

We have, I believe, won acceptance for the argument...

Sadruddin Aga Khan (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 1967)

From a statement made to the United Nations General Assembly, 20 November 1967.¹

I should like to return for a moment to the question of Africa, and to the comment I made at the beginning of my statement when I mentioned the close relationship between the High Commissioner's work and development. [...] agricultural resettlement is the best solution for the situation prevailing in Africa. This brings me to two observations which, I believe, are most important.

First, there is the interdependence between the refugee problem and the problem of development, an interdependence which comes to the fore in the consolidation phase, which in turn is possible only within the context of the total development of the regions where the refugees are settled. This is a fact that must be taken into account from the very outset. This integrated approach to the refugee problem and the development problem, this union of all forms of multilateral aid and, eventually, of bilateral aid, alone make it possible to achieve maximum economy in the use of resources and to avoid duplication and waste.

The second observation ... is the need to ensure co-ordination between the assistance of the High Commissioner's Office [UNHCR] and the continuation of development programmes which the other United Nations organs are able to provide. For if there was no co-operation, if there was no continuation,

some Governments would be confronted with a new emergency once the High Commissioner's assistance programmes had ended. For the High Commissioner cannot take on a task which is not within his realm and involve himself in development matter for other agencies to handle and involves not only refugees, but also the indigenous population of the countries where our programmes exist.

Now, if our programmes were to end before other national or international agencies were ready to take over, we might well find ourselves in a very serious situation requiring further intervention by the High Commissioner and additional expenses. It is therefore imperative that we co-ordinate our efforts; the United Nations development agencies and the specialized agencies must grant top priority to requests from countries and for regions in which there are refugees.

With that aim in view, I have expanded my contacts and efforts with all the United Nations development agencies. The understanding and support I have encountered are most encouraging. We have, I believe, won acceptance for the argument that development plans which disregard the presence of large numbers of refugees, often as many as hundreds of thousands of persons amidst the indigenous population, would quite simply be doomed to failure.

1. <http://tinyurl.com/SadruddinAgaKhanGA1967>

