

- Preventive and corrective measures;
- Building upon existing national law enforcement mechanisms;
- International support to national security forces;
- Deployment of international fact finding missions;
- Deployment of international observers;
- Deployment of international police forces;
- Deployment of regional military forces with or without UN endorsement;
- Deployment of international military forces under chapter VI or VII of the UN Charter.

Operationalising the ladder of options

In July 2000, UNHCR presented to its “Standing Committee” (a group of States that monitor the High Commissioner’s policies and operations), a plan aimed at operationalising this concept.

This paper, which the organisers of this seminar have shared with you, firstly, describes UNHCR’s intention to establish stand-by arrangements with a number of States for the provision of law and order advisers as well as public security personnel who would advise UNHCR on the nature and the sources of threats to refugees and their settlements and on adequate responses. The results of our approaches to a limited number of governments so far are not very encouraging. It appears that States are rather reluctant to deploy their police or military staff to humanitarian operations they themselves do not control. States have also expressed problems of a more administrative nature.

Secondly, in the paper we refer to UN Security Council Resolution 1296 of April 2000, which tries to link-up between the humanitarian, political and military components of the UN System. In this important Resolution the Security Council:

“Invites the Secretary General to bring to its attention situations where refugees and internally displaced persons are vulnerable to the threat of harassment or where camps are vulnerable to infiltration by armed elements, and where such threats may constitute a threat to international peace and security (...)”. In this Resolution, the Security Council also, “Expresses its willingness to consider such situations and, when necessary, adopt appropriate steps to help create a secure environment for civilians endangered by conflicts, including by providing support to States concerned (...)”.

Immediately following the adoption of this Resolution, UNHCR and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) agreed on a procedure on the basis of which the High Commissioner could inform DPKO of situations as described in the Resolution. Unfortunately, the results so far have been disappointing. Whenever deployed in the field, peacekeeping operations are based on strictly formulated mandates which do not always allow peacekeeping staff to assess and report on refugee security issues. There appear also to be important resource problems which would prevent speedy DPKO deployment into refugee populated areas. However, some progress has been made in the sense that both organisations have now agreed to second staff to each other’s emergency and planning units.

Given this state of affairs, you may wonder how UNHCR then actually responds to situations in which the lack of refugee security is a major factor in prohibiting the protection of and the assistance to refugees.