

Whereas: the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was established as a temporary agency of the UN and is therefore dependent on voluntary contributions for its operations; and

Whereas: the current workload of UNHCR is expanding rather than contracting with 21 million refugees and over 100 million displaced people requiring its services; and

Whereas: UNHCR uses as a guideline that 75% of the world's refugees are women and children, with this figure possibly rising to 90% when the men die or are killed, imprisoned or drafted into an army; and

Whereas: Canada's contribution ranks only # 11 in per capita giving (\$.63) among industrialized states (US – \$1.00, Norway \$1.20 in '99) and is earmarked for more "politically attractive" regions of the world, thereby limiting UNHCR's flexibility and having particularly adverse effects in the neediest areas in Africa; and

Whereas: countries under economic sanctions are frequently host to large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries (e.g. 31,400 refugees assisted by UNHCR in Iraq and 1.4 million in Iran); and

Whereas: funds for refugees are distributed by UNHCR to those in need rather than through governments or government agencies of the host countries; and

Whereas: it is frequently more productive, particularly in the case of women refugees for the UNHCR to involve women's organizations in the administration and distribution of relief funds; therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as its policy the principle that Canada should financially support the work of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); and be it further

RESOLVED: that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as its policy that such contribution should not be limited by being earmarked for particular areas of the world, thereby limiting the flexibility UNHCR needs to allocate assistance efficiently and where the need is greatest; and be it further

RESOLVED: that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

1. increase substantially its contribution to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) without taking monies from other areas of overseas development; and
2. cease designating such funds for only specific areas of the world thus limiting the flexibility of the UNHCR.