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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. EL-CHOUFI (Syrian Arab Republic)

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

AGENDA ITEM 50: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES
IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/34/13, A/34/480, A/34/549, A/34/567)

1. Mr. NISIBORI (Japan) praised the work of the former Commissioner-General and assured his successor of Japan's full co-operation. Quoting the report of the Secretary-General, he stressed the urgent and complex nature of the Middle Eastern question, which was central to the stability of the world, and recalled that the refugee problem had first been raised in the United Nations 30 years earlier. General Assembly resolution 212 (III), entitled "Assistance to Palestine refugees" and adopted one year before the establishment of UNRWA, was still very relevant. UNRWA had been established in 1949 by General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), in which the Assembly had urged all Members of the United Nations and non-members to make voluntary contributions to UNRWA. UNRWA had been entrusted by the entire international community with the task of alleviating the suffering of the Palestine refugees as a minimum condition for the establishment of peace in the area; but that original mandate seemed to have been forgotten.

2. The problem of the financing of UNRWA was not only chronic but structural. Past experience made it possible to distinguish between countries that were willing to co-operate and those which did not co-operate. As long as UNRWA continued to be financed solely by a few States, it would not be a truly world-wide organ as originally conceived. His delegation therefore requested countries which had not yet contributed or which had contributed only relatively small shares to realize fully UNRWA's fundamental purpose and its original task and to begin to meet their obligations as Members of the United Nations. His delegation was gratified to note that, in response to the Commissioner-General's appeals, a number of oil-producing countries in the Middle East had made generous additional contributions which had made it possible to approve expenditures for the three-year preparatory education cycle until the end of 1979, as well as certain increases in staff remuneration to compensate for increases in the cost of living. Unfortunately, however, it appeared that, as the Working Group had pointed out, UNRWA would have to continue to devote some of its efforts to fund-raising activities. That task should be made easier by the fact that the Palestinian question was currently attracting world-wide attention. Member States might also organize a fund-raising campaign among private sources.

3. Japan, which was an active member of the Advisory Commission and of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, would continue its support and had been increasing its contribution each year. In 1979 its contribution would total \$7 million, of which \$4 million would be in cash and \$3 million in kind. Japan's contribution was motivated by humanitarian and political considerations and by a desire to see the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

4. On the question of the location of UNRWA headquarters, he said it was highly desirable that it should be maintained in the Middle East, where the Agency's

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(Mr. Nisibori, Japan)

activities were carried out. In that connexion, he shared the view of the Chairman of the Advisory Commission. In conclusion, he paid a tribute to the staff and administration of UNRWA who carried out the Agency's assistance programmes in an explosive and tense atmosphere and who, in order to be able to continue to provide services to refugees both in the Arab host countries and in the occupied territories, had avoided any political involvement.

5. Mr. JAMAL (Qatar), after praising the work of UNRWA in increasingly difficult circumstances, said that, despite the increase in contributions and efforts, the Agency's deficit was continually growing, a situation that caused its services to decline and added to the sufferings already endured by the Palestinians. He pointed out that a solution to the Palestinian problem must be found through a political settlement. The Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in March 1978 and its barbarous daily attacks in that region since April 1979 complicated the Agency's task and increased the difficulties that it encountered. The illegal occupation of the Arab territories and the attacks against Arab host countries aggravated the Agency's working conditions. Its difficulties were thus not only financial, but were linked to the fact that the international community had been unable to put an end to Zionist expansionism or to ensure the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

6. He would have wished the report to review the various events that had led to the emergence of the Palestinian problem and to refer more fully to the resolutions adopted between 1948 and 1978 which had established the rights of the Palestinians to return to their homes and to recover their property as inalienable rights. However, while the aggressor received some \$2 billion per year which enabled it to perpetrate its aggression, UNRWA, which needed only some tens of millions of dollars to eliminate its deficit, could not obtain those funds in order to assist the victims, even from those responsible for the tragedy. It was only too easy to imagine the feelings of the refugees if the Agency's activities were to come to a halt; that would represent a setback for the international community which was desired by Israel. The Palestine Liberation Organization would then have to take charge of the refugees, and would thus be unable to devote all its energies to the liberation struggle.

7. His delegation was concerned by statements in the report regarding humanitarian programmes to benefit the Palestinian refugees. The refugees were very attached to their rights, to their education and to their culture and, although it had been possible to avoid interrupting the preparatory education cycle on 1 July 1979, the latter was still threatened in the more or less long term, and that could deprive 93,000 students of their education. Paragraph 104 of the report also mentioned the reduction in the individual basic ration, which had decreased from 10 to 5 kilograms per person. Moreover, the difficulties in provisioning had been increased by the Israeli aggression in southern Lebanon. Qatar had always provided the necessary funds and would continue to do so.

8. The report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine referred to the refusal of the Zionist entity to authorize the return of the Palestinians to their homeland and its intention to continue its expansionist policy. The right of return was a sacred and inalienable right established by

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(Mr. Jamal (Qatar))

Magna Carta since 1215, and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The right had been reaffirmed in the report which the United Nations Mediator on Palestine had submitted on 16 September 1948 and to which Menachem Begin had responded by assassinating the Mediator, Count Bernadotte on 17 September 1948. On 11 December 1948, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 194 (III) reaffirming the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes or to compensation if they did not choose to return. Nevertheless, Israel had always refused to comply with all United Nations resolutions, for its goal was to create a Jewish State and not a binational lay State. Israel, a racist entity, was pursuing its criminal policy to the point of mass expulsion of the Palestinians from their homes in the occupied territories. The United Nations was no more committed to preserving zionism in the Middle East than it was to preserving apartheid in South Africa.

9. He quoted an article by Rabbi Mayer Kahana which had appeared in the newspaper Israel Shelanu, published in New York on 12 October 1979, stating that the faith of Jews today rested on four tenets: (1) love for Israel; (2) the sacred nature of the Israeli land (in other words, in the Zionist mentality, the entire Palestinian territory); (3) the expulsion of the Arabs from the Palestinian territory; (4) the return from exile. Menachem Begin's policy with regard to the occupied Arab territories bore a strong resemblance to a racist policy.

10. In conclusion, he thanked the Commissioner-General for his efforts and reaffirmed his delegation's support for UNRWA. He reiterated that the Palestinian problem would not finally be solved until the Palestinian people could exercise their right to return to their homes, and their right to self-determination, sovereignty and national independence on their own territory and land, under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

11. Mrs. NOWOTHY (Austria) said that for 29 years UNRWA had carried out its important humanitarian task with great skill and dedication under extremely adverse conditions. She wished to join previous speakers in expressing to the Commissioner-General and his staff her sincere appreciation for their outstanding performance. She further expressed her thanks to Mr. McElhiney, who during the past five years had led UNRWA skilfully through a period of crisis.

12. Member States were all aware of the fact that the mandate and existence of UNRWA were intricately connected to the over-all political situation in the Middle East and that the Agency would continue its work until a just and lasting settlement, acceptable to all parties involved, could be achieved.

13. During the present debate, as in previous years, delegations had expressed concern over the critical financial situation of the Agency which, according to the Commissioner-General's annual report, would start the year with a deficit of nearly \$57 million. Its operations had expanded to the point where it was no longer possible for a small number of countries, however generous their contributions, to bear unaided the whole financial burden of the Agency. That was in any case contrary to the virtually unanimous decisions of the General Assembly regarding the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA and the responsibility of all States

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(Mrs. Nowothy, Austria)

to relieve human suffering, irrespective of their geographical location or their political attitude towards the Middle East. The time had therefore come for a fundamental change in the financing of UNRWA. Austria associated itself with the Commissioner-General's appeal for generous contributions, but still considered that during the coming year the Working Group on the Financing of the Agency should make specific recommendations for a solution to the problem.

14. The task assigned to UNRWA had dimensions which went far beyond the purely humanitarian aspects, since the Agency was required to provide services normally provided by Governments for their citizens, while the status of refugee conferred by UNRWA was internationally recognized as proof of Palestinian identity. That was one more reason to seek some means of enabling the Agency to continue its programmes without reduction, and to get rid of its deficit. Austria, which was a country of first asylum for many refugees, was particularly sensitive to their needs and problems, and had given particular attention to the matter of education. Austria had therefore been most concerned to learn that some programmes would have to be cut for lack of funds. While it might prove difficult, if not impossible, to lighten the burden of the refugees themselves, it could at least be hoped that by giving their children a thorough education the next generation might be afforded a better start in life. Thus, her delegation hoped that the response of Governments to the Commissioner-General's appeal would enable those first priority programmes to be maintained.

15. Her delegation had learnt with some concern from the chapter entitled "Legal matters" that officials of the Agency continued to be arrested without charge or trial and that there were restrictions on their movements. It hoped that all parties concerned would find a satisfactory solution to those problems and thus enable the Agency to function effectively and without unnecessary hindrance.

16. During 1978, the Agency had been obliged for reasons outside its control to relocate part of its headquarters, and the Austrian Government had been happy to be of assistance in that matter. The Government thought it had acted in the interest of the many Palestinian refugees and had thus given active expression of its concern for their fate.

17. Mr. ABDEL RAHMAN (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization) thanked the Agency and the Commissioner-General for their services to Palestinians in exile in neighbouring fraternal Arab countries or even in their own country.

18. He wished to restate the position of the Palestine Liberation Organization on the question under discussion, namely, that responsibility for aid to the Palestinian people was a universal responsibility. The international community, by approving the General Assembly resolution on the partition of Palestine and the establishment on Palestinian soil of a racist Zionist State had ipso facto endorsed the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians at a time when world Zionism was creating a racist régime and bringing together millions of Jews on the soil, land and property of the Palestinian people, and the international community must therefore accept full responsibility for the problem. For their part, the Palestinian people would struggle by all means in their power to return to Palestine, and would never accept any substitute solution.

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(Mr. Abdel Rahman, Observer, PLO)

19. The Zionist racists, not content with expelling the Palestinians from their territory and their property and robbing them of their nationality and political identity, were trying to circumscribe their living space by carrying out a policy of continual aggression and by launching barbarous attacks against the areas where Palestinian refugees were concentrated, particularly southern Lebanon. Such actions fitted in well with the racist theory and practice of the Zionists who intended to make Palestine a land without people by intensifying their destruction and their atrocities. However, they could not erase from memory the fact that Palestine was the ancestral home of the Palestinians, who had a long and glorious history there. It was the land of their birth, unlike the colonialist settlers in Palestine, more than 65 per cent of whom were immigrants who had usurped the homes and property of the Palestinians and destroyed their national heritage and were endeavouring to stifle their traditions and culture. Contrary to the Zionist allegations, responsibility for the problem of the Palestinian refugees thus lay not with the Arab States but with Israel.

20. The Palestinian problem was not merely a problem of refugees, and it would not be solved by the aid offered by the Agency, which was in any case inadequate to solve the economic problems of the Palestinians or even to ensure their survival. With the exception of those who were swimming against the tide of history and whose imperialist colonialist mentality would lead them straight to collective suicide, the world had become aware of the true nature of the problem. The Palestinian problem was that of a people driven from its own country and wishing to return there, of a people struggling for the recognition of its inalienable national rights. It was a problem which would not be solved while the Palestinian people were prevented from exercising their rights to self-determination, independence and national sovereignty, rights which had been recognized by the United Nations in its resolutions and in its Charter. With regard to the Agency's financial deficit, it was inconceivable, at a time when the Zionists were receiving millions of dollars following an international decision which had been the cause of the expulsion of the refugees, to ask the Arab countries to underwrite the costs of that decision. It was for the international community as a whole to undertake the necessary arrangements to overcome the deficit. With regard to the transfer of parts of the headquarters of the Agency to Vienna, it must be hoped that the transfer was only temporary and that the headquarters could soon return to Beirut. In conclusion, he thanked all those who had given assistance to the Palestinian people, and assured the Commissioner-General of the co-operation of PLO in his task.

21. Mr. IPSARIDES (Cyprus) paid tribute to the Commissioner-General and his staff for their devotion to duty and the competence with which they had performed their humanitarian task in extremely difficult circumstances.

22. The precarious financial position of the Agency and the picture of human beings forced to flee from their homes as refugees and uprooted people, which was fully described in the Commissioner-General's report, were matters of great concern to his delegation.

(Mr. Ipsarides, Cyprus)

23. UNRWA had been established on a temporary basis 29 years previously in an attempt to cope with a tragedy for which no remedy had yet been found; the problem had, in fact, only become more acute over the years. The reason was that the Palestinian problem was a political one, and it should have been solved by the implementation of United Nations resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to return to their homes or receive fair compensation, to self-determination and to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of all States in the region to coexist in security in accordance with the fundamental principles of justice.

24. It must be borne in mind that at the core of the question was the sense of injustice deeply rooted in the minds of almost 2 million people, a feeling which stemmed from their attachment to their ancestral land and their legitimate desire to recover their national heritage. The people of Cyprus who had recently shared the same experience of usurpation and expulsion from their lands by force, and who had known the tragedy of the uprooting and the mass expulsion of one third of the population, understood and fully appreciated the situation of the people of Palestine.

25. The international community had a moral obligation and a compelling duty to spare no effort to enable the Agency to continue its humanitarian task. Any reduction in the activities of UNRWA would add to the sufferings and hardships of the people of Palestine by jeopardizing the whole structure of assistance to the refugees, with all the disastrous consequences which that might have for the situation in the Middle East.

26. Despite its limited financial resources and the heavy burden represented by its own refugees, Cyprus had always made a modest contribution to the Agency as a token of support for its humanitarian work. His delegation associated itself with the appeal for larger contributions and hoped that a generous response by Governments would enable the Palestinian refugees to look forward with confidence to a future in which a comprehensive solution would be found to the problems of the Middle East based not on charity but on justice, equality and freedom.

27. Mr. ROSENTHAL (United States of America) said that the United States Government considered that UNRWA had discharged in a remarkable manner the tasks which had been entrusted to it, despite the often difficult conditions in which it had had to work. However, the Agency's financial situation was a matter of grave concern to the United States; for the current year the Agency had a deficit estimated at \$23.7 million. It would therefore have to retrench on important programmes and would be unable to make capital improvements which could not continue to be postponed indefinitely. Certainly, UNRWA's operations must be as cost-conscious as possible. His delegation was confident that a sincere effort had been made to accomplish that goal, but it continued to believe that the Commissioner-General must be able to count on an assured income so that he could make long-term plans.

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(Mr. Rosenthal, United States)

28. The United States contribution continued to account for one third of UNRWA's total budget. The United States had always maintained its financial commitment towards the Agency since it believed that the Agency's humanitarian work was vitally important. Nevertheless, the United States Government was increasingly concerned over the heavy burden which it was asked to shoulder, and believed that other concerned Governments, and particularly Governments in the area which were clearly in a position to do so, should increase their contributions to UNRWA's work. All the nations of the world had a duty to participate in the joint effort. Some might consider that UNRWA's activities had political implications, but they should consider above all the humanitarian aspect of that work. It could only be a matter for regret that the Agency, established as a temporary measure 30 years previously, was still aiding the dispersed people of Palestine. Yet there was wide recognition that the plight of the Palestinians, for whom the United States felt the deepest compassion, called not only for humanitarian assistance but also for a political solution which would enable the Palestinian people finally to live in dignity and self-reliance. The humanitarian work could for example be carried out within the framework of efforts to put an end to hostilities and to the displacement of populations. Support for UNRWA was an essential part of that policy, together with the negotiations being carried on by Egypt, Israel and the United States to achieve an over-all settlement of the Middle East problem. The Camp David agreements provided a viable framework for Middle Eastern peace. They were based on an undertaking by the United States, Egypt and Israel to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to participate in the determination of their own future. The United States Government intended to keep that commitment and called on all parties to join in. There must be an end to the fanning of hatred, past differences must be forgotten, and there must be progress towards peace in that troubled part of the world. Peace in the Middle East was the best means of improving the lot of the Palestinians and it was one of the essential aims of the United Nations and of the United States. Nevertheless, the international community had a responsibility to ensure that UNRWA continued to function on a sound financial basis.

29. His delegation paid tribute to the former Commissioner-General, who had discharged his duties with compassion and wisdom, and congratulated the incoming Commissioner-General on his appointment. His delegation was introducing a draft resolution calling for the continuation of UNRWA's activities with the full support of the international community. He urged its unanimous adoption.

30. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Qatar thought that he could change the facts of history by repeatedly making the same baseless allegations against Israel.

31. It was the Arab countries themselves which had created the Palestine refugee problem to serve their own destructive political aims. It was they who had opposed any solution of the problem, with utter disregard for the humanitarian considerations involved, as Arab leaders themselves had recognized on several occasions. Israel, on the other hand, had always been ready to try to solve the problem but the many proposals which it had made had always been rejected by the Arab countries.

(Mr. Doron, Israel)

32. General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which the representatives of Arab countries always quoted in a mutilated and tendentious form, proposed a negotiated agreement as a preliminary to a final settlement of all the questions on which Israel and its Arab neighbours were not agreed, including the question of Palestine refugees. When it had become obvious that a negotiated solution would not be quickly forthcoming, Israel had on several occasions suggested a separate settlement of the refugee problem independently of the other problems arising out of the hostilities between Israel and the Arab States, but the latter had always rejected that proposal.

33. With regard to the repeated assertions of the representatives of Arab countries concerning the conditional admission of Israel to membership in the United Nations, it was sufficient to recall that the United Nations Charter made no provision for such admission. The insinuations of those representatives were therefore baseless and were part of the usual arsenal of anti-Israel propaganda. The Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations had dealt with that and other connected questions, such as the position of the Arab States with regard to General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III), in four notes to the Secretary-General issued as documents A/33/386-S/12933, A/33/543, A/33/488-S/12966 and A/34/337, which contained all the facts and referred to all the relevant documentation.

34. Mr. JAMAL (Qatar), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel's use of the right of reply had not been prompted by guilt alone. The Palestinian tragedy would never have happened if Israel had not by force of arms, treachery and plots obliged the Palestinians to become a nomad, refugee people. The Israeli authorities were trying to deceive international public opinion by concealing historical truth. The aggressor was Israel and no one else in the Middle East conflict.

35. Mr. ABDEL RAHMAN (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, rejected the United States representative's arguments on two counts. In the first place, it was really ironical to hear the United States Government, which gave the Israeli Government assistance amounting to more than \$2 billion worth of arms a year, state that it made too large a contribution to the budget of UNRWA. Secondly, the Camp David agreements denied the Palestinians the right of self-determination. They were allowed only to participate in the determination of their future. In other words, others would decide on the Palestinians' future. The right to self-determination was indivisible. Either it was exercised or it was not. The Camp David agreements, on the other hand, made no mention of the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes. Finally, the Camp David agreements had been concluded without the presence of the principal parties concerned, the Palestinians. How was it then possible to speak of a framework for peace? The Camp David agreements were more like a declaration of war against the Palestinians, since the right to self-determination was denied to them. The Palestinian problem was not the doing of the Arab countries. It was the consequence of the establishment of alien settlers in Palestine following the eviction of the Palestinian people, by such methods as continually massacring the Palestinian population. The Israelis had been able to deceive the international community for years, but they could do so

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(Mr. Abdel Rahman, Observer, PLO)

no longer. The whole world was aware of the barbarous and cowardly aggressions carried out every day by Israel against the Palestinians within and outside the occupied Arab lands.

36. Mr. DORON (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the language used by the representative of Qatar was completely out of place in the Committee's discussions and showed that he had nothing to say, which absolved the Israeli representative from the necessity of replying to him.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that the draft resolution submitted by the United States delegation would be issued as document A/SPC/34/L.3.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.