

Antigua and Barbuda,	Dominica,	St Kitts and Nevis,
Bahamas,	Dominican Republic,	St Lucia,
Barbados,	Grenada,	St Vincent and Grenadines,
Canada,	Haiti,	Trinidad and Tobago,
Cuba,	Jamaica,	United States of America.

## NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL OVERVIEW

NORTH AMERICA REGIONAL OVERVIEW



### Recent Developments

At least four unseaworthy ships carrying several hundred Chinese nationals reached the Pacific Coast of Canada last summer. Most applied for refugee status, provoking an intense public debate about the perceived abuse of Canada's asylum system. The United States has faced similar challenges following the arrival of Chinese asylum-seekers in the Commonwealth territories of Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands in the South Pacific.

The United States announced an increase in resettlement admissions to 90,000 for the fiscal year 2000, including a doubling of the ceiling for the Middle East to 8,000 and an increase for Africa from 12,000 to 18,000 persons. In early 2000, Canada plans to launch a Protection Pilot scheme for the expedited resettlement (meaning within 72 hours) of persons with critical protection needs.

In the Caribbean region, the High Commissioner's Global Campaign on Accessions recorded its first success when St. Vincent and the Grenadines rat-

ified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless persons.

### Strategic Objectives

In the United States and Canada, UNHCR will advocate international standards of best practice in the protection of refugees, promote resettlement as a durable solution, and raise awareness in order to build a public constituency of support for refugees.

In the Caribbean, UNHCR will promote accession to international refugee law and statelessness instruments; encourage the enactment of legislation and the establishment of national refugee institutions; and consolidate durable solutions.

### Operations

UNHCR's protection advocacy activities in the **United States** and **Canada** in 2000 will focus on initiatives to reform the laws and institutions governing asylum. The Branch Office in Ottawa will continue to monitor the ongoing immigration law review in Canada, and the Regional Office in

Washington will work with legislators and advocacy groups pursuing positive changes to the legislative framework established by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. UNHCR will also carry out site visits to land borders, airports and detention facilities to observe how each country's refugee protection mechanisms are functioning in practice, with particular focus on the conditions faced by women and children seeking asylum. UNHCR will also provide counselling and assistance to asylum-seekers and their lawyers in the form of country of origin information, advisory opinions and self-help documentation.

UNHCR's refugee law promotion and training activities in the United States and Canada give special attention to the impact of gender, age and culture on refugee status determination at different stages of asylum processing. The Ottawa and Washington Offices provide advice and, where appropriate, advisory opinions in cases involving gender-persecution claims and unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

UNHCR will encourage the adoption of resettlement policies in the United States and Canada that are consistent with UNHCR's criteria, protection objectives and assessment of global needs. A priority in both countries will be the development of mechanisms for the rapid resettlement and successful integration of people with special needs, such as women-at-risk and victims of violence. The office in Ottawa will work closely with the Canadian Government as it launches its Protection Pilot project for the expedited resettlement of individuals with critical protection needs. UNHCR will also counsel and assist refugees, their family members and organisations seeking to facilitate resettlement.

UNHCR will seek to raise awareness of the plight of refugees, and support for international humanitarian action, among government decision-makers, the policy community, the media and the broader public in Canada and the United States. UNHCR will seek to reach new potential communities of support through a public outreach strategy that targets professional societies, religious and human rights groups, community organisations, universities and foundations. The United States Association for UNHCR (USA for UNHCR) will continue to build upon its recent successes in raising funds from the private sector.

UNHCR seeks to strengthen the framework for protection in the **Caribbean**, both to prepare for

any future refugee emergency and to help governments deal responsibly with asylum-seekers among the extra-regional migrants transiting the region.

Through the Global Campaign on Accessions, UNHCR is systematically promoting international legal instruments on refugees and statelessness in the Caribbean. UNHCR will also continue to encourage governments to enact national implementing legislation, offering legislative and institutional models that are appropriate to national circumstances. As Caribbean governments develop national mechanisms, UNHCR will review and analyse them from a gender equity perspective.

UNHCR facilitates these efforts in most Caribbean nations through a so-called protection network composed of community leaders, who are typically affiliated with NGOs working in the field of human rights or social welfare. After receiving training in international protection and UNHCR's priorities in the Caribbean, these honorary liaison officers monitor the arrival of asylum-seekers, help them gain access to legal assistance and basic services, and facilitate UNHCR's contacts with the national authorities.

During 2000, UNHCR will work towards achieving durable solutions for long-staying refugees in the Caribbean. For African refugee students in **Cuba**, UNHCR will facilitate voluntary repatriation or, where appropriate, return to the country of first asylum. Where repatriation or return is not an option, UNHCR will seek resettlement opportunities. UNHCR will also seek durable solutions for the remaining Haitian refugees in the **Dominican Republic** by facilitating, in appropriate cases, naturalisation or adjustment to legal resident status, and by promoting socio-economic integration through small-scale self-sufficiency projects.

#### NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

##### BUDGET (USD)

Country	Annual Programme
Canada	971,883
Cuba	467,900
United States of America	4,186,627
Regional Project*	125,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>5,751,410</b>
Bureau at Headquarters	476,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,227,510</b>

\* Covers activities in the Caribbean