

# **UNHCR Review of Achievements of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, and Consideration of Future Action**

## **PART I: ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN UNDER PARAGRAPH 35 OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN (WSC) PLAN OF ACTION**

### **I. Extent to which UNHCR has contributed to achievement of goals and strategies enunciated in the Declaration and Plan of Action**

#### **(a) Introduction**

UNHCR's actions over the last decade have contributed to achieving the goals and strategies set out in the WSC Declaration and Plan of Action. This section begins with a general introduction to UNHCR's policies and activities followed by a listing of the key internal milestones and developments during the past 10 years. There then follows a report on UNHCR's activities under each "specific action" enumerated in the Plan of Action. Given the Office's extensive operational involvement in many parts of the world, it is not feasible to recount here every action taken in the past decade concerning refugee children and other children of concern to UNHCR. The aim is rather to present key approaches and then illustrate these with typical activities which have been carried out over the years.

At the beginning of the year 2000, some 10 million out of the 22.3 million refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR (hereafter referred to as refugees) were children under the age of 18 years. Refugee children are a policy priority for UNHCR. The following key issues are specifically highlighted in the Office's strategy for action: **separation; sexual exploitation; military recruitment and education**. The special rights and needs of **adolescents** are also a priority focus for UNHCR programmes. Other issues are addressed as and when they appear of particular relevance to operations/countries, e.g. citizenship, detention of minors, etc.

UNHCR is seeking to integrate children's issues into its overall protection and assistance activities, and is placing an increased emphasis on an inter-agency approach to address issues of common concern as well as on training and capacity building activities. Issues concerning refugee children are addressed through Headquarters staff in Geneva as well as through five regionally-based Refugee Children's Officers and Advisers covering East Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, West Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Central and South-West Asia, North Africa, the Middle East and Europe. A cross-section of field staff all over the world comprising of, among others, Community Service and Protection Officers are responsible for translating UNHCR's policy on refugee children into concrete action on the ground. The Office works with a wide range of partners, notably other UN agencies and NGOs such as members of the Save the Children Alliance. Important collaborators within the UN family include UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, WFP and UNESCO.

**(b) Key milestones between 1990 - 2000**

- 1989: UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 59 on Refugee Children;
- 1992: UNHCR Executive Committee General Conclusion on International Protection No. 65 welcomes the creation of a post of Coordinator on Refugee Children;
- 1992: UNHCR Executive Committee General Conclusion on International Protection No. 68 welcomes the appointment of a Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children;
- 1993: Policy on Refugee Children adopted by UNHCR's Executive Committee;
- 1994: UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children are issued which provide the overall protection and assistance framework for responding to the needs of refugee children;
- 1994: UNHCR participates as an observer in the Hague process and is involved in drafting the "Recommendation concerning the Application to Refugee Children and other Internally Displaced Children of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption", adopted on 21 October 1994;
- 1996: World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children is held in Stockholm in which UNHCR chairs a workshop on refugee and internally displaced children;
- 1996: The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (the Machel study) is completed and has a formative influence on the future development of UNHCR's policy direction and strategy concerning refugee children;
- 1997 (April): UNHCR submits, to the Standing Committee of its Executive Committee, a progress report on refugee children and adolescents which includes the Office's strategy for follow-up to the Machel study;
- 1997 (July): UNHCR field offices are asked to draw up plans of action based on the Office's follow-up strategy to the Machel study which emphasise the following five areas: adolescents, sexual exploitation, education; prevention/monitoring of military recruitment of children, and unaccompanied children;
- 1997 (September): UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 84 on Refugee Children and Adolescents;
- 1997 Evaluation of UNHCR's efforts on behalf of children and adolescents is undertaken by UNHCR's Inspection and Evaluation Service in partnership with the Save the Children Alliance;

- 1997: UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum are issued;
- 1998 (August): UNHCR submits a report on refugee children and adolescents including its follow-up to the 1997 evaluation and implementation of the Machel study, to the Standing Committee of the UNHCR Executive Committee;
- 1998: Five Regional Policy Officer for Refugee Children posts are established. Four of these (currently in the process of being renamed as Senior Regional Advisers for Refugee Children) covering East Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, West Africa, Central and South-West Asia, North Africa, the Middle East and the CIS, are absorbed into UNHCR's 2000 Annual Programme Budget. The fifth position of Senior Regional Policy Officer under the joint UNHCR/Save the Children Alliance programme for Separated Children in Europe is, moreover, filled in September 1999;
- 1999: UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 88 on the Protection of the Refugee's Family;
- 1990s: Throughout the 1990s, a number of other UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusions refer to the protection and assistance concerns of refugee children, e.g. Conclusions No's 71, 74, 85 and 87;
- 2000 (February): UNHCR submits a progress report on refugee children and adolescents to the Standing Committee of its Executive Committee.

**(c) UNHCR contribution to the specific action areas under the 1990 WSC Declaration and Plan of Action**

➤ **Specific Action: Children in especially difficult circumstances/ protection of children during armed conflict**

These two action areas are discussed together here as all refugee children fall under the category "children in especially difficult circumstances" and many refugee children also find themselves in situations of armed conflict. Furthermore, all UNHCR activities can be covered under this heading but for the purposes of this report, the focus here is on the following issues: i) **protection** (sexual violence, exploitation and abuse; military recruitment; and general protection activities) and ii) **durable solutions**. Other important protection and assistance issues, including separation and education, as well as key initiatives, such as the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) project are detailed below under the relevant WSC Plan of Action heading. It is also worth noting the impact of the 1996 Machel study. There has been increasingly concerted follow-up in recent years by UNHCR field offices in line with the Office's comprehensive follow-up strategy to this study. A number of UNHCR refugee children's programmes, implemented alongside other relevant UN agencies, NGOs and other operational partners, are programmes dealing with children affected by armed conflict. A bi-annual reporting system on Machel study follow-up activities has been established to feed back on these activities.

## **i) Protection**

- Sexual violence, exploitation and abuse

Sexual violence, exploitation and abuse are important protection concerns in situations of forced population movement. Women of all ages may be victims of sexual violence but adolescent girls are particularly at risk. Boys may also be victims.

The issue of sexual violence in refugee settings has gained much attention in the last decade. The issue was put before the UNHCR Executive Committee in 1993 following which the "Guidelines on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence against Refugees" were issued in 1995. These guidelines stemmed from work carried out in asylum camps in South East Asia and later through UNHCR's experiences in the former Yugoslavia, Kenya and Rwanda. Concerns about refugee children and sexual violence have been reiterated in numerous policy documents over the past decade, namely the 1993 UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children, its 1994 Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children, and 1997 Executive Committee Conclusion No. 84. Sexual exploitation was identified as one of the five areas for follow-up to the Machel study and the 1997 evaluation again re-emphasised the need to address this issue.

The 1996 Stockholm World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was a landmark of the 1990s. UNHCR actively participated in this process and co-organised a workshop with *Terre des Hommes* on behalf of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child entitled "Sexual Exploitation of Children during Times of Armed Conflict." A preliminary study of 12 countries carried out by *Terre des Hommes* was presented to the workshop which suggested that the presence of the military is a key factor in the development of child prostitution in situations of armed conflict. This finding supported UNHCR's experience in different parts of the world. As such, many of the recommendations flowing from the workshop concerned training and disciplinary procedures for military personnel. The need for more national and international programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of adolescents was also highlighted. UNHCR has continued to support advocacy initiatives on this issue and fully supported the adoption in May 2000, by the Special Session of the General Assembly, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

UNHCR has, through the past decade, sought to address the issue of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, through concrete programmes on the ground. In collaboration with operational partners, it has attempted to address these problems through preventive measures such as education, sensitisation, awareness raising and camp layout, as well as curative measures such as health facilities for victims of violence, counselling, information and follow-up on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. In India, for example, discussions and campaigns have been carried out on subjects such as sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, domestic violence, gender equality and the girl child. Another recent example includes the use of a US\$ 1.6 million grant from the UN Foundation (which allocates Ted Turner funds) for

programmes addressing sexual and gender-based violence against adolescent girls in Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

- Military recruitment

Refugee children are among those at highest risk of illegal recruitment. Most are adolescents but there are many child soldiers who are 10 years of age or less. UNHCR thus has a strong interest in ensuring the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

The Office was actively involved in advocacy work during the drafting process leading to the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, by the Special Session of the General Assembly, in May 2000. UNHCR continues to carry out advocacy at field level against the use of child soldiers in all circumstances. For example, in Sri Lanka UNHCR has advocated for "child zones of peace" and aimed to provide alternatives to child recruitment. In Afghanistan, the Office continues to raise the issue of recruitment of returnee children and adolescent with the authorities.

UNHCR, in coordination with UNICEF and other partners, implements various activities to rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities through, among others, non-formal education, skills training and income generating activities. UNHCR programmes in several countries have, moreover, shown that family reunification is a principal means of rehabilitating child soldiers. Examples concerning programmes specifically targeted at child soldiers include efforts to reintegrate former child soldiers into the refugee community in Guinea and community awareness raising initiatives in Pakistan concerning the rights and needs of such children.

- General protection activities

UNHCR's specific activities for children are not carried out in isolation, but form an integral part of the Office's general protection activities that encompass and benefit refugee children as well as other categories of refugees. These general activities include enhancing the capacity of States to receive and protect refugees, making representations to governments and other relevant actors on protection concerns, promoting national legislation and asylum procedures, involvement in national refugee status determination procedures, undertaking determination of refugee status, and providing advice and developing jurisprudence.

One particular aspect that has an important bearing on children, is maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and ensuring the physical safety of refugees. The Office has developed the concept of the "ladder of options", which provides a variety of approaches to deal with varying degrees of insecurity in conjunction with the host State (whose primary responsibility it is to ensure the physical safety of refugees) and the international community. UNHCR continues to take a number of operational protection measures in this context, including: mobilising international resources to strengthen the national and local law-enforcement capacity; promoting the increased participation of refugees in assisting the host State to carry out its responsibility to ensure security in camps and

settlements; and making efforts to relocate refugees away from the border to enhance their security. Early action by the host State and others to separate combatants from refugees during a large-scale influx, helps to maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of camps, and enhances the physical security of the refugees through the reduction of cross-border attacks, banditry and sexual violence.

A recently adopted policy decision in relation to refugee security includes efforts to establish stand-by arrangements with, initially, a limited number of governments, for the provision of law and order and public security experts who will be known as Humanitarian Security Officers (HSOs). The stand-by arrangements will include the deployment of humanitarian security specialists to address security concerns in refugee camps. These efforts are geared at ensuring that the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee populated areas is respected and will also improve the physical security environment in which refugees live. The arrangements have been built upon the experience gained in operating security packages in Tanzania, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the Great Lakes region. Despite these efforts, ensuring the physical safety of refugees remains a major protection challenge.

## **ii) Durable solutions**

UNHCR seeks durable solutions in the form of repatriation, local integration and resettlement for refugee children under its care. In the context of return and consistent with UNHCR's particular focus on returnee children's needs, the Office has been funding a project for street children in Afghanistan. The project comprises pre-school and hygiene education and includes skills training. In an attempt to strengthen the availability of formal or informal education in Afghanistan, UNHCR's programme has also included the provision of textbooks and other school material for children, rehabilitation of schools and training of teachers.

In some countries, UNHCR, in cooperation with UNICEF and other agencies, is also actively involved in rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes for returnee children. A prominent example in this regard is the ongoing Liberian Children's Initiative, which, starting in 1998, has addressed the special needs of returnee children, *inter alia* by facilitating their access to education and training, and by supporting the functioning of the juvenile justice system.

If voluntary repatriation is not possible, local integration or resettlement are further possible durable solutions. UNHCR pays particular attention to the resettlement of individuals with special protection needs, including those of minors. The UNHCR Resettlement Handbook defines important criteria and procedures to be followed when resettling minors.

### **➤ Specific Action: The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) constitutes an important normative framework for UNHCR's actions relating to the international protection of and assistance to refugee children. The Office has sought to implement the Convention through the types of grassroots field projects mentioned above with a view to turning the rights of the child into a reality on the ground. UNHCR activities

are aimed at implementing many of the rights contained in the Convention, from the very specific provisions concerning refugee children (article 22) to more general rights concerning education and health, which pertain to all children.

Initiatives have also been carried out to raise awareness and understanding of child rights. In collaboration with the Save the Children Alliance and, since 1999, OHCHR and UNICEF, UNHCR has developed and is implementing the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) project, a training and capacity building initiative for UNHCR staff, government, NGO and other operational partners. Through ARC training of trainers workshops, with the regional Refugee Children's Officers and Advisers acting as focal points, regional resource teams are being created with a view to developing follow-up strategies to address critical children's issues in their respective regions/countries. This approach is fully in line with the recommendation for international cooperation made under article 45 of the Convention.

### ➤ **Specific Action: Child health**

Meeting the specific health needs of refugee children is one of the main priorities of UNHCR's health policy. Refugee children are particularly at risk of malnutrition, diarrhoeal and infectious diseases. UNHCR's health policy is laid down in the "UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies" and two reports submitted to Standing Committees of its Executive Committee during the last decade (September 1995 and August 1997). All these documents reiterate the primary need for immunization programmes and action to address the spread of communicable diseases such as measles, diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. Priority is also given to feeding programmes for malnourished children, basic curative care, oral rehydration therapy, vitamin A prophylaxis, and family health services. UNHCR's actions in the health sector are thus fully in line with the specific actions emphasised under the WSC Plan of Action which stress the importance of responding to readily preventable or treatable childhood diseases.

Moreover, the health-related goals laid out in the Plan of Action - reduction of under-5 child mortality, reduction of maternal mortality, reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among those under 5, and access to safe drinking water and sanitary disposal - serve as key indicators for UNHCR's work in all its operations. The first few weeks of a refugee emergency are often characterised by excess child mortality and severe malnutrition. However, these factors have been brought under control within one - three months in all situations where UNHCR has operated in the past decade. The work of UNHCR and other organisations has helped maintain normal levels for these indicators following the initial emergency phase.

The issue of HIV/AIDS, as highlighted in the 1990 Plan of Action, is of growing concern to UNHCR. A focal point has been appointed to look at the scope and impact of the epidemic in refugee situations. As far as young people are concerned, UNHCR addresses the issue of HIV/AIDS within the context of a broader strategy to respond to the reproductive health needs of young refugees. This strategy emphasises the need for a multi-sectoral approach involving school-based interventions (integration of HIV/AIDS education into school curricula, training of teachers in life skills education, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS) as well as health-facility interventions to improve

the access of young people to reproductive health services (training of health care providers in adolescent reproductive health, youth peer education for out-of-school refugee youth, and support for the development of recreational and vocational activities). The ARC project referred to above includes a resource pack focussing specifically on sexual and reproductive health. The Office is, moreover, implementing a three-year multi-sectoral programme in conjunction with UNFPA, aimed at strengthening the capacity of service providers and NGOs to address the reproductive health needs of young people, including HIV/AIDS, in refugee communities. Several pilot projects have been launched in East, West and Southern Africa following a regional planning workshop on HIV/AIDS in refugee situations held in Kampala in May-June 2000 which involved a range of UN and NGO partners. Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia have begun project implementation.

➤ **Specific Action: Role of women**

It is ten years since the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women was first published. The past decade has seen a shift in thinking away from looking at women in isolation to promoting gender equality between men and women, boys and girls. This entails moving beyond an analysis of the different experiences of refugee males and females to programming with the goal of redressing the discrimination that exists on the basis of gender.

UNHCR approaches still require that the basic needs of women be equally addressed through assistance and protection activities. However, more activities are now being promoted to address the strategic needs of women with the goal of transforming their subordinate status, i.e. education of women, promoting women in leadership (supported by training that gives them the skills to participate as leaders), funding the participation of women in the peace process (e.g. Arusha), providing women with training and knowledge in elections, voting and political participation in Kosovo, supporting/promoting changes to legislation which will give women equal access to land (in Guatemala) and inheritance (Rwanda), and advocating for the end of harmful traditional practices (such as FGM in refugee camps in Ethiopia).

Gender networks composed of UNHCR and a broad range of partners which cover programme and protection to ensure cross sectoral responsibility for ensuring gender mainstreaming, are being created and expanded. Targeted initiatives such as the Bosnian Women's Initiative, the Rwanda Women's Initiative and Kosovo Women's Initiative that are designed to promote equality for women in the return and reintegration process, are also being promoted.

Specific projects for refugee girls and young women include the Young Women's Experimental Learning Network (YWELN) which aims at enabling young women to recover the educational and recreational opportunities lost through years of conflict. As part of the Bosnian Women's Initiative, it plays a unique role in building grassroot communication networks across ethnic boundaries in order to foster communication and exchange between youth of different backgrounds. For example in Pakistan, UNHCR has implemented programmes aimed at promoting education opportunities among Afghan refugee girls. This project has had impressive results: attendance rates

for girls have increased; access to education has improved especially due to the creation of home based schools for girls; opportunities have opened up for female teachers; and early school drop-out rates have been curbed.

A comprehensive review will take place in 2001 of activities in the last 10 years to advance the rights of refugee women and promote gender equality. The goal of the review will be to develop good practices and lesson learned for future activities.

➤ **Specific Action: Role of the family (preventing and responding to separation)**

UNHCR continues to strengthen its efforts to address the rights and needs of unaccompanied and separated children. A number of activities have been carried out in recent years in terms of policy development, coordination and advocacy. UNHCR's "Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum" provide important guidance in this context. Since 1998, UNHCR and the Save the Children Alliance are implementing the Separated Children in Europe programme which seeks to ensure respect for the rights and best interests of separated children and adolescents arriving in Europe. This programme combines advocacy, training and public awareness activities. The Inter-Agency Group on Separated Children is a further initiative involving UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, IRC, World Vision and Save the Children-UK. It seeks to develop capacities for a more coordinated response from the emergency phase onwards to addressing the problems of separation. The group is in the process of developing joint guiding principles that are planned to be issued in 2001.

UNHCR has also been active on the ground in responding to the needs of separated children. Significant results were achieved in the Great Lakes region between 1994 and 1999, where close inter-agency collaboration involving notably UNHCR and the ICRC ensured the successful reunification of some 62,000 Rwandan unaccompanied and separated children. One interesting model of joint efforts is a project for separated refugee children in Guinea. UNHCR and its partners are seeking durable solutions for these children through a tracing and family reunification programme. In cases where, despite best efforts, tracing is not successful and family reunification is not possible, UNHCR's national and international partners work together to explore options for local integration.

Unaccompanied and separated adolescents may find themselves in situations of great responsibility for themselves and others. They may be difficult to place in foster families and, moreover, may be part of child-headed households assuming responsibility for younger children. Access to post-primary education, vocational training and income-generating opportunities is the key means of supporting the rights and capacities of adolescents to develop life skills and become self-sufficient. Examples of such activities are the vocational skills training programmes in Azerbaijan, the small business management projects in Burkina Faso and the assistance programme for returnees in Burundi under which returning adolescents were given a plot of land, a house kit, and are encouraged to build a house. In Myanmar, special assistance is given to unaccompanied and separated children to enable them to become self-sufficient.

➤ **Specific Action: Basic education and literacy**

Access to education is a fundamental human right of all refugee children and serves as an important protection tool on the ground. Supporting refugee education and vocational training is particularly vital in promoting the rehabilitation of war-affected refugee children and youth. The strategic use of education can, moreover, help prevent conflict and provide a positive alternative to joining armed forces.

Increasing the access of refugee children to schooling, particularly for girls, remains a key priority for UNHCR. Improved educational response during emergencies and enhancement of the quality of teaching requires the provision of more textbooks and classroom learning materials, better teacher training and strengthening the capacity of UNHCR's operational partners in education. Attention to these qualitative issues will also help increase the retention rate of refugee children in school.

Despite funding constraints, some progress has been made in refugee education since the Machel study. In Armenia, a revolving textbook project in which UNHCR participates together with UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and the Norwegian Refugee Council, has helped reduce dropout rates among both local and refugee school children. Liberian refugee children in Côte d'Ivoire are in the process of being integrated into local primary schools. In a number of countries, inter-disciplinary, cross-curricular educational programmes are offered to refugee children in peace, human rights and environmental education. Burundi and Congolese refugee children in Tanzania attend schools in which the country of origin curriculum is used under the concept of education for repatriation thus preparing refugees for reintegration upon return. The need for adolescents and young people to have access to vocational training and income-generating opportunities is also being met through various programmes.

While UNHCR endeavours to ensure access to primary education for all refugee children, fewer possibilities are available for children at the secondary level. The High Commissioner therefore selected education at post-primary level as one of the issues on which UNHCR will focus on the occasion of its 50th anniversary this year. A UNHCR proposal for a Refugee Education Trust has been launched which involves the establishment of an independent fund for refugee post-primary education. To increase the availability of education in emergencies, UNHCR is collaborating with UNICEF in seeking additional financial support from Ted Turner funds through the UN Foundation.

Access to secondary and tertiary education is made possible for a small number of refugees through scholarship schemes, such as those offered by the Albert Einstein Academic Scholarship Programme for Refugees (DAFI), funded since 1992 by the Government of Germany, the Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize Scholarship programme and the Windle Trust. These institutions provide academic scholarships to refugees as a component of human resource development and self-reliance.

➤ **Specific Action: Children and the environment**

Helping refugee children, and those of local host communities, understand their surroundings and better appreciate the importance of a healthy environment is an important part of UNHCR's work. Environmental education initiatives, many of which are carried out in collaboration with UNESCO PEER, are a mainstay of this work. Illustrated manuals for teachers, and corresponding work books for primary school children explore a range of topics, including soil, fresh water, domestic energy and environmental health. Each series is tailored according to the language spoken and the local perceptions of the environment. Issues covered help facilitate discussion of some of the key environmental concerns in refugee operations into the existing curriculum.

Many practical activities are also encouraged and supported, for example the formation of eco clubs where children get together outside of class time – usually with a teacher – and set up school gardens or take care of trees in the school compound and surrounding area. In some instances, often at the request of children, tree nurseries are established and the children assume the responsibility of planting, weeding, watering and even planting out and protecting seedlings against animals – all positive moves towards sound environmental management and rehabilitation.

Refugee children are increasingly helping spread environmental messages by sharing their energy and enthusiasm for new ideas through activities such as paintings, songs, drama and storytelling. While children are the primary audience of such teaching, adults too benefit from the messages being passed. These simple initiatives play an important supporting role in broader community awareness activities and contribute to improved standards of health and welfare, as well as better relations between refugees and local host communities.

## **II. Cooperation with other UN agencies and international organisations to ensure achievement of goals including at field level**

UNHCR works in partnership with a wide range of organisations, notably other UN agencies such as UNICEF, and NGOs such as members of the Save the Children Alliance. Key examples are cited in the text above and include e.g. the ARC and Separated Children in Europe initiatives, and inter-agency collaboration leading to the successful reunification of some 62,000 Rwandan unaccompanied and separated children between 1994 and 1999.

## **III. Participating in appropriate mechanisms for monitoring implementation of WSC Plan of Action**

While UNHCR has not participated in formal monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the WSC Plan of Action, the Office monitors implementation through the reference to the Plan of Action standards in the 1994 UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children.

#### **IV. A. Participation in preparation of consolidated analysis of plans and actions undertaken by individual countries**

UNHCR has not, as per available information, been formally involved in this process.

#### **IV. B. Extent to which the governing body has included a periodic review of the Declaration and Plan of Action at its regular sessions, and has kept the General Assembly, through ECOSOC, fully informed of progress to date and additional action required during the decade**

UNHCR was actively involved in the preparatory works for the WSC. At the time, some 7 million of the world's 15 million refugees were children. In the years preceding the Summit, UNHCR had become increasingly aware of the needs of refugee children and had set up an internal working group on children as a precursor to the more formal refugee children coordination structure set up in the 1990s.

UNHCR, in its comments to the World Summit, highlighted the fact that refugee children are among the groups of children most at risk in the world. The Office also emphasised that children should not be seen in isolation and that programmes targeting children need to encompass their mothers/care givers and the wider community. UNHCR's protection mandate was highlighted as was the essential support of the NGO community for work in this area. The Office's stance at the World Summit has permeated policy and programme development over the past decade as these themes have continually been emphasised in its activities.

UNHCR informed its Executive Committee of its involvement in the WSC. The World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action were subsequently referred to in the 1994 UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children, a central document of the last decade to the Office. This reference highlights the important standards of the WSC Plan of Action in terms of health and education. It mentions that States are encouraged to develop national plans of action, which should include refugee children under the category of "children in especially difficult circumstances". It notes that although the Declaration and Plan are not treaty standards, their widespread acceptance has been a major step forward.

It should moreover be noted that, even though there was no formal adoption of the WSC Plan of Action, UNHCR's activities and strategies fall wholly in line with the recommendations contained therein. As shown above, UNHCR's activities over the past decade has sought to address almost every goal and specific action highlighted by the World Summit.

## **PART II. OTHER ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WSC PLAN OF ACTION**

V. This question is addressed above under Part I (I) Specific Action: The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**VI.** UNHCR has not, as per available information, been formally involved in this process.

**VII.** We do not have further issues to raise.

### **PART III. CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION**

#### **VIII. Views and global assessment regarding implementation and results of the World Summit for Children Plan of Action during the last decade**

The WSC ended a decade that had seen major advancements in children's rights with the adoption of the CRC in 1989. It also began a decade that carried this momentum further with the publication of the Machel study in 1996, the World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996, and the ratification of the CRC by all but two States in the world. Thus there has been much attention and action at the global level. The next stage must be to strive for better implementation at the national and local levels as much remains to be done in terms of realising the rights of refugee and other children on the ground.

#### **IX. Views of the organisation on issues and challenges**

The CRC and its Optional Protocols represent a comprehensive set of standards. The major challenge today is to ensure that these standards are properly implemented at all levels. This requires a political commitment on the part of all actors to ensure that the necessary will and resources are available to help realise the rights of refugee children and adolescents. The capacity on the ground of all partners, including UN agencies, NGOs, governments and other parts of civil society, must be strengthened so as to ensure that the necessary protection and assistance activities are carried out. Training and capacity building and inter-agency coordination efforts are vital in this regard.

Commitments are needed to address the physical security of refugee children, their families and communities, as well as the people who work to protect and assist them.

It is vital to monitor compliance and ensure accountability of those who violate the fundamental rights of refugee children.

Within the context of international security, the imposition of sanctions must make clear provisions for the exemption of humanitarian activities in order to avoid damage to vulnerable populations, especially women and children.