

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe inside. The top bulb is dark blue, and the bottom bulb is light blue. The globe is centered in the narrow neck of the hourglass. The top bulb has a dark blue cap. The bottom bulb has a light blue cap.

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Report RL31690

*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

Rhoda Margesson and Johanna Bockman, fore

Updated January 3, 2003

**Abstract.** UNHCR provides legal protection, implements long-term solutions, and coordinates emergency humanitarian relief for refugees and other displaced persons around the world. Currently, UNHCR faces a series of challenges: the protection of displaced populations that are not technically refugees and thus fall outside the mandate of UNHCR; availability of resources; a worldwide asylum crisis; accusations of misconduct by UNHCR employees; and the security of refugees and UN workers. Issues of particular concern to Congress are funding shortages at UNHCR, burdensharing, and avenues for U.S. influence within UNHCR.

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# CRS Report for Congress

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## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

**January 3, 2003**

Rhoda Margesson  
Foreign Affairs Analyst  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

Johanna Bockman  
Research Associate  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

# United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

## Summary

Established in 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides legal protection, implements long-term solutions, and coordinates emergency humanitarian relief for refugees and other displaced persons around the world. At the beginning of 2002, the populations of concern to UNHCR totaled 19.8 million people, which included 12 million refugees. Currently, UNHCR faces a series of challenges: the protection of displaced populations that are not technically refugees and thus fall outside the mandate of UNHCR; availability of resources; a worldwide asylum crisis; accusations of misconduct by UNHCR employees; and the security of refugees and U.N. workers. Issues of particular concern to Congress are funding shortages at UNHCR, burdensharing, and avenues for U.S. influence within UNHCR. This report will be updated periodically.

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# United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

## Background

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the U.N. agency dedicated to the protection of refugees and other populations displaced by conflict, famine, and natural disasters.<sup>1</sup> This report describes the mandate, operations, and budget of UNHCR. It looks at the challenges facing the organization and issues of concern for Congress.<sup>2</sup> UNHCR provides legal protection, implements long-term solutions, and coordinates emergency humanitarian relief for refugees and other displaced persons. An understanding of UNHCR and its challenges is particularly relevant today with the possibility of war in Iraq, which might create new populations of refugees and other displaced persons, and the continuing refugee situations in Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Issues of particular concern to Congress are funding shortages at UNHCR, burdensharing, and avenues for U.S. influence within UNHCR.

**About UNHCR.** Established by the U.N. General Assembly in 1950 and made operational in 1951, UNHCR is mandated to lead and coordinate international action for the protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems worldwide. The current High Commissioner is Ruud Lubbers, a former Dutch prime minister, who began his five-year term in January 2001.

UNHCR is headquartered in Geneva and employs over 5,000 staff in more than 110 countries. Its governing body, the Executive Committee, approves the High Commissioner's assistance programs, advises the High Commissioner, and oversees UNHCR finances and administration. The Executive Committee meets every year and has 61 members, all of whom are representatives of governments, including the United States. A smaller Standing Committee meets every three or four months. UNHCR is mainly supported by voluntary contributions from governments.

**UNHCR's Mandate.** Refugees are granted a special status under international law. Once an individual is considered a refugee, that individual automatically has certain rights, and states that are parties to the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the

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<sup>1</sup> There are many international actors involved in various aspects of the problems presented by refugees and internally displaced persons. These include the United Nations, other international organizations (IOs), intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private voluntary organizations.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on UNHCR, see its website: [<http://www.unhcr.ch>]. For further information on U.S. refugee policy, see CRS Report RL31689, *U.S. International Refugee Assistance: Issues for Congress*, by Rhoda Margesson.

Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and/or its 1967 Protocol are obligated to provide certain resources and protection.<sup>3</sup> UNHCR ensures these rights, works to find permanent solutions for refugees, and coordinates immediate humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR was established to help resettle European refugees after World War II, and its mandate reflects this history.<sup>4</sup> It became the institutional mechanism for the implementation of the 1951 Convention. Under the 1951 Convention, a refugee is legally defined as a person fleeing his or her country because of persecution or “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”<sup>5</sup> The central rights accorded to refugees are non-rejection of asylum seekers at the border, non-forced repatriation (non-refoulement), admission to safety, access to fair and efficient procedures for determination of refugee status, assurance of the same rights and basic help received by any other foreigner who is a legal resident, and appropriate lasting solutions.<sup>6</sup>

The 1951 Convention limits the definition of refugees to those created by events occurring prior to 1951.<sup>7</sup> In response to the emergence of large refugee movements since 1951, the 1967 Protocol incorporates the measures included in the 1951 Convention, but imposes no time or geographical limits. States may be a party to one or both instruments. UNHCR often works with states on national laws to implement provisions of these international treaties and argues that international law overrides other bilateral agreements that may exist. Enforcement of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol remains a challenge.

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<sup>3</sup> 138 countries are party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol. The United States is only party to the Protocol and not the Convention. See *Justification to Congress for 2003* by Department of State’s Population, Refugee, and Migration Bureau: [<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/14382.pdf>].

<sup>4</sup> Within the U.N. system, the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also protects refugees and provides humanitarian aid. However, this agency is completely separate from UNHCR and works only with Palestinian refugees.

<sup>5</sup> *Text of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Chapter 1, Article 1 (A) 2.

<sup>6</sup> “Who is a refugee?,” Basic Facts, UNHCR webpage ([<http://www.unhcr.ch>]); Susan Martin, “Global migration trends and asylum,” *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, Working Paper No. 41, October 30, 2001, [<http://www.jha.ac/articles/u041.htm>]. The principle of “non-refoulement” means that “No contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” *Text of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Chapter 1, Article 33.1. The issue of non-refoulement is also considered part of customary international law.

<sup>7</sup> *Text of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Chapter 1, Article 1 (B) 1.

Over time, the U.N. General Assembly has passed resolutions expanding UNHCR's involvement to those escaping armed conflict, generalized violence, foreign aggression, and other circumstances.<sup>8</sup> While UNHCR's mandate is to protect refugees (and by legal definition, refugees have crossed an international border because of persecution or a well-founded fear of being persecuted) it now provides assistance to a broader group known as "persons of concern" to UNHCR.

## Current Situation

**Persons of Concern.** UNHCR estimates as of January 1, 2002, indicate that there are 19.8 million persons of concern worldwide. This category includes refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers, stateless persons, and others. Compared with the year before, this number has decreased by 2 million, as many refugees have returned to their home countries.

Refugees	12 million	61%
Internally Displaced Persons	5.3 million	26%
Asylum Seekers	940,800	5%
Returned Refugees	467,700	2%
Returned IDPs	241,000	1%
Various	1 million	5%

When refugees begin to return to their home countries, UNHCR often provides assistance to these "returnees" and monitors their well-being. UNHCR may provide transportation, a start-up package (which may contain such items as cash grants, farm tools, and seeds), and assistance rebuilding homes and schools. Monitoring of their well-being rarely continues longer than two years.

Unlike refugees who seek asylum outside their country of citizenship, internally displaced persons have not crossed an international border but remain inside their own country. Under international law, IDPs do not have the same protection as refugees. IDPs fall into the gaps between the mandates of different agencies. By default, UNHCR has provided assistance and some protection to IDPs, but it has argued that it lacks the capacity and resources to cope systematically with the needs of IDPs in addition to its refugee caseload. The plight of this group has gained international recognition as a problem that needs to be addressed.

Asia	8.8 million
Europe	4.9 million
Africa	4.2 million
N. America	1.1 million
Latin America and Carribean	765,400
Oceania	81,300
Total	19.8 million

There are other groups requiring assistance. Asylum seekers are people who flee their home country and seek sanctuary in a second state. They apply for asylum — which is the right to be recognized as a refugee — and receive legal protection and material assistance. UNHCR helps these asylum seekers, whose formal status has not yet been determined. In addition to asylum seekers, there are other refugee-like populations. For example, UNHCR assists stateless persons, such as those from the

<sup>8</sup> 2002 General Appeal, UNHCR, p. 11: [http://www.unhcr.ch.]

former Soviet Union who have not been able to obtain citizenship in any of the former republics.

**UNHCR's Role.** UNHCR has three main functions. First, it provides legal protection to those who fall within its mandate. Governments establish procedures to determine refugee status and related rights in accordance with their own legal systems. UNHCR offers advice and non-binding guidelines to these governments.<sup>9</sup> In countries, which are not party to international refugee treaties but request UNHCR assistance, UNHCR may determine refugee status and offer its own protection and assistance.

Second, UNHCR seeks permanent solutions to refugee situations. In general, there are three solutions for refugees: 1) voluntary repatriation, 2) local integration in the country of first asylum, and 3) resettlement from the country of first asylum to a third country. UNHCR prefers voluntary repatriation, whereby refugees return to their home countries. If repatriation is impossible, then UNHCR seeks either local integration or, if this is impossible, resettlement in a third country.

Third, UNHCR also coordinates numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide emergency humanitarian relief to refugees. This relief includes shelter, food, and basic medical care.

UNHCR also carries out a variety of other activities. For example, in the past UNHCR has provided training for border guards on how to handle refugee situations, developed an intergovernmental emergency response team for greater integration and coordination, and resolved particularly sensitive situations between governments and those seeking asylum. Some of these situations involved behind-the-scene negotiations and discussions.

**UNHCR Operations.** As humanitarian crises became more complex through the 1990s, UNHCR began working with a wider number and variety of organizations. Within the U.N. system, UNHCR works most closely with the World Food Program (WFP), the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. UNHCR also coordinates with international organizations (IOs), such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). UNHCR works with over 500 NGOs that provide much of the operational support for refugees.

In the past decade, UNHCR has dealt with massive population movements, including those from Rwanda, the Balkans, and Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghans have lived for years in refugee camps, partly supported by UNHCR, in Pakistan and

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<sup>9</sup> Some states have *ad hoc* procedures in place that give individuals an opportunity for a determination to be made as to whether they have a well-founded fear of persecution that can be recognized under the refugee mandate.



Iran. Since September 11, 2001, a reverse situation has taken place as many more Afghans have returned home from Pakistan and Iran than were expected, putting a strain on UNHCR programs and leading to a reduction in the resources provided to these returnees.<sup>10</sup>

UNHCR is putting together a contingency plan for Iraq in the event of a war.<sup>11</sup> Currently, while there are a small number of NGOs in Iraq, U.N. agencies provide the bulk of humanitarian assistance in the form of food and medicine. Reportedly, the United Nations estimates that over 60 percent of 24 million people in Iraq receive monthly food distributions.<sup>12</sup> Depending on its scope and duration, war could create a humanitarian emergency with large population movements across borders or within Iraq itself.

**Budget.** UNHCR depends almost entirely on voluntary contributions to fund its operations. Of UNHCR's budget, 98% comes from voluntary contributions from governments and other donors, such as foundations, corporations, and the public at large. Two per cent comes from the U.N. regular budget and covers administrative personnel costs in the Geneva headquarters. Nearly 95% of the total contributions to UNHCR come from 15 donors (14 governments and the European Union).<sup>13</sup>

The Calendar Year (CY) 2002 budget of UNHCR is currently \$1.05 billion, composed of \$801.7 million from the annual budget, \$219 million from supplementals to cover new emergency needs, \$20 million from the U.N. regular budget, and \$7 million from a young professional recruitment program. The CY2003 UNHCR appeal is for \$837 million for the annual budget and \$39.5 million for supplementals.

## Challenges for UNHCR

**Funding.** Since 1999, UNHCR's annual budget has seen shortfalls, which have required cuts in planned programs.<sup>14</sup> Since UNHCR relies on voluntary contributions, it depends on the annual generosity of its donors and cannot anticipate from year to year how much money will be available nor how much it will have to spend. Some pledged contributions are also late. These problems create a general cash availability crisis and budget shortfalls. In February 2002, UNHCR froze its administrative budgets. As of June 30, 2002, only \$678 million had been received as income, which led to an 11% decrease in planned programs. The UNHCR annual budget was cut in CY2002 from just over \$800 million to \$710 million. These

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<sup>10</sup> Pam O'Toole. "U.N. Seeks Extra Afghan Aid," BBC World Service, June 13, 2002. [[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/2044027.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2044027.stm)].

<sup>11</sup> See [<http://www.unhcr.ch>].

<sup>12</sup> "UN sees huge aid needs in case of war on Iraq," *Reuters*, December 23, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to the European Union, these include the United States, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Finland and France.

<sup>14</sup> *2002 Global Appeal*, p. 16.

funding shortfalls have most seriously affected programs in Africa, as well as in Thailand, Papua New Guinea, and the Caucasus.<sup>15</sup>

The unpredictability of global conflicts also contributes to UNHCR's financial difficulties. UNHCR cannot fully anticipate the extent and costs of new refugee emergencies. During CY2002, UNHCR had to make a supplemental appeal to fund new emergency needs in Afghanistan, Macedonia, East Timor, Liberia, Angola, and Zambia, as well as new programs to protect U.N. personnel. For CY2003, UNHCR has made another supplemental appeal. UNHCR has introduced new mechanisms to improve its funding flows, including the creation of an operational reserve to cover some emergencies and other unexpected costs.

**Earmarking.** Countries often earmark their funds for specific programs. The United States earmarks 97% of its contributions with 25% tightly earmarked (to be used only for specific countries or types of activities) and 72% lightly earmarked (allocated for use within specified geographic regions). Other countries tightly earmark a larger proportion of their contributions, such as the European Commission, which does so for its entire contribution. In contrast, the Netherlands provides 65% of its contribution in unrestricted funds.<sup>16</sup> Tight earmarking, in particular, means that some programs are well funded and other programs experience shortages. For example, countries provided a high level of funding earmarked to the Kosovo crisis, but African crises have not received the same level of funding.<sup>17</sup> Countries that tightly earmark "appear to view UNHCR as an implementing partner rather than a global multilateral agency with a universal mandate."<sup>18</sup>

**Internally Displaced Persons.** High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers has reportedly stated that UNHCR will care for IDPs only under certain conditions and only if UNHCR has adequate resources: "I will not say that UNHCR will care for all IDPs. I do not believe in that at all."<sup>19</sup> Instead, High Commissioner Lubbers seeks a broader response from the U.N. system and the international community. The lack of a designated organization mandated to focus on IDPs has resulted in an inconsistent and often incomplete response to IDP crises.<sup>20</sup> A number of questions remain unresolved. Which organization(s) should take on this role? What kind of protective legal mechanism might be established to provide for IDPs in much the same way the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol have done for refugees?

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<sup>15</sup> Some European countries have contributed new funds. "More money trickles in for U.N. refugee agency after urgent appeal," *Agence France-Presse*, October 25, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> "Earmarking Patterns in 2001," [<http://www.unhcr.ch>].

<sup>17</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> *2002 Global Appeal*, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Ruud Lubbers in *Refugees* magazine: [<http://www.unhcr.ch/un&ref/lubbers/future.htm>].

<sup>20</sup> Loescher, Gil, *The UNHCR and World Politics: A Perilous Path*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

**Asylum Crisis.** UNHCR has been coping with increased numbers of asylum seekers. At the same time, states are less willing to provide asylum. Developing countries host the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees. The top five refugee-hosting countries are Pakistan, Iran, Germany, Tanzania, and the United States. However, the countries with the most refugees per 1,000 inhabitants are Armenia, Guinea, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Republic of the Congo, and Djibouti. When one takes into account GDP, those countries with the largest refugee populations per \$1 million of GDP are Armenia, Guinea, Tanzania, Zambia, and Congo.<sup>21</sup> These countries have generously accepted refugees and often receive international assistance from UNHCR. However, the international community does not cover all the costs associated with large refugee populations. These countries and many others have become less willing to take in asylum seekers because they already have substantial refugee populations, face increasing economic problems, and worry about perceived threats to domestic security.

Even developed countries are less willing to accept asylum seekers. The European Union, for example, sought to stem the flow of asylum seekers by promoting regional protection (relying on safe havens and other zones in the region of origin) and interpreting narrowly the definition of refugees (for example, excluding those persecuted by non-state actors).<sup>22</sup> These measures may have the unintended consequence of expanding illegal migration, migrant trafficking, and organized crime, as refugees under duress seek other avenues of asylum.<sup>23</sup>

**Accusations of Misconduct.** In November 2001, UNHCR requested an investigation into allegations of sexual exploitation of refugees by its own aid workers in West Africa. The resulting report in July 2002 could not verify the allegations, but found 10 cases of sexual exploitation, of which one case involved a U.N. Volunteer. Even though no allegations against U.N. staff members have been substantiated, the report does reveal that sexual exploitation occurs in refugee camps perhaps due to a lack of day-to-day UNHCR management and the conditions of camp life. Through 2002 and 2003, UNHCR is implementing a series of reforms to stop sexual exploitation among refugees.<sup>24</sup>

**Security.** In some regional and civil wars, combatants have used refugees as pawns in their overall strategy. For example, some experts argue that in Kosovo Milosovic and other leaders may have purposely created large-scale refugee crises

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<sup>21</sup> "Funding UNHCR's Programmes," *UNHCR Global Report 2000*, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Conference "Recent European Union Initiatives to Stem the Flow of Asylum Seekers and Migrants," October 9, 1998: [<http://www.ceip.org>].

<sup>23</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers has recently proposed a "Convention Plus" approach as one possible mechanism for dealing with the wide range of refugee and migration challenges. See UNHCR website ([<http://www.unhcr.ch>]), News, Press Releases, September 13, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> "Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the investigation into sexual exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa," United Nations document, A/57/465, October 11, 2002.

to shape the outcome of the war and manipulate the response by the international community. As a result, refugees may be seen as central to the objectives and strategies of war, and yet many remain innocent victims caught in the crossfire.

In many cases, refugees seek to escape violence, but violence often follows them to refugee camps. These camps may house rival ethnic groups and armed rebels as in Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan in the 1990s, may be invaded by rebel forces as is currently the case in Uganda, and may not be able to protect refugees from sexual exploitation and general violence. UNHCR has sought to protect refugees and its workers from this violence, but some argue that more needs to be done.

Since UNHCR often operates in the midst of wars, humanitarian assistance to refugees is not always viewed by the combatants as a neutral act.<sup>25</sup> UNHCR and other humanitarian actors are increasingly perceived as taking sides. Further aggravating these problems, humanitarian agencies have needed to work with military forces, which also increasingly provide humanitarian assistance (as was the case in Macedonia during the Kosovo conflict). The risk, some argue, is that the humanitarian assistance community and refugees they protect may appear to be parties to the conflict.<sup>26</sup> As a result of these trends, some U.N. humanitarian aid workers have become targets in civil wars. To improve security to its personnel, the United Nations established at the end of 2001 a new Emergency and Security Service program, of which each U.N. agency pays a portion of the costs. UNHCR will pay \$2 million for this program, as well as another \$7 million for other security programs.<sup>27</sup> UNHCR has included the costs of these programs in its budget appeal for CY2003.

## Issues for Congress

**Adequate Funding.** The U.S. government is the largest contributor to UNHCR, representing at least 25% of all contributions.<sup>28</sup> The largest share of U.S. contributions is voluntary.<sup>29</sup> In FY2002, the U.S. government contributed \$255 million to UNHCR. Until FY2003 funding has been appropriated, programs will continue to operate at FY2002 funding levels. A key concern is whether UNHCR

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<sup>25</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2000. *The State of the World's Refugees: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 282-283.

<sup>26</sup> "Report of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees: Questions related to refugees and displaced persons and the humanitarian question," Speech delivered by Armas Rahola to the U.N. General Assembly, November 19, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> *2003 Global Appeal*, UNHCR, p. 51: [<http://www.unhcr.ch>].

<sup>28</sup> Arthur E. Dewey, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration, stated, "We try to be reliable in the US Government by using the multilateral system and we contribute 25 percent minimum, of the refugee costs of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees." "Reconstruction and Humanitarian Efforts in Afghanistan" Briefing, August 29, 2002: [<http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/rm/13187.htm>].

<sup>29</sup> Regular assessed U.N. dues cover the administrative costs of UNHCR operations.

will receive adequate contributions from the United States in FY2003. The State Department's Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) Bureau expects to have refugee needs equal to FY2002, and there could be a significant shortage in refugee program funding, including funding to UNHCR. Any additional funds would depend on the possibility of a supplemental appropriation (with a likely delay in funding of UNHCR programs). Furthermore, many countries follow the U.S. lead in making their own voluntary contributions. If the United States lowers its contributions, other countries may follow suit. In general, both the Executive branch and Congress value the work of UNHCR. For example, the Senate Committee on Appropriations' most recent foreign operations report stated that the Committee "strongly supports" the work of UNHCR, is "deeply concerned" by the large budget shortfall, and is "alarmed that this shortfall is beginning to adversely impact field operations in a number of regions."<sup>30</sup>

### U.S. Voluntary Contributions to UNHCR

(in millions of \$)

FY90	\$	104	FY97	\$	241
FY91		206	FY98		254
FY92		241	FY99		293
FY93		293	FY00		245
FY94		255	FY01		245
FY95		227	FY02		255
FY96		262	FY03		*

\* Figures not yet available.

Authorization for participation in the UNHCR program is through the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 (P.L. 87-510), as amended. Authorization is found in the Department of State authorization bill, which is determined by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House Committee on International Relations. Appropriations for UNHCR programs are provided in the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill to the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) Account and to the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) Fund, which are overseen by the State Department.<sup>31</sup>

**Burden Sharing.** How much of UNHCR's expenses should the United States cover? According to U.S. Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration Arthur E. Dewey, the European Union has not made adequate contributions to UNHCR, providing only 15% of its budget, in contrast to the 25% contributed by the United States. Through its European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the European Union has distributed humanitarian assistance through NGOs, instead of through multilateral agencies like UNHCR. According to Dewey, ECHO should contribute the same level to UNHCR as the United States.<sup>32</sup> However, individual European governments also provide money directly to UNHCR.

<sup>30</sup> S.Rept. 107-219, *Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2003*, July 24, 2002, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Other activities funded through the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) Account include: overseas refugee assistance; the costs of processing refugees for admission to the United States and the initial period of resettlement; aid to refugees resettling in Israel; and administrative expenses of the Department of State's Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) Bureau.

<sup>32</sup> "Reconstruction and Humanitarian Efforts in Afghanistan" Briefing, August 29, 2002: [http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/rm/13187.htm].

According to UNHCR, ECHO and the European Union member governments have collectively provided about \$70 million more than the United States to UNHCR in FY2002. The main issue appears to be whether ECHO and the member governments should redirect more funds from their own bilateral programs into multilateral programs like UNHCR.

**Asylum.** The U.S. government has reduced the number of refugees admitted into the United States. Until 1995, the ceiling for admissions was over 100,000. This ceiling has fallen to 70,000 for 2003.<sup>33</sup> These reductions should be considered within the context of the broader international asylum crisis. In addition, U.S. response to asylum seekers and protection of refugees will likely impact its ability to influence other countries' behavior with regard to the protection of asylum seekers.

**U.S. Influence.** Congress has sought to make certain that specific programs and geographical areas receive adequate resources. The House Committee on International Relations has emphasized protecting Afghan refugees, East Timorese refugees, and refugees in Africa.<sup>34</sup> The U.S. government influences the activities of the UNHCR in many ways. First, since it contributes a substantial proportion of the total UNHCR budget and earmarks these funds, the U.S. government supports certain programs and certain geographical areas, and allows U.S. policy priorities to influence UNHCR priorities. Second, through the very act of contributing money and protecting refugees according to certain standards, the U.S. government also encourages other countries to contribute at appropriate levels and treat refugees at a certain standard. Third, the United States is an active member of UNHCR's Executive Committee and, therefore, has a voice in the administration of UNHCR. Fourth, U.S. nationals work for UNHCR and bring U.S. interests, values, and perspectives with them. Congress may address two related questions. What kind of influence should the United States have? How can the United States balance its priorities with the fact that UNHCR is a global, multilateral agency with a universal mandate?

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<sup>33</sup> "White House Announces 2003 Refugee Admission Figures," *Presidential Determination No. 2003-02*, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, October 16, 2002; "Spotlight on the US Refugee Resettlement Program," [<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=54>].

<sup>34</sup> H.Rept. 107-57, *Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003*, May 4, 2001.