

I. Introduction

1 It is particularly important for a refugee to be able to travel outside the country of his normal residence. Such travel, for example in order to take advantage of opportunities for education, training or employment, may be an essential prerequisite for a durable solution to his problems. In this respect facilitation of refugee travel is also of interest to Governments.

2 Unlike an ordinary alien, a refugee does not enjoy the protection of the country of his nationality and cannot therefore avail himself of a national passport for travel purposes. When the international community, after World War I, approached the task of establishing an internationally recognized status for refugees, one of the first measures taken was to ensure that refugees were provided with documentation to enable them to travel. The form and content of this documentation varied at different times, but provided the basis from which the "Convention Travel Document" (the travel document for which the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees provides) developed. The convention Travel Document is now regularly issued by States parties to the 1951 Convention or to the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and is also-widely recognized by States which are not parties to these instruments.

3 The experience of UNHCR has shown, however, that its availability for refugees is not always accepted by Governments as, a matter of course. Certain Governments do not issue Convention Travel Documents to refugees? or only do so with considerable reluctance. Other Governments, even though willing to issue Convention Travel Documents, have done so subject to various restrictions relating to the period of validity of the document itself, its geographical validity and the right of the holder to return to the issuing country. In certain cases, refugees have encountered difficulties in obtaining a renewal or extension of their Convention Travel Document, or the issue of a new travel document by States to which they may be considered to have transferred their residence. Such restrictive practices have frequently had the undesirable effect of impeding the refugee's freedom of movement which, as indicated above, may be of special importance in his case.

4 The High Commissioner -therefore believes that the question of the issue of travel documents to refugees can usefully form the subject of a detailed examination by the Sub-Committee of the whole on International Protection. He trusts that he will receive the Committee's support in his continuing efforts to ensure that, wherever possible and practicable, the movement of refugees is facilitated by the issue of appropriate documentation for travel purposes.

5 In the present note it is proposed:

- to give a short historical summary of the development of the refugee travel document;
- to outline its principal features and the conditions and implications of its issue;
- to describe some of the problems encountered by refugees in regard to the issue of travel documents;
- to reach certain conclusions indicating a solution to these various problems.

II. Historical development of the refugee travel document

6 The first international instrument drawn up for the benefit of refugees in 1922 dealt exclusively with the issue of certificates of identity to refugees for use as travel documents. The issue of such certificates of identity was also provided for in various later international instruments adopted between the two World Wars. Originally, these certificates of identity, which came to be known as "Nansen Passports", were issued on a single sheet of paper and were not, like later refugee travel documents, in booklet form resembling a national passport. The earlier instrument contained no indications as to the period of validity of the certificate of identity, and also provided expressly that the certificate did not in any way imply a right for the holder to return to the issuing country without special authorization. In the later instruments it was specified that the period of validity should normally be one-year. As regards the right of return, provisions were in due course introduced enabling the holder to return to the issuing country within the period of the certificate's validity. At the same time it was specified that limitations on this right of return should only be introduced in exceptional circumstances.

7 After the end of World War II, the great number of new refugees necessitated the adoption of a travel document that was more like a passport and more widely recognized. Such a document was provided for in the "London" Agreement relating to the issue of a travel document to refugees of 15 October 1946.^[1] It was to be in booklet form in accordance with the specimen attached to the Agreement, and the period of validity of the document was to be either one or two years at the discretion of the issuing authority. It was to be made valid for the largest possible number of countries, and the holder of the travel document was to be entitled to return to the territory of the issuing authority within the period of its validity. Only in exceptional cases could this right of return be limited to a period of not less than three months. The provisions relating to the "London Travel Document" were indeed very similar to those which now regulate the 1951 Convention Travel Document.

The 1951 Convention Travel Document for Refugees

8 Article 28 of the 1951 Convention provides that:

"1. The Contracting States shall issue to refugees lawfully staying in their territory travel documents for the purpose of travel outside their territory unless compelling reasons of national security or public order otherwise require, and the provisions of the Schedule to this Convention shall apply with respect to such documents. The Contracting States may issue such a travel document to any other refugee in their territory; they shall in particular give sympathetic consideration to the issue of such a travel document to refugees in their territory who are unable to obtain a travel document from the country of their lawful residence.

2. Travel documents issued to refugees under previous international agreements by parties thereto shall be recognized and treated by the Contracting States in the same way as if they had been issued pursuant to this article."

9 An obligation to issue travel documents in accordance with this article is also assumed by States upon becoming parties to the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. [2]

Description of the Convention Travel Document

10 The text and format of the Convention Travel Document are laid down in the Annex to the 1951 Convention.

11 At an early stage of the activities of UNHCR, it was felt that it would be useful if the Convention Travel Document, issued by various States, could be as uniform as possible, not only as regards the text (which is prescribed in the Annex) but also with respect to colour, type of cover, format and printing. For this purpose the Office in consultation with Governments, produced a model document in booklet form, with a stiff blue cover, resembling a national passport. The High Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Refugees (predecessor to the present Executive Committee) recommended that Governments issue their Convention Travel Document in conformity with the model prepared by UNHCR. The majority of States which issue the document have adopted this model with the result that the blue Convention Travel Document has become universally known. It is accepted for visa purposes, not only by States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol, but in practice by all countries to which refugees wish to travel.

12 In order to assist those States which have recently become parties to the Convention and/or the Protocol, particularly in the developing world, UNHCR has printed and is available to provide to Governments at their request, Convention Travel Documents. These documents conform to the model prescribed by the Convention and are in three versions (English-French; French-English; Arabic-English-French).

Conditions and implications of the issue of Convention Travel Documents

(A) Circumstances in which Convention Travel Documents are required to be issued

13 According to article 28 paragraph 1 of the 1951 Convention, Contracting States are required to issue travel documents for the purposes of travel to refugees lawfully staying in their territory. It will be seen that this provision contains two elements.

14 In the first place, the document is required to be issued "for the purpose of travel". The mandatory wording of this provision implies that a Contracting State may not refuse to issue a travel document to a refugee if, for example, it regards the proposed travel as inappropriate. The travaux préparatoires to this provision indicate that a refugee is not required to "justify" the proposed travel in order to receive a travel document to which he is entitled "for travel purposes". [3]

15 Secondly, the obligation to issue a travel document is in respect of refugees who are "lawfully staying" in the territory of a Contracting State. Article 28 paragraph 1 however also provides that Contracting States "may issue such a travel document to any other refugee in their territory; they shall in particular give sympathetic consideration to the issue of such a travel document to refugees in their territory who are unable to obtain a travel document from the country of their lawful residence". [4] This recommendation is of particular value in the situations where the State which has first accepted a refugee is not a party to the 1951 Convention or to the 1967 Protocol, or for other reasons (e.g. geographical limitation of a State's obligations under the Convention) does not issue travel documents to specific groups of refugees.

(B) Circumstances in which the issue of a Convention Travel Document may be refused

16 An exception to the requirement that Contracting States issue travel documents to refugees lawfully staying in their territory is to be found in the words "unless compelling reasons of national security or public order otherwise require". During the travaux préparatoires to article 28 it was stressed that the word "compelling" was to be understood as a restriction upon the words "reasons national security or public order". Not every case which would ordinarily fall under the latter concept would therefore justify a refusal of a travel document, but only reasons of a very serious character. [5]

(C) Geographical validity of Convention Travel Documents

17 According to paragraph 4 of the Schedule to the 1951 Convention, the document shall, save in special or exceptional cases, be made valid for the largest possible number of countries. States do not normally restrict the document's geographical validity. Some States, however, for security reasons, exclude from such validity the refugee's country of origin.

(D) Period of validity of Convention Travel Documents

18 The Convention Travel Document should have a validity of either one or two years at the discretion of the issuing authority (Schedule, paragraph 5). It will be recalled that while the earlier international refugee instruments fixed the period of validity of certificates of identity at one year, the 1946 Agreement, like the 1951 Convention, provided for a period of validity of one or two years at the discretion of the issuing authority. States parties to the 1951 Convention rarely make use of this option to issue a travel document with a validity of only one year. Such a short period of validity could, in certain circumstances impose an unduly heavy burden on the refugee and, as far as renewal is concerned, could also involve considerable administrative inconvenience for the authorities in the issuing country or its diplomatic or consular representatives abroad. For the refugee a travel document with a sufficiently long validity is clearly of importance, especially if he wishes to move to another country for education or resettlement.

(E) Renewal or extension of validity of Convention Travel Documents

19 The renewal or extension of validity of the document is a matter for the issuing authority so long as the holder has not established lawful residence in another territory and resides lawfully in the territory of the said authority. The issue of a new document is, under the same conditions, a matter for the authority which issued the former document [Schedule, paragraph 6(1)].

20 In order to facilitate the extension of validity of Convention Travel Documents where refugees are outside the issuing country, it is also provided that diplomatic or consular authorities, specially authorized for this purpose, shall be empowered to extend, for a period not exceeding six months, the validity of a travel document issued by their Governments [Schedule, paragraph 6(2)]. Although such extensions are stated to be for a period not exceeding six months, a number of Contracting States have authorized extensions by their diplomatic or consular authorities for longer periods. Alternatively, arrangements have been made whereby Convention Travel Documents can be transmitted by diplomatic or consular authorities for renewal, without the need for the refugee himself to return to the issuing country. Such measures take account of the hardship which sometimes arises for a refugee if, in order to renew his travel document, he is required to return to the issuing country, especially when great distances are involved.

(F) The "return clause"

21 The 1951 Convention contains an undertaking by Contracting States to re-admit the holder of a travel document to their territory at any time during the document's validity (Schedule, paragraph 13). The travel document itself includes (on page 1) a mention of the period within which the holder is authorized to return to the issuing country. The period specified normally coincides with the validity of the document itself. This "return clause" facilitates the obtaining of visas for short periods of travel outside the refugee's country of habitual residence. It is also an important factor in arranging studies for refugees at educational institutions abroad and for the resettlement of refugees from countries where they have found temporary asylum.

22 According to paragraph 13(3) of the Schedule, the validity of the return clause may in exceptional cases, or in cases where the refugee's stay in the issuing country is authorized for a specific period, be limited to a period of no' less than three months. These "exceptional cases" are not defined. In view, however, of the basic purpose of issuing travel documents to refugees (i.e. to facilitate their movement) , it is evident that such exceptions should be limited to cases where there are very special reasons for restricting the validity of the return clause to a period of less than that of the validity of the travel document.

(G) International recognition of Convention Travel Documents

23 The validity of travel documents issued in accordance with article 28 is to be recognized by all States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol (Schedule, paragraph 7). The possession of a Convention Travel Document is evidence that the authorities of the issuing country consider the holder to be a refugee. In practice the great majority of States recognize the Convention Travel Document not only as a document on which a visa may be given but also as evidence of the holder's refugee status.

(H) Transfer of responsibility for the issue of Convention Travel Documents

24 In the case of refugee movements other than for purely temporary purposes, the question arises whether and if so, at which stage the second country should assume responsibility for the refugee and exchange his Convention Travel Document for a new travel document issued by its own authorities. This situation is regulated by paragraph 11 of the Schedule to the 1951 Convention:

"When a refugee has lawfully taken up residence in the territory of another Contracting State, the responsibility for the issue of a new document, under the terms and conditions of article 28, shall be that of the competent authority of that territory? to which the refugee shall be entitled to apply."

25 When, therefore, a refugee has lawfully taken up residence in another Contracting State, the authorities of that State should issue him a new Convention Travel Document. In certain cases, however, he is not issued with a travel document "under the terms and conditions of article 28" but with an alien's passport or some other type of documentation not indicating his refugee status, a practice which does not seem compatible with the letter and spirit of article 28 and the Schedule to the 1951 Convention.

26 The 1951 Convention does not provide any indication as to the circumstances in which a refugee must be considered to have "lawfully taken up residence in the territory of another Contracting State", at which time', therefore, responsibility for the issue of a Convention Travel Document is transferred. This question does not of course, arise where a refugee enters the territory of another

Contracting State for purely temporary purposes, e.g. for tourism or business. The situation is however otherwise where a refugee has been permitted to enter the territory of another Contracting State on a more permanent basis or to reside there for a longer period, e.g. for employment.

27 Since the 1951 Convention does not provide any guidance on this matter, situations have arisen in which refugees, through no fault of their own, have become the victims of different interpretations and varying practices by States. In order to remedy such situations, various European States have adopted bilateral or multilateral agreements [6] concerning the transfer of responsibility for the issue of Convention Travel Documents. These agreements define the criteria, principally length of residence, according to which a refugee may be regarded as having become established in the territory of a Contracting State other than the one which issued his Convention Travel Document. The period of residence for transfer of responsibility is normally specified as two years, except in one case where it is three years. Agreements of this kind help to avoid situations, which necessarily work to the detriment of the refugee, in which it is not clear whether the Contracting State which has issued a Convention Travel Document is still under an obligation to renew it or whether responsibility for the issue of such a document has passed to the State in which the refugee has already resided for a certain time.

28 When paragraphs 6 and 11 of the Schedule were drafted, there was evidently an awareness that they might lead to cases of disagreement as to the time at which transfer of responsibility should take place. It was in order to help to overcome difficulties of this kind that the recommendation in sub-paragraph 3, paragraph 6 of the Schedule was introduced as a recommendation to cover situations which might arise where a refugee is considered to have settled in a second country by his country of former residence, but where the refugee has not yet been accepted as a resident by that second country. According to this sub-paragraph:

"The Contracting States shall give sympathetic consideration to renewing or extending the validity of travel documents or issuing new documents to refugees no longer lawfully resident in their territory who are unable to obtain a document from the country of their lawful residence."

(I) Visas and admission

29 Even where a refugee holds a Convention Travel Document, he will normally require a visa to enter another country, not only to take up employment or for studies, but also for short visits.

30 The question of visas and admission is dealt with in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of the Schedule to the 1951 Convention. The authorities of the country to which the refugee desires to proceed shall, if they are prepared to admit him and if a visa is required, affix a visa on his travel document (paragraph 8). Contracting States undertake to issue transit visas to refugees who have obtained visas for a territory of final destination; such visas may only be refused on grounds which would justify refusal of a visa to any alien (paragraph 9). Finally, fees for the issue of exit, entry or transit visas shall not exceed the lowest scale of charges for visas on foreign passports (paragraph 10).

31 When the 1951 Convention was adopted, i.e. in the post-war period, there were still considerable restrictions on travel generally between countries. These restrictions were later gradually reduced or eliminated through bilateral or multilateral agreements, whereby the nationals of Contracting States were exempted from the visa requirement, or even from the requirement of a passport, for travel to the territory of another State party to such agreements.

32 Refugees did not, however, benefit to any appreciable extent from the above-mentioned relaxation of travel restrictions. They still needed travel documents and visas; in most countries the consular authorities were not authorized to issue such visas to refugees and the visa application had therefore to be referred to the central authorities of the country concerned. This not only entailed considerable delay but often resulted in making it impossible for the refugee to travel. With the general easing of restrictions for nationals, the difficulties encountered by refugees became particularly noticeable and tended to make them feel that they were being exposed to discrimination in this matter.

33 In order to remedy this situation, various arrangements were made to facilitate refugee travel. While the requirement of entry visas for permanent settlement could hardly be dispensed with, some relaxation could certainly be envisaged for purely temporary visits. Thus a number of bilateral agreements and, within the Council of Europe, the European Agreement on the "Abolition of Visas for Refugees of 20 April 1959, were adopted with a view to exempting refugees from the visa requirement. Today 14 States are parties to the last-mentioned Agreement which, inter alia, exempts refugees from the visa requirement for visits of not more than three months (otherwise than for taking up employment) [7] These agreements, however, only apply to refugees travelling on a Convention Travel Document issued by States parties to these agreements. Only the Federal Republic of Germany has unilaterally waived the visa requirement for visits to the Federal territory by holders of Convention Travel Documents issued by certain other countries.

34 UNHCR has always encouraged such measures aimed at ensuring that refugees also benefit from arrangements between States for exempting their nationals from the visa requirement. Where such arrangements do not exist, the travel of refugees can also be facilitated in various other ways. Thus consular representatives who are empowered to issue visas to holders of national passports without reference to their central authorities, could similarly be authorized to grant visas to holders of Convention Travel Documents. In accordance with paragraph 10 of the Schedule to the 1951 Convention, fees for the issuance of visas could be reduced. Finally, pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Schedule, transit visas which are particularly important for resettlement and educational purposes can be granted without difficulty and refused only on grounds which would justify refusal of such a visa to any alien.

III. Problems facing refugees in connection with the issue of travel documents

35 Of the 76 States which as of 31 July 1978 were parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol, a large number issue Convention Travel Documents to refugees. The Office is aware, however, of many cases in which refugees have experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining Convention Travel Documents. In certain instances, this has merely been due to the fact that the authorities of the State concerned have not yet made the necessary technical and administrative arrangements to enable Convention Travel Documents to be issued. In other cases, the reasons have been more complex.

36 In States where formal procedures for determining refugee status exist, the issue of Convention Travel Documents normally gives rise to little difficulty. Where such procedures do not exist, the person concerned may find himself obliged to establish his refugee status when applying for a Convention Travel Document. The authorities may, however, feel a certain reluctance to make a formal determination of refugee status solely in connection with an application for a travel document, since (a) the applicant has usually already been granted the right of residence in the country concerned, and (b) some other form of documentation, e.g. an alien's passport, may be readily available. Experience has, however, shown that such alternative documentation is generally much less favorable to the refugee than a Convention Travel Document. As mentioned above, the Convention Travel Document has now received widespread recognition and is much more readily accepted for visa purposes. It is, moreover, only on the basis of a Convention Travel Document that refugees can take advantage of special arrangements exempting them from the visa requirement, e.g. the 1959 European Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees.

37 In other States there has been an unwillingness to issue Convention Travel Documents because of their "long" period of validity or because of the "return clause". Other States again, while willing to issue Convention Travel Documents, have considerably reduced their period of validity or the period of validity of the return clause, even though the circumstances of the case were not covered by the exception provided for in paragraph 13(3) of the Schedule to the 1951 Convention.

38 As regards the return clause in particular, experience has shown that it not only helps to facilitate the movement of refugees for temporary purposes, but is an important factor in arranging studies for refugees at educational institutions abroad, and for the further resettlement of refugees from countries where they have found only temporary asylum. For countries offering educational opportunities to refugees, it is important to know that those who take up such offers can return to their country of first asylum on completion of their studies. Similar considerations apply in the case of resettlement if, soon after the refugee's admission it becomes apparent that his integration in the countries is clearly not feasible. In practice, however, cases in which the return clause has been used by a country of resettlement to return a refugee to a country of first asylum, or in which the refugee himself wished to take advantage of the return clause, have been very rare. It can, therefore, be said that the granting or, if necessary, extension of the return clause can, without unduly burdening the State of issue, substantially contribute to the promotion of durable solutions for refugees.

39 Refusal by States to grant a return clause of normal length or to extend the validity of a return clause already granted has, in many cases, led to very unfortunate consequences. Frequently the refugee concerned has suffered considerable hardship through not knowing until the very last moment when the return clause was finally granted, whether he would be able to take advantage of a resettlement or study opportunity. In other cases, the resettlement or study opportunity has been endangered or even lost due to delay in granting a return clause. Where the refugee has already been studying abroad, delay in extending the return clause has sometimes led to a cessation or interruption of studies and in any event to considerable stress and anxiety for the refugee student.

40 Efforts to secure the grant or extension of a return clause in such cases represent a considerable administrative burden for UNHCR which is frequently called upon to make a number of approaches both to the country which issued the travel document (to grant or extend the return clause) and to the country to which the refugee wishes to proceed or in which he already finds himself (to keep the existing options open until a solution is found). Mention should also be made of the costs - sometimes amounting to thousands of dollars - which may be necessary for the grant of emergency assistance, care and maintenance and also staff time, until the problems resulting from the non-availability of a return clause, or of a sufficiently long return clause, have finally been resolved.

41 Problems have also frequently arisen as regards the extension or renewal of Convention Travel Documents. These problems relate to the question of the transfer of responsibility (paragraphs 24 - 28 above) or to the lack of appropriate arrangements whereby a refugee can obtain a renewal by diplomatic or consular authorities of the issuing State in his country of present residence (paragraphs 19 and 20 above).

42 Finally, a number of cases have come to the knowledge of UNHCR in which refugees have encountered difficulties in obtaining visas on their Convention Travel Documents. These difficulties have frequently resulted from the fact that the special character of the Convention Travel Document has not been taken into account by visa issuing authorities. In other cases, high fees charged for visas have either resulted in hardship for the refugee or have presented a serious obstacle to his freedom of movement.

43 The various problems referred to in the preceding paragraphs concern refugees residing in States parties to the 1951 convention and/or the 1967 Protocol. Needless to say, if they reside in a country which has not yet become a party to these instruments, the difficulties in the way of their travel will be even greater. The State concerned would be under no obligation to issue any travel document. Moreover, even if such a document is issued, it may have a number of disadvantages, such as lack of general recognition and acceptance for visa purposes, absence of a return clause and the resulting need for a re-entry visa, short period of validity etc.

IV. Conclusions

44 The institution of the refugee travel document dates back to the earliest days of the establishment of an internationally recognized status for refugees. Indeed, the possibility for a refugee to obtain such a document constitutes an important element of refugee status.

45 The travel document issued under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol greatly facilitates the movement of refugees for temporary visits and also plays an important role in the process of finding durable solutions for refugee problems.

46 It is therefore desirable that States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol issue travel documents to refugees as provided for in article 28, in the Schedule and the Annex to the Convention, and that those States which have not yet done so make appropriate administrative and technical arrangements, if necessary in consultation with UNHCR, for the issue of Convention Travel Documents.

47 Its also desirable that Convention Travel Documents should be issued by States in a liberal manner, i.e.

(A) to all refugees lawfully staying in their territory who wish to travel;

(B) with wide validity both geographically and in time;

(C) in the absence of very special circumstances, with a return clause having the same period of validity as the travel document itself.

48 Favorable consideration should be given to arrangements whereby extensions of validity or renewals of Convention Travel Documents can be obtained by refugees without having to return to the issuing country, especially if the country in which the refugee is presently staying is a distant one.

49 As regards "transfer of responsibility" for the issue Convention Travel Documents, it is of importance to refugees that the provisions of paragraphs 6 and 11 of the Schedule to the 1951 Convention should not be the subject of different interpretations by Contracting States. Bilateral or multilateral arrangements aimed at establishing, when such responsibility is transferred are to be welcomed. In the absence of such arrangements, States should endeavor to ensure that differences of interpretation as to when responsibility is transferred do not operate to the detriment of the refugee.

50 Whenever possible, measures for facilitating the travel of nationals should also be extended to refugees. Formalities for the issue of visas to refugees, where necessary, should be simplified, and refugees should not be required to pay higher visa fees than nationals of the country in which they are normally resident.

51 States which are not parties to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol should seek to ensure that refugees who lawfully reside in their territory are issued with appropriate travel documents. The conditions attached to the issue of such documents should as far as possible be similar to those applicable to travel documents issued in accordance with the 1951 Convention.

[1] United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. XI, No. 150.

[2] Article 1.1 of the Protocol provides: "The States Parties to the present Protocol undertake to apply articles 2 to 34 inclusive of the Convention to refugees as hereinafter defined."

[3] E/AC.32/SR.16 pp 13-15, SR.42 PP 5-7; A./CONF.2/SR.12 PP 4-13, SR.17 pp 4-11.

[4] Underlining added.

[5] A/CONF.2/61 and N. Robinson's Commentary to the 1951 Convention, page 136.

[6] Agreement concerning the residence of refugees between Austria and the Benelux countries of 11 April 1960;

Agreement between the Benelux countries and Switzerland concerning the right of return of refugee workers of 14 May 1954;

Agreement on the movement of refugees between France and Switzerland of 12 April 1960;

Final Protocol to the Agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland concerning the abolition of visas for refugees of 4 May 1962;

Agreement between Austria and France concerning the residence of refugees according to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 21 October 1974.

[7] In Resolution (58) 5 of 27 March 1958, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recommended that pending signature of the above-mentioned Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees, Member Governments should (a) issue entry visas to refugees free of charge, at least for visits of up to three months duration, (b) speed up the procedure for the issue of entry visas to refugees by their consular authorities, especially in cases where the journey was of particular urgency for compassionate reasons.