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**VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF ERITREAN
REFUGEES FROM THE SUDAN AND THEIR
REINTEGRATION IN ERITREA**

CONCLUSIONS

**OF THE
MEETING OF THE
TRIPARTITE REPATRIATION COMMISSION
COMPRISING
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN,
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF ERITREA
AND UNHCR**

KHARTOUM/SUDAN, 21 AND 22 MARCH 2001

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Conclusion One
The Eritrean Refugee Caseload in Sudan

The Parties recognise the existence in Sudan of the following categories of Eritrean refugees:

- (i) A residual caseload that arrived in Sudan as a result of events occurring on or after May 2000, hereinafter referred to in this document as the "New Caseload".
- (ii) The Eritrean refugees who were already in Sudan before the events occurring on or after May 2000, hereinafter to be referred to in this document as the "Old Caseload".

Conclusion Two
Re-affirmation of the Existing Legal Frame-work for the Voluntary Repatriation of Eritrean Refugees in Sudan

1. The Parties reaffirm that the Tripartite Agreement of 7 April 2000 and the Record of the Meeting of 27/28 April 2000 reached respectively at Geneva and Asmara as well as the Tripartite Agreement and Conclusions of 14 July 2000 reached at Asmara provide the legal frame-work for the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan.

2. The Conclusions contained herein constitute an integral part of the above mentioned documents and each document shall be mutually re-enforcing to the other.

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**Conclusion Three
Time Frame and Basic Planning Assumptions**

- 1. Repatriation movements will begin from the camps where the New Caseload resides. While this is ongoing, preparatory activities, including information campaign and registration for voluntary repatriation, will be undertaken in the camps and other areas hosting the Old Caseload, with priority being given to the camps. As soon as the logistical capacity is in excess of the requirements to repatriate the New Caseload, Repatriation Movements of the Old Caseload will start.
- 2. The voluntary repatriation operation for the residual New Caseload as well as for 160,000 of the Old Caseload is planned to last from April 2001 to the end of the year 2002, during which time the operation will be reviewed depending on the progress made.
- 3. It is agreed that the voluntary repatriation of the New Caseload be completed not later than 30 June 2001, following which protection and assistance to those who still remain in the Sudan shall be reviewed.
- 4. For planning purposes, in the year 2001 some 62,000 Eritrean refugees will, subject to availability of funds, be assisted to repatriate from Sudan. The parties agree that, provided additional resources can be mobilised, the 62,000 figure may be revised upward. The planning figure for the year 2002 will be established at the latest by 31 December 2001.

**Conclusion Four
Information Campaign**

- 1. The Tripartite Repatriation Commission agrees to the contents of the information leaflet attached as Annex I.
- 2. The Parties agree that immediately following this Tripartite Meeting, the information campaign and registration for voluntary repatriation will take place at all Eritrean refugee sites, with priority being given to those refugee sites from where movements will start as specified in Conclusion Three at paragraph 1 and Conclusion Seven of this Document.
- 3. It is agreed that the information campaign referred to above will be carried out at all refugee sites for a period of two weeks. Subsequent information activities will, if necessary, be carried out as and when required.

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**Conclusion Five
Registration – Documentation and Deregistration**

The parties confirm that Topic Four of the Conclusions of 27/28 April 2000 concerning documentation, registration and deregistration procedures will apply to this operation in its entirety.

**Conclusion Six
Customs and Immigration Procedures**

The Parties hereby agree that the customs and immigration procedures stipulated in Article IX of the Tri-Partite Agreement of 14 July 2000 will apply to this operation in its entirety.

**Conclusion Seven
Order of Movement for the Operation**

1. Pursuant to the Conclusion on Topic 12 of the Record of the Meeting of 27/28 April 2000 as well as Conclusion Three of this Meeting, the Parties agree to add Gulsa and Lafa to the list of sites from which the operation will start. The list will now read as follows: Lafa, Gulsa, Wad Sharife, Shagarab, Suki, Fau 5, Wad Awad, Mafaza, Hawata. Abu Rakham and Port Sudan, followed by other areas.
2. The first destinations of return to Eritrea will be determined by the Eritrean authorities on the basis of statistics derived from the registration for voluntary repatriation which will be carried out in Sudan.

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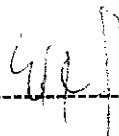
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**Conclusion Eight
Repatriation Food Assistance**

1. WFP will provide the returning refugees a one-time two-month food package (at 2100 Kcal per person/per day), initially in Sudan, with subsequent monthly rations (for 10 months) being provided according to the general ration scale for war and drought affected populations in Eritrea. Furthermore, selective feeding programmes for identified vulnerable groups and specific food for work activities will be supported, as and when necessary.

2. The Government of the State of Eritrea will attempt to meet, from other sources, the deficit between the full ration scale and the ration provided by WFP.


THUS DONE at Khartoum, on 22nd day of March 2001 in three originals in the English Language, all three texts being equally authentic.



**For the Government of the State
of Eritrea**



**For the Government of the Republic
of Sudan**



**For the United Nations High Commissioner
for Refugees**





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ANNEX 1

**INFORMATION LEAFLET
FOR ERITREAN REFUGEES IN THE SUDAN**

**INFORMATION
ON THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF ERITREAN
REFUGEES FROM THE SUDAN AND THEIR
REINTEGRATION IN ERITREA**

BACKGROUND

As you know, most of you left your country because of the conflict and other reasons at the time of the late Emperor Haile Selassie and of the Menghistu regime.

You are also aware that following the defeat of the Menghistu regime in May 1991, a Provisional Government was formed in Eritrea. In April 1993, an internationally supervised Referendum was organised on the future status of Eritrea in which the Eritrean population overwhelmingly decided in favour of independence from Ethiopia. On 24 May 1993 Eritrea declared its independence.

Since May 1993, many of your compatriots have voluntarily repatriated to Eritrea, either on their own or with the help of UNHCR and the international community.

It is to be noted that following the end of hostilities and the recent peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia under the auspices of the Organisation African Unity and the United Nations, the conditions in your regions of origin have improved. The United Nations has now established a peacekeeping mission in both countries to ensure the implementation of the peace accord.

Both the Government of the State of Eritrea and the Government of the Republic of Sudan, as well as UNHCR, would now like to assist those among you who would like to voluntarily return to your homeland, to do so.

This Information Leaflet describes how you will be assisted to return. It also gives you information on the principles agreed between UNHCR and the Governments of Eritrea and Sudan. These principles are meant to ensure that your return is strictly voluntary and that you are not subjected to discriminatory treatment upon your return. This Information Leaflet also outlines in great detail the nature of assistance you will receive when you are back home, and attempts to answer some of the basic questions you may have.

If your questions are not answered in this leaflet, please contact UNHCR in Sudan and/or approach the Eritrean officials that will be visiting your area in the near future.

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THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

1 What is the basis of this voluntary repatriation exercise?

The Governments of Eritrea and Sudan, together with UNHCR, have concluded an agreement referred to as "Tripartite Agreement", which supports the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees in Sudan and tries to address all the practical issues concerning this exercise.

Most importantly, the Agreement guarantees that all returns will be voluntary. It recognises UNHCR's role of supervising the returns and monitoring the treatment of returnees.

2. Who is entitled to return?

All Eritrean nationals are entitled to return to Eritrea, as are their non-Eritrean spouses and their children as well as family members who entirely depend on their support. Individuals who were married to Eritrean nationals and are now widowed are also entitled to return.

3. How will the voluntariness of the decision to return be verified?

Those wishing to return will individually be interviewed and asked to sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form. This exercise will be conducted under UNHCR's supervision. If you don't sign the form, you will not be obliged to return under this program.

4. Am I going to be forced to return?

Absolutely not. No one will be forced to return against his or her will. This is a voluntary return.

5. How can I be sure of my safety upon my return?

UNHCR will monitor your conditions upon return. The Government of Eritrea has accepted, through the Tripartite Agreement already mentioned, that UNHCR will have access to all returnees wherever they may be. Furthermore, as it is the case for all Eritrean nationals in the country, the Government has expressed his commitment to provide protection, once you have returned.

6. Are the areas of return still mined?

Most areas of return are quite safe. However, there is significant risk from mines and unexploded ordnance in certain areas along the Ethiopian – Eritrean border where fighting recently took place. Both the UN Peace-keeping Mission and the Government of Eritrea are conducting demining operations in these areas. The progress made on demining will be assessed on a regular basis with the aim of determining which areas along the border have been cleared and are considered safe for return. It is very important that you seek the guidance of the local authorities in Eritrea regarding the safety of areas to which you wish to return.

7. **To which part of Eritrea am I allowed to return?**

You are free to return to any part of Eritrea you wish. It can be your original area of origin or any other place. You may also, if you wish, return to areas, which were previously identified and prepared for the return, which started in 1994.

8. **How can I know about the conditions in the area where I want to return to?**

The Government of Eritrea, together with UNHCR, has been collecting information about conditions in the various areas in Eritrea, including available community facilities and other services. This information will be available at the registration centres where you can register for voluntary repatriation. If you have questions about conditions in specific areas in Eritrea, please ask the staff undertaking the registration for repatriation. **In addition, your representatives can undertake visits to Eritrea to see the conditions for themselves and come back and report to you.**

8. **How will the registration exercise be conducted?**

Registration Teams, comprising UNHCR staff will conduct registration exercises in the refugee camps and settlements, and designated Centres in urban areas in co-operation with COR and ERREC.

Please keep your copy of the Voluntary Repatriation Form you will receive at the Registration Centre safely. You will need it during all stages of the process. If the information entered on the Voluntary Repatriation Form changes over time, for example when you have a new-born child, please kindly contact UNHCR or COR so that the information can be updated.

9. **What will be the procedure after the registration?**

Once you have been registered, UNHCR and COR, as well as ERREC in Eritrea, will require sufficient time to plan your movement as well as your reception in Eritrea.

Movement plans will therefore be devised and you will be informed in good time as to when repatriation transport will be available for you. **You are requested not-to dispose of your property or abandon your daily activities simply because you have registered to repatriate because of the time that may pass between your registration to go home and the actual movement to Eritrea.**

However, if you are employed and entitled to termination benefits, you should make arrangements with your employer early on to ensure that you receive these benefits before departure. However, this is not a reason to terminate the employment, before your repatriate.

10. **What do I need to do once I have registered?**

It will be important to take care of documents concerning your health, education and other requirements. You should therefore ensure the following: (i). That your children are vaccinated; (ii). That you obtain Birth, Marriage, Death Certificates (in case your relatives

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died while in the Sudan) and health certificates; (iii). That you obtain school and vocational certificates; (iv). That you settle any debts you may owe (as you may not be allowed to depart under Sudanese laws before doing this).

All the Documents that you obtain should be kept safely as you may need them in Eritrea for various purposes.

11. What happens if I want to return home by my own means?

You may do so, if this is more convenient for you and your family. All Eritrean nationals and their families are welcome to come to Eritrea. However, if you have not yet been registered for repatriation, please kindly approach COR and UNHCR and request registration by UNHCR. You will be asked to return your Sudanese refugee ration card and/or Identity Card and you will receive your Voluntary Repatriation Form.

As stated above, it would be also helpful for you to obtain birth, marriage, divorce death and educational certificates before departure.

Upon arrival in Eritrea, please report to ERREC and UNHCR at the designated Reception Centres. There you will show your Voluntary Repatriation Form. You will then be registered by ERREC. Thereafter, you will benefit from the same assistance as those who returned on repatriation convoys. The details of this assistance are described below.

12. Medical screening before departure

Arrangements will be made for everyone to be medically screened before departure. If you are on medication, you will receive adequate drugs to complete your treatment. T. B. patients should take particular note of this point.

Women who have reached the end of their pregnancy, that is, thirty-two weeks or more, will not be allowed to travel and must wait until after delivery. Women who have just given birth should also wait to return until such time that travel does not pose a health risk. This will be determined during the medical screening. Arrangements will be made to ensure that those who cannot travel are not separated from their families.

13. What kind of assistance will my family and I receive?

The following types of assistance will be offered:

A. Transportation and transit assistance

You will be assisted with transportation from where you are now living in Sudan to as close as possible to your final destination of choice in Eritrea. You can take your personal belongings with you. Water food and medical care will be provided during the journey back home and at the reception and, as necessary, transit centre, where you will stay for one day and, if necessary for a maximum period of up to three days.

B. Can I bring to Eritrea all my belongings, including my vehicle or tractor?

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You will be allowed to export from Sudan your personal belongings, including your light vehicle, free from any taxes, charges or other tariffs. Exceptionally, heavy vehicles, tractors and grinding mills will also be free of duties. Once in Eritrea, you'll be also exempted from paying import duties concerning your personal belongings, including your vehicles.

B. Assistance at the Reception and Transit Centres

At the Transit Centre, you will be provided with food, water, medical attention and shelter. Arrangements have also been made for you to be met by members of local Women's, Youth and other groups, who will give you information on their programmes, from which you may wish to benefit in your re-integration efforts.

C. Transportation to the area of your final destination

From the Transit Centre, you will again be assisted to travel to your chosen final destination.

D. Assistance at the final destination point

At your final destination point, you will be assisted with temporary shelter, i.e.: a family tent per household. You will be expected to build your own house.

E. Assistance that will help your integration in Eritrea

Food

You will receive food assistance for a period of two months. After that period, food assistance will be provided in the same amount, form and period as normally provided to IDPs and other eligible Eritreans. Food distribution will be done at a Food Distribution Centre nearest to your area. You will have to present the card given to you by ERREC at the Distribution Centre to be able to obtain food and other assistance.

Non-food items

You should bring along your kitchen and other utensils. However, upon return you will receive a blanket per person, and kerosene stove per household and a water container.

As needed, you will also receive a basic tool set, which will assist you in clearing land and constructing your shelter. This will comprise 1 hoe, 1 axe, 1 spade and 1 sickle per household.

Cash Grant

In order to help you start any economic activity, you will receive an unconditional cash grant of approx. 1,500 Nakfa per household. You don't need to explain for which purposes you intend to use this grant.

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Community-based assistance

Since most of you will be arriving in areas where there are already existing communities, assistance in the form of education (schools), water supplies and medical care as well as other essential physical infrastructure will be given to the communities. **You will be encouraged to participate in the planning committees in your area, which will include the existing local populations. These committees will identify the needs of the community.** By participating in the welfare of your communities, you would be speeding up the process of your own re-integration.

Access to land

The Government of Eritrea will provide land for your homestead and up to two hectares of land, depending on land availability, to those of you, who wish to engage in agricultural activities. If you wish to cultivate more land, this will be made available to you, where local conditions permit. Women will have the same access to land as men.

Since you will receive a conditional cash grant to start economic activities, you will have to make your own arrangements to cultivate your land, if you want to engage in agriculture.

14. Currency and customs regulations

You will be allowed to carry with you the money you own provided you convert it into foreign currency before leaving Sudan.

You are allowed to export your essential personal and household goods without any export duties or other levies. Similarly, you will be able to import these items into Eritrea without paying any import duties. However, this applies to personal belongings for your immediate and personal use. If you have additional items (such as two or three TV sets for example) they will be considered as excess luxury items and they will be taxed.

15. Prohibited articles

You are not allowed to export or import items such as weapons and other illegal commodities. Severe penalties can be imposed and you may be liable to imprisonment.

16. Environmental protection laws in Eritrea

You are reminded that there are strict laws meant to protect the environment in Eritrea. In particular, you should note that the cutting of trees is strictly forbidden unless you have obtained specific permission from the authorities. As part of the assistance package, you will receive a kerosene stove to assist you with your energy needs and five tree seedlings to plant at your homestead.

17. National Service in Eritrea

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With regard to national service, the Government of Eritrea will give due consideration to your specific situation as returnees, since you will need time to settle in Eritrea and you will need to devote your efforts to establishing your livelihood there.

18. Do you have special needs?

If you have special needs, because you are, for example, sick, disabled or have a specific problem that needs to be attended to, please bring this to the attention of the staff which will register you for repatriation. They will try to follow-up and ensure that your specific requirements are met. If you return by your own means, please inform the ERREC and UNHCR staff at the Reception Centres of the same.

19. Do you have any questions?

If you should have any questions, concerning this voluntary repatriation programme, you should ask officers from UNHCR, COR or ERREC. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions to officials from Eritrea who will be involved in the oral information campaigns to be conducted by UNHCR, COR and ERREC.

In short, welcome back home!

This Information Leaflet is jointly issued by the Government of Sudan, the Government of the State of Eritrea and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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AGENDA

**MEETING OF THE
TRIPARTITE REPATRIATION COMMISSION
GOVERNMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SUDAN, THE STATE OF ERITREA AND UNHCR**

KHARTOUM, SUDAN 21 – 22 MARCH 2001

Wednesday, 21 March 2001

10.00 - 10.30 hrs

Item One:

Opening Statements:

- The Delegation of Sudan
- The Delegation of Eritrea
- The UNHCR Delegation

10.30 - 10.45 hrs

Item Two:

Adoption of Agenda

10.45 - 11.00 hrs

Coffee Break (The Chair to decide).

11.00 - 13.00 hrs

Item Three:

The two categories of Eritrean refugees to be repatriated.

Item Four:

Re-affirmation of the Existing Legal Framework for the Voluntary Repatriation of Eritrean Refugees in Sudan: The Tripartite Agreements of 7 April 2000 (Geneva) and 14 July 2000 (Asmara).

13.00 - 14.00 hrs

Lunch (The Chair to decide).

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14.15 – 18.00 hrs

Item Five:

Time Frame and Basic Planning
Assumptions for the Repatriation Operation
from Sudan and the Reintegration
Programme in Eritrea.

Item Six:

Information Campaign

Item Seven:

Registration, Documentation and
Deregistration.

15.30 – 15.45hrs

Coffee Break (The Chair to decide).

15.45 – 18.00

Item Eight:

Customs and Immigration Procedures

Item Nine:

Order of Movement for the Operation

Item Ten: (postponed to 22 March 2001)

Repatriation Food Assistance.

Thursday, 22 March 2001

11.00 - 12.30 hrs

Item Eleven:

Presentation and Adoption of the
Conclusions of the Meeting

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12.30 -13.00 hrs

Item Twelve:

Closing Remarks:

- The Delegation of Eritrea
- The Delegation of Sudan
- The UNHCR Delegation

<END OF MEETING>

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HAUT COMMISSARIAT
POUR LES REFUGIES



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UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES

Bureau du Directeur Régional de l'Est,
la Corne de l'Afrique et la Région des
Grands Lacs

Tél: 251-1-444046, 444103
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Regional Director's Office
For East, Horn of Africa and
the Great Lakes Region

P.O.Box 1076
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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**OPENING STATEMENT
BY MS. WAIRIMU KARAGO
UNHCR REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FOR THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND THE GREAT
LAKES REGION**

**TO THE MEETING OF THE
TRIPARTITE REPATRIATION COMMISSION
KHARTOUM/SUDAN
21 MARCH 2001**

Madam Commissioner,
Mr. Commissioner,
Distinguished Delegates of the Governments of Eritrea and Sudan and
UN Colleagues,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me and the UNHCR delegation to join you, Madam Commissioner, and you, Mr. Commissioner, and your delegations as well as the colleagues from WFP for another Tripartite Meeting aimed at making further progress in the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees currently in the Sudan.

I would also like to thank the Government of Sudan and in particular you, Mr. Commissioner, for hosting this fourth Tripartite Meeting in Khartoum, a city I visited last in mid-year 2000. We are grateful for your generous hospitality and the warm welcome we received in the Sudan.

A lot has been achieved already through our previous three meetings and the action that followed them. While, unfortunately, renewed fighting in areas of potential refugee return forced us to postpone the voluntary repatriation of long-staying Eritrean refugees after the information

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campaign and the initial phase of registration for repatriation in May last year, the Tripartite Agreement signed in April 2000 and the resulting operational conclusions remain a valid framework for our joint action. This in itself is positive and will help us to move ahead.

The new influx of Eritrean refugees into Sudan in May and June last year caused an emergency and, yet again, the Government and people of Sudan received the new refugees with their traditional hospitality and, together with UNHCR and other partners, ensured that no lives were lost and refugees enjoyed international protection and the necessary services. UNHCR is most appreciative of the way these new refugees were received and hosted in the Sudan.

Fortunately, most of the new Eritrean refugees returned when the fighting had ceased and many of them were even able to take advantage of the upcoming planting season in their home areas. Again, we agreed on a tripartite framework for this operation so that this facilitated repatriation operation could be carried out in the true spirit of partnership that characterizes our joint action. The voluntary repatriation of many of the new Eritrean refugees was a big step ahead in our efforts to avoid another protracted refugee situation through early implementation of durable solutions. I would like to commend all those who were involved in this operation, including our NGO partners, for a job well-done under complex circumstances.

Through the repatriation operation for the new Eritrean refugees we have also gained valuable experience in working together to achieve voluntary repatriation as a durable solution and this will help all of us to conduct successfully the upcoming repatriation and reintegration of the remaining Eritrean refugees.

The agreements signed in April and July 2000 and the conclusions of the Tripartite Meetings which have already taken place constitute a solid foundation for the continuation of the programme in 2001 and beyond. What is needed from this meeting is to reaffirm their validity and applicability and to agree on some operational issues which need to be discussed, before the next phase of the operation commences.

As was the case before, time is of essence. Eritrean refugees in the Sudan are eagerly waiting to be assisted to go home. The rainy season, which will complicate the logistics of repatriation movements is only a few months away. Furthermore, donor support for the programme will only

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be forthcoming, once we can show results on the ground and we can demonstrate that the programme is moving ahead smoothly and successfully.

It is therefore important that action follows words, after we conclude this Tripartite Meeting. We are pleased that, once again, the Government of the State of Eritrea is prepared to take part in the voluntary repatriation information campaign, since it is very important that refugees can discuss their aspirations and concerns with their own authorities, who are best placed to address those issues. I am confident, that the information campaign will be followed suit by registration for voluntary repatriation and actual movements back to Eritrea, so that we can live up to the expectations of refugees who are waiting for their chance to re-establish themselves in Eritrea.

Madam Commissioner, Mr. Commissioner, distinguished delegates,

In the meantime, it has become a tradition that WFP joins these tripartite meetings as an important partner in our common endeavours. Without the vital support from WFP in the provision of food to repatriants and returnees in Eritrea, successful reintegration cannot succeed. I am grateful that the colleagues from WFP Sudan and Eritrea are here with us today so that we can agree on modalities for the provision of food aid to returning Eritrean refugees, among the other items on our agenda.

Turning to the current realities facing UNHCR, it is a fact that we will have to conduct this repatriation and reintegration programme in a situation where financial resources are short of needs. This is a problem for UNHCR globally, and not only in this part of the world, and UNHCR Senior Management is exploring how best the difficult financial situation should be dealt with. However, despite all efforts in this regard, it is unlikely that UNHCR will have at its disposal all the resources we would wish to devote to this operation. It is therefore imperative that we use the available resources wisely and to the maximum benefit of those we are here to serve.

In this regard, the involvement of other actors in the reintegration programme in Eritrea is a cornerstone of the strategy, much as UNHCR considers it its mandate to assist the initial reintegration phase through provision of the necessary relief supplies and modest support to vital services. To make reintegration sustainable so that those returning can live in an environment where they can be self-sufficient, have access to

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adequate water for themselves and their animals, their children can go to school and they have access necessary health care and other community services, UNHCR and developmental actors have to join forces. UNHCR action has to be complemented by other programmes in the areas to which refugees will be returning. The Government of the State of Eritrea and UNHCR will therefore have a key-role to play in encouraging other actors to include in their plans and programmes important interventions in areas of refugee return which will help sustainable long-term re-integration.

I would like to again assure you that UNHCR is fully committed to this voluntary repatriation and reintegration operation, the next steps of which, we are here to discuss. We are determined to work with all of you and play our role in making this operation a success, so that the world can see that we are serious in solving the problems of refugees who have been in exile for so long and who deserve to live normal lives as part of the societies in their home areas, rather than being dependent on humanitarian hand-outs.

As you would all agree with me, this region needs success stories and actions that lead to peace and stability. As long as hundreds of thousands of citizens of this region remain in exile due to instability and insecurity, peace and prosperity cannot prevail. In this regard, the return of Eritrean refugees from Sudan would be a move in the right direction.

Madam Commissioner, Mr. Commissioner, distinguished delegates,

In closing, I would, once again, like to express UNHCR's gratitude for the spirit in which the Governments of the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Sudan have addressed the humanitarian crisis last year and worked together in the pursuit of durable solutions for Eritreans in exile. I am confident, that in this spirit, we will conduct a successful fourth Tripartite Meeting, which will be followed by swift implementation of the repatriation and reintegration programme.

Thank you.

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**List of Participants of the Meeting of the Tripartite Repatriation
Commission
21-22 March 2001 at the Hilton Hotel, Khartoum, Sudan**

The Government of the Republic of Sudan

**Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Al Aghbash
Commissioner for Refugees (COR), Sudan**

**Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Hussein Abdelaliem
Deputy Commissioner, COR**

**Mr. Ismail Ibrahim Ismail
Senior Advisor, COR**

**Mr. Mubarak Talha Salih
Director of Protection, COR**

**Mr. Abdelkadir Ibrahim
Director of Administration and Finance, COR**

**Mr. Abdelrahim Ali El Kheir
NGO Coordinator, COR**

The Government of the State of Eritrea

**Ms. Hiwet Zemichael
Commissioner Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC)**

**Mr. Daniel Zeratzion
Director Repatriation, ERREC**

**Mr. Yikealo Mebrahtu
Director Reintegration, ERREC**

**Mr. Mohamed Saleh
Public Relations Officer, ERREC**

**Mr. Ibrahim Said
Director General Relief & Logistics**

**Mr. Mohamed Saleh
First Secretary, Eritrean Embassy, Khartoum**

**Mr. Emnay Suleiman
Eritrean Embassy, Khartoum**

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Mr. Andeberhan Berhe
Eritrean Embassy, Khartoum

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Ms. Wairimu Karago
Regional Director, East and Horn of Africa, Geneva

Mr. K. Z. Hla
Head of Liaison Unit, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva.

Ms. Simon Wolken
Senior Regional Operations Officer

Mr. Ron Mponda
Senior Regional Protection Officer

Mr. Wenceslaus Romani Urasa
Representative, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr. Bellings Sikanda
Head of Sub-Office, Es Showak, Sudan

Mr. Ahmed Warsame
Senior Repatriation Officer, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr. Wycliffe Songwa
Head of Sub Office, Port Sudan

Ms. Jane Muigai
Protection Officer, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr. Tahir Ali
Chief of Mission, Asmara, Eritrea

Dr. Mohamed Dualeh
Head of Sub-Office, Barentu, Eritrea

Mr. Tony Garcia
Senior Protection Officer, Asmara, Eritrea

Mr. A. Daneshvar,
Representative – Sana'a
Yemeni

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Mr. Nicholas Siwingwa
Deputy Country Representative, Khartoum, Sudan

Mr. Kofi Owusu-Tieku
Deputy Country Representative, Asmara, Eritrea

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Date:- 21/03/2001

Madam Karago

Madam Hiwot

Distinguished delegates.

It is a pleasure to all of us here in Sudan to welcome you to this important meeting, which takes place in Khartoum, to look into the repatriation of Eritrean Refugees in Sudan.

This meeting comes as one of series of meetings that we undertook together to consider the same issue, Eritrean Repatriation.

I said in Asmara on April 2000, that the historical relations between Sudan and Eritrea had always played the role of leading our two people to stress the strengthening of this relation. With this understanding we look to the Eritrean Refugees whom we hosted for a long time as our brothers. This reality had always been in our mind, when we were stressing for the last ten years the return of the Eritrean Refugees to their homeland, Eritrea.

Unfortunately during the last few weeks there was a hectic distortion for the image of Sudan on this repatriation for the simple reason that we have stated our position in priorities in terms of the forthcoming exercise of repatriation. I put it on record that we still maintain these priorities.

We have shown our utmost cooperation in all the previous repatriation, and we will do the same for any future operations.

Having said that we would request UNHCR to mobilize enough resources that will lead to the successful conclusion of this repatriation.

& WFP

I thank all UNHCR staff who are here in this meeting, and I thank all the delegates from ERREC in their second home Sudan.

MA

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24/27

Honorable Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Al-Agbash,
Commissioner for Refugees, Sudan

Honorable Ms Wairimu Karago
UNHCR Regional Director for East & Horn of Africa & the Great Lakes
Region

Honorable Mr. W. R. Urasa
UNHCR representative in the Sudan

Honorable Mr. Tahir Ali
UNHCR chief of mission in Eritrea

Delegates and Colleagues,

Please allow me to thank the Sudanese government for attending two consecutive meeting in Asmara, to discuss in detail for the repatriation of our people back to their homeland. The people and the government of Sudan had given all humanitarian and social support for decades to our people, which will always be remembered in the history of our struggle for independence.

Again I would like to thank you for the warm welcome that has been forwarded for my colleagues and me since we touched the Sudanese soil. And I appreciate you for hosting these wonderful meeting of the three parties here in Khartoum.

During the past three years the Ethiopian government's choice remained for war instead of peaceful solution to the border conflict. As the conflict reached its highest peak last year, thousands of our people were displaced internally and to the Sudan. As usual, the people and Government of Sudan did every thing they can to accommodate our people. Again I would like to thank the people and the Government of Sudan for the tireless effort they have shown during the crisis. The cooperation of speedy repatriation of most newly displaced Eritreans is also highly appreciated.

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Honorable delegates,

In this tripartite meeting here in Khartoum, I would like to reaffirm Eritrea's full and unreserved commitment to the legal and operational framework established already through the previous two agreements and operational conclusions reached in April and August 2000 in Asmara. These are the corner stones for continued cooperation on which the three parties shall build.

In last year's repatriation operation of the newly displaced refugees, we have gained some experience, which will help to look into the weaknesses and strengths.

The weaknesses that was identified were:

1. Starting repatriation without adequate preparations
2. Lack of logistical coordination
3. Lack of proper information to the returnees
4. Shortage of manpower and facilities

The strengths were:

1. Quick implementation / Action of the agreement
2. Deployment of enough trucks
3. Well organized reception centers, and timely movement of people to their final destination
4. Good cooperation and understanding between the implementing partners.

Dear Partners and delegates,

After three years of unexpected war with Ethiopia, the peace agreement was signed on December 12, 2000 in Algiers. To make this peace tangible the efforts of the International Community, UN bodies, OAU and the Government of Algeria was immense. Even though some difficulties appeared after the signing of the agreement, it is properly handled by the UN mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia. Eritrea will no longer be a refugee producing country based on its policy of peaceful coexistence and respect of national integrity of neighboring countries. Eritrea will work with all its neighbors for durable solutions to any conflicts or disputes that is occurring or may occur in the future.

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[unclear]
USA

26/27

Even though our region has been heavily dependent on relief-aid, this doesn't mean that our region is potentially poor. This region has full capacity to feed not only its people, but it can also support others in need. The instability of the region has affected all of us equally, and it is to be remembered that Sudan was once to be called the breadbasket of Africa. Development and prosperity can be not achieved, unless peace prevails in our region.

Honorable Delegates and Colleagues,

Eritrea is waiting to receive back all its nationals with open arms as soon as possible. The warm cooperation of Sudan and UNHCR in this regard, and the true partnership already established will make the operation smooth and successful.

After this tripartite meeting, Eritrea wants to see an operation which is fast and progressive. In this regard we look forward to taking immediate steps related to information campaign, registration for repatriation, and actual movements so that a considerable number of refugees can return home before the rainy season starts. This quick action will help returnees to catch up the farming season and help them produce some of their requirements for the next season.

Attainment of durable solutions need strong commitment and partnerships of all relevant actors, mainly the Sudanese Government, the State of Eritrea, UNHCR and other UN bodies.

I appreciate the presence of WFP in this meeting and the role they played in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Eritrea. I am sure also that WFP's previous commitment to support the returnees through provision of adequate food is in place. Besides I would like to call upon all UN agencies and NGOs to work closely with the Eritrean Government to reintegrate the returnees, complimenting to UNHCR's efforts.

Dear Partners and Colleagues

I am confident that this meeting will come with sound plan followed by swift operational action thereafter. I would like to reiterate again my thanks for the people and the Government of Sudan for facilitating this meeting.

MA

UNHCR

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27/2

On behalf of the Government and the Commission, I would like to express our deep gratitude for your commitments and dedication to promote lasting solutions to the Eritrean refugees in the Sudan back to their homeland.

Thank you very much

Hiwet Zemichael

Commissioner
March 21, 2001

NA (114) WSA

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CLOSING REMARKS
BY MS. WAIRIMU KARAGO
UNHCR REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FOR THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND THE GREAT
LAKES REGION

TO THE MEETING OF THE
TRIPARTITE REPATRIATION COMMISSION
KHARTOUM/SUDAN
22 MARCH 2001

Madam Commissioner,
Mr. Commissioner,
Distinguished Delegates of the Governments of Eritrea and Sudan and
UN Colleagues,

The fourth meeting of our Tripartite Repatriation Commission has been successfully concluded in the same spirit of cooperation and partnership that has characterized our previous meetings. I would like to thank you, Madam Commissioner, and you, Mr. Commissioner, as well as the members of your delegations and the colleagues from WFP for their contribution to this success.

Together, we have broadened the foundation for the attainment of durable solutions through voluntary repatriation for Eritrean refugees in the Sudan. In addition to repatriation and reintegration, this concept of durable solutions does, however, also encompass dealing with the effects the long presence of refugees has had on refugee-hosting areas in the Sudan. Tangible and visible progress on voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Eritrean refugees will, as was said during this meeting,

help us raise the financial resources for this operation. UNHCR fully recognizes the importance of dealing with the issue of refugee-affected areas and, much as we cannot do it alone, the concerns of the Government of the Republic of Sudan in this regard are well understood. We will use our best endeavours to capitalize on the success of the upcoming repatriation operation to also include resource mobilization for refugee-affected areas in our strategy. The more we can show that we are moving towards solving this protracted refugee situation in a constructive way, the better our chances are to help the Government of Sudan address their concerns related to refugee-hosting areas. Part of this strategy is the sustainability of interventions in areas which used to host refugees. The relevant authorities of the Regional States and Line Ministries should, as much as possible, be involved in this process so that any investment in refugee-affected areas has a lasting impact.

While this meeting focused on the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan, we should not forget that there are also Eritrean refugees in Djibouti and Yemen who are equally welcome at home and awaiting their chance to return. This has always been part of our plans and it was my pleasure to have our Representative in Yemen with us during the meeting to benefit from our deliberations. This is one step to work towards common approaches and standards regarding the return of Eritrean refugees from the different countries of asylum. The plight of Eritrean refugees and the move towards a solution to their problems is regional and has to be addressed as such. I stand ready to do what UNHCR can to assist in this process.

The ERREC Commissioner stressed in her opening statement that all Eritrean refugees are welcome at home and it is a well-known fact that the circumstances which made these refugees seek safety in the Sudan have changed for the better. As part of the strategy of the operation we have been discussing during the last two days, the time will therefore come, when their status as refugees has to be reviewed and the ceased circumstances cessation clause be applied in line with the international refugee instruments.

But before we get to this juncture, let us together cease this opportunity to take all necessary action to enable Eritreans in exile to exercise their human right to return to their country. We owe it to them.

Madam Commissioner, Mr. Commissioner, dear colleagues, this meeting is indeed a major step forward towards lasting solutions for Eritrean refugees, but much remains to be done. It is time to translate agreements into action and I am sure we will start doing so immediately.

Again, I thank the Government of Sudan, and in particular you, Mr. Commissioner, for hosting this important meeting.

Thank you.

22/03/2001

Madam Carago

Madam Hawot

Representative of W.F.P

Distinguished delegates

In this Closing Session, I would like to highlight some points in relation to the refugees in Sudan.

Sudan being a country with nine neighbouring countries, this sheer geographical fact, together with the receptive culture of our Sudanese People had opened the doors of Sudan for those who sought asylum in Sudan. At a time the numbers of those refugees went over one million, few of them were put in organized settlements, the majority are spontaneous settlers, both in Urban and Rural Centers.

Sudan had through the last three decades, requested the international community to push on the area of the durable solutions for those refugees. During the major changes that took place in the **HORN** in the beginning of the nineties we took the initiative to make the repatriation possible for both Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees.

We are pleased to see that we are making now some progress in the Eritrean Repatriation.

It is unfortunate for us, here in Sudan, that this repatriation comes at a time, when **UNHCR** is undergoing financial problems. We hope that we join our hands to overcome these difficulties.

This is also unfortunate because Sudan for the last few years had been continuously hammering on the issue of Refugee Affected Areas, high among them is the problem of environment.

The deliberations of yesterday and today had given a chance to all of us to voice their concerns, which will be addressed in the repatriation operations.

I repeat what I said in Asmara, our success will be depend on the realistic approach in the implementation of such a huge operation.

I thank all of you **UNHCR, ERREC, W.F.P** and all other guests.

Dear Mohamed Warrame

As per the discussing made with Wendy please find the closing statement.
Mawia 26/04/01
out/04/01

~~Attn. Belai~~
Attn. Mr. Mohamed Warrame.

01/ERTAS/HCR/FAX 0164

Honorable Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Al-Agbashi,
Commissioner for Refugees, Sudan

Honorable Ms. Wairimu Karago
UNHCR Regional Director of for East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region

Honorable Mr. W.R. Urasa
UNHCR representative in the Sudan

Honorable Mr. Tahir Ali
UNHCR chief of mission in Eritrea

Delegates and Colleagues,

Thank you for the hospitality during our stay in the Sudan.

Considering the conclusions reached yesterday and the reaffirmation of earlier agreements we now have a solid basis for action that paves the way for all Eritrean refugees in the Sudan, to return home. We are confident that the peace process with Ethiopia will move ahead and will further add to the peace and stability that will help the durable reintegration of Eritreans away from home.

I would like to reiterate that the Eritrean refugees currently hosted in the Sudan are all welcome to join their fellow-countrymen and women, who either stayed in the country or returned in earlier years, to help rebuild and develop their motherland.

Therefore, in our view, the Eritreans who currently find themselves in the Sudan are no longer refugees as such, but rather citizens of Eritrea awaiting their return home.

We look forward to returning to the Sudan soon to conduct the information campaign on the repatriation and reintegration operation in the refugee camps and other settlements. The Government of the State of Eritrea is interested to discuss with its citizens in exile so as to ensure that they are informed of what pertains in their home country and that they can also voice whatever issues they would like to be clarified. We actually look forward to this process of interacting with our brothers and sisters in the Sudan.

We thank the Government of Sudan and UNHCR in advance for their cooperation in this regard.

As we agreed, the information campaign will be followed by registration and return movements. We are confident that we will see the first convoys crossing the border soon. Action speaks louder than words and this is true also for refugees who want to see that what we have put on paper today and in previous meetings will translate into the fulfillment of their right to return to their country. I am 100% sure, by working together there is nothing that can stop to make it real.

Thank you very much again.

Hiwet Zemichael
Commissioner
March 22, 2001