

The Problem of Manifestly Unfounded or Abusive Applications for Refugee Status or Asylum

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The Executive Committee,

(a) Recalled Conclusion No. 8 (XXVIII) adopted at its twenty-eighth session on the Determination of Refugee Status and Conclusion No. 15 (XXX) adopted at its thirtieth session concerning Refugees without an Asylum Country;

(b) Recalled Conclusion No. 28 (XXXIII) adopted at its thirty-third session in which the need for measures to meet the problem of manifestly unfounded or abusive applications for refugee status was recognized;

(c) Noted that applications for refugee status by persons who clearly have no valid claim to be considered refugees under the relevant criteria constitute a serious problem in a number of States parties to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Such applications are burdensome to the affected countries and detrimental to the interests of those applicants who have good grounds for requesting recognition as refugees;

(d) Considered that national procedures for the determination of refugee status may usefully include special provision for dealing in an expeditious manner with applications which are considered to be so obviously without foundation as not to merit full examination at every level of the procedure. Such applications have been termed either "clearly abusive" or "manifestly unfounded" and are to be defined as those which are clearly fraudulent or not related to the criteria for the granting of refugee status laid down in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees nor to any other criteria justifying the granting of asylum;

(e) Recognized the substantive character of a decision that an application for refugee status is manifestly unfounded or abusive, the grave consequences of an erroneous determination for the applicant and the resulting need for such a decision to be accompanied by appropriate procedural guarantees and therefore recommended that:

(i) as in the case of all requests for the determination of refugee status or the grant of asylum, the applicant should be given a complete personal interview by a fully qualified official and, whenever possible, by an official of the authority competent to determine refugee status;

(ii) the manifestly unfounded or abusive character of an application should be established by the authority normally competent to determine refugee status;

(iii) an unsuccessful applicant should be enabled to have a negative decision reviewed before rejection at the frontier or forcible removal from the territory. Where arrangements for such a review do not exist, governments should give favourable consideration to their establishment. This review possibility can be more simplified than that available in the case of rejected applications which are not considered manifestly unfounded or abusive.

(f) Recognized that while measures to deal with manifestly un-founded or abusive applications may not resolve the wider problem of large numbers of applications for

refugee status, both problems can be mitigated by overall arrangements for speeding up refugee status determination procedures, for example by:

(i) allocating sufficient personnel and resources to refugee status determination bodies so as to enable them to accomplish their task expeditiously, and

(ii) the introduction of measures that would reduce the time required for the completion of the appeals process.