

confidence-building measure, but will not provide security as such). Their number may increase as the other leaders return (if necessary, the SRSG can also call on officers of the UNCHR for back-up).

The UNHCR is also assisting by airlifting leaders in exile and their families from Thailand, mainly in Bangkok (this group is known to UNHCR as "Cambodian refugees dispersed in Thailand").

In addition, UNHCR is facilitating the return of Cambodians who were living in border regions and who fled into Thailand following the post-July outbreak of fighting. On the Thai side of the border near the Cambodian town of O'Smach are approximately 15,000 refugees. More crossed into Thailand with the renewal of fighting in late December (1500 on December 29). Near Battambang in Cambodia, fighting drove 40,000 into Thailand (there may also be 3-4000 displaced in Cambodia). Since the October 10 Flash Appeal<sup>16</sup>, UNHCR also facilitated the return of 3,500, but that flow dried up when fighting resumed. UNHCR also monitors the security of returnees.

UNCHR, which reports to the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Human Rights in Cambodia (SRSG (HR)), Thomas Hammarberg, has been monitoring the freedom and fairness of election preparations, including the problem of impunity and its effect on the overall climate, and the need for an appropriate legislative framework. Its report late last summer formed the basis for the November 1997 UNGA resolution on Cambodia, which dealt at length with election preparations. The visit of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, **Mary Robinson**, to Cambodia in January served to highlight the UN's concern with the fairness of elections. UNCHR hopes to field a large monitoring force in the election period, made up of four mobile teams. In addition, it will provide funds to the main election-oriented ngos, including LICADHO, ADHOC and VIGILANCE.

UNESCO plans to support a program of building linkages among Cambodians (the "culture of peace") which will indirectly support the election process. It has discussed with the NEC more specific voter education under NEC auspices, re-using the network it is setting up for the March census, and in conjunction with COFFEL and COMFREL.

The EU intends to cover the cost of voter registration, media training and monitoring this exercise (the total cost will be approximately \$11.5 million). Requiring attention will be the nature of coordination between the UN (especially the UNDP) and the EU.

ASEAN countries played a significant role in bringing the parties together in the 1991

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<sup>16</sup>The \$6 mn appeal was based on repatriation of 22,000 over one year, with 40,000 remaining in Thailand. Therefore, for now, it seems unlikely to require adjustment. When I spoke on December 30 with Giuseppe de Vincentis, Head of the UNHCR's Liaison Office in Phnom Penh, he thanked Canada for its \$500,000 (Cdn) contribution and indicated that while the appeal is not yet completely met, he was confident that it soon would be.