

UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



RECEIVED  
7 MAY 1957  
INDEX SECTION LIBRARY

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/AC.79/SR.27  
26 April 1957

Original: ENGLISH



UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE FUND

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Fourth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 29 January 1957, at 11 a.m.

CONTENTS:

	<u>Page</u>
1. Opening of the fourth session	6
2. Election of officers (item 1 of the revised provisional agenda)	6
3. Adoption of the agenda (item 2 of the revised provisional agenda) (A/AC.79/44/Rev.1)	7
4. Report on the fourth session of the Standing Programme Sub-Committee (item 3 of the agenda) (A/AC.79/53 - A/AC.79/PSC/5)	9
5. The problem of Hungarian refugees (General debate) (item 4 of the agenda)	9

Present:

Chairman: Dame May CURWEN (United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland)  
later Mr. TUNCEL (Turkey)  
Rapporteur: Mr. CURRIE (Australia)

Members:

Austria	Mr. HELMER
Belgium	Mr. CONTEMPRE
Brazil	Mr. NETTO
Denmark	Mr. GUNDELACH
France	Mr. de CURTON
Federal Republic of Germany	Mr. MIDDELMANN
Greece	Mr. BENSIS
Holy See	Mgr. BRINI
Iran	Mr. KAFAI
Israel	Mr. KAHANY
Italy	Mr. SCADUTO MENDOLA
Netherlands	Mr. SCHELTEMA
Norway	Mr. CAPPELEN
Switzerland	Mr. SCHÜRCH
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. WARDROP
United States of America	Mr. PHILLIPS Mr. POPPER
Venezuela	Mr. LUJAN

Observers for the Governments of States Members of the United Nations:

Canada	Mr. WERSHOF
China	Mr. TSING-CHANG LIU
Hungary	Mr. MARJAI
Sweden	Mr. KOLLBERG
Yugoslavia	Mr. KACJAN

Special representative:

Sovereign Order of Malta Mr. KOCH

Also present:

Mr. LINDT	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Mr. PELT	Director of the European Office of the United Nations

Representatives of specialized agencies:

International Labour Organisation

Mr. OBLATH

Food and Agriculture Organization

Mr. BRITTON

Representatives of inter-governmental organizations:Intergovernmental Committee for  
European Migration

Miss BAVERSTOCK

Council of Europe

Mr. GUNALTAY

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category AInternational Federation of Christian  
Trade Unions

Mr. EGGERMANN

Mr. POPOVITCH

Mr. ODERBOLZ

World Federation of United Nations  
Associations

Mr. SMITH

Mr. TSANG

Category B and Register

Agudas Israel World Organization

Chief Rabbi SAFRAN

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Mr. JORDAN

Mr. ELFENBEIN

Mr. JACOBSON

Catholic International Union for  
Social Service

Miss HERTOGHE

Commission of the Churches on  
International Affairs

Mr. LEDERMANN

Consultative Council of Jewish  
Organizations

Mr. BRUNSCHWIG

Co-ordinating Board of Jewish  
Organizations

Mr. WARBURG

International Catholic Migration  
Commission

Mr. STARK

Mr. HEERWAGEN

International Committee of the  
Red Cross

Mr. GALLOPIN

Mr. COURSIER

Mrs. MATHEZ

International Conference of  
Catholic Charities

Mr. A. PUGIN

Abbé BOUVIER

Mr. M. PUGIN

International Council of Women

Miss van EEGHEN

International Labour Assistance

Mrs. BAN

International Relief Committee  
for Intellectual Workers

Mr. GORDON

International Social Services

Miss DODDS

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (continued):

Category B and Register (continued)

International Union for Child Welfare	Mr. THELIN Miss MOSER
League of Red Cross Societies	Mr. de ROUGE Mr. DUNNING Dr. HANTCHEF
ORT World Union	Mr. BRAUDE Mr. HALPERIN Mr. SCHWEITZER
Pax Romana	Mr. KERSTIENS Mr. SZMITHOWSKI Father GROND
Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies Working for Refugees	Mr. JORDAN Miss BERTSCHI
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom	Miss BAER
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations	Mr. MAHER DOSS
World Federation of Catholic Young Women and Girls	Miss HERREN
World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations	Miss de KALBERMATTEN Miss de LUCY-FOSSARIEU
World University Service	Mr. DUCRET Mr. IOVENKO
World Young Women's Christian Association	Miss ARNOLD Mrs. LUDI
<u>Other Organizations (Members of the Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies working for Refugees):</u>	
American Polish War Relief ) American Relief for Poland Inc. )	Mr. PISKORSKI
American Friends Service Committee	Mr. WOOD
International Rescue Committee	Mr. SINCLAIR Miss de JAGER
Jewish Agency for Palestine	Mr. LAOR Mr. KUDLER
National Catholic Welfare Conference	Mr. St. JOHN Miss NORTON
Tolstoy Foundation Incorporated	Mrs. SCHAUFUSS

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (continued):

Other Organizations (Members of the Standing Conference of  
Voluntary Agencies working for Refugees) (continued):

Unitarian Service Committee	Mrs. MATTHEY
United HIAS Service	Mr. SPANIEN
World Council of Churches	Mr. CHANDLER Miss JABOOR

Secretariat:

Mr. Read	Deputy High Commissioner
Mr. Pagès	Director of the Office of the High Commissioner
Mr. Alexander	Deputy Director of the Office of the High Commissioner
Mr. Pinegar	Chief, Implementation Section
Mr. Asscher	Secretary to the Committee

1. OPENING OF THE FOURTH SESSION

The CHAIRMAN, declaring the fourth session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) open, said that, in the absence of Mr. Patijn (Netherlands), who had been Chairman at the third session, she would preside in her capacity of Vice-Chairman until the new officers had been elected.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

The CHAIRMAN called for nominations for the offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur for the fourth session.

On the proposal of Mr. KAFAI (Iran), supported by Mr. PHILLIPS (United States of America) and Mr. KAHANY (Israel),

Mr. Tuncel (Turkey) was unanimously elected Chairman.

On the proposal of Mr. WARDROP (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. de CURTON (France),

Mr. Cappelen (Norway) was unanimously elected Vice-Chairman.

On the proposal of Mr. NETTO (Brazil), supported by Mr. SCHELTEMA (Netherlands),

Mr. Currie (Australia) was unanimously elected Rapporteur.

Mr. Tuncel (Turkey) took the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Executive Committee for the honour it had done the Turkish Government and himself by electing him to the Chairmanship. He was aware of the heavy responsibility which the task of presiding over the Committee's meetings laid upon him, and trusted that he could count on the support of its members to see him through.

Mr. CAPPELEN (Norway) and Mr. Currie (Australia) also thanked the Committee for electing them to their respective offices.

The CHAIRMAN called upon the Director of the European Office of the United Nations to address the Committee.

Mr. PELT, Director of the European Office of the United Nations, said that there were two particular reasons why he considered it a privilege to be attending the opening of the Committee's fourth session.

First, he was able to welcome Mr. Lindt, the newly-appointed United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whose Office was under the roof of the European Office of the United Nations. He (Mr. Pelt) had established the best possible relations with the late High Commissioner, Dr. van Heuven Goedhart, and was convinced that they would continue with the new High Commissioner. Mr. Lindt had taken up his new functions at

a difficult moment, and he wished him every success in his endeavours while assuring him of his full support.

Secondly, he was thus given an opportunity of conveying to the members of the Executive Committee the best wishes of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for success in their task. More than ever before, the problem of refugees required the devoted attention both of governments and of public opinion. The European Office of the United Nations would give every possible support to the Executive Committee in its work.

The CHAIRMAN, expressing his deep sorrow, evoked the memory of the late Dr. van Heuven Goedhart, whose active participation in the Committee's work would certainly be missed; it was now for the Committee to press to its successful conclusion the great work launched by the late lamented High Commissioner.

He was pleased to welcome the new High Commissioner in the name of the Executive Committee. Mr. Lindt's great experience in dealing with the problem of refugees, and the knowledge of the United Nations which he had acquired in New York as a representative of the Swiss Federal Government, would be of great value to the Executive Committee.

He then called upon the High Commissioner to define the objectives he had set himself in his programme of work.

Mr. LINDT, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, made the statement annexed to this summary record.

Monsignor BRINI (Holy See) observed that in his statement the High Commissioner had raised certain issues of principle. He therefore requested that the verbatim text of the speech be circulated.

The CHAIRMAN said that that would be done.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that rule 9 of the Committee's rules of procedure entitled States Members of the United Nations to be represented by observers at its public meetings, and wished to welcome on behalf of the Committee the observers for the Governments of Canada, China, Hungary, Sweden and Yugoslavia, who were present under that arrangement. According to usage, an observer from the Sovereign Order of Malta was also attending the proceedings, and he welcomed him too.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 2 of the revised provisional agenda) (A/AC.79/44/Rev.1)

The CHAIRMAN noted that in paragraph 106 of the report on its fourth session (A/AC.79/53 - A/AC.79/PSC/5) the Standing Programme Sub-Committee had asked the Executive Committee to consider the possibility of amending the revised provisional

agenda in such a way as to give priority to the problem of Hungarian refugees.

Mr. CONTEMPRE (Belgium) said that, in view of the topical nature of the problem, he would support the request, originally made by the Austrian delegation, that it be discussed at the beginning of the session.

Mr. POPPER (United States of America) supported the proposal, but assumed that it applied to the general debate on the question, and that the detailed discussion would be left as item 9 of the Agenda.

The CHAIRMAN agreed that that would be the best procedure. The problem of the Hungarian refugees in Austria was a very important item on the Committee's agenda for the session, and the Austrian Government had sent its Minister of the Interior to attend the discussion. Welcoming the Minister, he said that he would formally propose that the general debate on the problem of Hungarian refugees be held immediately after item 3 of the agenda (report on the fourth session of the Standing Programme Subcommittee) had been disposed of. The detailed consideration of the High Commissioner's report on the Hungarian refugees (A/AC.79/49) would remain as item 9.

It was unanimously decided to proceed to the general discussion of the problem of Hungarian refugees immediately after item 3 of the provisional agenda had been dealt with.

Mr. de CURTON (France) recalled that the High Commissioner had spoken of the measures taken by the Egyptian Government against a great number of persons who had been compelled to leave Egypt, abandoning all their possessions. Some of those persons were nationals of the countries in which they had now sought refuge. Others were refugees in the legal sense of the term, being either stateless persons or Egyptian citizens who now found themselves in countries which had no legal obligations towards them but which had granted them asylum for humanitarian reasons. The Committee should consider the action to be taken, the status to be accorded to the refugees and their legal position in general. The problem was a serious one. While the Committee's agenda included questions that were graver still, the question of the refugees from Egypt should also be discussed, either as an additional item or under item 11 (other business). A report should be prepared on the position of such refugees, and on the assistance that the international community of nations might be able to give them through the good offices of the High Commissioner.

The CHAIRMAN said that the question of refugees from Egypt could be taken under item 11.



Mr. CONTEMPRE (Belgium), Mr. KAHANY (Israel) and Mr. SCHELTEMA (Netherlands) supported the proposal made by the representative of France.

Monsignor BRINI (Holy See) felt that an exchange of views on the subject within the framework of the various questions with which the Committee had to deal could be most useful.

Mr. KACJAN (Observer for the Government of Yugoslavia) suggested that the problem of Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia should be considered as a separate item.

Mr. LINDT, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, explained that item 9 referred to all refugees from Hungary, and that a separate document was being prepared on the position in Yugoslavia. A separate item was therefore unnecessary.

The revised provisional agenda (A/AC.79/44/Rev.1) was adopted unanimously subject to the decision taken concerning the general debate on the problem of Hungarian refugees<sup>(1)</sup>.

4. REPORT ON THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE STANDING PROGRAMME SUB-COMMITTEE (item 3 of the agenda) (A/AC.79/53 - A/AC.79/PSC/5)

The CHAIRMAN said that, in accordance with the usual practice, the Committee would simply take note of the Sub-Committee's report, the various chapters of which would be discussed in detail in connexion with the several items of the Committee's agenda to which they referred.

The Committee took note of the report on the fourth session of the Standing Programme Sub-Committee (A/AC.79/53 - A/AC.79/PSC/5).

5. THE PROBLEM OF HUNGARIAN REFUGEES (GENERAL DEBATE) (item 4 of the agenda)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to embark upon its general debate on the problem of Hungarian refugees.

Mr. HELMER (Austria) said that a continuous stream of Hungarian refugees had been flooding into Austria across the Hungarian border for the past three months. Their number already exceeded 170,000. That meant as many individual tragedies, and innumerable problems relating to care and maintenance and the provision of clothing, transport and documents.

The events of 23 October 1956 had appeared to foreshadow a far-reaching change in Hungary, culminating in the announcement of general free elections by Prime Minister Imre Nagy. An influx into Austria, although on a somewhat limited scale, had begun at that time of Hungarians who had been anxious lest the situation prove detrimental to them. Baseless allegations had subsequently been made by Soviet Union circles and the Peoples' Democracies that Austria had violated its neutrality and had

(1) For the agenda as adopted, see document A/AC.79/44/Rev.2.

lacked impartiality in reacting to the events in Hungary. He would not refute those allegations in detail, but it seemed indicative of Austria's attitude regarding the right of asylum that those early refugees had been received in the same way as the fugitives who had begun to arrive on the very day on which Soviet military intervention had prevented the holding of free elections. Austria neither was able, nor had any right, to interfere actively in the happenings in Hungary. But all its sympathy went out to that country's unhappy people, and it was doing everything in its power to alleviate their sufferings.

Whatever the motives that had driven so many thousands of Hungarians to leave their homes, whether fear of political reprisals, fear of deportation or other compelling reasons, one thing stood beyond doubt: people of all ages and in all walks of life had tried to reach Austria, and the stream of refugees had still not dried up. Neither the winter nor stricter counter-measures had prevented more and more refugees making their way into Austria across the snow, despite the cold, difficult though it had become to do so. That mass flight of people leaving their homes, abandoning all their belongings and risking their very lives merely to cross the border was unique in history.

The influx had created for Austria many economic, financial and human problems. The burden imposed by the reception of so many refugees and the need to care for them was becoming too heavy, and could not be borne by Austria alone. One hundred million Austrian schillings had been spent on the establishment or adaptation of camps, about 20 million on furnishing them, and another 105 million on running them and feeding the refugees. The transport of refugees within Austria had cost about 15 million schillings. Those figures did not include what had been given to the Hungarian refugees privately in Austria.

Austria could not have carried out that gigantic task unaided. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and his representative in Vienna had done all that was humanly possible to assist Austria, for which he (Mr. Helmer) thanked them on behalf of the Austrian Federal Government. His Government was also grateful to all those countries which had together admitted a total of approximately 100,000 Hungarian refugees already, and especially to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) which had moved the refugees to the countries of second asylum. Austria was also grateful to the innumerable private voluntary agencies and individuals who had given their utmost in their efforts to aid the refugees. Without their help

the task with which Austria and the whole free world had been faced could not have been accomplished. The fact that, perhaps for the first time in post-war history, many States had been prepared to waive bureaucratic regulations to facilitate the reception of refugees, without which concession no collective action would have been possible, was also extremely gratifying.

It should be emphasized that the United States of America had so far allowed the immigration of more than 22,000 persons, which was the highest number admitted by any one country. Even so, improvements were urgently needed. The United States immigration laws created one of the main difficulties. They had been drafted on the principle that the first country of asylum must be relieved of its burden, and therefore stipulated that only refugees in Austria could be granted immigration visas. That well-intentioned legislation had had results contrary to its intentions. Some refugees refused to leave Austria lest they thereby lose their chance of admission to the United States of America. And considerable unrest had arisen among the refugees in various European countries, who were endeavouring to return to Austria by all possible means so that they could apply for United States immigration visas. As a result, a number of European countries were now reluctant, not without some justification, to admit dissatisfied people, and it was therefore becoming increasingly difficult to resettle refugees in those countries. The Austrian Federal Government, therefore, was obliged to appeal urgently to the United States Government and Congress to reconsider the regulations to enable refugees who had already left Austria for other countries to seek admission to the United States of America. Such a step would remedy all shortcomings and encourage the European countries of second asylum to receive new refugees to replace those who had had the chance of emigrating to the United States of America.

Unfortunately, despite all that had so far been done, the problem of the Hungarian refugees was far from solved, either for Austria or for the rest of the world.

The Austrian Federal Government could not agree that Austria was doomed, by virtue of its geographical situation, to bear the main burden of the Hungarian refugee problem. It was incompatible with Austrian feelings to have to beg to enable it to discharge a duty which was incumbent on all free nations. Concern for the fate of the Hungarian refugees was a matter for the entire free world. All those who, having confidence in the free world, wished to begin a new life there, must be helped to do so. There were, however, some States which had not yet realized that the number of refugees for whom Austria - a country which had felt the impact of the war and of post-war conditions

much more severely than most - had to provide was equivalent to more than 1 per cent of its own population. How many refugees could be accommodated if every State Member of ICEM, or any other free Member of the United Nations, would accept a similar quota?

The Austrian Federal Government certainly did not wish to have to contemplate closing the Austrian-Hungarian frontier. In granting the right of asylum, Austria took into account not only its democratic obligations and the terms of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, but also its humanitarian and moral responsibilities. But it could not assimilate the large number of refugees at present within its frontiers. Austria, with its common frontier with Hungary, had never declared that its refugee quota was exhausted, as some other countries had done. It therefore felt entitled to address an urgent appeal to other countries to take all steps in their power that would contribute to a solution of the problem of the Hungarian refugees in Austria.

Austria would attempt to absorb the largest possible number of Hungarian refugees into its economy: as a tentative figure, approximately 20,000, including dependent members of families. For a country with some 7 million inhabitants and a comparatively limited economy that was asking a great deal. If other countries were to take a similar proportion of refugees in relation to their resources and population the results would be striking. The United States of America, with a population of about 170 million, would need to accept about half a million refugees from Hungary instead of the 22,000 so far admitted. European countries with between 40 and 50 million inhabitants would need to accept some 120,000 to 150,000 Hungarians, but none had in fact taken more than 15,000. Unfortunately, most had not seen their way to offer hospitality to more than a few thousand, although they had room for 50,000 to 100,000.

The way in which the Hungarian refugee problem was solved would really be an acid test of the spirit in which the United Nations had been built and by which its Members were linked. It was not enough simply to push human beings into a camp and to supply them with the minimum needs for existence. It must not be forgotten that those people had sought freedom and must therefore be given a chance to establish themselves in the free world with the support of the countries of asylum.

To be frank, Austria was utterly weary of having to ask for, beg for or haggle over every dollar, and over the acceptance of every single refugee, in addition to running the risk of having to take back some of the refugees already accepted by other countries.

There could be only one exception to the principle that Austria would not accept the return of refugees, namely: where the refugee made a specific request in writing to return to his homeland. The exact procedure had been laid down by the Austrian Federal Government at its meeting on 21 January 1957.

The influx of refugees had declined somewhat in recent days, largely owing to the severe weather and stricter border control. Experience had, however, shown that the present stream of refugees might at any moment again turn into a flood. It was to be feared that the present approximate figure of 65,000 Hungarian refugees in Austria would remain constant, entailing a daily expenditure of US \$80,000.

The nervous strain of camp life, without anything definite to look forward to, might provoke sudden reactions not only among the refugees themselves, but also in Austria, and even throughout the world. All available funds had been spent; even the \$2,500,000 contributed by the High Commissioner's Office had been practically exhausted; indeed, the cost of reconstructing barracks had in itself exceeded that figure. The expenditure on refugees incurred in January was not covered by any budgetary provision. For Austria, the present situation was pregnant with political dangers, which he had already pointed out to the High Commissioner.

It was unthinkable that a world which had watched with so much sympathy and understanding Austria's struggle for freedom - which had gone on, not for a mere three weeks, or even months, but for ten whole years - should be indifferent to such a situation. Had not his country put up such a courageous and determined resistance to all the attacks on its democratic way of life, and had it not time and again stood steadfast as the bastion of democracy, the world might have been faced years ago with an Austrian refugee problem.

Austria was not unfamiliar with the problem of refugees; after the end of the second world war it had had to absorb many hundreds of thousands. A large proportion had been granted citizenship and had been integrated into Austria's economy, but if the 65,000 Hungarian refugees now in the country were added to the 180,000 earlier refugees it would be seen that Austria had to look after some 250,000 foreigners who had come destitute into the country.

Austria naturally wished to uphold two principles: that of unrestricted right of asylum; and that of freedom of movement for all refugees, including the right to return to their homeland for all who wished to do so. It must, however, insist that all countries of the free world do their share in two essentials: they must accept, or

a quota system based on their respective absorptive capacity, Hungarian refugees both from among the 65,000 already in Austria and from among those who might still arrive; and they must immediately raise funds to reimburse Austria for the cost of caring for and maintaining refugees on its territory on the same quota basis. Austria therefore requested most urgently that the UNREF Executive Committee recommend governments to accept those principles.

It was only natural that Austria should be unable to bear all the burdens of a country of first asylum. Hence it could not be expected to re-admit refugees from countries of second asylum. Furthermore, Austria must insist that receiving countries accept refugees from Austria exclusively on the basis of numbers and families, and not on that of political, professional or health considerations. Otherwise, Austria would be left with none but the aged and the sick.

Time was of the essence. So long as so much uncertainty surrounded the future of the Hungarian refugees, the well-known effects of camp life would be an ever-present menace; the very spirit of democratic thinking would be endangered, and the integration of the refugees in their new homelands made that much the more difficult.

The flame of freedom would never be extinguished. The whole free world should in all humility reflect on the fact that it had been spared the tragedy which had overwhelmed the Hungarian people. That would make it easier for it to shoulder the burden of caring for the Hungarian refugees. That simple fact also made unremitting efforts on their behalf the bounden duty of the entire free world.

Mr. CONTEMPRE (Belgium) observed that the Austrian representative had rightly drawn attention to the enormous burdens imposed on his country by the influx of refugees from Hungary and had recognized the generous aid which Austria had so far received. Belgium had responded very promptly to the appeals launched by the Austrian Government and the High Commissioner's Office, and had given as much assistance as was possible for a small and densely-populated country. It had accepted more than 3,000 refugees from Hungary in the second half of November 1956, and had spent more than 10 million Belgian francs (equivalent to about US \$200,000) on resettling them. In order to relieve the burden on Austria, the Belgian Government had admitted the refugees indiscriminately, rejecting only those suffering from contagious diseases who might well have been a danger to their fellow refugees. Transport had been arranged by ICEM in trains made available by the Belgian railways. The refugees had been quartered in five provisional reception centres, and had been cared for by the five largest voluntary organizations working for refugees. They had been provided with clothing and food,

and even with recreation, while awaiting registration and medical examination. The administrative procedures had been very expeditious, and almost all the refugees were now housed in individual homes. Many of them had voluntarily taken work - no pressure to do so had been brought to bear on them - and most were now practising their previous occupations. Only about 100 refugees, who had proved difficult to assimilate, now remained in the centres, where they were being cared for by the Belgian social welfare services.

He wished to pay a tribute to the Austrian authorities for the assistance and encouragement they had given to the Belgian reception committee, especially at a time when it had been the subject of slanderous attacks. He also wished to thank ICEM and the voluntary agencies concerned. A particular tribute was due to the Belgian people themselves for their ready sympathy with and assistance to the refugees from Hungary and for their help in resettling them in Belgium.

Further statements in the general debate on the problem of Hungarian refugees were deferred until the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

ANNEX

STATEMENT MADE BY MR. LINDT,  
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES,  
AT THE OPENING MEETING  
OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNREF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

"Mr. Chairman,

"I should first of all like to congratulate you on your election, and say how very glad I am to be able to collaborate with you. I wish to thank the representative of the Secretary-General very much for his remarks. In my relatively short existence in this new incarnation I have already had occasion to call for assistance from the European Office of the United Nations, and I should like to express my thanks for all the help I have received and I am sure will receive in the future. I am certain that the excellent relations between the various services inside this building will continue and develop.

"The more I become acquainted with the work of my Office, the more I am struck by one fact: the plans which have been developed, the legal protection carried out for the refugees, the assistance given to them, bear the imprint of a very eminent personality. The more I had occasion to study the documents prepared for this meeting, the higher was my admiration for the man who had the imagination, the persistence and the wish to carry through what is proving now to be an extraordinarily important work: the UNREF programme. When I see now that this UNREF programme is starting to have very encouraging results, I have a bad conscience that I am here to see those results instead of Dr. van Heuven Goedhart.

"I am also very much aware that at this moment the work of the Office of the High Commissioner has been widened by emergencies. I do not need to mention the influx of Hungarian refugees into neighbouring countries. We have now a total of 169,000 refugees from Hungary who have arrived in Austria, and, up to yesterday, 12,900 refugees from Hungary who have arrived in Yugoslavia. As you know, the United Nations have helped with the assistance side of this refugee problem and have given certain tasks to my Office. I would like to stress that whereas at the beginning Austria was the only country of first asylum, we have now a second problem developing in a second country of asylum: Yugoslavia. But with that we shall deal at a later stage. The policy of this Office concerning the Hungarian refugees is at present to do everything possible in close co-operation with ICEM to stimulate emigration, the best and quickest way of lightening the burden on the countries of first asylum. I need not stress that



emigration as a solution can, of course, only apply to those refugees who want to emigrate, and it is a very important part of the functions of my Office to see that the refugees can exercise their free will without any pressure from one side or another.

"Another emergency problem is now arising: that of refugees from Egypt. There is no doubt in my mind that those refugees from Egypt who are not able, or not willing, to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of their country of nationality fall under the mandate of my Office. They may have no nationality or they may have lost their nationality, or, for valid reasons, may not be willing to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of their country of nationality. I am therefore ready to exercise the legal and diplomatic functions of my Office in their favour. I am following with concern the development of this question, and it is partly because of these various emergency situations which we can see developing before us that I have proposed in the Plan of Operations the creation of an increased emergency reserve. I think the amount proposed can perhaps be criticized for being too small in relation to the potentialities of the present situation.

"Though my Office, my colleagues at Headquarters and at most of our Branch Offices, are at present struggling with work created by the emergency situations, I can give you the assurance that this Office is doing everything possible in order that the emergency questions should not hinder the work on the UNREF programme. This is now technically half way through its proposed existence, but in fact, practically, the UNREF programme is one year behind. This was due to a great extent to the lateness of the receipt of contributions. We have this year a different and more favourable situation thanks to the special contribution of the Swedish Government, to the amount of 7 million Kroner - a contribution for which I am most grateful. This Office is now able to put before you projects which can be implemented rapidly. I would draw special attention to the housing projects; these usually take a considerable time to get completed, and I very much hope that you will be able to accept the order of priority which we should like to assign to these projects. This year the money is there to start work.

"This Swedish contribution makes somewhat out of date and obsolete the "shortfall paper" which we had prepared, and you will see that in the recommendations of the Standing Programme Sub-Committee it is suggested this paper, which indicated how far contributions fell short of the target, should be revised. The report of the Programme Sub-Committee also mentions that the High Commissioner should be asked to include a

re-appraisal of the UNREF programme in the light of experience gained and also in the light of the impact of the emergency situations of last year and this year.

"You will see that during the last year, thanks to the UNREF programme, 6,000 refugees were able to be resettled, and what is especially encouraging is that the results in the last few months are progressively higher than the results of the earlier months of the year. I think we shall not be disappointed in our hopes that this progress will continue.

"As far as the Shanghai Operation is concerned, I am glad to report that refugees are still leaving China and there is even some expectation that the rate may increase in the near future, which might of course necessitate a considerable amount of financial assistance from this Office.

"This Office will always keep in mind the unsolved problems of the difficult cases, which receive special attention in the UNREF programme, and I should like to appeal to the Governments who are represented here to follow the very generous example of those Governments who have accepted difficult cases in their territory. If that example could be followed, we could make quicker headway in dealing with those cases which are particularly worthy of help from a human point of view.

"I have mentioned some of the problems we are dealing with. I should further like to mention the question of the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, a very important problem, involving about 630,000 people. I would suggest that this question be dealt with by the Executive Committee, if you would agree, Mr. Chairman, in its advisory capacity. It is of course possible that other questions on the agenda could also be dealt with by the Committee in that capacity.

"Mr. Chairman, I should like to thank you for having allowed me to make these short, and, I am quite aware, sketchy, introductory remarks."

---