

one country will cause predictable difficulties for others. Yet the refugees' fundamental right to leave must be respected, particularly as remaining, in the present circumstances, threatens their very survival.

**International  
Response**

A situation of such magnitude in humanitarian and political terms demands, and is receiving, an international response.

The countries most concerned with the Indochina refugee situation include, of course, the countries in the Southeast Asian neighbourhood which are providing temporary asylum to the refugees; those which have traditionally resettled refugees; and those which are major financial supporters of UNHCR programs. These countries, of which Canada is one, met in December and January under UNHCR auspices in an attempt to develop a co-ordinated international response to the situation.

**UNHCR's  
Traditional  
Preference**

The UNHCR seeks as a first preference to return refugees to their country if circumstances permit or, alternatively, to provide for resettlement in neighbouring countries. In the case of the Indochinese refugees, it is unlikely that in the foreseeable future they will be able – or indeed willing – to return to their countries. Furthermore, for political and sociological reasons, it is not possible for the great majority of them to be resettled in the countries of first asylum. In fact, of those involved, only some proportion of the Laotians in Thailand would appear to be able to be temporarily resettled in their country of first asylum. The High Commissioner has had to seek resettlement places for most of the 265,000 in his care in camps in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong.

It is clear, however, that the situation cannot be addressed only in terms of finding resettlement places. The High Commissioner for Refugees must, with the support of the international community, ensure that each refugee is provided first asylum in the country on whose shores, or at whose frontier, he has arrived. Each refugee must be protected against forcible return to the country he has just fled. Each must be provided with the food, shelter and medical care necessary to ensure his survival. The UNHCR must, subsequently, seek to obtain a final resettlement place for him.

**Vietnam's  
Responsibility**

One must ask how the international community can respond in political terms to the problems created by Vietnam.

The answer is not easy to find. It is Vietnam's closest neighbours, the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines – which are likely to have the greatest impact on the policies of their neighbour. The ASEAN countries are increasingly, but in low-key terms, drawing to Vietnam's attention the seriousness of the effects on them of Vietnam's policies. They speak too of Vietnam's responsibilities in terms of controlling the outflow and of managing the departures from the country in a civilized, humane way, not involving blackmail and danger. But they are also calling on Vietnam to create conditions from which people will not want to flee. They made these views known at a meeting in Jakarta May 15 and 16 which considered a proposal for an ASEAN refugee processing island. At that meeting, Canada and other countries also voiced their