



PERMANENT MISSION OF  
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**Her Excellency Ms. M. Patricia Durrant  
Permanent Representative of Jamaica  
to the United Nations**

**at the**

**Security Council Briefing by  
Mrs. Sadako Ogata  
United Nations High Commissioner  
for Refugees**

**NEW YORK**

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2000**

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Mr. President,

Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata for her very comprehensive briefing to the Security Council this afternoon. Her briefing has underscored the continued importance and relevance of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, in reaching a global population of approximately 22.3 million people which are of concern to the UNHCR.

The figures indicate that the global population of concern to the Office of the UNHCR increased from 21.5 million in 1998 to 22.3 million in 1999. This signals the need for the Security Council's continued attention and increased focus on the plight of these people. We recognize however, that this figure still does not reflect the dramatic and massive humanitarian crises confronting the UNHCR.

We wish to take this opportunity to commend Mrs. Ogata for her leadership of the Office of the UNHCR and to recognize the unwavering commitment of her and her staff over the past decade. She has shepherded the organization through a very complicated and often difficult decade, which began with the mass movement of almost two million Kurds in 1991. Since then the situations across the globe have, in many instances, mushroomed and are still a cause for our deep and collective concern. We have observed the crises in Bosnia, Kosovo and the Great Lakes region. We have also observed with increasing concern the situations in Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Horn of Africa and in East Timor, to name but a few others. It is a tribute to her leadership and part of her legacy, that in all these tumultuous times, the UNHCR was there, at the forefront despite the odds – and faithfully executing its mandate in seeking to provide international protection to refugees and other persons of concern, and in seeking permanent solutions to these problems by assisting Governments to facilitate voluntary repatriation and or assimilation into new communities. My delegation, against this background, recognises the indispensable role of the UNHCR and its sterling contribution in the international humanitarian domain.

There have been successes, which speak to the undisputed role of the UNHCR – and where UNHCR made a difference – specifically, the millions of refugees which have been repatriated over the last ten years; in Latin America where the closure of the UNHCR's repatriation operation in Mexico ended the decade of refugee crises in Central America and in Cambodia where over 400,000 refugees were able to return home.

Yet, Mr. President, my delegation recognises that the task facing the UNHCR is still a mammoth one. As Mrs. Ogata has said on previous occasions "Solutions to refugee problems take time". We are fully cognizant of the need for support of the international community - and importantly the support of the Security Council. The Council, we believe, in discharging its Charter obligations - in the maintenance of international peace and security is intimately linked to the role the UNHCR has to play in finding rapid solutions resulting from the proliferation of conflicts which ultimately worsen the human condition. We believe that the Security Council and the UNHCR must increase their collaboration in addressing both the continuing situations globally and new situations, which may arise.

Mr. President,

My delegation wishes to highlight a few areas of critical importance to us - and to which the United Nations as a whole and the Security Council, in particular must devote greater attention - with the ultimate aim of improving the work of the UNHCR.

First, we agree that there is the need to improve the response capabilities of the UNHCR. Time can save lives. The capacities of the UNHCR must be bolstered in order to enhance the delivery time. The ability of humanitarian agencies must not be diminished but rather improved. Here, we also must work towards striking the balance between responding to high-profile emergencies and other smaller and equally urgent humanitarian disasters such as some in Africa.

Humanitarian emergencies require in all cases, sustained international support and prompt action by relevant actors. The Council's role in responding to these situations can also avert further crises and contribute to the diffusion and ultimate prevention of further conflict.

In this regard, Jamaica attaches importance to the strengthening of the UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity. We note that UNHCR has established new Emergency Services and we would like to hear more from Mrs. Ogata about the role of these services and their activities so far.

Second, we see the need for intensification of efforts to guarantee the safety of humanitarian and associated personnel. This is a source of great preoccupation for us. Only recently we were saddened at the murders of three UNHCR staff in West Timor and one in Guinea. We maintain that if humanitarian personnel are unable to discharge their duties in an environment free from fear and intimidation, then their efforts would have come to nought.

The 1994 Convention on the Protection of United Nations and Associated Personnel provides the backdrop for our work. While states have the primary responsibility to protect and provide for civilians in their territory and to ensure the safe, unimpeded access of humanitarian workers to civilians in need, the Security Council has a role to play in helping to create an environment for such assistance. There must be collaboration on the ground between peacekeepers and humanitarian agencies in providing safe environments for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The close cooperation between the DPKO, OCHA, the UNHCR and other representatives must be sustained.

Third, access to humanitarian workers is another area, which is closely linked to safety. Staff of organizations such as the UNHCR must be able to access civilian populations. We strongly condemn the denial of access of such personnel. This is another area in which the Council must work closely with the UNHCR and other organizations providing assistance in war-torn or conflict prone areas. The Council recognised this critical issue when it held debates in February and March on related topics. We must now convert our words into action.

Fourth, my delegation agrees as Mrs. Ogata so aptly stated in the Council debate on 13 January, "humanitarian action alone will not solve any of the problems leading to forced human displacement". The Security Council therefore has a definitive role in preventing, containing and resolving conflicts. We agree that by taking firm positions and supporting decisively, rapidly and substantively the follow-up to peace agreements, and by promoting the mobilization of resources for reconstruction and peace-building, the Council will have made its contribution to averting and stemming humanitarian crises. We must work towards this goal or render ourselves incapable of discharging the mandate for maintenance of international peace and stability.

Fifth, we believe that United Nations system must work toward devising a mechanisms to effectively and equitably address the protection of displaced populations which are of concern to the UNHCR. We are aware that sometimes the lines are blurred between groups as they are often displaced internally and the same groups later move across borders. While we are aware of the difficulties involved in arriving at practical solutions we see this as an area in which we can work toward ensuring or providing some guarantee of protection.

Mr. President, there are several other areas in which my delegation would have liked to focus but time does not permit. We wish to briefly mention a few areas in which we must continue to support the UNHCR's work. The continued implementation of a targeted strategy for the advancement of refugee women and the mainstreaming of a gender quality perspective remains a priority. We recognise the work being done to incorporate this in

several key training packages and field guidelines. We welcome the project description format of identifying how each project would address the particular needs and rights of refugee women.

The activities relating to refugee children and adolescents are also noteworthy, particularly the UNHCR's follow-up to the UN strategy on the impact of armed conflict on children. The priorities aimed at mainstreaming children's issues into UNHCR's overall protection and assistance activities as well as the increased emphasis on an inter-agency approach require continued action. In addition, the formulated policy on older refugees, which was endorsed in February of this year, is particularly welcome and so is the project "Imagine Co-existence" which seeks to promote co-existence in divided communities. We look forward to the pilot projects in Bosnia and Rwanda.

Mr. President,

The debate this afternoon must serve as a solid basis for the Security Council to intensify its cooperation and collaboration with the Office of the UNHCR. Our roles are not separate but linked as we both seek to find solutions to crises affecting at their very core, people, and in efforts aimed at restoration and rebuilding.

We are faced with the grim reminders that as we witness humanitarian catastrophes, burgeoning crises and the staggering human costs. Millions of people continue to be uprooted by conflict and are exposed to extreme hardship, violence and death. It is our collective responsibility to help them. We know that solutions are difficult but we must be clear and decisive in our actions to help those affected.

Finally, Jamaica strongly supports the work of the UNHCR. In its 50 years of operation it has made an invaluable contribution to improving the human condition and in seeking to find durable solutions.