

European Community

News Release

EC AIDING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

Backing up measures by its member states, the European Community as such has taken urgent action to help the refugees, now numbering some 400,000, in Indochina. The Community has undertaken to provide emergency food aid through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These undertakings are as follows:

- the provision of 20,000 tonnes of rice (besides the 8,000 tonnes approved by the EC in July) covering 50 per cent of the needs, up to February 1980, of the refugees in South-East Asia;
- the provision of 1,500 tonnes of vitaminized milk powder (besides the 1,500 tonnes approved in July);
- the provision of \$16 million for the UNHCR's general programme for refugees in South-East Asia;
- the allocation of 2,700 tonnes of rice to Cambodian refugees in Vietnam through the UNHCR;
- a provisional credit of some \$6 million for Cambodian refugees, which will be channelled through international organizations.

Moreover, EC Development Commissioner Claude Cheysson has declared that all food aid to Vietnam is being suspended until September 1979, when the EC Council of Ministers will re-examine the situation.

The European Community, which is the biggest contributor to the United Nations refugee programme after the United States, proposed and was represented at the special UN conference on South-East Asian refugees held in Geneva, 20-21 July.

Speaking for the EC, Michael O'Kennedy, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and President-in-office of the EC Council of Ministers, said: "The European Community and its member states for whom I speak have already given practical evidence of their concern about this problem and their willingness to help. All of our countries have admitted, or agreed to accept, refugees for resettlement and all have contributed to the funds of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.... The Community as such has made a large amount of special aid available to relieve the refugees.... We know that certain other states too have contributed greatly by accepting large numbers of refugees and we hope that countries which had not previously responded will now find it possible to do so, so that the burden will be more fairly shared. All of this will not be enough, however, unless all of us play our part - and in particular unless the countries from which the exodus of refugees is taking place meet their particular responsibilities. I appeal to them to do so, so that together, and by common effort, we may relieve great human suffering."

