

Uprooted People

A Newsletter of the World Council of Churches in solidarity with people compelled by severe political, economic and social conditions to leave their land and culture.

1. A note from the editor

Uprooted People is a publication of the International Relations team of the World Council of Churches and is intended to provide information on current developments to churches and related organizations in support of their work.

Uprooted People is distributed four times a year by e-mail. If you would like to receive the publication or to contribute news affecting uprooted people in your region, please contact Elizabeth Ferris (egf@wcc-coe.org)

2. Network News

WCC's Commission of the Churches in International Affairs (CCIA) will meet in Switzerland from 4-6 June to review WCC's work on international relations, to analyze contemporary international developments and to discuss how churches can be more effective witnesses in today's world. Staff will present programme highlights focusing on WCC initiatives to respond to the aftermath of the 11 September attacks, the ecumenical response to the Palestinian-Israelii conflict, the situation in Southern Asia and uprooted people and erosion of international standards of protection. A review of WCC's relations with the United Nations, conducted by an external consultant, will also be considered.

WCC will convene a meeting on "Beyond 11 September: Implications for US Churches and the World" from 5-6 August in Washington, D. C., USA. This meeting, a follow-up to an international meeting held last November, will analyze the global implications of US responses to the attacks and will seek to discern together the role of the churches' witness in this context.

The sub-regional working groups from West Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, and Central Africa have met in the last few months. Several common themes emerged from all four of these meetings: the number of refugees is increasing, financial resources available to the churches are diminishing, and UNHCR budget cuts have meant that increasing numbers of refugees are turning to the churches for assistance, but they do not have adequate resources to respond. Participants in the sub-regional meetings affirmed the sub-regional model for organizing ecumenical work in Africa and expressed concern that three of the four sub-regional groups have no resources to employ a coordinator. They agreed that they will work to ensure that uprooted people's concerns are put high on the agenda of the 2003 AACC Assembly.

The Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe (CCME) has had several meetings in the past few months, including its Executive Committee, a joint meeting of working group 1

(Monitoring European migration policies) and Working Group 2 (church engagement with refugees, migrants and displaced), and the Implementation Group. The Executive Committee began planning for the CCME Assembly to be held from 10-14 October in Greece. The Assembly will receive a report from Working Groups 1 and 2 which outlines major developments in European migration policies and reports on ways in which churches throughout Europe have ministered to refugees and asylum-seekers. Recommendations including ways of strengthening churches' ministry in this regard. The Implementation Group, composed of representatives of CCME, the Conference of European Churches, and WCC, considered the report of an independent evaluator, who reviewed progress in implementing the Agreement of Cooperation signed by the three organizations in January 2000 and recommended that steps be taken to merge CCME into CEC as a separate commission. This possibility will be considered by the CCME Assembly as well as by CEC governing bodies.

In cooperation with Christian Aid and Restart Center, the Middle East Council of Churches organized a Sphere Training in Syria on Disaster Response & Trauma Detection & Rehabilitation within the framework of an advanced training for workers with refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.

Also in April, MECC organized a Workshop on Migrant Workers: Situation and Issues and the Churches' Response to look at the situation of migrant workers in the Persian Gulf states. This meeting, held from 25-27 April in Bahrain was organized by the Gulf Liaison office.

From May 23-25, the annual meeting of the "Amman Process" network will be held in Brussels. This meeting brings together representatives of churches and related organizations from the Middle East and Europe to discuss common refuge and migration issues in the Euro-Mediterranean area. This year's meeting will include opportunities for dialogue with European Union officials.

MECC will organize a training session on prison ministry to build the skills of prison chaplains in providing spiritual and pastoral care to prisoners and detainees, including refugees and migrants. The training session, will be held in Cairo from 25-30 June. An additional training seminar on prison ministry will be held in Beirut, Lebanon in December 2002 on Prison Ministry with a focus on the concepts of restorative justice and the reintegration of ex-prisoners into the society.

The annual meeting of the Joint MECC/WCC Working Group on Refugees, Displaced and Migrants will be held in Damascus, Syria from 16-21 September to review and analyze the situation of uprooted people in the region and propose an action plan for the coming year.

The Latin American Ecumenical Network on Uprooted People will meet in Lima, Peru from 2-4 July to consider developments in Latin America. Particular emphasis will be placed on comparing legislation of Latin American countries regarding refugees and internally displaced people. The meeting will also consider ways of strengthening relationships between the churches and related organizations working on these issues in Latin America.

In March, the Latin American Council of Churches, The Confraternidad Evangélica Ecuatoriana and the Indigenous Protestant Federation of Ecuador organized a meeting in Ecuador with the participation of pastors and lay leaders from Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador. The meeting focused on church witness with the displaced. Bible studies focused on the experience of King David as a refugee (II Samuel 15-16). A main focus of the meeting was on the situation of Colombians displaced by the military or by paramilitary groups who often find themselves in an ambiguous situation and on the impact of the Plan Colombia on the situation. Although Protestant churches are united on the need to

participate in public life, there is no consensus and great debate about the way in which they participate. The meeting concluded with a strong call to Protestant churches to open their doors to those most in need, particularly to Latin American displaced people. Participants affirmed the need to create a network among churches for the assistance and integration of displaced.

A seminar on “cooperation for finding solutions to problems concerning the registration of migrant workers” in Chiang Mai, Thailand in mid-February 2002 drafted a letter to Thai Prime Minister which outlines a number of concerns including: the prevailing public attitude toward migrant workers which results in discrimination, the fact that agreements made with sending countries have not been made public, and decisions to deport pregnant women. The seminar was organized by the Network of Northern Thai NGOs working on displaced people from Burma which includes the Mekong Sub-regional program of the Christian Conference of Asia. The seminar asked the government to develop: actions related to public awareness, a more transparent decision-making process, more humane deportations, and a more humane registration period. The Thai government’s operation to deport more than 300,000 illegal Burmese workers began on 10 February. More than one million Burmese migrants are thought to be living in Thailand. Last October over 500,000 Burmese workers received work permits at a cost of about US\$100. In late February a migrant worker infected with HIV/AIDS and sent back from Thailand was not allowed to go back home and was detained by the military regime. (The Mekong News monthly newsletter. For more information contact: mppcca@chmai2.loxinfo.co.th.)

The Mekong subregional programme will have an exchange and meeting in cooperation with the Amity Foundation in Kunming from 20-24 May 2002. The Christian Conference of Asia’s programme on Migrants, Refugees and Internally Displaced People plans to have a joint workshop for churches from both sending and receiving countries in Asia in September 2002.

The Pacific Council of Churches, the Tonga National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches organized The Pacific Migrants Strategic Plan Workshop in Tonga from 18-19 April. The workshop sought to find ways whereby the church in the Pacific together with those from the Pacific Rim countries (New Zealand, Australia, and USA) can formulate strategies to address migrant issues. The workshop identified a number of areas of concern, including problems of identity, cultural ties and value systems; violence and anti-social behavior; spiritual foundations; problems with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation migrant, socio-economic concerns, and advocacy and the prophetic role of the churches. The workshop recommended that a Pacific Ecumenical Migrant task force be created to implement and follow up these recommendations and that churches are encouraged to develop their own task forces to initiate dialogue with their migrant churches, create new ministries for new migrants to the home country and advocate on issues affecting migrants with the Pacific and host governments.

The Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland has issued a detailed report on the situation of refugees in Scotland and the world. The report proposes that international human rights standards must form a cornerstone of EU immigration and asylum policy, a monitoring body should be established to review immigration/asylum law, likely consequences of immigration law for race relations need to be studied in depth, and governments should take a lead in changing people’s attitudes towards immigrants/refugees. The Committee expressed utmost concern about proposals of the Home Secretary ‘to streamline and simplify’ the appeals process.

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) organized a regional meeting in March on “Refugees and their Right to Communicate.” The meeting, held in Lusaka,

Zambia, drew participants primarily from Southern Africa as well as African members of WACC's Executive Committee.

3. International News

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women has completed an Assessment of UNHCR's Implementation of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women which was discussed at the UNHCR Global Consultations on International Protection. The assessment reviewed progress – and shortfalls – of UNHCR's work with refugee women over the past 10 years and included field visits to 5 areas. The assessment found substantial progress in several areas, but noted that a gap between the policies and practices continues. The Guidelines, which will be revised this year, do not address some important threats to the safety of refugee women, such as domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and detention and asylum issues nor do they include issues related to refugee women who are returned, urban refugees or internally displaced persons,

An Independent Evaluation of UNHCR's work with Refugee Children has also been completed and was discussed at the UNHCR Global Consultations. The evaluation, which visited nine field operations, found that refugee children are often overlooked in UNHCR's planning. A number of specific problem areas were identified, including birth registration, status determination, response to children who have been tortured or traumatized, child labor and abuse, traditional harmful practices, detention and sexual exploitation. The report found management problems of limited accountability, the "dilemma of mainstreaming," and gaps in operationalizing child protection. A copy of the full evaluation is available at the UNHCR website (Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit): www.unhcr.ch.

This year's UN Commission on Human Rights considered a number of issues related to migrants. The Commission meeting was characterized by a reduced schedule due to financial limitations and was characterized for its focus on the conflict between Palestine and Israel. Briefings for NGOs were organized by Francis Deng, the UN Special Rapporteur on Internal Displacement and by Gabriela Rodriguez, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants. In addition the Steering Committee for the Global Campaign for the ratification of the UN Migrant Workers' Convention organized a special session on 15 April which included panelists from NGOs, UN agencies, and IOM. WCC presented a written submission to the Commission on the situation for internally displaced people in Sri Lanka and detention practices of the Australian government. Reports and written NGO statements on migration can be found at: <http://www.december18.net/unchrreports2002.htm>.

Nineteen of the twenty ratifications needed for the International Convention for the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families to come into force have now been received. In the expectation that the 20th ratification will soon be registered, the Steering Committee of the Global Campaign for the Convention is beginning discussions of monitoring implementation of the Convention. An updated list of ratifications can be found at: <http://www.december18.net/UNconvention.htm>.

The UN High Commission on Human Rights announced in mid-March that this year's Nansen Refugee Award will go to the captain, crew and owner of the Norwegian container ship Tampa which rescued hundreds of shipwrecked asylum seekers in the Indonesian Ocean last August. The Nansen Refugee Award is given annually to individuals or organizations that have distinguished themselves in work on behalf of refugees. While the Norwegian ship sought to bring the asylum-seekers to safety in Australia, the Australian government refused to allow the ship to land. Instead, Australian military forces boarded the ship and the asylum-seekers were ultimately transferred to Nauru and Papua New Guinea for refugee screening.

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in late 2001 on “Violence against women migrant workers” which urges governments to continue to cooperate fully with the special rapporteurs on the human rights of migrants and on violence against women and to inviting them to visit their countries, calls upon governments to enact penal and criminal sanctions to punish perpetrators of violence against migrant women and to provide the victims with assistance and counseling, to provide training programmes for their law enforcement personnel, to adopt measures to regulate the recruitment and deployment of women migrant workers. (available from the UN website: www.un.org or as document A/RES/56/131.)

4. News in Brief

In Sri Lanka, there are hopes for peace as negotiations continue between the Tamil insurgents and the Sri Lankan government. Following the signature of a ceasefire agreement between Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Velupillai Prabhakaran, there have been few violations of the ceasefire and many positive developments, including re-opening of the road from Colombo to Jaffna. Further peace talks are scheduled to be held in Thailand in June. The churches in Sri Lanka issued a pastoral letter in March 2002 which states that “it is the prime task of Christians today in Sri Lanka to reflect on our past and seek forgiveness for our actions and inactions and to boldly act in such a way as to end this war...Whether the MOU signed by the parties at conflict fails or succeeds, we need to stand up against the war and reject all forms of violence and work for sustainable justice and dignity.” JRS reports that there are currently about 720,000 internally displaced people in Sri Lanka, many living in government-held camps and an additional 330,000 Sri Lankan refugees abroad. Around 37,000 people have ‘disappeared’ in the course of the conflict. (JRS Dispatches, no. 108)

Escalating tension in Nepal as the government confronts Marxist rebels has led it to delay talks on the status and future of the estimated 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Talks scheduled for February—the twelfth round – were postponed.

A tripartite agreement was signed in early April in Geneva by the governments of Iran, Afghanistan and UNHCR. The agreement lays down the main legal and operational framework for the voluntary return of Afghan refugees in Iran. The agreement formalizes UNHCR’s role in monitoring the voluntariness of the return and guarantees the agency’s free access to refugees and returnees on both sides of the border. The Interim Authority of Afghanistan also undertakes to facilitate the recovery of lost land or property and to recognize the legal status of refugees as well as educational and professional qualifications gained in Iran. The pace of repatriation of Afghan refugees has been such that UNHCR has almost run out of funding for its Afghanistan operations. A joint repatriation programme with the government of Pakistan that began on 1 March assisted more than 150,000 in its first month of operation. Present indications are that close to 500,000 refugees have returned from Pakistan with much smaller numbers returning from Iran. UNHCR estimates that there are more than 1.5 million Afghan refugees in Iran and around two million in Pakistan.

UNHCR announced in late March that Vietnam and Cambodia had violated the terms of a tripartite agreement on the voluntary return of “Montagnard” refugees and declared it could no longer be associated with repatriation under the agreement. This decision followed an incident on 21 March in which a group of more than 400 Vietnamese entered a refugee camp at Mondulkiri and threatened and manhandled refugees and UNHCR staff trying to protect them. The tripartite agreement was signed in January.

In early April more than 900 ethnic minority asylum seekers from Vietnam began their journey to be resettled in the United States. They have been moved to a temporary shelter while US officials complete refugee processing. Cambodia agreed in early April to allow the Montagnards to be resettled, provoking concern by Vietnamese leaders who saw the offer of resettlement as politically-motivated. Cambodian prime minister Hun Sen attempted to soothe Vietnam by demanding that the United Nations close two camps before the end of April and ordering that all people who enter Cambodia without proper documents will be treated as illegal entrants, not asylum seekers. For the complete story, see: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5410-2002Apr14.html> Over 1000 hill tribe people had fled Vietnam's Central Highlands to refugee camps in Cambodia during the past year after Hanoi sent troops to the region to quell protests by ethnic minority groups seeking land ownership and religious freedom. Meanwhile there are reports that Vietnam is tightening security in the Central Highlands. See <http://asia.news.yahoo.com/020415/reuters/asia-100191.html>

Elections in East Timor offer the possibility of return to the estimated 70,000 East Timorese who still remain in West Timor. The Indonesian authorities have extended the deadline for repatriation beyond the original 1 May 2002 date, but reaffirms that they will all eventually have to leave.

The situation of detained asylum-seekers in Australia has continued to deteriorate in recent months, with major riots at detention centres, increased numbers of detainees engaging in self-harm, and government plans to build a new detention centre on Christmas Island. Minister of Immigration, Philip Ruddock, announced in May that Afghan asylum-seekers whose claims had been rejected would soon be returned to Afghanistan as the situation is stabilizing there. At least 70 Australian groups have been formed in reaction to the government's policies in the last few years and demonstrations of support for the asylum-seekers have been held throughout the country. In April, Minister Ruddock said there would be "no rush to resettle" more than 300 people in Nauru and Papua New Guinea who have been granted temporary asylum by the UNHCR. Australia's agreement with Nauru expires at the end of May and the Australian government has not indicated whether the agreement will be renewed. He has indicated that he is holding talks with other countries which may be prepared to take the refugees and that Australia will do its fair share.

In late May, Justice Bhagawati, the special envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Commission's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention arrived in Australia to visit Detention Centres. While Justice Bhagawati will investigate ongoing claims of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention will investigate whether Australia's detention system is justifiable or not. James Thomson of the National Council of Churches of Australia, who participated in the UN Human Rights Commission meeting in April argues that "Detention in Australia becomes arbitrary through its mandatory, indefinite and non-reviewable nature. The key issue is whether the indefinite detention of all asylum seekers with no right to challenge the lawfulness of one's detention violates human rights standards Australia has helped formulate."

Repatriation of Burundians from Tanzania began on 28 March in spite of concerns about their safety back home. Negotiations to bring about a ceasefire in Burundi took place in South Africa in February but without the participation of the National Liberation Front. Meanwhile military operations continue and people continue to be displaced by the violence.

Following the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, some cautious hopes for a peace settlement in Angola have been awakened. Plans are underway to demobilize and reintegrate UNITA rebel soldiers into the regular FAA army. Presently there are some 400,000 Angolan refugees and four million internally displaced people.

Human Rights Watch reported the murder on April 17 of two Rwandan refugee children in Nairobi, Kenya. The children had been living in a so-called “secure residence” when their throats were slit by an assailant. Their mother, who is a close relative of the former president of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana, was also severely injured with multiple stab wounds. The refugees had reportedly been approved for resettlement for some 11 months. Some 190 refugees are currently living in the safe house under the auspices of UNHCR. (for the full report, see <http://www.hrw.org>)

A report by the Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation*, reports that about 140 illegal immigrants from Ethiopia were deported from Kenya amid fears that they are part of a lucrative human trafficking ring. The *Daily Nation* had earlier exposed a racket in which hundreds of illegal immigrants from Somalia, Ethiopia, China, India and Sri Lanka were being smuggled daily to Europe and the USA through Nairobi’s airport.

UNHCR announced in early May that it is ending refugee status for all Eritreans who fled their country as a result of the war of independence or the recent border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. UNHCR explained that the root causes of the Eritrean refugee problem no longer exist as fundamental and durable changes have occurred with the end of the 30-year old war with Ethiopia in 1991 and Eritrean independence in 1993. More than 100,000 Eritreans have already returned home, either on their own or under a voluntary repatriation operation that began in May 2001. Currently UNHCR assists some 140,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan while thousands more have spontaneously settled in urban areas. Some 5,000 Eritrean refugees also remain in Ethiopia.

IOM organized the second regional meeting in the context of IOM’s Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa programme to facilitate cross-border inter-agency cooperation and to manage migration issues. The participants agreed to work together to develop strategies to manage labor migration in the context of an integrated regional labor market. Labor migration within and between SADC member states is a phenomenon of concern to governments in the region.

Churches in Italy have expressed deep concerns about the proposed law on immigration and asylum which introduces mandatory detention and restrictive appeal procedures as well as effectively cutting funds to local government for reception of and assistance to asylum-seekers. The bill has passed the upper chamber of the legislature. This comes in the context of ever-stricter immigration controls, including the use of military planes to return undocumented migrants to their countries of origin. JRS reports that “illegal migrants have been detained on arrival in Italy, those seeking asylum have had little if any access to legal counsel or assistance and, in some cases, were given less than five minutes to present their case to the Italian authorities for protection.” (JRS, Servir, April 2002)

The Spanish presidency of the European Union has set the following priorities in the area of migration flow management: the establishment of minimum harmonization criteria for a Common Policy on illegal immigration, based on the report submitted by the Commission, the creation of a common visa policy, the creation of Common Consular Visa Offices, and the monitoring of the “Viability Study on the creation of a European Border Police.” For more information, see <http://www.picum.org/European%20Developments.htm>.

The German parliament adopted a new immigration bill on 1 March which was accepted by the second chamber on 22 March. However, there is considerable disagreement on the voting procedure. The new bill is awaiting signature by the German President Johannes Rau, but he is under considerable pressure not to sign it because of the procedures followed.

PICUM reports that the regularization procedure in Greece suffers from chaos as a result of total lack of coordination and cooperation between the various agencies handling the legalization process in the country. See <http://www.picum.org/VGreeceRegularisation.htm>.

French NGOs have launched a major campaign against the double penalty in which immigrants are obliged to leave the country after having committed a crime. These expelled persons are spouses or parents of French citizens and long-time residents who have sometimes lived in France since they were children. They may not even know the countries to which they are returned. For more information on the campaign, contact GISTI at gisti@ras.eu.org.

IOM organized two workshops aimed at training officials of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to better manage migration. The participants of the three South Caucasus countries focused on the development of control strategies, entry criteria, the effective use of visas, counter-trafficking and illegal migration and how to facilitate entry for legal visitors.

A law approved in Portugal in January 2001 enabled undocumented workers to apply for a one year residence permit if they could prove employment. A total of about 150,000 migrants benefited from this provision. If they remain employed, their residence permits will be renewed every year. After five years they are entitled to a permanent residence permit.

The Council of Europe directive for minimum standards for the reception of asylum-seekers was approved in April of this year. UNHCR praised sections of the directive regulating access to health care and education and the provision of identity documents and vital information on asylum procedures, including legal assistance. However, UNHCR expressed concern that provisions of the directive allow too much scope for exceptions and adaptations by the member states. The lack of a harmonization provision regarding access to employment is a major shortcoming. The final text of the directive allows for the withholding of all benefits – except for emergency medical care – from asylum seekers who show uncooperative behavior or who have not complied with certain reporting requirements.

IOM also organized a workshop on Counter-Trafficking Legislation in Kazakhstan in which more than 50 participants worked on various aspects of legislation related to trafficking, including labor and employment law, criminal law and criminal procedures, licensing of travel and immigration agencies, as well as protection, compensation and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking. During the three-day workshop, participants proposed legislative measures to increase counter-trafficking efforts and to punish traffickers. It is estimated that some 5,000 women could be trafficked from Kazakhstan every year.

In the United States legislation has been passed to abolish the Immigration and Naturalization Service and to divide its functions between two new bureaus, one for immigration services (such as citizenship applications) and the other for enforcement. The two bureaus would report to a new associate attorney general for immigration affairs at the Justice Department, although the role and authority of that official continues to be a contentious issue. Discussion of reorganizing the immigration service has been a long-standing concern and the agency has been criticized for both inadequate provision of services and inadequate border control. NGOs have long noted the fundamental contradiction between the two aspects of its mandate, on the one hand to welcome and serve newcomers and on the other to keep people from illegally entering the country. Previous efforts to restructure the agency have always failed. The 11 September attacks and the renewed attention to security issues provided the impetus to change the agency.

The number of refugees arriving in the United States for resettlement has been relatively small. As of May, less than 12,000 refugees have arrived although the annual ceiling for refugee admissions is 70,000. The fiscal year ends on 30 September.

Also in the USA, an advocacy campaign called “Kids can’t wait” has been launched by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to rally support for legislation that would protect unaccompanied children coming to the US who are detained by the INS, ensuring that they have legal counsel and an appointed guardian.

With the collapse of the peace process in Colombia, renewed violence is leading to fears of a new exodus of people fleeing clashes between the security forces, paramilitary groups and rebel organizations. Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela have all expressed fears that they may be faced with an influx of refugees if the civilian population of Colombia continues to be caught up in the civil war. The Venezuelan government, for example, has setup contingency plans to assist 10,000 people fleeing the conflict. (JRS Dispatches, no. 109)

Human Rights Watch has issued a new report on the situation of Haitians in the Dominican Republic which calls on the government to revise its deportation policies to ensure due process and to avoid race-based discrimination. The human rights organization also called on the government to protect Dominicans of Haitian descent from deportation, consistent with the constitution’s rule of citizenship by birth. For the full report, see: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/domrep/>

5. Upcoming Meetings

World Refugee Day is commemorated on 20 June. UNHCR is planning a commemoration event, which will include recognition of UN staff and NGOs which have implemented initiatives to improve the lives of refugee women. Many churches are also planning special activities to raise awareness about the situation of refugees in their regions.

The Peace Brigades International Office is organizing a seminar on “International field protection for internally displaced populations: needs and challenges, actors and strategies” from 5-6 June in Brussels. The aim of the seminar is to share strategies and to improve the cooperation among actors working with internally displaced persons. Particular attention will be given to the cases of Colombia and Indonesia. For more information, contact pbibc@wanadoo.be or visit the website at www.peacebrigades.org.

The 83rd special session of the IOM Council will be held from 5-6 June in Geneva. The agenda includes applications for membership; IOM’s role in emergency and post-conflict situations; managing migration at the regional level: identifying effective strategies for regional consultations; and general debate.

The annual UNHCR-government-NGO tripartite consultations on resettlement will be held from 18-29 June in Geneva. The agenda includes regional discussions, security concerns, the strategic use of resettlement (with particular emphasis on developments in the relationship between resettlement and asylum), integration initiative, innovations and strategies in case identification for resettlement, family reunification, and an update on the UNHCR/ICMC Deployment scheme.)

UNHCR’s Standing Committee will meet from 24-26 June where the principal item for discussion will be the adoption of the Agenda for Protection, the elements of which were adopted by the Ministerial-level meeting in December 2001. The Programme of Action includes six main goals: strengthened implementation of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol; protecting refugees within broader migration movements; sharing of burdens and responsibilities more equitably and building of capacities to receive and protect refugees;

addressing security-related concerns more effectively; redoubling the search for durable solutions; and meeting the protection needs of refugee women and children. The Agenda for Protection is available from the UNHCR website (section on Global Consultations) at www.unhcr.ch.

The World Civil Society Forum will be held in Geneva from 15-19 July; some 1800 representatives of civil society organizations are expected to attend. There will be a session on migration and international cooperation as well as many sessions on issues related to peace, development and the environment. For further information, see www.worldcivilsociety.org.

The September round of UNHCR and related meetings will include:
22-24 September – the Global Ecumenical Network for Uprooted People
25-27 September – UNHCR/NGO Pre-ExComm Consultations
26 September – UNHCR Standing Committee meeting
30 September-4 October the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting

The United Nations University and World Institute for Development Economics Research will convene a Conference on Poverty, International Migration and Asylum in Helsinki, Finland from 27-28 September 2002. The conference will focus on two major themes: the economic consequences of immigration and issues associated with asylum migration. With respect to asylum migration, the key themes to be covered are: patterns and trends, modes and methods and implications for receiving states and countries of origin, and public policy responses. For further information, see <http://www.wider.unu.edu/>

The Globalization Research Center at the University of Hawaii/Manoa is organizing a conference on “The Human Rights Challenge of Globalization in Asia-Pacific-US: the Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children” from 13-15 November 2002. The practical focus of the conference will be to monitor progress and evaluation implementation strategies of two international initiatives: the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking in Women and Children and the Anti-Trafficking Protocol of the UN Crime Convention. For programme information, see <http://www.globalhawaii.org/pdf/trafficking.htm>.

6. Past Meetings

The final session of UNHCR’s Global Consultations on International Protection was held in Geneva from 22-24 May with a focus on durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement), refugee women and refugee children. Discussions of durable solutions included an emphasis on the need to take initiatives on protracted refugee situations, to re-vitalize local integration as a solution, to adopt more flexible criteria and encourage more governments to accept resettled refugees, and to see the three solutions as complementary. The need for comprehensive strategies to find solutions for long-term refugees (or, as the Norwegian Ambassador said, to develop “package deals”) was another theme of the meeting. The NGO statement on voluntary repatriation emphasized the importance of “voluntariness” in returning refugees, arguing that to send people back to unsafe situations constitutes refoulement.

The Report of the International Conference: “The Baltic Sea as an Escape Route” has now been published. It includes the texts of the presentations made at the November 2001 conference as well as the results of the working groups and additional materials in the appendix. The report includes a wealth of information about the situation of refugees in

countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, the Nordic countries, and Germany as well as articles on issues such as refugee women, trafficking, unaccompanied minors, border control mechanisms and ways of migrants' organizing themselves to confront these situations. The report is available for €2.50 from Baltic.net@frsh.de.

A February Symposium on Best Practices in Humanitarian Information Exchange held in Geneva stressed the importance of accurate and timely information to help prevent, prepare for or mitigate humanitarian crises. The statement acknowledges OCHA's role as a focal point in the area of humanitarian information exchange. 250 aid practitioners participated in the symposium and developed a six page statement on Best Practices which is available at: http://www.reliefweb.int/symposium/final_statement.doc.

Culture Divides – The Gospel Unites? Migrant Churches in European Countries is the title of the report of the third European Conference on Migrant Churches held in Hamburg, Germany from 4-7 October. Edited by Martin Affolderbach and Heike Vierling-Ihrig, the report includes several overview and keynote contributions as well as country reports on the situations of migrant churches in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Available from CCME at: ccme@wanadoo.be.

The bi-annual General Assembly of PICUM was held in March in Oirschot, Netherlands. Issues discussed included the second international experts' seminar on health care for undocumented migrants, the proceeding of the Book of Solidarity project and the Ethical Code, and policy issues such as cooperation with the trade unions on employment matters and the importance of promoting return and development aid.

The Refugee Law Project of Uganda, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights organized a workshop on "Protecting Refugee Rights in East Africa: the need for a progressive legislative and policy framework" which brought together about 70 members of parliament from Kenya, Uganda and the East African Community to focus on the refugee bills slated to come before the two parliaments before the end of the year. The MPs were encouraged to support the enactment of strong legislation for the protection of refugees that respects international standards and sets the fair treatment and physical protection of refugees as priorities. Despite their long experience in dealing with refugees, neither Kenya nor Uganda has a comprehensive legal framework for refugee protection. See <http://lchr.org> for more information.

7. Resources

Refugees and the Myth of the Borderless World is an edited publication by the Australian National University and available online at <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/ir>. The 50-page publication includes articles on the global refugee crisis, refugees and illegal migrants in the Asia-Pacific region, 'illegal' refugees, the 'Pacific solution,' Australia's refugee and humanitarian policies, and statistics.

United against Racism offers a wealth of information on events and activities planned in Europe. This year, the European-wide Action Week against Racism was held from 16-24 March with thousands of people engaged in hundreds of activities. For more information see <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org>

Human Rights Watch has published Closed Door Policy: Afghan Refugees in Pakistan and Iran which documents some of the key problems that the 3.5 million Afghan refugees face

which relate both to the cause of their flight from Afghanistan and their treatment in exile in Pakistan and Iran. For more information, see <http://www.hrw.org>.

Human Rights Watch has published The Other Side of the Canary Islands: Rights Violations against Migrants and Asylum Seekers. The report documents the “appalling treatment both prior to and during detention of migrants arriving illegally to Spain’s Canary Islands.” Detainees not only suffer from severe overcrowding, but also complete deprivation of communications with the outside world – no telephones, visits, or ability to send or receive mail. For more information, see <http://www.hrw.org>.

The first edition of the Bulletin of Humanitarian Action for Indonesia, known as “Sesama” has been published and will be distributed on a bimonthly basis. The first issue focuses on the situation of IDPs in Indonesia and the “ambitious Indonesian relocation programme.” This refers to the government’s plans to relocate 1.3 million IDPs between mid-December 2001 and the end of 2002. For more information, contact akui@xs4all.nl.

Future Seekers: Refugees and the Law in Australia by Mary Crock and Ben Saul provides an overview of the procedures governing refugee claims made inside Australia, provides statistics and other basic information relating to refugees, explores some of the common misunderstandings about refugees and illegal migrants and shows how it is possible to balance Australia’s international commitment to protecting human rights with domestic concerns about safeguarding Australia’s borders. Available for Aus\$ 20 from www.federationpress.com.au or info@federationpress.com.au.

The February 2002 issue of Forced Migration Review explores the dilemmas of development-induced displacement. Available from: <http://www.fmreview.org/fmr12.htm>.

Human Rights Watch has finalized the web page for its Migrants Rights Project which focuses on the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers in Western Europe. See: <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/migrants/>. In addition the Children’s Rights Division’s recent report “Nowhere to turn: State Abuses of Unaccompanied Migrant Children by Spain and Morocco” has been released and can be accessed in English and Spanish at <http://www.hrw.org> (recommendations are also available in French and Arabic)

UNHCR’s Evaluation and Policy Unit has published “Meeting the Rights and Protection Needs of Refugee Children: an independent evaluation of the impact of UNHCR’s activities.” This evaluation was undertaken by an eight-person team of experts who visited nine UNHCR operations around the world. The report is available on the UNHCR website: <http://www.unhcr.ch>.

The Human Rights Watch statement to the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum in Valencia on 13 April is entitled “the Aftermath of September 11 – the Tightening of Immigration Policies” and is available at <http://hrw.org/press/2002/04/valenciaspeech0413.htm>.

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies has released a detailed report on the situation of NGO coordination in Afghanistan at the present time. For copies of the report, contact ICVA at: secretariat@icva.ch.

Arthur Helton has written The Price of Indifference: Refugees and Humanitarian Action in the New Century which systematically analyzes refugee policy responses over the past decade and calls for specific reforms to make policy more proactive and comprehensive. Helton argues that refugee policy must be more than the “administration of misery.” Available for £14.99 (paperback) from customers@oup-usa.org (for USA) and from book.orders@oup.co.uk (for rest of world.)

The Danish Centre for Human Rights has completed a study on Safe Avenues to Asylum. The study notes that most asylum seekers coming to Europe are forced to use illegal means and suggests that the present system of extraterritorial migration control be complemented with a system that uses diplomatic representations as part of the asylum system, for instance by facilitating legal entry through humanitarian visas. This would allow for differentiation between persons in need of protection and other categories of migrants before they reach the border of potential host states. For an executive summary or the full text of the report, refer to:

http://www.humanrights.dk/upload/application/f1f4136a/final_report_020403gn.pdf.