Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1474 (2005)[1]

Activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated by the United Nations to lead and co-ordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. The UNHCR's activities are mandated by its statute and guided by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Therefore, the UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state and, once circumstances allow, to return home voluntarily and in safety and dignity.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly maintains close co-operation with the UNHCR through its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population and gives its full support to the UNHCR's activities, particularly its assistance activities in Europe.

3. The Assembly welcomes the UNHCR's work in war-torn areas such as the Balkans and the North and South Caucasus. It calls on all international partners to ensure that the UNHCR is not left alone to cope with refugee crises without a guarantee of security provided by the international community.

4. The efforts of the UNHCR in ensuring that the creation of a European Union common policy on asylum and migration is fully consistent with the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and with human rights standards, merit the full support of the Assembly.

5. The Assembly considers that co-operation between the Council of Europe and the UNHCR in the drafting of legal standards related to asylum and to the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers should be further developed.

6. The Assembly acknowledges the Agenda for Protection, endorsed by the UNHCR's Executive Committee and welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, as a central policy framework providing guidance for concrete actions by the UNHCR, governments and NGOs.

7. The Assembly attaches great importance to the UNHCR's "Convention Plus" initiative aimed at improving refugees' protection through special multilateral agreements in a spirit of international co-operation and, in particular, to the issue of the strategic use of resettlement as an instrument of burden sharing in Europe. The Assembly encourages Council of Europe member states to take an active part in the elaboration of these agreements.

8. Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly invites the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe to:

8.1. ensure effective access to a fair asylum procedure in the application of border-control measures and the management of illegal migrants, in full accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and with other human rights standards;

8.2. commit themselves to burden-sharing strategies, as promoted by the UNHCR, by increasing capacities for the resettlement of refugees;

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1. acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 25 November 2005 (see Doc. 10560, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mr Hancock).

8.3. clarify the respective responsibilities of Council of Europe member states in the event of irregular secondary movements of refugees and asylum seekers;

8.4. secure the funding of the UNHCR's budget and support the organisation's efforts to attract additional resources, in particular complementary funding, including from the private sector;

8.5. organise ministerial and parliamentary debates on migration and asylum policies, with special emphasis on the situation of refugees, the role of the UNHCR and the creation of positive public opinion receptive to refugees' needs and supportive to their efforts to integrate;

8.6. provide adequate training, together with the assistance of the UNHCR where relevant, for officials dealing with the problems of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons;

8.7. step up the fight against human trafficking, while ensuring access to international protection for individual victims of trafficking, as guaranteed by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol;

8.8. encourage the strategic use of resettlement as advocated by the UNHCR as a tool of protection, a durable solution and a tangible form of burden sharing in protracted refugee situations;

8.9. promote the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons into wider regional and national development and recovery programmes in consultation with the UNHCR where appropriate;

8.10. stress the need for continued joint efforts at national and regional level to avoid and reduce statelessness.