ June 23 - July 3, 1977, the Council of Ministers passed resolution CM/Res.547(XXIX) which took into account the various observations and recommendations made by the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugee Problems particularly as regards the assessment of the needs of refugees from Southern Africa and refugees in general. The Council noted that the placement of these young refugees in Africa Educational Institutions is a most urgent problem to which an early solution has to be found. The gravity of the refugee problem in Southern Africa was likely to grow with the intensification of the national liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

5. In cognisance of these problems the OAU, while expressing appreciation particularly to the countries of the region for extending valuable assistance to these refugees, appealed to other OAU Member States to respond to this challenge through generous contributions. In fact the OAU decided to set up a Special Fund, for Southern African refugees to be funded from extra-budgetary contributions. It further called on the international community to continue giving the much needed assistance to African refugees. Under operative paragraph 9 the Council called upon the OAU Secretary-General "to convene urgently a meeting of the Committee of Experts set up under Resolution CM/Res. 536(XXVIII) to follow up developments of the situation in this region and assist in finding a solution to this problem in consultation with Member States, Liberation Movements and the UNHCR, and report to the Council of Ministers at its Thirtieth Ordinary Session."

6. Traditionally the report on the refugee problem in Africa is presented to the Council of Ministers by the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugee Problems which is the policy making body on refugee matters in Africa. In fact the report of the Commission of Ten is a sequel to the report made to them by the Coordinating Committee whose duties in the field of refugee Education and Placement include advising the BPEAR on general policy, coordinating the efforts of member organizations in order to enable the BPEAR to discharge its duties efficiently, approving the BPEAR Programmes, examining the BPEAR activity reports, approving the BPEAR operational budget and examining the financial report of the BPEAR's operational budget.

7. In the year of reporting no meeting of the Coordinating Committee was held and neither was there a meeting of the Commission of Ten. Procedurally the meeting of the Coordinating Committee is based on the financial reports on the work programmes of the BPEAR and projects for the following financial year. As the Council will be aware following the disclosure of financial mismanagement and embezzlement of BPEAR funds the OAU Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Financial Matters at its December 1977/January 1978 Session in Addis Ababa inter alia, directed the OAU Administrative Secretary-General to submit to the Thirtieth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers a progress report on the investigations by the Ethiopian authorities and to reorganise the Bureau and its management. As part of the police investigations the BPEAR accounts were suspended pending the outcome of the investigations. It was likewise recommended that the BPEAR staff be re-deployed to other sections of the General Secretariat and to be temporarily replaced by other staff. The Administrative Secretary-General made an interim report to the Thirtieth Session of the Council of Ministers as the case was still sub judice.

8. It must be emphasized that the freezing of the BPEAR accounts pending police investigations has imposed a lot of hardships on refugees beneficiaries of BPEAR assistance especially those in educational institutions who were under BPEAR scholarships. Similarly the BPEAR has not been able to pay its national correspondents. At the time of writing the question of opening a temporary BPEAR account to relieve the plight of African refugees was being considered by the General Secretariat.

9. The re-deployment of BPEAR staff to other sections in the General Secretariat was not followed by immediate replacements thus creating an additional bottleneck to the operations of the BPEAR. In fact up to the time of writing the BPEAR was under the direct control of the Director of the Political Department. Of the former BPEAR staff only the Rural Resettlement Officer who took up his appointment on 9 December, 1977, and the Mass Media Expert on contract remained in addition to the Registry Clerk and one Secretary. It is appropriate to underscore that the deplorable events leading to the freezing of the BPEAR accounts are most unfortunate because the consequence has been to impose further constraints on the ability of the BPEAR to obtain scholarships, place refugees in jobs, resettle them or assist them in voluntary repatriation. This point is best appreciated as one realises that the major sources of financial assistance in favour of African refugees are extra-African. With the image of the BPEAR tarnished it would be naive to expect the donors to show the same enthusiasm in contributing to BPEAR funds; and without the necessary funds the BPEAR cannot operate meaningfully.

10. Despite the sad events cited above the BPEAR has spared no efforts in meeting its responsibilities in the fields of education, placement, rural resettlement and legal protection of refugees.

11. The number of refugees has somewhat increased since the creation of the BPEAR, and now exceeds 2 million in Africa. The concomitant result of this development has been a proportional increase on demands for bursaries and other forms of financial assistance. Presently, on average, the BPEAR receives about 600 applications a year for scholarships and financial assistance. Only a very insignificant number of these can ever hope to receive BPEAR assistance. It is fitting to mention here that within the context of Resolution CM/Res.536(XXVIII) and CM/Res.547(XXIX) Nigeria accepted some 256 students from South Africa for academic year 1977/78. Other countries took a number of students but the burden remained on the countries in the regions of refugee influx like Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zambia.

12. In the field of placement the BPEAR record remains poor and the forecast is gloomy. Between the period June 1974 - June 1978 less than 50 refugees were placed in jobs in independent Africa. It is very sad that while Africa deplores her skilled manpower shortage African countries appear most reluctant to employ qualified African refugees. They would rather take non-African experts. This is a shame to Africa. Moreover it is a frustrating experience to qualified African refugees who would not only like to be independent and self-supporting but are prepared to contribute to Africa's economic and social development but are denied a role in this endeavour by obscurantist attitudes on the part of some African Governments. If qualifications cannot guarantee refugees employment, then, the education they are seeking is meaningless.

13. Hitherto the question of rural resettlement has not received the attention it deserves. However, with the appointment of an experienced rural resettlement officer in the BPEAR, the situation should change for the better. The resettlement section of the BPEAR is working on possible resettlement projects. But again the successful implementation of any such projects will depend on the availability not only of expertise but of finances.

14. In the field of legal protection, in the absence of qualified personnel, the BPEAR has had to rely heavily on the services of the UNHCR and this situation will remain so for quite some time.

15. The OAU/BPEAR is aware and conscious that in this humanitarian task to relieve the plight of refugees it is not alone. As a matter of fact it is a new-comer vis-à-vis, for instance, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Therefore the OAU/BPEAR has maintained close collaboration with humanitarian organisations - UNHCR, ECA, International University Exchange Fund, World Lutheran Federation, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the All Africa Conference of Churches - all in one way or another engaged in refugee work either in the provision of scholarship or finances, or resettlement projects.

16. In the above context it is appropriate to mention that as part of its reorganization programme to serve the refugees better the OAU contacted the UNHCR who have assigned their Addis Ababa based Social Consultant for Africa to assist the BPEAR on a restricted secondment basis. Preliminary discussions have been held between the BPEAR and the UNHCR Social consultant for Africa to spell out possible areas of cooperation between the OAU/BPEAR and the UNHCR. The OAU/BPEAR is optimistic that this arrangement will be invaluable in enervating the BPEAR and giving it a new image.

17. Over and above the activities mentioned earlier the OAU/BPEAR organized a Seminar for OAU/BPEAR National Correspondents in Addis Ababa on 13 - 17 September, 1977. The attendance, as was indicated in the Secretary-General's report CM/840(XXX) was poor with only one National Correspondent present. Apart from the OAU/BPEAR staff and the UNHCR representatives from the Embassies of Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire in Addis Ababa attended as well as a delegate from PAC, a senior official from the OAU Liberation Committee and representatives from the Lutheran World Service, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International University Exchange Fund and the Adenaur Foundation who sponsored the Conference. The Seminars' recommendations are appended to this report.

18. Moreover the OAU/BPEAR has actively participated in the work of the Planning Committee's meetings in preparation for the 1979 African Refugee Conference in Arusha, Tanzania, to examine the question of African refugees with a view to making recommendations for more vigorous and effective programmes in favour of African refugees. The draft agenda of the 1979 African Refugee Conference is appended to this report for information.

19. As in the past the OAU/BPEAR organised activities in Addis Ababa on the occasion of AFRICA REFUGEE DAY on 20 June 1978. The OAU/BPEAR also sent reminders to OAU Member States; inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations for the celebration of Africa Refugee Day.

20. That the OAU is a dynamic organization is beyond challenge! So also the fact that the international community and above all the African refugees expect and demand more positive action from the OAU as personified in the OAU/BPEAR.



But the OAU/BPEAR's record in favour of African refugees leaves a lot to be desired. The burden has been too heavy for those Member States condemned by geography and history to be in the regions of the influxes of refugees. Besides the OAU has relied too much for too long on extra-African assistance for African refugee work and programmes as pointed out elsewhere in this report.

21. Admittedly the OAU/BPEAR can and should do more in alleviating the plight of African refugees but for the bottlenecks which unless tackled boldly and objectively will continue to undermine the work of the OAU/BPEAR. With the coming into force on 20 June 1974 of the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa there remain three major bottlenecks, namely, a deplorable lack of funds, lack of cooperation from many OAU Member States and non-implementation of OAU resolutions in favour of refugees.

22. Despite calls for financial contributions to the OAU/BPEAR and in particular the call for a special fund as stipulated in operative paragraph 7 of Resolution CM/Res.547 (XXIX) the response from Member States has remained poor and disappointing and the prospects are not bright. It is quite unrealistic for OAU Member States to think that the OAU/BPEAR can rely indefinitely on external financial assistance and at the same time expect it to maintain its independence and responsibility. In spite of whatever fine programmes might be mapped out in favour of African refugees until and unless OAU Member States give the OAU/BPEAR the financial backing it needs for the execution of its humanitarian work it will not achieve this noble goal. OAU Member States must earnestly address themselves to this question.

23. The OAU/BPEAR has faced tremendous difficulties in obtaining scholarships for refugees, placing refugees in jobs or resettling them or assisting them in voluntary repatriation as a result of what can only be described as lack of cooperation from OAU Member States. The OAU/BPEAR cannot succeed in its mandate to educate and place African refugees without the cooperation of Member States.

24. The third bottleneck is the glaring failure of many OAU Member States to implement their own resolutions. Witness the failure of 9 Nations Committee of Experts formed under resolution CM/Res.563(XXVIII) to meet despite the urgency of the problems and the initiatives taken by the General Secretariat to convene the Experts' meeting, or the pathetic response to the September 1977 meeting of OAU/BPEAR National Correspondents. In fact it has been rightly observed that if the OAU Member States were to implement the many constructive and objective resolutions in favour of African refugees the BPEAR's task of educating and placing refugees would have indeed been greatly facilitated. But, alas, the actual situation is one of apparent indifference on the part of many Member States. Independent Africa cannot afford this kind of haphazard approach to such an urgent problem that needs an immediate solution on a continental basis.

25. The OAU Secretariat would once more like to appeal to all the Member States to do their best in the implementation of resolutions and decisions in favour of African refugees. The point cannot be over-stressed that the responsibility for African refugees is first and foremost an African one and unless Africa herself takes a practical approach the problem is bound to bedevil the continent longer than - is inevitable.

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Annex I

THIRD SEMINAR OF THE  
OAU BUREAU FOR PLACEMENT AND  
EDUCATION OF AFRICAN REFUGEES  
13 - 17 September 1977  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION ON THE APPOINTMENT AND THE DUTIES  
OF BPEAR NATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS

The Seminar of the BPEAR National Correspondents during its third session held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia from 13 to 17 September 1977 examined the thorny question of the role of the National Correspondent, with respect to his appointment it also considered his functions under Articles IX and X of resolution CM/Rpt/Cttce A.(XXIII) Annex,II adopted by the 23rd Session of the OAU Council of Ministers on the status of the BPEAR.

Conscious of the important role that the national correspondent should play to ensure the success of the work of the BPEAR with respect to the placement and the education of African refugees;

Convinced moreover, that for the National Correspondents to be efficient it is necessary that by his position, function and his interest in humanitarian problems, be influential in his Government.

The Seminar discussed the role and work of the National Correspondents. It was regrettably noted that the performance of a number of National Correspondents leaves a lot to be desired. In particular the conference deplored the fact that most of the National Correspondents have failed to submit regular reports to the BPEAR concerning their activities. Their attendance to meetings has not improved either even when advance notice is sent to them including return air tickets from their respective capitals to meeting places.

In that regard it is pertinent to recall Res.489 (XXVII) adopted by the 27th Session of the Council of Ministers in Mauritius in June 1976, which inter-alia requested "Member States to check and supervise the work of the National Correspondents to ensure the regular submission of quarterly reports to the BPEAR on their activities for the benefit of African Refugees."

Still convinced that the work of the National Correspondents is essential and must continue, once again requests Member States concerned to review the work of the National Correspondents in their respective countries with a view to ensuring that their performance is in keeping with the laid down rules and procedure. The Member States concerned are also requested to consider taking appropriate measures against National Correspondents whose work is found unsatisfactory. This may include their being replaced by new and capable National Correspondents thus facilitating the work of BPEAR and the welfare of the African Refugees in general.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING OF AFRICAN REFUGEES

The Seminar of the OAU Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees for its National Correspondents, held its Third Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from the 13 to 16th September, 1977.

It dwelt at length on the problems posed by the education and training of African refugees, problems which have taken on new dimensions since last year with the influx of young refugees coming from Southern Africa.

Considering the fact that in spite of recommendations and important resolutions adopted by various OAU meetings, the education of refugees, and the offer of scholarships to refugees are still serious problems.

Particularly preoccupied by the difficulties encountered by the young African refugees as regards their admission in institutions in their countries of asylum and more especially as regards the production of the required documents,

Recalling the fact that a recommendation on this point was adopted at its Second Session, recommendation which called upon universities and training centres to be FLEXIBLE in their admission requirements and to be less demanding in diplomas and certificates for the admission of African refugees,

Conscious of finding a suitable solution to this all important question, on one hand respecting the laws and regulations of Member States and on the other safeguarding the right of education of young African refugees,

By virtue of its powers, such as defined by articles 3 at its internal arrangement and in conformity with article 15 of the same arrangement such as it established the procedure applying its recommendations.

1. MAKES AN URGENT APPEAL to all OAU Member States, to International Organisations both governmental and benevolent, to coordinate their efforts in order to increase their assistance to young African refugee students, by offering them more vacancies in institutions and increasing the number of scholarship awards;

2. RECOMMENDS to the coordinating committee of the BPEAR to try its best for the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugees to make the next Council of Ministers adopt the following measures:

- The admission of refugee in an institution or a training centre will be done in accordance with existing regulations of the host country.
- Member States are especially asked to charge refugees the same fees as their nationals.
- It is this way that the refugees who cannot produce certificates will have the chance of being tested by an ad hoc commission made up of the competent authorities of the asylum country.

3. RENDERS HOMAGE to member states and to governmental and benevolent organizations which have shown a lot of generosity in the education of African refugees.

4. CALLS UPON states which have not as yet welcomed refugees to offer them the opportunity to acquire professional and technical skills.

AFRICAN REFUGEE CONFERENCE, 1979

I. Theme of Conference

Conference on the Situation of Refugees in independent Africa  
(This is a modification on the original formulation which read thus: "Granting of Asylum is a Peaceful and Humanitarian Act - A Conference on the Rights and Problems of Refugees in Independent Africa.")

II. Provisional Agenda

1. Protection and Legal aspects of the refugee problem

- Sovereignty of States and the granting of asylum (existing international conventions and other legal instruments relating to refugees)
- Problems of eligibility (Identification of refugees)
- National legislations (comparative study)
- Application of national legislations
- Model legislations
- Naturalization
- Refugees in prison
- Territorial asylum
- Travel documents

2. Social and economic aspects of the problem

- Counselling
- Employment
- Education
- Resettlement
- Rural settlement

...../.



- 4. Urban refugees
  - Intellectual refugees
  - Child refugees
  - Reunion of refugee families
  - Phasing out of assistance
- 3. Institutional, administrative and financial aspects of the problem
  - Co-ordination and exchange for information
  - Quota system and the country of second asylum
  - International solidarity: African refugees outside Africa
  - NON-~~A~~AFRICAN SEEKING ASYLUM IN AFRICA (for pannel discussion during the Conference)
- 4. Proposed plan of action (recommendations of the Conference)
- 5. Any other business.

III. Participants

African Governments  
Inter-Governmental Organizations  
Non-Governmental Organizations

IV. Venue and Date of Conference

Arusha, Tanzania (tentative) - 1979

RESOLUTION ON THE SETTING UP OF AN OAU SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMME FOR ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS

The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in its Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Session in Lome, Togo, from 21-28 February 1977;

Having considered the reports on the hardships that the young people are facing after leaving South Africa as a result of their opposition to the apartheid regime and their participation in the Nationalist struggle in South Africa;

Considering that these young people are great assets for the pursuit of the armed struggle in South Africa as well as for the development of their country after the attainment of majority rule;

1. DECIDES to set up a special programme for the provision of educational, vocational and other training facilities in Africa and other countries in order to prepare these young people to serve their country usefully after the attainment of majority rule;
2. DECIDES further to set up a Special Committee of Experts from the following countries: Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Egypt and Nigeria to assess the requirements of these young people in terms of assistance and submit a report and concrete proposals to the next 29th Session of the Council of Ministers.
3. CALLS UPON the Secretary-General of the OAU to organise a meeting of the Committee during the Afro-Arab Summit in Cairo.

RESOLUTION ON SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO SOUTHERN  
AFRICAN REFUGEES

The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity meeting in its Twenty-Ninth Ordinary Session in Libreville, Gabon, from 23rd June - 3rd July, 1977.

Bearing in mind, on the one hand, Article 4 of the OAU Convention on the allotment of responsibilities among Member States and, on the other, Resolution CM/Res.536 (XXVIII) (Lome) of the Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Session by which the Council established a special Committee of experts to assess the requirements of students and the young refugees from Southern Africa in terms of assistance;

Considering the urgency, the seriousness and the magnitude of this problem;

Having examined the report of the OAU Commission of Ten on Refugee Problems as well as the assessment of the needs and the conclusions contained in the report prepared by the Director of the BPEAR prepared by a mission to Botswana;

Having taken further cognisance of the conclusions of the UN Mission to that region and the recent appeal made by the UNHCR to the International Committee in general and OAU Member States in particular for appropriate emergency aid to refugees;

Considering that the placement of these young refugees in African Educational Institutions is one of the most urgent and friendly aspects of the problem both for the safety and the training of the refugees;

Having noted with satisfaction the initiative already taken by some Member States to provide assistance;

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Assessing the gravity of the refugee problem in Southern Africa, which is a direct consequence of the apartheid regime, and considering that the number of these refugees and their suffering will increase with the intensification of the national liberation struggle;

Having heard the statement of the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the question;

1. REITERATES its gratitude to the host countries of the region and urges them to generously grant to refugees the hospitality and assistance they need irrespective of their political affiliations;
2. EXPRESSES its gratitude to other Member States which are taking action to provide assistance for these refugees and encourage them to continue their efforts and increase their valuable assistance;
3. CONGRATULATES the Commission of Ten and the BPEAR on the interest they are showing in this matter and on their successful initiatives in this regard;
4. FURTHER NOTES with satisfaction the concrete proposals made by the U.N. Mission of Experts on refugee students in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland;
5. STRONGLY SUPPORTS the appeal made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for increased assistance to refugees and recommends that Member States generously consider the requests for assistance made to them, and especially recommends that they make more vacancies; bursaries and scholarships available to these refugees in their educational institutions;

- 3 -

6. INVITES Member States to inform the BPEAR at the latest by 31 August 1977 the number of these young refugee students whom they can receive in their countries or grant scholarships;
7. DECIDES to set up a special fund for aid, similar to the Liberation Committee Fund, for Southern African refugees to be funded from extra-budgetary contributions and administered by BPEAR;
8. APPEALS once again to the international community and particularly to the international organizations of humanitarian interest to continue to give an assistance;
9. CALLS ON the Secretary General to convene urgently a meeting of Committee of Experts set up under Resolution CM/536 (XXVIII), follow up developments of the situation in this region and assist in finding a solution to this problem in consultation with Member States, Liberation Movements and the UNHCR, and report to the Council of Ministers at its Thirtieth Ordinary Session;
10. EXPRESSES satisfaction with the harmonious co-operation between the United Nations High Commission the Coordinating Committee and BPEAR and urges them to continue their efforts in order to find suitable solutions to the problem of Refugees.



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