



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**STATEMENT BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

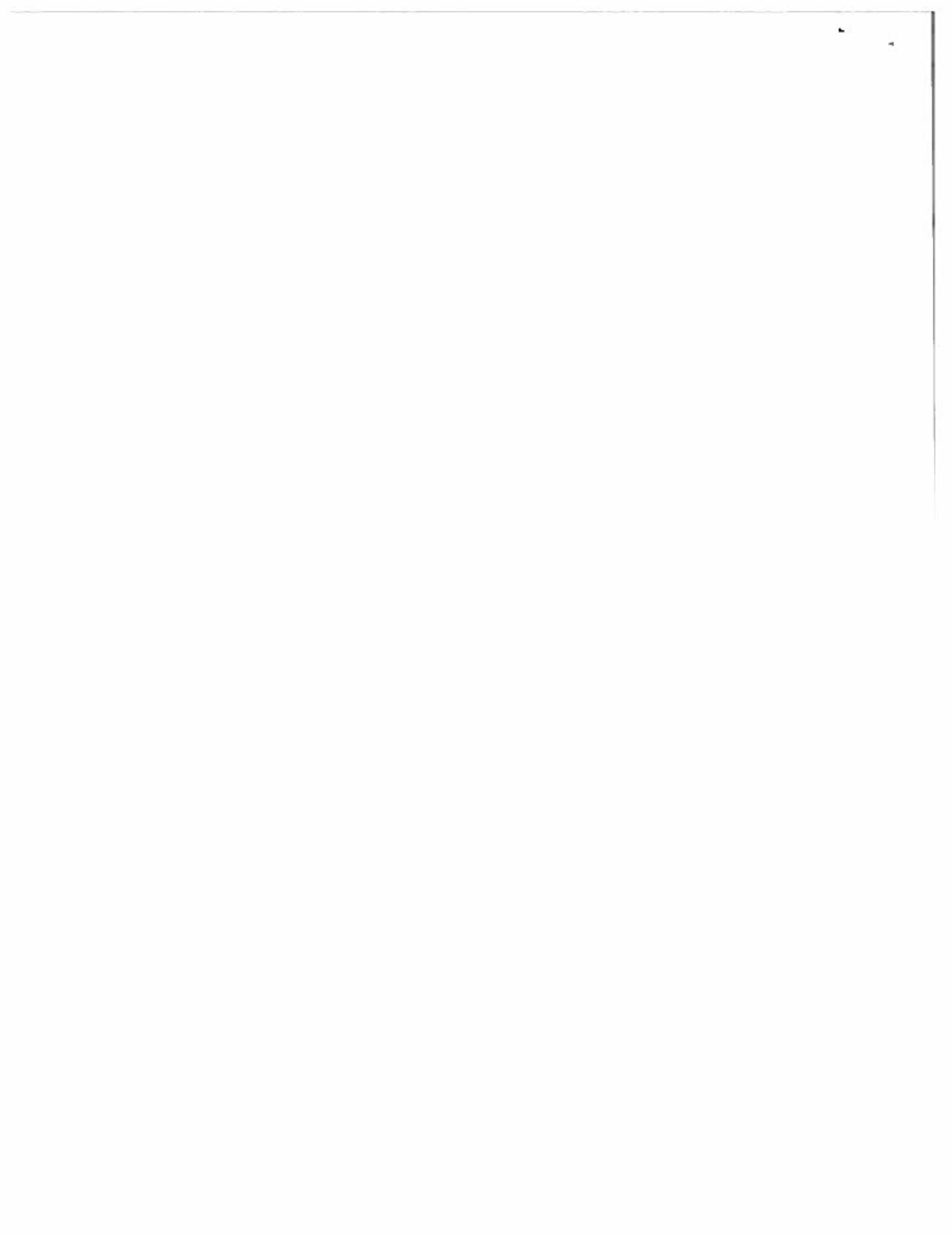
**ON THE BRIEFINGS BY
MRS. SADAKO OGATA
UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

ON

**HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN
AFRICA**

NEW YORK, 13 JANUARY 2000

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Mr. President,

I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to you Mr. President, for convening this meeting to address the critical issue of humanitarian assistance to refugees in Africa, and to thank the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata for her comprehensive briefing.

Mr. President,

This discussion highlights the manner in which the United Nations is responding to challenges posed by humanitarian needs in countries involved in or emerging from conflicts in Africa.

The most recent figures indicate that there are over 6 million people of concern to the UNHCR in Africa, out of an estimated 21.5 million worldwide. The figures for Africa include 3.3 million refugees, 1.6 million internally displaced persons and 1.3 million former refugees who have recently returned home.

During a similar briefing to the Council in July 1999 on Refugees in Africa, it was underscored that the implementation of political agreements between warring factions was critical to the resolution of some of the worst refugee problems in Africa. While we are heartened by the signing of the two Peace agreements: Lomé and Lusaka Peace Agreements dealing with the conflicts in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo respectively, it is evident that this is only a first step in solving the refugee crisis.

We all agree that several challenges lie ahead, the most compelling being; the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons into societies. Equal attention needs to be given to the security of refugees and the need for allocation of resources to assist host Governments to fund refugee programmes.

My delegation welcomes the progress made by the UNHCR in the past year in addressing the crisis of refugees and displaced persons in Africa.

This includes, in some instances:

- the localizing of refugees at a reasonable distance from the areas of conflict and borders;
- assisting host Governments in maintaining the security and neutrality of refugee camps and settlements.

The UNHCR has also provide draft model legislation which assist Government structures in charge of refugee issues. Training has also been provided to government officials. Nevertheless, further steps need to be taken to ensure that all refugees and internally displaced persons – notably women and children – are adequately protected.

Another challenge faced by the international community is the need to strengthen compliance with international law. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol are the principal international instruments concerning the protection of refugees. Instruments such as the 1969 Organisation for African Unity (OAU) Convention the Specific

Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees have all been developed to deal with refugees.

It is regrettable that often these international instruments are not adhered to by the parties in conflict, much to the detriment of innocent populations.

Mr. President,

The action of African regional and sub-regional organizations in seeking to address the problem of refugees and displaced person is laudable. We commend the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) for its initiative in 1998 in convening a Ministerial meeting on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons and in making key recommendations for action by the international community.

In this regard, Jamaica believes that the Council must:

- urge member states to take measures to address the root causes of conflicts;
- recommit themselves to the relevant Refugee instruments including the OAU Convention of 1969;
- strengthen Refugee Protection in Africa through asylum , protection and security;
- provide durable solutions including voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees;
- consolidate the re-integration process through various means including community based and participatory programmes, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, international support and commitment;
- assist in building Africa's capacity to respond to refugee and internal displacement.

Mr. President,

While considerable attention is given to the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis in Africa, we cannot ignore the fact that host, the flow of refugees constitutes a security problem to several host governments. We regret the fact that in some instances, refugee camps are potential pools for rebel recruitment and posing a threat to the peace and security of communities. The health status of refugees is also a cause for concern, as we discussed during the debate on the impact of AIDS earlier this week.

We also deplore the fact increasingly refugees and displaced persons are deprived of necessary amenities such as food, water and shelter owing to obstacles which are encountered in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We applaud on the other hand the untiring efforts of international agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Funds and Programmes and the NGO community in seeking to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and displaced persons, often at great risk to the lives of the staff concerned.

Mr. President,

The international community cannot afford to turn its back on Africa. We need to ensure that Africa receives equal treatment in terms of the allocation of financial resources.

