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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MATHIAS (Portugal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 53: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSICNER-GENERAL (A/35/13)
- (b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/35/526)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (A/35/474)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/35/438 and Corr.1, 472, 473)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that in addition to the documents referred to in the agenda item, he wished to draw the Committee's attention to two letters from Israel issued as documents A/35/97 and A/35/316.

2. Mr. RYDBECK (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that in April 1980 the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had completed 30 years of service to the Palestine refugees. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), establishing UNRWA, there had been many changes both in the role of the organization and in the circumstances in which it operated in the area comprising Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA had been founded to meet the human emergency resulting from the fighting between Israelis and Arabs in 1948. It had to provide essential support for destitute Palestinians who had lost their homes and means of livelihood and desperately needed food, shelter and clothing. At that time it had been assumed those those relief programmes would be required for only two or three years. The Agency had been regarded as a temporary organization whose task would be completed when a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question had been arrived at. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) stated in operative paragraph 11 that such a solution should include the repatriation of refugees or compensation for loss of property for those who preferred not to return.

3. Thirty years after the founding of UNRWA no solution to the Palestine question had been found. The conflict of 1948 had been followed, not by a comprehensive settlement, but by a series of wars and upheavals in UNRWA's area of operation, including the wars of October-November 1956 and June 1967, the fighting in Jordan in 1970, the war of October 1973, the internal strife in Lebanon in 1975-1976, the Israeli military operation in south Lebanon in 1978, and the shooting incidents in Lebanon which were still continuing intermittently. Moreover, in the past two years tension had increased in the West Bank and Gaza.

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

4. Throughout 30 years of turmoil UNRWA had continued to bring succour to a growing number of Palestine refugees, despite frequent danger to the Agency staff. Over the years new generations of refugees had been added; in 1950 UNRWA had undertaken the care of 900,000 registered refugees, but it had now double that number on its rolls. With the agreement of the General Assembly it had acted pragmatically to adapt the services it provided for the refugees to changing circumstances. Gradually those services had become institutionalized and, pending a political solution to the Palestine question, the Agency was providing the services in education, health and welfare which would be provided by a government if the Palestinians had their own Government. Thus UNRWA had become a significant factor in the political equation, and an agent for both change and stability in the Middle East. It provided the framework within which the international community and the Palestinians themselves worked together for the benefit of 1.8 million refugees. Over 16,700 Palestinians, nearly all refugees, were employed by the Agency to run its programmes, under the direction of only 113 international staff. No other United Nations operation was of that magnitude, or so closely identified with the people it existed to serve.

5. Some two thirds of the Palestinian staff were engaged in the education programme, which accounted for nearly 53 per cent of the Agency's budget for the current year, and for 61.8 per cent of the budget for the following year. Since 1958 UNRWA had been urged by the General Assembly to develop education and training, an emphasis that was fully in accordance with the demands of the refugees themselves. Lacking land and inherited wealth, the Palestinians had seized on educational opportunities as a means not only to achieve economic and social mobility but also to develop their resources as a community. The literacy level and the proportion of graduates from tertiary education among the Palestinians were the highest in the region. Despite meagre facilities at school and lack of privacy at home, the refugee child, supported by his family and community, was sufficiently motivated to overcome handicaps that would be regarded as severe disadvantages in Western societies. Throughout the Middle East qualified Palestinians could be found wherever there was a demand for technical and professional skills. Their qualifications and experience represented a valuable asset for the future of the Palestinian community. Many owed their start to the Agency's education programme, run with the assistance of UNESCO specialists. During the past year there had been 314,000 pupils in UNRWA's 67 elementary and preparatory schools, and enrolment increased by several thousand every year through the natural population growth. Each year several thousand completed a vocational, technical or teacher-training course at one of UNRWA's centres. A few hundred graduated from universities on UNRWA scholarships, while thousands graduated on scholarships from other sources.

6. The foregoing facts underlined the vital role of UNRWA's education programme and the serious consequences of any forced reduction in the programme. Such a reduction would mean that tens of thousands of young Palestinians would be deprived of the opportunity to become self-sufficient, and that thousands of Palestinian teachers and instructors would be unemployed, unless the programme

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

could be handed over in an orderly fashion to an appropriate authority which had both the means to run it and the will to do so. The implications of such reductions would go beyond humanitarian considerations and raise serious questions for the stability of the area.

7. Nevertheless, as he had stated in the introduction to his report (A/35/13, paras. 6 and 7) he had been forced to contemplate withdrawal from a major part of the Agency's school programme during the current year. At the end of June the continuation of the whole school programme had been ensured only until the end of September. Since then additional special contributions, including \$5 million from Iraq, \$3.8 million from Saudi Arabia, \$3.2 million from the United States, \$150,000 from Norway and \$50,000 from the Netherlands, had made it possible to maintain the school programme intact to the end of 1980. Current projections indicated a deficit of between \$56 million and \$70 million on the estimated 1981 budget of \$231 million. Both his own report and that of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/35/526) made clear the alarming financial crisis the Agency faced. The estimated deficits were so large that reductions would have to be planned, if not executed, early in 1981. Paragraph 7 of his report indicated the options open if major cuts in the programme had to be made. After the pledging conference, and before deciding how UNRWA's programmes could be tailored to its foreseeable income in 1981, he would seek an extraordinary meeting of the UNRWA Advisory Commission. Members of the Special Political Committee might think that the financial crisis had been exaggerated, and might ask how the Agency expected to survive until the end of 1980 despite a current deficit of \$37 million. The answer was that \$17 million of that amount represented budgeted expenditure on flour for the basic ration, but that expenditure would not in fact be incurred and the ration would be maintained at the current half rate. Most of the rest of the deficit would be covered by denying to the staff the increases in pay and allowances to which they were entitled, under agreements with the staff unions, to compensate them for the rapid inflation in the fields of operation. No provision had been made in the 1981 budget for the purchase of flour, and the Agency would no longer be able to reduce expenditures by underpaying its loyal staff. Staff pay represented 69 per cent of the budget for 1981, and rates for locally recruited staff were therefore a vital factor in the budget level. By agreement with the staff unions, pay and allowances had been indexed to the cost of living in each field, but that system had broken down through the Agency's inability to meet the financial cost. In 1979 the Agency had reached a new agreement with the staff to change the basis for determining pay. In future, levels would be determined through comparison with the prevailing market rates paid by outside employers for comparable jobs. The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) had generously agreed to conduct salary surveys in the fields of operation and make recommendations on salary scales and other conditions of service. The first survey of pay and conditions had taken place in the West Bank in June, and a panel of the ICSC had met recently in Vienna to consider new pay scales for the staff in the West Bank, and also for Gaza staff, to whom the same scales would be applied. As the various surveys were carried out and the new basis was adopted, it would no longer be possible for the Agency to deny to staff the indicated increases in cost-of-living allowances. It would have to pay the market rate for the job. Consequently if funds were restricted, there would have to be a reduction in the staff employed, and hence in the programmes they carried out.

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

8. Year after year UNRWA had had to reduce services, defer maintenance of installations, withhold compensation for rising costs of living from the staff, and cover the remaining deficits by reducing working capital to practically nil. Unless Governments came to the Agency's aid, further reductions on a large scale were unavoidable, and they could come only out of the education programme. The health programme was already at a minimum level consistent with an acceptable standard of public health and individual medical care, while the main component of the relief programme, the basic ration, was limited to the distribution of food-stuffs contributed by Governments in kind.
9. He drew the Committee's attention to the letter dated 2 September he had received from Mrs. Dever, the Chairman of the Advisory Commission (A/35/13, pp. vi and vii), in which she referred to the responsibility of the entire international community for the financing of UNRWA, a burden that had thus far been unevenly shared by Member States. She had also recommended in that letter that the General Assembly should call on the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA to study the Agency's financial deficit and make specific recommendations before the next regular meeting of the Advisory Commission (in August or September 1981) for measures to increase income and to find new sources of financing for UNRWA. A more stable financial basis for UNRWA was of the highest importance for its future operations, since the education and health services cost more every year, as a result of inflation and the natural growth of the refugee population. There was an immediate need for assured income at a higher level, and decisions on the level of UNRWA's programmes could not wait beyond the end of 1980.
10. Another problem was the location of UNRWA's headquarters. One result of the disturbed conditions in the Near East was the division of UNRWA's headquarters between Vienna and Amman. In resolution 34/52 of 1979 the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Commissioner-General to relocate the Agency's headquarters within the area of operations as soon as practicable. The Chairman of the Advisory Commission, in the letter already referred to, had asked him to consider consolidation of the headquarters in Beirut or elsewhere within the area of operations. The Commissioner-General fully agreed on the desirability of having the headquarters in one place in the area of operations in the Near East. He was ready to consult with any of the host Governments who so wished on the practicability of that proposal, which involved consideration of costs and security, of the future lease of life to be granted to the Agency by the General Assembly through the renewal of its mandate, and of the facilities required by the Agency's headquarters, as communicated to the Syrian and Jordanian Governments in May 1978. One of the essential factors in determining the future location of the headquarters was rental costs, since in the existing state of UNRWA's finances the Agency could not be committed to paying high rents to accommodate headquarters currently housed rent-free in Vienna.
11. UNRWA's mandate had expired on 30 June 1980. If the General Assembly voted for an extension, it was clear from his report (A/35/13) and that of the Working Group, and also from his present statement, that such a decision would not ensure the continued operation of the Agency at the existing level. Unless Governments which had been giving regular support to UNRWA and Governments which voted for the continuation of its activities but made no contributions to it were prepared

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(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

to follow up their vote for an extended mandate by measures to ensure adequate financing, the Agency would not survive in its present form. He urgently appealed to all Governments which showed their belief in the importance of the Agency's work by voting for an extended mandate, and who could give substantial financial support to it, to regard their vote for an extended mandate as a commitment to contribute towards solving the Agency's financial crisis. Whatever the contents of a resolution extending UNRWA's mandate, the real decision on the level of its services would be made through the volume of contributions by Member States. Unless the pledging conference resulted in a marked increase of income for the coming year, there would have to be severe cuts. As he had indicated in paragraph 7 of his report, the Agency must either cut programmes evenly across the five fields, or curtail or end programmes selectively in one or more of the fields.

12. UNRWA was neither a State nor a Government, and its sole responsibility was to provide services for the Palestine refugees. Nevertheless, through its existence over three decades it had acquired a status in the area of operations which was of more than humanitarian significance. Its curtailment or collapse would have widespread repercussions throughout the area. Thus the decisions taken regarding the future of UNRWA, the level of its programmes, and the geographical distribution of its activities were basically decisions of a political nature. Hence decisions by Governments collectively or individually regarding the financing of UNRWA were also political decisions. He appealed to delegations to bear that in mind during the discussions and the voting on the subject in the Special Political Committee.

13. Mr. KOLBY (Norway), speaking as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, referred to the origin and background of the Working Group as outlined in the introduction to the report (A/35/526).

14. Chapter II of the report outlined the activities of the Working Group during 1980, and reflected its concern over the Agency's financial situation. In March the Commissioner-General had informed the Working Group that he was asking contributors to increase their contributions for 1980, and was also establishing a list, by order of priority, of budget items which would not be approved until additional income to cover them was forthcoming. The Commissioner-General had expressed concern about the education programme and said that in the absence of additional contributions there would be insufficient funds to maintain that programme at its existing level in all fields until the end of 1980. He had accordingly planned to withdraw financial support for the Agency's schools in Jordan and Syria as from September 1980, although in view of the serious consequences that would follow he intended to make every effort to avoid having to take such action. The Working Group had appealed urgently to all States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, as well as to the Heads of the specialized agencies, to provide the necessary additional sums to enable the Agency to maintain its services to the Palestinian refugees at existing levels. The generous response from a number of Governments had made it possible to continue the financial support for the Agency's schools in Jordan and Syria

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(Mr. Kolby, Norway)

until the end of 1980, and it had also become possible to make provisions to meet the expected cost in 1980 of the recommendations of the salary survey carried out by the ICSC, which was to be applied to area staff pay in the West Bank and Gaza fields.

15. Chapter III of the report described UNRWA's existing financial situation. At the beginning of 1980 estimated expenditures of \$211.5 million had left a deficit of \$56.3 million on the regular budget, and in addition \$6 million were needed to replenish the Agency's working capital. By October 1980 the revised budget estimates were \$211.3 million, while pledged or expected income had risen to \$174.2 million, resulting in a reduction in the budgetary deficit to \$37.1 million. Unless further substantial contributions were received by the end of 1980, it would not be possible for the Commissioner-General to approve expenditures on the remaining items on the list of suspended budgetary items.

16. UNRWA's estimated financial needs in 1981 were estimated at \$236.9 million, including provision to increase the working capital by \$6 million. The total was \$20 million more than in 1980, despite the fact that no provision was being made in the 1981 budget to restore the flour content of the basic ration. If contributors maintained their contributions at the 1980 level the estimated budgetary deficit would be \$56.7 million. However, if the special additional contributions made in 1980 were not repeated the deficit would be \$70.4 million. Unless income in 1981 was increased substantially over the level of 1980, the Agency would again face the possibility of having to reduce the educational programme. The increase in the deficit meant that there was less time to raise additional funds. Subject to the outcome of the pledging conference, present projections of income for 1981 indicated that the Agency would have to withdraw financial support from the schools in Jordan and Syria as early as January 1981, or to withdraw its financial support from the schools in all five fields of operation at the end of the school year in May/June 1981.

17. The Working Group's concluding remarks were set out in chapter IV of the report. The Working Group still believed that until a just and lasting settlement of the problem of the Palestine refugees had been achieved, UNRWA's humanitarian services in the form of relief assistance, health care and education remained indispensable. In 1980 a drastic reduction of services had been avoided only through the continued generous support of a relatively small number of countries, together with generous additional contributions from some countries. Despite the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/90 A, and the efforts of the Commissioner-General and the Working Group, it had not been possible during the past year to achieve a firm basis for the financing of UNRWA. The projected shortfall for 1981 was the highest in the history of the Agency, and the reductions in services that would have to be made unless income in 1981 substantially exceeded that for 1980, would have social and political consequences with implications for the refugees, for the host countries, and for the prospects of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Kolby, Norway)

18. The continuation of UNWRA's services was the responsibility of the entire world community; the Working Group consequently reiterated its call to those Governments which had not yet contributed to UNWRA to start contributing, and urged Governments that had made only relatively small contributions to be more generous. The Working Group hoped that the Governments which had contributed generously in the past would continue to increase their contributions. In view of the very serious financial situation facing UNWRA in 1981, the Working Group would do all it could to assist the Commissioner-General in his fund-raising efforts.

19. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan) congratulated the Chairman on his election and noted that he had also served as the Chairman of the Security Council Commission established under resolution 446 (1979), the work of which pertained to the closely-related subject of Israel's usurpation and colonization of the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. In that capacity, he had demonstrated his objectivity and loyalty to the Charter of the United Nations as well as his incisive grasp of the reality of the situation. Israel, an aggressor and expansionist, had, for more than three decades, relentlessly denied the basic human rights of the Palestinians, both in their ancestral homeland and in their dispersal.

20. He expressed his Government's appreciation to the Commissioner-General for his tireless dedication to alleviating the ordeal suffered by the Palestine refugees, despite limited means and in the midst of strife, instability and organized Israeli violence, particularly in south Lebanon, and against Palestinian concentrations in the occupied territories. His delegation also appreciated the Commissioner-General's candid portrayal of the imminent catastrophe that would inevitably confront the Palestinian people as a result of the destruction of their national life and their dispersal in 1947 through an unparalleled act of criminality. That catastrophe had been brought to mind by the fact that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees had observed the conclusion of 30 years of service on 30 April 1980 (A/35/13, para. 1). He drew attention to the fact that the United Nations commemorated 29 November 1947 as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

21. With regard to paragraph 2 of the Commissioner-General's report (A/35/13), he noted that the report rightly referred to General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) as the "founding charter" of UNRWA. Over the years, the General Assembly's position had always been that every Palestinian refugee was ipso facto entitled to return to his home and live at peace with his neighbours and that those not choosing to do so were entitled to full compensation. However, he disagreed with the report's interpretation of paragraph 6 of resolution 302 (IV) that by 31 December 1950 the "works" function of the Agency was to have superseded its "relief" function and that it had envisaged the early transfer to the Governments of the area of responsibility for all forms of assistance to those refugees who had not been repatriated (A/35/13, para. 2).

22. There were two basic flaws in that assumption. The first was to assume that the Palestine refugees would be willing to entertain the thought that their

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(Mr. Nuseibeh, Jordan)

expulsion from their homeland had been anything but barbaric and unjust. Their inherent right to repatriation had been fortified categorically in General Assembly resolution 194 (II). Moreover, the protocol signed in Lausanne on 12 May 1949 by the members of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and by the representatives of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Israel had referred to the rights of the refugees and the preservation of their property and had proposed to the delegations of Israel and of the Arab States that the working document attached thereto should be taken as a basis for discussions with the Conciliation Commission. The protocol had also indicated that the interested delegations had accepted that proposal with the understanding that the exchanges of views to be carried out by the Conciliation Commission with the two parties would bear upon necessary territorial adjustments. If Israel had not reneged on its signature, the whole Palestine problem, and foremost of all the refugee problem, would not currently be the subject of debate in the Committee. That understanding had clearly been the reason why international relief had been envisaged as an ad hoc emergency undertaking to be concluded by 1950.

23. The second flaw in the report's interpretation of paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) was that the host Governments, which were the Governments of free, sovereign States, had never envisaged or agreed to provide a permanent home for a people who had been brutally rendered homeless by violence and terror. It was therefore clear that the Palestinian refugees and the host Governments were the prime victims of any prolongation of that seemingly endless tragedy.

24. However, the Agency seemed to have no alternative but to fail to fulfil the solemn mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The Commissioner-General's report sounded an alarm: the Agency definitely planned to abandon some of its most basic programmes by June 1981. That decision was being forced upon the Agency by an act of political will, clearly designed to change the original conditions whereby the international community had had responsibility for assisting the Palestinian people until that situation was remedied. Such a unilateral change in those conditions, to the detriment of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, was doomed to failure and would simply impose additional hardships on the Palestinians as well as on the host Governments. It should be noted that the direct and, especially, the indirect contributions of the host Governments far exceeded those of any other country in the world, including the major Powers. For example, in Jordan, which was after all a developing country, educational facilities and employment were provided for nearly 1 million displaced Palestinians.

25. Describing the basic features of the refugee situation, he pointed out that, because of a ceiling arrangement introduced almost 20 years before, only 45 per cent of the current refugee population received Agency relief. Moreover, the refugee population was considerably less than half of the total Palestinian population, which numbered nearly 4 million. The basic rations for the most needy refugees had been reduced by half in 1979 and 1980, and other rations had been cut drastically also. Jordan's direct assistance to the refugees, in addition to

(Mr. Kuseibeh, Jordan)

its contribution to UNRWA, had amounted to \$35.5 million during the current fiscal year, and the Jordanian Government had also been responsible for 250,000 displaced persons from the West Bank since 1967. In that connexion, he expressed his Government's appreciation for the efficient way in which UNRWA had participated in that task. The Jordanian Government also provided the refugees with all the services commonly provided to its citizens, together with unconditional opportunities for employment.

26. While education was laudably the Agency's first priority - with second priority being given to health services and third priority to relief and welfare services - the only area in which it could now make further reductions was in the education programme, since relief had already been curtailed to the utmost. For the past three decades, the education programme had helped many Palestinians to emerge from their tragic situation.

27. The increased figures contained in the Agency's budgets did not reflect increased services - although the Agency always provided excellent services within its means - but simply the world-wide rapid inflation in the price of goods and services. In fact, the report warned that, without sufficient contributions from the international community, the Agency might have to lay down financial responsibility for all its schools in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, while maintaining those in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza (A/35/13, para. 7). That would mean that Jordan would be required to have two parallel Ministries of Education, a situation that would be difficult for any country.

28. His Government felt that such a reduction in the education programme was a callous abandonment of international responsibilities towards the Palestinian refugees, in flagrant disregard of United Nations commitments. The month before, he had discussed that matter with the Secretary-General, who had made a special appeal in his annual report to the General Assembly. He had also promised to consider making additional special appeals to Member States. It was inconceivable that hundreds of thousands of children and thousands of qualified teachers should be forced to leave their class-rooms.

29. A monumental injustice had been inflicted upon the Palestinian people three decades before, when the General Assembly had represented a minority of mankind, but today the moral imperatives of a universally representative General Assembly far outweighed any political machinations and unscrupulous expediency. The General Assembly was fully aware of the fact that, in 1947 and 1948, the Palestinian people had owned at least 94 per cent of the land in Palestine; they had represented two thirds of the population and thus had naturally possessed Palestine's infrastructure. While the gross national product of Israel was almost \$15,000 million yearly, the lawful owners had been driven out and were currently being told that the international community would no longer provide schooling for their children. That was certainly an immoral, unjust and intolerable state of affairs, particularly in the light of the discussions held recently during the eleventh special session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Huseibeh, Jordan)

30. No one could contest the fact that the Palestinian people, particularly the refugees, were foremost among the disadvantaged, living in a state of suspended animation for as long as 32 years. They were a hardworking people, and yet they were prevented from earning a decent living, tilling their land, working in their factories and enjoying the natural resources and public services that every country afforded its people. Their hands were chained behind their backs, while they were told that, not only would they continue to live in dire conditions, without their most basic needs being met, but also that, because of its financial crisis, the Agency could no longer assume responsibility for the schooling of their children.

31. He asked whether it was fair that Israel, the tormentor of those people, had received \$10,000 million in official assistance from the United States of America in the past three and a half years, in addition to billions of dollars in tax-exempt contributions.

32. The Palestinian people, who deeply appreciated the Agency's operations, would welcome the termination of its assistance, provided that their inalienable right to return to their homeland was also respected. However, to desert them in their hour of greatest need could only be described as a crime against humanity, and the Powers that had originally brought about that catastrophe must bear the utmost responsibility for it, ethically, morally and legally.

33. He asked whether the cost of the weapons that had for years been used indiscriminately against the Palestinian refugees and their Lebanese brothers might not far outweigh, in value, the relatively small cost of enabling the Agency, or at least its school system, to survive. The profound moral choice that must be made on that question would inevitably have serious implications for regional as well as world peace, security and economic stability.

34. His Government, as one of the host Governments, had on several occasions expressed its profound concern over the destabilization that would result from the elimination of schooling for hundreds of thousands of students, from a further reduction of the already sub-human food assistance level and from abandoning the sick to die. His Government earnestly hoped that its repeated warnings would be heeded, for in one way or another they directly affected the 1,834,000 refugees registered with the Agency as of 30 June 1980.

35. The General Assembly had resolved each year that the Palestinian refugees should be enabled to return to their homes, but to no avail. On 3 October 1980, in a letter to the Secretary-General, the Israeli representatives had termed the General Assembly resolution on the unconditional return of all those displaced as a result of the 1967 conflict "unrealistic and obstructive". Perhaps the time had come to tell Israel, which went out of its way to ridicule and ignore every United Nations resolution, that it was a member and not a master of the community of nations and that, if it disagreed, then it had no place in that community.

(Mr. Fuseibeh, Jordan)

36. In conclusion, he expressed his Government's deep appreciation for the dedicated efforts of all those concerned and for the contributions made by Member States and non-governmental organizations over the years. He also expressed his delegation's hope that the Agency could currently take action in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/112, to reconsolidate its headquarters within the area of its operations. Lastly, he expressed his delegation's deepest condolences to the delegation of Algeria on the tragic earthquake that had occurred in that country, which only recently had won its independence and rebuilt itself as a nation.

37. Mr. YAZI (Pakistan) proposed that in view of the importance of the information contained in the statement by the representative of Jordan, the full text of that statement should be circulated to members of the Committee.

38. The CHAIRMAN said that, since the General Assembly had again authorized the Committee to obtain, on specific request, transcriptions of the debates of some of its meetings or portions thereof, he took it that the Committee wished to request that a transcription of the statement by the representative of Jordan should be made and circulated to members of the Committee.

39. It was so decided.

40. Mr. RAHMAN (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the Palestinian people was suffering from crimes perpetrated ever since 1945, when the General Assembly had adopted resolution 181 (II) containing the Plan of Partition and had thus violated the territorial integrity of Palestine. That resolution had also provided a basis for the racist system under which the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people were being flagrantly violated and total war had been declared against its national identity. It was therefore natural that the international community should assume responsibility for the forcible uprooting of the Palestinian people, which had begun in the spring of 1948 when terrorist activities, some of them conducted by the current Prime Minister of Israel, had been directed against innocent women, children and elderly people. The international community received daily reports of similar crimes and, accordingly, had declared the Zionist movement to be a form of racism and racial discrimination. Now history would judge those who continued to oppress the Palestinian people.

41. UNRWA had been created to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian refugees by providing minimum services to meet their basic needs. Without going into the details of the Commissioner-General's report (A/35/13), he drew attention to the fact that, as was indicated in the report, the Israeli authorities had let no opportunity pass to obstruct the Agency's work by arresting its employees, disrupting the functioning of its schools, closing them, destroying school materials, hitting pupils and generally terrorizing the population. An investigation of such incidents had been promised, but no relevant information was contained in the report. In fact, the report tended to gloss over such terrorist activities.

(Mr. Rahman, Observer, PLO)

42. He also drew attention to the fact that the Commissioner-General submitted his reports to the Israeli Zionist authorities and that their comments were taken into account (A/35/13. p. v). In his opinion, it was not appropriate for the Commissioner-General to submit his report to Israeli censorship.
43. The report of the Commissioner-General made no mention of the fact that the Israeli authorities had rejected part of the school texts approved by UNESCO and had adopted measures prohibiting representatives of UNESCO from conducting examinations in the Gaza strip. The report of the Commissioner-General should mention all such questions so that the international community would be aware of those practices.
44. Responsibility for financing the Agency should be borne by the Government of Israel and the countries which had contributed to the tragedy of the Palestinian people. While the Palestinian people was suffering from the effects of dispersion, the Zionists were profiting from the use of their property. Justice demanded that Palestinians should be helped with revenue derived from their own property. He did not agree with the idea that the Agency should be transformed into an Arab institution. Although the Palestine Liberation Organization had encouraged Arab countries to help overcome the Agency's budget deficit, that should in no way be interpreted as meaning that Arab States alone should bear the responsibility for the operations of the Agency. The Israeli Government, and the States which were providing it with considerable financial aid for continuing its aggressive and terrorist activities against the Palestinian people, had a moral obligation to increase their participation in the financing of the Agency. Furthermore, the report of the trustees for the affairs of Palestinians in Arab host countries recommended that the Commissioner-General, the Working Group on the Financing of UERWA, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Governments of Arab oil-producing States should request oil companies to make grants to the Agency in the form of humanitarian aid which would partly make up for the taxes which they owed. The participation of donor countries in the budget of the Agency should be determined in percentages, not in fixed amounts, so that the Agency's funds would not be eroded by inflation. The budget of the Agency should be an integral part of the regular budget of the United Nations. Furthermore, the headquarters of the Agency should be located in the area of operations.
45. With regard to the decrease in activities in the field of education and health, the Palestine Liberation Organization was opposed to any discrimination between Palestine refugees according to their place of residence. Their current location must not be used as a basis for discrimination with regard to the treatment they received or the services to which they were entitled. Furthermore, any decrease in the educational programmes of the Agency would have a negative effect on the general situation in the region.
46. The problem of the Palestinian refugees was only one aspect of the question of the Palestinian people as a whole. The only solution to that problem was to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its sovereign rights, especially the right to return to its homeland and property and the right to exercise its sovereign national independence in an independent Palestinian State. The longer that solution was postponed, the longer the region would be exposed to further bloodshed and destruction. The responsibility for that situation fell upon the Zionist entity of Israel and the States which came to its aid, particularly the United States of

(Mr. Mahan, Observer, PLO)

America. The Palestine Liberation Organization supported by all peace-loving forces, would continue the struggle for the just cause of the Palestinian people.

47. To conclusion, he expressed his condolences to the Government and people of Algeria in connexion with the tragic event which had recently taken place in that country.

48. Mr. ASSEM (Lyon) said that his Delegation wished to express its condolences to the Government and people of Algeria in connexion with the tragic event which had recently taken place in that country. With regard to the report of the Commissioner-General, he noted with appreciation the manner in which a list of suspended budgeted expenditures, which equalled the projected deficit, had been drawn up. The practice of moving items from the non-approved to the approved category only as pledges of additional income were received was a prudent management technique to avoid sudden cutbacks in UNRWA activities, and it was also an effective means of fund-raising since it pinpointed activities that must cease when a specific amount of funds was not contributed.

49. In spite of the important role played by UNRWA, its financial situation continued to be extremely precarious. His delegation once again urged those countries which had not contributed at all, or which had contributed only a part of their fair share, to fully discharge their obligations. The current financial situation, in which only a small number of Member States assumed the financial burden, should not be permitted to become an established feature of United Nations activities. In that regard, it was gratifying to note that, in response to the Commissioner-General's solicitation efforts, a number of oil-producing countries in the Middle East had made generous additional contributions to UNRWA. His Delegation, furthermore, strongly hoped that the efforts of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, which was the sole organ bridging the General Assembly and the UNRWA secretariat, would contribute to the financial soundness of UNRWA.

50. His delegation regretted the relocation of the Agency's headquarters in Vienna and Amman, and fully shared the view of the Chairman of the Advisory Commission that the possible consolidation of the headquarters in Beirut or elsewhere within the area of operations should remain an objective of the Commissioner-General's considerations. His Government, which had long recognized the vital importance of UNRWA, would contribute in 1980 approximately \$9.5 million, an increase of over 35 per cent as compared with the previous year's contribution.

51. Mr. STEPHANO (Greece) confirmed the Greek Government's support for the renewal of the mandate of the Agency, which for 30 years had been performing its humanitarian tasks under extremely difficult conditions. Greece had supported UNRWA's activities to the limits of its possibilities and hoped to be in a position to announce a substantial increase in its contribution at the forthcoming pledging conference. His delegation was deeply concerned at the critical financial situation of the Agency and emphasized that it was the duty of all States, regardless of their geographical location and political attitude, to relieve human suffering.

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

52. It should not, however, be forgotten that the reason for the existence of the Agency was the political situation in the Middle East and the struggle of the Palestinian people for its right to self-determination and to its own State within the framework of a comprehensive settlement. UNRWA had become a significant factor in the political equation and, as the Commissioner-General had pointed out, it was an agent for both change and stability in the Middle East. Moreover, the very fact that, despite lack of land and inherited wealth, the proportion of Palestinian graduates from tertiary education was the highest in the region illustrated the useful work done by UNRWA and emphasized the need to find the necessary resources to finance it. The Agency's progress in the education and employment of women was also a comforting fact. His delegation therefore urged the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA to make specific recommendations for means of finding new sources of finance for UNRWA.

53. Appreciation should be extended to the UNESCO specialists, whose elaboration of a wider programme run by the Agency had made it possible for so many qualified Palestinians to be available in the Middle East, and to the International Civil Service Commission for its assistance to UNRWA in readjusting local staff pay in view of the ever-rising cost of living.

54. Lastly, he hoped that the major part of the UNRWA headquarters would return in the near future to the area of operations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/112 A.

55. Mr. RAHIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was disappointed with the comments made by the representative of Jordan concerning the role of Israel with regard to the refugee problem. Instead of offering a new approach, the representative of Jordan had merely repeated the same argument that had been used for the past 30 years and had placed full blame on Israel for the creation of the refugee problem. History, however, showed that that was not true. During the war of 1948 the exodus of Arab refugees from Palestine was caused, to a great extent, by the attitude of Arab leaders at that time. He cited a number of authoritative Arab commentators who had written that the refugee problem was the direct consequence of the opposition of Arab States to the Jewish State and the partition of Palestine. The Arab States, which had encouraged the Palestine refugees to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies, had failed to keep their promises to those refugees and must contribute to the solution of the problem.

56. The representative of Jordan had insisted on the right to return based on paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The basic idea underlying the whole of that resolution, however, was that the parties to the conflict, the Arab States and Israel, should enter into negotiations directly or with the help of the Conciliation Commission in order to find a peaceful settlement to all the outstanding problems confronting them. In general, the international community needed a new approach, a message of hope and peace, in dealing with that problem in the 1980s.

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57. Mr. NUSEIBESHAMMA (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that although his statement had been described as repetitive by the Israeli representative, its substance was very simple, namely that Israel should allow the Palestinians to return to their homeland. If Israel's hope for a breakthrough was sincere, it could be fulfilled only by talking to the Palestinians.

58. Once more, the Israeli representative had said that the Arabs had called upon the Palestinians to leave their homes, whereas in fact they had done so because they were afraid of the massacres and terrorism to which their fellow countrymen were being subjected. Everyone's right to return home must be respected.

59. Mr. RAHMAN (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel still seemed to hope, as the Israeli authorities had in 1948, that time would solve the Palestinian problem and that the old would die and the young forget. However, time had strengthened the Palestinians' attachment to their homes and their identity and to the collective existence of a people which had fought for years and would continue to fight for its basic human and national rights.

60. It was natural for people to leave their homes if a fire broke out, and no one contested their right to return when the fire had been extinguished. The Palestinians were not super-human. They had left their homes in fear of the Israeli terrorist activities which he had described in his statement.

61. The right to return to one's home and the right to self-determination were basic human rights which could not be subject to negotiation. They should be the basis of negotiations and not their outcome. He was sure that by now the international community had become sufficiently conscious of the real issues involved in the Middle East conflict, and would not be misled by perverted logic which consistently ignored the existence of the Palestinian people and depicted the conflict as an Arab/Israeli rather than a Palestinian/Israeli affair.

62. Mr. MAJEED (United Arab Emirates), speaking in the exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had expressed anger at the repetition of certain facts by one Arab representative. Those facts would continue to be repeated because facts could not be changed with the passage of time or at the whim of the speaker. There seemed to be a contradiction between the Israeli representative's two contentions - first, that the Palestine refugees had left home at the instigation of their leaders and, secondly, that there were refugees in every war. The latter contention was correct. In every war, refugees left their homes whether or not they were told to do so, because they were afraid of the tragedies entailed by war.

63. The Israeli representative had also asked why an Arab representative had referred only to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In fact, the representative concerned was not the only one to do so. The United States, an ally of Israel, regularly submitted a draft resolution which referred specifically to that paragraph.

(Mr. Hammad, United Arab Emirates)

64. The Israeli representative had also referred to Jewish refugees from Arab countries. All Arab States which Jewish refugees had left in 1948 had declared themselves ready to accept their return. Was Israel prepared to do the same?

65. It was difficult to know what new approach Israel was expecting to the Palestinian problem. Did it expect the Arab States to forget the refugees and accept the Israeli Government's policy of establishing settlements in the Arab occupied territories?

66. Mr. RAMIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, disagreed with the Jordanian representative's contention that the refugee problem was the key to all the problems between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Every objective observer would come to the conclusion that the central problem was in fact the refusal of the majority of Israel's Arab neighbours to accept Israel as a legitimate State and to acknowledge the Jewish people's right to land which had been theirs for 4,000 years. That was the central issue but it had very serious by-products - namely, the problems of the Arab refugees and their property and of the Jewish refugees who had been expelled from Arab countries where they had lived for thousands of years. Jordan was in a state of war with Israel, yet expected the latter to admit Palestinians living in Jordan. Why did Jordan not take part in the peace process and present its ideas in the course of negotiations?

67. The representative of the United Arab Emirates had spoken of the Palestinian tragedy. That was the tragedy of the whole Middle East, which was not limited to the Palestinians. There was no absolute right to return. Every sovereign State was entitled to decide whom it would admit. The refugee problem was part of the peace package directly envisaged in Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

68. The representative of the United Arab Emirates had also asked what new approach Israel proposed. There was already a new approach in the current peace negotiations. Representatives of Israel's other Arab neighbours should also join the negotiating table and present their case in a constructive way, as Israel was doing.

69. Mr. NUSRIBESHARIFA (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the issue was certainly one of land. The Palestinians had owned the land in Palestine and had lived on it. If there had been no land in Palestine, there would be no Israel. The Israeli representative seemed to hope that the Palestinians would somehow evaporate so that there would be no more refugee problem. It was now establishing settlements and confiscating land belonging to Palestinians who lived in the West Bank, and even appropriating the water they drank. It was strange that Israel should talk about autonomy for people who were living on their own land, as if Israel owned that land and was kind enough to offer autonomy to its legitimate inhabitants. Those who participated in the talks on autonomy were in fact recognizing that Israel owned the West Bank. If Israel wanted a breakthrough, it should put an end to its policy of establishing settlements and expropriating land, and it should abide by United Nations resolutions.

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70. Mr. RAHMAN (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was amazed that the representative of Israel had expressed surprise that Israel was not accepted in the Middle East. The reason was the crimes and atrocities committed against Palestinians in the past and still being committed against them. For instance, two elected Palestinian mayors, after being expelled from their homes, had appeared before an Israeli military court, but their trial had been held in a cafeteria near the bridge over the Jordan and they had not been allowed to return home. The Palestine refugees in the Middle East were victims of a continuous process being carried out by the Israeli Zionist authorities, whose intention was to destroy the national identity of the Palestinian people. That could be achieved only by destruction of Palestinians individually and collectively. He hoped, however, that the time of genocide had passed and that the international community would not tolerate such a procedure.

71. The Israeli representative had also referred to Jewish refugees from Arab countries. A refugee was someone who left his country of origin for another country, so that Israel was in fact a country of refugees. He therefore appealed to every country which Jewish refugees had left for Palestine to allow them to return. On the other hand, refugees could not claim sovereignty over the country where they had settled.

72. Mr. EL-SAID (Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated his country's position on the Palestine refugee problem, which would be explained at greater length during the general debate on the item. At present, he wished to refer only to the strange allegation by one representative that all participants in the peace process recognized that the West Bank belonged to Israel. That representative should listen to the declared position of Egypt, which championed the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and believed that any solution to the Middle East problem should conform to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which called for the total withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967. He called upon other representatives to reiterate their country's position on that matter.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.