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A3-0308/92

R E P O R T

of the Committee on Development and Cooperation

on Afghan refugees

Rapporteur: Mr Henri SBY

PE 201.838/fin.
Or. EN

* Consultation procedure requiring a single reading
** Cooperation procedure (first reading)

**|| Cooperation procedure (second reading) requiring the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament
*** Parliamentary assent requiring the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament

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At the sitting of 12 March 1990, the President of the European Parliament announced that he had forwarded the motion for a resolution by Mr Stevenson, Mr Welsh and Mr von Habsburg on the plight of Afghan refugees in Pakistan pursuant to Rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure, to the Committee on Development and Cooperation as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets for its opinion.

At its meeting of 31 May 1990, the committee decided to draw up a report and appointed Mr Henri SABY rapporteur.

At its meetings of 15 July 1992, it considered the draft report.

At its meeting of 16 October 1992, it unanimously adopted the resolution.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Saby, chairman and rapporteur; Mr Chiabrande, vice-chairman; Mrs Belo, vice-chairman; Mrs Daly, Mr Christiansen (dep. Mr Bird), Mr Kostopoulos, Mr McGowan, Mrs Pery, Mrs Simons, Mr Telkämper and Mr Verhagen.

The Committee on Budgets decided not to draw up an opinion.

The report was tabled on 19 October 1992.

The deadline for tabling amendments will appear on the draft agenda for the part-session at which the report is to be considered.

A
MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on Afghan refugees

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr STEVENSON and others on the plight of Afghan refugees in Pakistan (B3-0214/90)
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and Cooperation (A3-0308/92)
- A. Bearing in mind the contribution made by the people of Pakistan and Iran to the hosting of an estimated six million refugees from Afghanistan during the last ten years;
- B. Considering the massive support of the international community in providing additional aid for the refugee population,
- C. Recognising the efforts of the staff of specialised agencies such as the UNHCR on the one hand, and by non-governmental organisations on the other hand, who have greatly contributed to an easing of suffering by responding to pressing humanitarian demands,
- D. Whereas there is a desire to repatriate Afghanistan refugees, which is felt by the new government of Afghanistan, even though the internal conflict has not been completely resolved, and heavy fighting has once again broken out in and around Kabul which undermines the chances for peace,
- E. Given the current estimates for voluntary repatriation for 1992 which amount to between 700.000 and 1 million persons, according to the UNHCR, returning from either Pakistan or Iran,
- F. Whereas the war is said to have left more than 1 million casualties and destroyed virtually all of Afghanistan's hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure within the country,
- G. Whereas irrigation and canal building are crucial for the development of the rural economy largely based on agriculture,
- H. Bearing in mind the enormous difficulties created by the existence of millions of anti-personnel mines scattered around the country which continue to maim and kill people,
- I. Taking account of the lack of administrative structures within Afghanistan which hampers rehabilitation efforts,
- J. Whereas the financial needs of the UNHCR is now estimated at 63 million dollars for the repatriation programme in 1992,

1. Urges the government of Afghanistan and the Supreme Leadership Council to engage in a special effort aimed at national reconciliation, involving all sectors of the Afghan population.
2. Requests the European Commission to respond favourably to the increased requirements of the UNHCR and NGOs operating in Pakistan, Iran and in Afghanistan and urges the Council to recognise the need for additional resources in the Community budget which must be devoted to refugee and other humanitarian objectives,
3. Considers that resource planning for Afghan refugees by the European Community must maintain due regard for short term care and maintenance programmes as well as for longer term development objectives, as mentioned in the explanatory statement attached to this report;
4. Urges the European Commission to recognise that decision-making on projects submitted by NGOs is still unnecessarily long and that delays in decision-making may undermine project viability and credibility,
5. Calls upon its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, to the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees and to the government of Afghanistan.

B
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Introduction

The collapse of the United Nations mediation efforts to bring an end to the internal conflict in Afghanistan constituted a setback for the resolution of the refugee crisis. Yet, there are signs that in spite of considerable civil unrest continuing in parts of the country, the interim government of Sebghatulla Modjaddidi which was followed by the nomination of Burhanuddin Rabbani, as President, and includes the Afghan rebel leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud as Minister of Defence has a real chance of survival.

The new government in Kabul is making serious attempts to capitalise on the enormous desire for peace which is felt by the vast majority of the population. But, it must put up with persistent efforts to undermine its power base, which lies with moderate muslim leaders. An islamic state is established yet, there are those who wish to see this islamic state more radicalised, no doubt partly for their own personal gratification. In this way, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is continuing to attack the new government in Kaboul, with his guerrilla troops. The leader of the radical islamic opposition, Hekmatyar, remains a powerful leader of one of Afghanistan's largest tribes - the pashtouns - in spite of recent losses on the battlefield.

Unless he can be accommodated by the new government, or eliminated, he is likely to encourage other tribal leaders to wage war and thus tempt the country towards dislocation. Events in Tadjakistan and elsewhere will no doubt tend to encourage centrifugal tendencies. A strong central government established in Kabul is unlikely to constitute a real counterweight to the many ethnic fiefdoms within Afghanistan, even though a majority of these provinces have an interest in the preservation of peace for its own sake. As things stand at the moment, it is very hard to predict the course which events will take in the coming months.

The background to the Afghan conflict, which led to one third of the country's population seeking refuge in Pakistan and in Iran, is inextricably associated with the super-power rivalries of what is now a bygone age. Yet the geographic location of the country will continue to be a significant element in the future power struggles of the region.

The political settlement which has now been achieved as a result of a military victory and the capitulation of the former regime, followed many months of intricate negotiations conducted by Benon Sevan on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Although the UN involvement ultimately failed to resolve the conflict, it probably laid the groundwork for a minimum of the trust and cooperation which is now essential if the new rulers are to be in a position to plan - both economically and socially - for the future of the country.

The government which has now been formed in Afghanistan does not have any administrative apparatus in the country at large. No territorial administration has existed since 1979 and most provinces are governed (if that is the right word) by the tribal chiefs. For example, the Hazaras in central Afghanistan, supported by Iran, have been relatively autonomous since 1979,

though heavily oppressed. The north-eastern part of the country, where the Tajik tribes live, was effectively administered by Ahmad Shah Massoud, now defence minister, and as was indicated above, one of the few leaders with a solid power base.

The Pashtoun tribes have never been united, and, situated in the east of the country, have been dependent on and subservient to Pakistan's interests for some time. Their location on the Pakistan border areas has made them interlocutors on the refugee problem. They also profited largely from drugs and arms smuggling linked to Pakistan's interests.

The war is said to have left more than 1,000,000 casualties. Whatever infrastructure which once existed in the country - roads, bridges, hospitals, schools etc. has been destroyed. The task of reconstruction is enormous.¹

Various obstacles resulting from the war must now be overcome. The first- and the most awkward - results from the need to de-mine the thousands of fields and mountain meadows where millions of mines have been sown. Unless this is done, agricultural production will be severely curtailed and it will be an immensely dangerous occupation. People will be deterred from returning to their homes. Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest countries. The war made things worse. Agricultural production in general is a precarious occupation and climatic conditions only accentuate the problems outlined above. Some regions are currently experiencing rapid desertification; other regions suffered from very heavy flooding in 1991 which wiped out at a stroke, months of efforts at reconstruction. Communications are difficult because so many roads and bridges have been destroyed and rebuilding is very slow due to the difficulty of access over very uneven and mountainous terrain.

Irrigation and canal building are crucial for the development of agricultural production. Even relatively small scale artisanal irrigation projects take time to materialise. The lack of tools, machinery and equipment hampers progress. Water management institutions are necessary to reduce the risk of local conflict breaking out over water distribution problems.

Refugees

Afghans constitute the largest refugee population in the world. Asylum countries which report to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that overall numbers amount to six million people. The main asylum countries are Iran and Pakistan.

The Pakistan government estimates the refugee population within its frontiers as 3.2 million people. They mostly live in 345 UNHCR-assisted refugee villages of which 70 per cent are in the North-West Frontier Province (see map), and 25 per cent in Baluchistan.

In Iran, an equal number of refugees have settled in the course of the last ten years or so. Most of these are from western and northern Afghanistan. Unlike those refugees in Pakistan, most have been integrated

¹ See Barnett Rubin, Columbia University: Afghanistan, an action memorandum. INN.1992

into Iranian society and the economy. Ethnic complicity facilitated this though the cost to Iran was considerable. Half a million are nevertheless living in spontaneous settlements in the border regions on subsidised rations.

In both cases, it is important to note that three-quarters of the refugee population are women and children.

The European Community remains one of the major donors for the Afghan refugee population. Through the World Food Programme the EC began by providing 50,000 tonnes of cereals in 1988. This was subsequently doubled and has been maintained since then.

In addition, resources have been made directly available to the UNHCR and to many non-governmental organizations including M.S.F. Belgium and Holland (MSF France withdrew following the death of one of the field doctors in 1989), and Christian Aid. The British Refugee Council has coordinated much NGO activity notably through the British Agencies Afghanistan Group and has provided this committee with very useful insights into the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The main priorities of the Community in the recent period which have been implemented by NGOs and specialised agencies (coordinated often by the United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Afghanistan - UNOCA) are as follows:

- health and hygiene in the refugee camps in Baluchistan,
- construction of training centres,
- re-afforestation and other environmental projects,
- education projects for children and young people,
- medical assistance and sanitation projects,
- vaccination programmes,
- rehabilitation of irrigation systems,
- preparatory programmes for repatriation.

The situation in many refugee camps in Pakistan has periodically deteriorated in spite of massive assistance. The main problem has been the deterioration of sanitation which in turn has led to infection and disease from water-borne insects. Local Pakistani populations have also been increasingly infected and are also in need of medical assistance. It is very sad, and tragic, to learn that twelve percent of refugee children die before they are five years old. Forty percent of these deaths occur because of inadequate sanitation and sanitary conditions which lead to diarrhoea.

Repatriation

Programmes for the voluntary repatriation of refugees have existed for many years. This is simply because repatriation (though frequently costly) provides what can be considered to be a solution to the refugee problem.

The UNHCR has launched an appeal under the Operation Salaam Programme for 17 million US\$ to assist with repatriation. The numbers of those returning to Afghanistan is continually increasing as the new government in Kabul establishes itself. Already this target figure has become totally inadequate.

Repatriation is a complicated process which requires considerable planning and resources if it is to operate successfully. It is more than

simply indicating the path and providing the transport for refugee families to return to their place of origin. It requires considerable quantities of food aid at point of destination, and preparation of the sites for the returnees. It requires real development assistance.

The UNHCR, by its charter, and by the 1988 Geneva Accords, is responsible for all of this as well as for 'protection' activities, which includes the establishment of offices in the field for logistical purposes as well as monitoring.

A repatriation grant provides cash/wheat packages for families, in exchange for their ration cards, of families wishing to return. Transit centres are established also along the return routes. Food security for four months is supplied and special needs of the most vulnerable groups need to be covered.

Many joint ventures between NGOs, specialised agencies and local communities have been established to assist with the re-integration of returnees. In addition to food, clothing and housing materials are also required. Water provision and pumping equipment is a frequent on-site priority. Tools and equipment are required to get people back to work and to break the pattern of dependency which so often accompanies refugee existence. Educational and training materials are also needed. Afghan refugees suffered from increasing analphabetisation in the camps, once home this cannot be allowed to continue.

The following extract from a UNHCR publication provides an example of the refugee-repatriation operation:

"During the summer of 1991 a group of elders from a refugee village in Baluchistan asked the UNHCR office in Quetta to help them and the 100 families they represented to return to their home areas along the Helmand river. They had left in the early 1980s. Some of them had returned to sow and harvest crops, but only for brief periods. Now they thought it was safe enough for them all to go back for good. But there were problems. All the houses in the village had been destroyed. The irrigation system was badly damaged. Even if they encashed their ration cards, they would be far short of the funds necessary to reconstruct them.

UNHCR responded. Officials visited the refugees, then their home area. An assistance package, tailored to their needs, was put together. On a sunny morning in October, the roof beams from the refugees' houses in Baluchistan were loaded onto UNHCR-hired trucks and pick-ups and taken to Helmand. The families arrived a week later, accompanied by UNHCR officials. There they found UNHCR tents waiting, which they could occupy until they had rebuilt their houses. Officials were there to monitor the UNHCR-funded rehabilitation of the irrigation system and construction of new houses. The families are now preparing the land for sowing of winter grain which can be harvested in spring."

An increasing number of refugee leaders are seeking assistance for group repatriation. In 1991, 200,000 refugees returned to Afghanistan. Early in 1992, it was calculated that refugees were returning at a greater rate than before. By June 1992, those being repatriated increased considerably. In one day 16,000 people returned to Afghanistan according to press reports.

In such circumstances, the donor community is being asked to increase its support for repatriation programmes. Current projections indicate that in 1992 more than twice the expected number of refugees will return home.

Even at this accelerated rate of repatriation, the needs of those who remain in Pakistan should not be neglected.

Conclusion

Although Afghanistan is unlikely to resort to its largely feudal system of government which existed before the Soviet occupation of December 1978, the new Islamic government will no doubt be unable and probably unwilling to attempt to create a more centralised state apparatus, attempted by the Communist authorities. Islam may well be the only unifying element that the ten-member supreme leadership council may agree on. The centrifugal tendency of the traditionally autonomous tribal areas is likely to be the main basis for the country's organisation. Yet even then, competing branches of Islam, and antagonism and rivalry between clans may undermine the fragile peace and the rehabilitation efforts.

The halting of major arms supplies by the super-powers came a bit late to prevent most Afghans possessing modern military hardware. The heroin trade may exacerbate rivalries and undermine development efforts too. If refugees do not have access to adequate resources, many may be tempted by the lucrative sums of money to be earned by producing opium poppies and heroin. Pakistan has already shown the way in this respect.

It is in this troubled environment that NGOs and the UNHCR are having to operate, while maintaining their ongoing responsibilities in the camps in Pakistan.

In collaboration with the F.A.O., seeds and fertilisers are beginning to reach destination within Afghanistan and crop planting programmes are underway. In contrast with this, most refugees in the Pakistan camps remain in a state of almost complete dependency.

It is to be hoped that this short report will contribute to a regeneration of Community interest for this most pressing humanitarian problem.

PAKISTAN

- Main Roads
 - Secondary Roads
 - Railways
 - Rivers
 - ✈ Airports
 - Regional Boundaries
 - ▲ Designated Departure Point
- 0 100 200 300 km

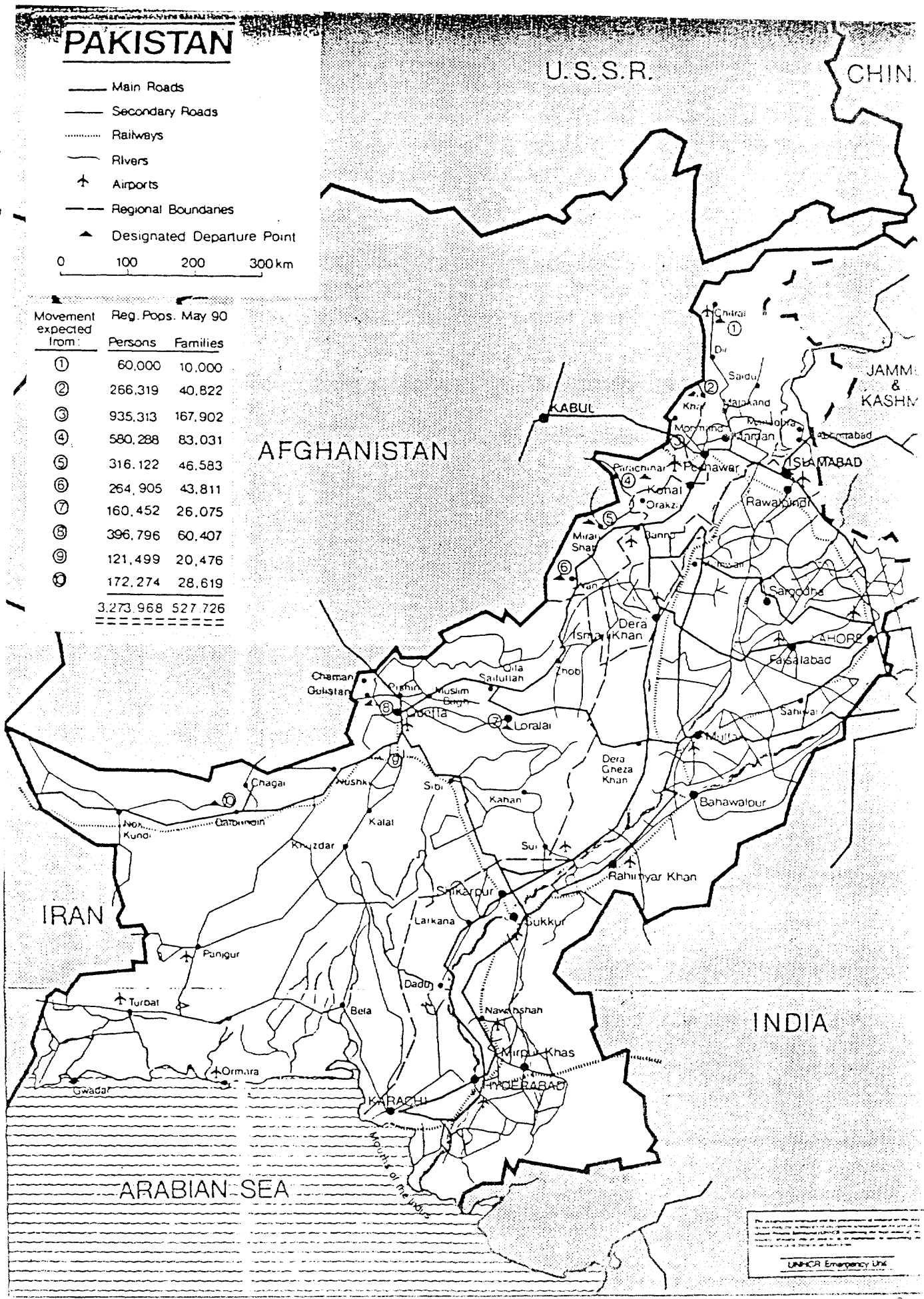
U.S.S.R.

CHINA

Movement expected from:	Reg. Pops. May 90	
	Persons	Families
①	60,000	10,000
②	266,319	40,822
③	935,313	167,902
④	580,288	83,031
⑤	316,122	46,583
⑥	264,905	43,811
⑦	160,452	26,075
⑧	396,796	60,407
⑨	121,499	20,476
⑩	172,274	28,619
	<u>3,273,968</u>	<u>527,726</u>

AFGHANISTAN

JAMMU & KASHMIR



This information is provided for the purpose of assisting in the relief of refugees. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose. UNHCR Emergency Unit

PROPOSITION FOR A RESOLUTION
on the plight of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan
tabled pursuant to Rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure

The European Parliament,

Recalling that the most fundamental of all human rights is the right to life itself;

Alarmed at the continuing plight of the 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan;

Considering that Pakistan provides shelter to the single largest concentration of refugees in the world today;

Noting that the Government of Pakistan has taken charge of supplying the basic wants of these refugees since 1981 despite limitations of physical and financial resources, and that this has caused a steady erosion of Pakistan's food stocks;

Considering that the shortfalls in external aid have to be made up from Pakistan's own meagre resources;

Whereas the shortfalls in the relief supplies have affected essential commodities like wheat, edible oil and sugar;

Whereas the pledges and deliveries of donated wheat have not been able to match the actual releases to the refugees.

Expresses its concern that Pakistan's reserves of food have now reached the point where there is a serious and imminent danger of widespread malnutrition and even starvation among the Afghan refugees in Pakistan;

Notes that, in particular, Pakistan is facing a shortfall of over 200,000 tons of wheat during the coming winter;

Calls on the Commission to make arrangements for wheat to be supplied to Pakistan without delay to make up this shortfall as soon as possible;

Instructs its President to forward this Resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Ministers meeting in European Political Cooperation and the Government of Pakistan.