

10 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,  
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly  
for the announcement of voluntary contributions to UNHCR**

It gives me great pleasure to open this meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. We all are aware that the fulfillment of UNHCR's important mandate depends for a large part on the support of governments. This Conference gives us the opportunity to express this support.

Before proceeding further, may I first convey to you the regrets of the High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata, that she is unable to be with us. When I met her last week, she told me that it had been her wish and intention to be present. However, her schedule these days is particularly busy, and difficult choices had to be made. She nevertheless asked me to tell you how much importance she attaches to this event, and how deeply she appreciates your support.

Mr. John Horekens, Director of UNHCR's Division of Communication and Information, is representing the High Commissioner. I shall shortly be asking him to present to us UNHCR's financial requirements for the year 2001.

On 14 December this year, UNHCR will commemorate its fiftieth birthday. So much has changed since the 1950's. From a small office with a modest budget and activities that were confined to seeking solutions to the problem of refugees in post-war Europe, UNHCR has become - in the words of Secretary-General - "a massive relief agency ministering to millions of people around the globe".

The millennium annual theme of the High Commissioner's Executive Committee was particularly relevant to this reality: UNHCR@50: from response to solutions. In her statement to the Third Committee earlier this week, Mrs. Ogata outlined the responses that her Office has implemented - particularly in the past decade - and outlined some of the major challenges which it faces as it enters the new century. Not least among them is the issue of resources.

UNHCR is engaged in an on-going process of rationalization and simplification of its budget procedures, adjusting the mechanisms that govern the resourcing of its budget, and engaging in an ongoing dialogue with donors. And yet it faces a financial shortfall, both for the current year, and for its anticipated needs in 2001.

Attached to the invitation you received to today's meeting was an Annex showing the estimated requirements fore 2001 in order to meet minimum standards of protection and assistance to those

of concern to UNHCR. The contributions that you will announce here today will help create a solid financial base for these activities next year. Your pledges will demonstrate the resolve of the international community to assist victims of persecution and violence world-wide.