

the Partenariat interne pour la paix, despite its limitations;

- ♦ pursue its firm financial commitment in favour of the legal assistance programme and double the number of lawyers, currently six, involved in this programme; support the training of Burundian magistrates and attorneys and their exposure to the practices used by democratic judiciary systems to improve the competence, independence and impartiality of the judiciary;
- ♦ urgently secure and increase financial support for the activities of the UNHCR;
- ♦ consider again the question of an international criminal tribunal when the proper conditions for establishing such a body have been met in Burundi — establishment of a ceasefire, the existence of a genuine internal political dialogue, the successful conclusion of the ongoing negotiations, and the initiation of a process towards democratic governance;
- ♦ continue, through UN agencies, support to local communities through income-generating activities, increased participation of women in the economic and social life of their communities and increased food security, and extend such support by activities that promote a spirit of tolerance conducive to national reconciliation and the emergence of a culture of peace and human rights within Burundian society; and
- ♦ assist with medical and food help to prisoners in Burundi, making such support dependant upon the improvement of conditions of detention, effective initiatives to control arbitrary detention and the introduction of administrative reforms to improve the management of the penitentiary system; support and facilitate the work of local NGOs which are, with enormous difficulties, providing support to prisoners and detainees.

Resolution of the General Assembly

FIELD OPERATIONS

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Since 1994, technical cooperation activities have been the object of successive agreements signed between the OHCHR and the government of Burundi — in 1995, 1996, and 1997. An exchange of letters in April 1995 between the High Commissioner and the government was followed by an agreement of cooperation signed in November 1995, enabling the deployment of the Mission of Observation in Burundi. An Interim Memorandum of Understanding between OHCHR and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) was signed in May 1998 for the period until 31 December 1998, covering activities related to the Mission of Observation and the Legal

Assistance Programme which were initiated in February 1997 on the basis of an agreement of cooperation between OHCHR and the government.

The main functions of the OHCHR in Burundi are:

- ♦ Technical cooperation — strengthening the judiciary system; training the military, the police and the gendarmerie in the field of human rights; capacity building and support to human rights organizations and civil society, and in particular to national media and NGOs; training and education sessions; promoting human rights culture and providing documentation on human rights.
- ♦ Mission of observation — investigating allegations of severe violations of human rights, including the right to life, and of forced or involuntary disappearances and arbitrary detention; collecting testimonies in the field from local and provincial civil and military authorities regarding violations of human rights; visiting the main detention centres of the country, with a focus on individual and private interviews, and undertaking regular assessments of detention conditions; judicial assistance to the detainees in order to speed up the judicial process; field visits to regroupment camps, visits to injured victims of human rights violations in hospitals, etc.
- ♦ Legal Assistance Programme — providing six international lawyers working side by side with their Burundese colleagues with a view to assisting and defending those accused of criminal responsibility for acts committed in the aftermath of the assassination of former President Ndadaye; restoring the confidence of the Burundese in the judiciary system; and indirectly contributing to the reduction of the number of death sentences or in the speeding up of the judiciary process for those detainees having committed minor offences.

As of August 1998 the main activities of the Office included, for example:

- ♦ at least 24 audio-visual productions and sensitization campaigns in the field of human rights as well as 15 reports on the overall activities of the technical cooperation component of the work (Media Unit);
- ♦ active participation of the Education Unit in a series of activities around the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration geared towards primary and secondary schools in Bujumbura;
- ♦ a four-week seminar by the Justice Unit in July 1998 for 38 military magistrates, organized at the request of the Ministry of Defence;
- ♦ in April/May, field investigations in several provinces to visit prisons and cachots, mostly overpopulated, with deplorable detention conditions, noting that in the one of Ngozi, 335 detainees died of hunger and disease during the period October 1997 and March 1998; and