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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia)

later: Mr. STARCEVIC (Yugoslavia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST:

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (A/38/13)
- (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/38/558)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (A/38/397)
- (d) REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (A/38/143)
- (e) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/149, 361 and Add.1, 382, 386, 418, 419 and 420)

1. Mr. RYDBECK (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near-East), introducing his report for year ending on 30 June 1983 (A/38/13), said that the tragic situation in Lebanon and the problems that country was facing remained a subject of very serious concern for UNRWA and continued to absorb a large part of its resources. Moreover, the developments in recent weeks had confirmed that the emergency relief operation for the thousands of Palestinian refugees who had been the victims of the turmoil could not be ended in the near future.

2. In accordance with the decision contained in the annual report for the year ending in June 1982, UNRWA had continued to provide food through the winter to 185,000 refugees, who had been receiving emergency rations for the previous 16 months, and to provide blankets to 30,000 of them, who had been suffering particular hardship. That programme was essential, because the refugees in question did not have the means to purchase the necessary goods to meet their minimum needs. In fact, there was a serious shortage of work opportunities for the refugees and, in many cases, women and children were alone because the men of the family had been killed or seriously wounded, had fled or were being held in detention. Donations in cash or in kind received from Governments in the context of the relief programme had been very useful, but UNRWA still needed more blankets.

3. The fighting that had engulfed the area around Tripoli had increased the emergency needs. There were some 31,000 refugees registered in the Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi camps and in the town of Tripoli and, in the past 16 months, their number had been swollen by some 2,500 refugees displaced from other parts of Lebanon. Several thousand refugees from the Beddawi camp and a number from Nahr el-Bared had fled from the constant attacks into the town itself but they were currently extremely vulnerable there. The Agency was attempting to meet their immediate needs and had sent to Tripoli supplies of foodstuffs, kitchen kits and blankets from stocks in Beirut and the Beqa'a valley, in addition to blankets received from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

4. In consultation with ICRC, the Agency was also furnishing petroleum and diesel oil, a generator and a water tanker and was engaging additional medical and nursing staff to run a full-time clinic and to assist the staff at a hospital operated by ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross, where most of the patients were Palestinians. The situation in an around Tripoli was constantly changing, and the UNRWA Lebanon Field Office would do everything possible to respond to the needs of the refugee civilians under attack.

5. At the end of June, he had issued an appeal for \$13 million to finance the first phase of a programme for the reconstruction of Agency installations and camp infrastructure in Lebanon and to supplement the grants the destitute had already been given to repair their shelters. That appeal had been issued after the Agency had received, on 1 March, written authorization from the Government of Lebanon to restore all camps to their condition prior to the Israeli invasion and after he personally had received confirmation in May that that was the official policy of the Lebanese Government.

6. Thus far, five Governments had pledged \$4.5 million in response to his appeal and, despite the circumstances prevailing in Lebanon, it had been possible to embark on the programme. Of the \$3.8 million actually received, \$3.4 million had been committed by early November, and work had been begun in the Ein el-Hilweh camp on the construction of a feeding centre, school rooms and kindergarten classes and on the laying of sewers. Like the emergency relief operation, the reconstruction programme was funded separately from the Agency's regular budget and could be implemented only to the extent that special contributions were forthcoming. He therefore renewed his appeal for generous assistance from Member States.

7. The rehousing of the refugees would only be partially achieved in the context of the programme. With the help of materials and money from the Agency and other sources, the inhabitants of the camps had reasonably satisfactory accommodations. However, that was not true of the refugees who had been displaced by the fighting or by harassment, and who had crowded into the camps, where no additional plots of land could be allocated to them, or of the refugees who had been living outside the camps, in other words, almost half the refugees registered in Lebanon. The policy of the Lebanese Government applied only to the reconstruction of camps and, thus far, land outside those boundaries had not been made available to the Agency.

8. The personal safety of the refugees was even more worrying. In his opinion, the Agency had a clear moral obligation to assist in securing the safety of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, but the only means at its disposal were to report, to warn and to make representations to the parties responsible. Those representations had undoubtedly had a positive effect. Nevertheless, since the end of June, there had been reports of 20 incidents involving the death or injury of refugees or the destruction of their property in south Lebanon, 10 in Beirut, several evictions of refugees at gunpoint in the area between Beirut and the Awali river and 4 attacks on refugees in the Beqa'a valley, 2 of them on UNRWA drivers. Moreover, reports were still coming in. By the morning of 8 November, it had been estimated that 65 to 70 persons had been killed and 112 wounded, and that more

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

casualties were inevitable as long as the fighting continued. He urgently appealed to those who had effective control in the various parts of Lebanon to do everything within their power to protect the lives of civilians.

9. Other disturbing developments had occurred in south Lebanon, where the Israeli Defence Force had demolished two refugee shelters in the Burj el-Shemali camp on 12 September and one refugee shelter in the Ein el-Hilweh camp, on 29 September, in each instance apparently as a punitive measure against the families of individuals sought by the Defence Force. As in similar cases, the Agency had taken the position that such demolitions were contrary to international law and, specifically, to the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 which, in article 53, stipulated that "any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons ... is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations" and, in article 33, that "no protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed". The Agency had submitted a formal protest and a claim for compensation to the Government of Israel. It had also informed the Lebanese Government of its intention to rebuild those three shelters, and work on them had begun recently.

10. A related question was the detention in Lebanon of refugees without charges by the Israeli and Lebanese authorities, which was the concern of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Agency intervened in cases involving its own staff members. As of the end of October, 65 staff members of the Lebanon Field Office were still being detained by the Israeli authorities in the El-Ansar Camp, and five staff members were being detained by the Lebanese authorities. That question was being considered by the Fifth Committee, which had before it two reports of the Secretary-General on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations (A/C.5/38/17 and A/C.5/38/18).

11. Many of UNRWA's schools and other buildings had been occupied for varying periods of time by homeless Palestinian and Lebanese refugees. That was a humanitarian problem and it was the concern of the Agency to provide alternative accommodation and, if necessary, to make the necessary arrangements for the education of the children until their schools were available again. In recent months, however, UNRWA installations in Lebanon had been used for purposes which were in clear contravention of the Charter of the United Nations and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. That had happened in the case of the Sibli Training Centre, where the militia of the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze) had installed an observation post on the roof of one of the dormitories in early September and refused to leave; a school compound in the Nahr el-Bared camp in north Lebanon had been used for several days in August by the Palestine Liberation Organization for paramilitary training; and in Beirut a French unit of the multinational force had placed a military observation post on the roof of a school rented by UNRWA. The Israeli military headquarters in Tyre, which had been destroyed in the morning of 4 November, had been housed in a school constructed for and rented by the Agency. The Shajara School had been occupied by

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

the Israeli Defence Force since July 1982 in spite of protests by the Agency. In each case, the Agency's position was based on the provisions of the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, particularly article II.

12. In the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the effects on the welfare of the refugees of the continuing unrest and the security measures taken by the Israeli army in response to disturbances gave cause for concern. Curfews continued to be imposed on refugee camps in the West Bank. At the end of July the main entrance to the Jalazone Camp and three pedestrian paths had been closed by the authorities. Demonstrations organized by the local population were continuing unabated and the developments over the past 10 days were disturbing. On

1 November, the Israeli authorities had informed UNRWA's Field Director that they had given orders to close the Kalandia Vocational Training Centre and the Kalandia Girls' School for one month on the grounds that stones had been thrown from those facilities. Although the Agency had already erected fences around the buildings in order to prevent just such acts, it would ensure that its premises were not used as a sanctuary for those who violated law and order. He had agreed to erect even higher concrete walls, in spite of the expense involved in such work, but he could not accept the closing of the school and training centre, which was detrimental to the education of all those who attended those institutions.

13. Between 28 June and mid-July shelters had been destroyed on the perimeter of the Beach camp in the Gaza Strip by order of the Israeli authorities. The authorities had pointed out that the shelters destroyed had been constructed on State property without proper authorization; some of the shelters had been makeshift accommodation erected by refugees whose former shelters had been demolished by the authorities in a road construction scheme in 1971. In the West Bank in early August the authorities had blocked up one room in each of six-family shelters in the Aida and Jalazone camps by way of reprisal.

14. In the Gaza Strip it had been possible the previous month to resume construction work designed to enlarge, improve or maintain UNRWA facilities and services which had been interrupted by order of the Israeli authorities. Thanks to the decision of two major donors to provide contributions in cash rather than in kind for the education programme, and in accordance with the recommendations of JIU in its report on UNRWA (A/38/143, para. 36), the Agency had given priority to the school programme; work was under way not only in the Gaza Strip but also in Jordan and Syria.

15. Following an assessment carried out by a WHO consultant, the school health programme was being reorganized, which would enable each pupil to receive more sustained attention. The children would also benefit from dental care services, which in the past had been very inadequate. A five-year plan would provide additional clinical laboratories and the ambulance fleet would be modernized. Over 70,000 destitute refugees were now benefiting from improved welfare programmes, which included food assistance (1,900 calories and 60 grams of protein per day), clothing, blankets, shelter repairs, etc. New hardship cases were being identified daily and the programme was expected to cover some 100,000 beneficiaries by early 1984.

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(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

16. With regard to the financial difficulties confronting the Agency, he expressed gratitude to JIU for its excellent report on the organization, budget and functioning of UNRWA (A/38/143). He agreed with the inspectors that there was room for improvement particularly in the presentation of the budget, and of the overall financial situation, in order to give donor Governments information enabling them to understand the consequences of the level of contributions which they set for the Agency. He also agreed with the recommendation of JIU concerning the possibility of placing the Agency's liability for separation benefits (\$61 million) on the United Nations regular budget to cover a possible mass termination of posts. The risks incurred by the Organization would be minimal and such a measure would be of considerable help to the Agency. The reserve for separation benefits played a critical role in the planning of UNRWA's resources in the early months of the year because it determined the point at which programmes must be curtailed if the Agency did not receive sufficient funds to function for the entire year. The risk would be reduced if the Agency knew that it could use all of its resources to continue its operations. At the same time, the sum reserved for separation benefits would be written into the regular budget of the United Nations as a contingency so that it would not affect the levels of assessment of Member States unless the Agency halted all its operations. It was hoped, therefore, that the Member States would reconsider that suggestion in a favourable manner.

17. In 1983, the Agency was in a relatively favourable financial position which had allowed it to make some qualitative improvements in the education programme. That situation was due largely to the decision of the European Economic Community and the Government of Canada to make available cash for education in place of the distribution of rations. Such a decision was a major breakthrough for the Agency, which was deeply indebted to those who had worked so painstakingly to find ways of meeting UNRWA's primary needs. He hoped that their example would encourage others to follow suit.

18. The other reason for the present situation was that the Agency had entered 1983 with a sizeable cash balance (\$US 25.3 million) and that since January it had received pledges which had been made against the 1982 budget. But in 1984, the Agency would probably have available a cash balance of only \$US 5.9 million, or little more than one third of the monthly cash requirements. Total income for 1983 was less, in both absolute and real terms, than in 1982. As of October, the 1983 pledges totalled \$US 167 million, as against \$US 182 million in 1982, or a loss of \$US 15 million.

19. Despite inflation and the growing school population, few Governments had increased their contributions in 1983, many had donated at the same level as in 1982 and earlier years, and - a fact that caused special concern - some Governments had reduced the amount of their assistance. In particular, several special contributions on which the Agency had counted had not been renewed thus far. He therefore wished to make an urgent appeal to the States Members of the United Nations; he was convinced they would agree that, in the absence of the equitable political solution hoped for by the international community, there was no viable political and humanitarian alternative to the Agency.

(Mr. Rydbeck, UNRWA)

20. In view of the importance of the services provided by UNRWA in the current situation in the Middle East, he hoped that the international community would be in a position to mobilize the \$US 233 million in funds required for 1984 and that it would demonstrate by its actions as well as by its votes that the Palestine refugees, who had suffered so much, would not be abandoned but would continue to be provided for through the programmes of the Agency created by the international community until the commitments embodied in General Assembly resolutions could be honoured.

21. Mr. Starčević (Yugoslavia) took the Chair.

22. Mr. KOLBY (Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA) recalled that the Working Group had been established in 1970 under General Assembly resolution 2656 (XXV) and that at its thirty-seventh session the General Assembly, in its resolution 37/120 A, had requested the Working Group to continue its efforts, in co-operation with the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General, for the financing of UNRWA for a further period of one year.

23. Presenting the report of the Working Group (A/38/558), he said that the introduction contained a brief description of the history and terms of reference of the Working Group and that it provided information on the consideration of its report at the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Section II summarized the activities of the Working Group in 1983. During the entire year the members of the Working Group had followed with concern the difficulties experienced by the Agency and the serious financial situation it continued to face. The Agency's future ability to finance its contributions at existing levels remained uncertain. The Agency had had to carry out emergency operations in Lebanon, for which special appeals had been issued. The financial outlook for the Agency could be improved only by greatly increased contributions from donors or by the planned reduction or elimination of the Agency's programmes, either uniformly throughout its area of operations or field by field.

24. In section III the report described the financial situation of the Agency, as presented to the Working Group by the Deputy Commissioner-General on 28 September. The budgeted expenditure for 1983, estimated at \$US 271.4 million, had been decreased by the end of February 1983 to \$US 207.5 million, a net decrease of \$US 63.9 million. That reduction had been made by eliminating the general food ration programme, except in Lebanon, and by updating estimated staff cost increases. The deficit currently stood at \$US 41 million. The budgeted expenditure for 1984 was estimated at \$US 233 million, an increase of \$US 25 million over 1983. That increase was due to expected inflation and additional costs associated with the increase in the school population. Moreover, in 1983 the income from voluntary contributions had decreased by \$US 16 million below the 1982 figure, which was cause for serious concern. According to estimates, the cash balance of the Agency at the beginning of 1984 would be less than one month's expenditure, which was not a safe working level. The Agency might also be forced to bear in its regular budget the cost of the first stages of the reconstruction of its facilities in Lebanon, since responses to his special appeal

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(Mr. Kolby, UNRWA)

had been very meagre. Lastly, the conversion of gifts in kind to cash had been of great value to the Agency. The Deputy Commissioner-General had also underlined the benefit the Agency would gain if the General Assembly were to assume the contingent liability for paying termination indemnities to the staff in the event of mass redundancies, should that become necessary in order to avoid bankruptcy.

25. The Working Group submitted its conclusions in section IV of its report. It was disturbed at the shortfall of \$US 41 million in the financing of the Agency's budgeted expenditure for 1983. That situation was due partly to the rise in the value of the dollar and partly to the decrease in special additional contributions, which in previous years had been a significant amount.

26. The financial outlook for 1984 therefore gave rise to very serious concern. If income did not exceed the 1983 level, there would be a shortfall of \$US 66 million in 1984. It was therefore essential that the international community should increase its financial support to UNRWA. Since the willingness of some major contributors to convert their in-kind contributions into cash had been a decisive factor in maintaining UNRWA's education programme at its current level, the Working Group expressed the hope that the contributors concerned would continue to assist the Agency in that respect.

27. During the consideration of the question of the Agency's liability for termination indemnities, it had been pointed out that if the responsibility for them could be assumed by the regular budget of the United Nations, the Agency would be able to carry on its programmes for several more months. It was also pointed out, however, that such a proposal represented a financial risk to the United Nations. Moreover, it would be contrary to the principle of voluntary financing for operational activities in the United Nations system.

28. The Working Group felt that pending a political settlement of the refugee problem, UNRWA must continue its humanitarian services to the Palestine refugees. It was essential that Members of the United Nations should make the necessary financial contributions to ensure the continuation of the Agency's humanitarian assistance to the Palestine refugees. To that end, the Working Group recommended the following: that Governments which had not contributed to UNRWA should start to contribute; that Governments which had made only relatively small contributions should make more generous ones; that Governments which had made generous special contributions to UNRWA in 1982 or earlier years should do so again in 1983 and 1984; that Governments which had made generous contributions to UNRWA throughout the years should continue to do so and should strive to increase them; and that Governments should make payment of their contributions as early as possible each year.

29. Mr. VUKOVIC (Chairman, Joint Inspection Unit) recalled that in March 1982 the General Assembly had, by its decision 36/462, requested the Joint Inspection Unit to carry out a comprehensive review of the organization, budget and operations of UNRWA with a view to assisting the Commissioner-General to make the most effective and economical use of the limited funds available to the Agency.

(Mr. Vukovic)

30. In response to that request, the Joint Inspection Unit had, in consultation with UNRWA staff, made a careful examination of the documents, files and operations of the Agency. The Inspectors had visited the Vienna headquarters on several occasions to discuss various issues with the Commissioner-General and his staff. Between January and March 1983, a JIU team had visited the Amman headquarters and all the field offices, including various camps and installations. There had also been valuable discussions with UNESCO and WHO staff, both in the field and at the headquarters of those organizations, and with the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

31. In its report, the Joint Inspection Unit examined the results obtained by UNRWA in the execution of its three main programmes on education, health and relief. After discussing some of the operational difficulties of the Agency, which were to a large extent the consequence of financial constraints, the report analysed issues relating to the budget, personnel, structure and decentralization of UNRWA and some questions concerning the Agency's mandate and institutional setting.

32. UNRWA was a complex organization working in a difficult context, and its achievements and shortcomings should be judged against the background of the lack of prospects thus far for a just settlement of the question of the Palestine refugees. Nevertheless, JIU was convinced that, by and large, the Agency's operations and overall cost effectiveness had been satisfactory.

33. The Agency's achievements were an illustration of what international co-operation could do in pursuit of a humanitarian goal. In co-operation with UNESCO and WHO, the Agency had developed an effective programme of humanitarian assistance. Over the 35 years of its existence, it had regularly provided services comparable to those provided by a Government and had established, in the field of education, health and relief an apparatus which had enabled a large proportion of the Palestine refugees to be socially productive and had helped them to maintain a Palestinian identity. In that process, UNRWA had acquired specific institutional functions and had given training to thousands of Palestinian staff members. The dedicated and competent staff of the Agency was its strongest asset, and the Inspectors felt that it must not be lost.

34. UNRWA continued to operate under difficult conditions, including ever-increasing financial needs and the continuing uncertainty concerning the availability of resources. In addition, the question of the legal protection of Palestine refugees had not yet been satisfactorily settled. The Inspectors believed that innovative and acceptable measures, based on humanitarian considerations, should be sought. The involvement of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees could have a positive effect on the safety and security of Palestine refugees.

35. Despite the relatively satisfactory nature of UNRWA operations, improvements could undoubtedly be made in many fields. Some basic problems, such as the deplorable state of many Agency installations, could be solved only through

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(Mr. Vukovic)

adequate funding. There was a need for improvements in policies and procedures, especially in programming and budgeting, in staffing and in the organization of services. The JIU report contained specific recommendations for a more rational use of available funds. The uncertainty of sufficient and stable financing in recent years had become a major constraint on the Agency's operations. The Agency was afraid of having to interrupt certain services or to discontinue entire programmes. That situation, together with the fact that its headquarters had for a long time been far removed from its area of operations, had weakened confidence in the ability of UNRWA to meet minimum requirements in the future. There was an urgent need to remedy those weaknesses. JIU hoped that its report would constitute a positive contribution in that direction.

36. Mr. SALAH (Jordan)* said that his delegation had listened with great interest to the statement of the Commissioner-General of the Agency, Mr. Olof Rydbeck, and to those made in introducing the reports of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA and of the Joint Inspection Unit by the Chairmen of those bodies. In that regard, he expressed his appreciation to them and thanked Mr. Olof Rydbeck for his untiring efforts in managing the Agency and directing its work.

37. The Special Political Committee was now considering agenda item 73 on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, at a time when the situation of those refugees could be seen to be deteriorating and becoming more complicated. The Committee should therefore examine that question with all the care that it deserved. Jordan considered the question of Palestine a crucial one which occupied a prime position. His delegation had studied with the greatest interest and attention the report of the Commissioner-General and the various documents and reports before the Committee on the agenda item in question.

38. The problems concerning the situation of the Palestine refugees raised in the report required thorough study and examination. It should be noted, in particular, that the measures recently taken by the Commissioner-General showed a tendency towards the belief that, in the absence of voluntary contributions, the only solution to the financial crisis of the Agency was to continue to reduce basic services, particularly the relief provided by it to Palestine refugees. Jordan wished to draw attention to the fact that such an impression was given by the report and to caution against such a tendency, which would mean, in the final analysis, the beginning of the liquidation of the Agency. The Agency's priorities must be clearly defined. It should, in particular, make it a matter of principle to maintain services at their previous level. The financial crisis of the Agency, of whose seriousness Jordan was certainly aware, must be resolved not by a reduction of services but by obtaining additional resources. Jordan could not subscribe to the argument that the only solution to the Agency's crisis was a reduction in its services. The reason the Agency had been created at all was to

* This statement has been given full coverage in the summary record in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee during the meeting.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

provide services for Palestine refugees. The elimination of those services, at the very time when employment opportunities for those refugees in Lebanon, on the West Bank and in Gaza were becoming scarce, represented a dangerous tendency with vast ramifications whose consequences it was difficult to foresee. What was certain was that it would have deleterious effects on the region and on the prospects of peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

39. The attempt to make the Arab host States bear the consequences of that reduction in services was even more disturbing. Those countries already had a much heavier burden than the Agency had. While the Agency spent the equivalent of \$27 per student for education and \$9 per month per refugee for rations, the Arab host countries spent much more.

40. The report of the Commissioner-General (A/38/13) cited a number of illegal actions committed by Israel as part of its ongoing plan to achieve the abolition of the Agency by cutting off its means of existence and the assistance to the Palestinian Arab people. Those actions included the repeated imposition of curfews and the arbitrary closing of schools, universities and higher education institutions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Calculations showed that the number of days on which students had been able to attend classes regularly was at most only 50 per cent of the number scheduled. There was no need to draw attention to the effect that situation could have on the standards of learning and, consequently on the social standards of Palestinian refugees. Apart from the imposition of curfews, the violation of the Agreement governing the activities of the Agency prevented it from discharging its task and resulted in the waste of a large part of its already slim resources.

41. The situation of Palestine refugees in southern Lebanon, occupied by Israel since June 1982, was disturbing, since the Israeli invasion had disrupted the daily lives of the refugees; furthermore, the damage to their camps and dwellings had been very severe, some of the main camps such as Ein el Hilweh and Rashidieh having been completely destroyed. The serious damage resulting from the Israeli invasion was not limited to the camps: it extended to the property and the dwellings of Palestinians outside those camps, not to mention the destruction and massacres carried out in the camps of Sabra and Shatila during the Israeli invasion of Beirut. According to the Commissioner-General, the damage caused to Agency facilities and the restrictions imposed on its work had cost it \$52 million. That additional cost represented a considerable strain on the Agency's budget. Jordan considered that it was for Israel to bear that additional cost in view of its direct responsibility for those acts of destruction. The murders and outrages committed in southern Lebanon against Palestinians and Lebanese continued, and it was Israel which was responsible for protecting civilians under the provisions of international conventions relating to situations of conflict and occupation.

42. His delegation paid tribute to the Commissioner-General for his efforts to restore and maintain UNRWA services and to ensure the protection and safety of Palestine refugees and arrange for the rebuilding of their camps. It would, however, like to make a number of comments on the Commissioner-General's report.

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(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

43. First, the Palestinian question was at the very heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and continued to be the source of perpetual violence and tensions in the region. Furthermore, the Palestinians had not freely chosen to become refugees scattered in various States of the world and living off Agency subsidies and services. That exile had been imposed on the Palestinian people by Israeli occupation. The Commissioner-General's report did not recall that fact and omitted to mention that the problem of refugees was one of a people that had been expelled from its country, Palestine, in 1948 and 1967 by the Israeli forces which had sowed death and terror among the population and had obliged it through force and violence, to leave its homeland, Palestine.

44. Second, the report did not cite the General Assembly resolution on the return of Palestine refugees to their homes or the fact that Israel had not implemented that resolution, thus perpetuating the problem of Palestine refugees and complicating it by swelling the number of refugees resulting from the Israeli occupation of 1967.

45. Third, the report did not mention the General Assembly resolution providing for the establishment of a special fund for the receipt of income derived from the property of Palestine refugees in their occupied homeland, nor did it note that Israel was directly impeding the operation of that fund.

46. Fourth, the report did not indicate the services that the host States provided to Palestine refugees or the financial costs they bore. However, it cited the less substantial services provided by certain bodies and agencies, which fell far short of the direct costs assumed by the host States by the very fact that they sheltered the Palestine refugees, costs which exceeded the total amount that the international community could contribute annually to UNRWA. In addition, within the modest economic means available to it, Jordan had since 1948 assumed significant obligations towards Palestine refugees, to whom it provided direct and indirect assistance and offered employment opportunities to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people as it waited to return to its homeland.

47. Fifth, the report referred to the current financial situation of the Agency after the reduction in food rations and the decision to stop distributing those rations to tens of thousands of Palestine refugees. It did not, however, describe the reaction of those refugees and did not refer to the discontent caused among them by that decision. Nor did it refer to the need to resume the distribution of the rations, which led Jordan to wonder about the intent behind the reduction of the rations and the cessation of their distribution, and whether the aim was not to sweep away the problem of Palestine refugees and to free the international community from its responsibility towards them by making the host countries and the refugees themselves assume that burden.

48. Sixth, the education and health services mentioned in the report, which the Agency provided to refugees, were by no means adequate, being below the necessary minimum and constantly getting smaller.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

49. Seventh, Jordan reaffirmed that Israel bore full responsibility for the tragic living conditions of the refugees in southern Lebanon and in all the other areas where they were living, and that the United Nations must assume the obligations incumbent upon it and put an end to the repressive practices of Israel against the Palestine refugees in the territories that it occupied. It must also be said that, in the opening paragraph of his report, the Commissioner-General indicated that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on 6 June 1982 had severely disrupted the lives of the Palestine refugees and had largely undone the Agency's work of 30 years in Lebanon.

50. Eighth, as a result of its invasion and the war it had waged against the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples in June 1982, Israel was responsible for damage, reconstruction and repayment of all necessary compensation, as well as for the losses suffered by the Palestine refugees and Lebanese civilians and those caused to the Agency's facilities and activities in Lebanon. The international community must make the aggressor bear responsibility for all losses and damage resulting from its aggression. Furthermore, peace and security could not be guaranteed if the aggressor was allowed to escape his responsibility or if the cost of his aggression was borne by others.

51. Jordan was aware of the Agency's persistent financial difficulties. Therefore, given the importance of the question, his delegation would like to make a number of proposals which might help reduce those difficulties to some extent:

1. The Working Group should be requested to study closely ways of obtaining permanent and secure sources of funds for the Agency instead of its relying on voluntary contributions, which might be reduced, and, in that connection, Jordan reiterated its request that the UNRWA budget should be incorporated in the budget of the United Nations.

2. The headquarters of the Agency should be transferred from Vienna to the Middle East, the area of its operations, as soon as possible, since that proposal had been made repeatedly for many years and had been incorporated in General Assembly resolution 36/146 F, the non-implementation of which would lead to a loss of UNRWA funds.

3. More local staff should be appointed and the number of international civil servants should be reduced: in his report, the Commissioner-General had praised the locally recruited staff for the effective and devoted efforts they had made in extremely difficult conditions in Lebanon, which had resulted in the death of a number of them.

52. His delegation wished to point out to the Committee certain facts concerning the Secretary-General's report (A/38/418) on the removal and resettlement of Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip. It was not merely a question of the return of the Palestinians affected by the changes in the frontier line between Egypt and Israel but of an operation with political and military implications in which Israel was currently carrying out a plan aimed at eliminating the material and moral existence of the camps, because it considered that the refugee camps were the political symbol of the lasting nature of this tragedy and the physical

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manifestation of the crime committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. At the end of June 1983, the Israeli Government had announced the creation of a ministerial commission under the chairmanship of the Minister without Portfolio, Mordeki Ben Forat, to deal with refugee matters; that commission had been asked to study the situation of the Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with the aim of resettling those refugees in areas outside their camps. Its chairman had stated that the project had reached an advanced stage, that Israel had appealed to several foreign Zionist organizations to contribute to its financing and that some of them had immediately responded to the appeal. The aim of that Israeli project was to destroy certain camps completely on the pretext of security or demographic reasons and to transfer their inhabitants to the region of Jeftlik in the Jordan Valley, 23 kilometres east of the town of Nablus. That plan to evacuate and demolish Palestinian camps could not be more alien to the humanitarian pretexts invoked by Israel; it was even an inhuman act, the aim being, first, from the demographic point of view, to enable Israel to redistribute the land in accordance with its ambitions and its colonialist and expansionist policies which had led it to establish a large number of settlements in the areas near those camps; secondly, from the political point of view, to enable Israel for the first time since 1948 to make wide-ranging political changes in the Palestinian question by means of a plan aimed at the disappearance of the refugees and the physical demolition of the camps. Thus, the operation of moving the camps and their inhabitants was one of "bantustanization" carried out by Israel in the occupied Arab territories - identical to that carried out by the South African Government against the indigenous majority in the territory of Azania - and represented an Israeli attempt to find a radical solution to the dilemma in which it found itself, torn between its desire to annex the occupied Arab territories and its wish to preserve the purely Jewish character of its State. Jordan appealed to the Committee and the international community to reject that Israeli plan and to take the necessary decisions to restrain Israel and prevent it from pursuing that project. He hoped that the draft resolution on the matter would contain an explicit reference to that dangerous question.

53. After careful study of the Secretary-General's report (A/38/386) on the establishment of an Arab university at Jerusalem, his delegation supported the substance of the report and called for its recommendations to be implemented. The report recognized the need for the establishment of an Arab university at Jerusalem (Al-Quds), referred to the financial requirements of higher education in the occupied territories as well as employment opportunities for graduates and consequently the improvement of the general living conditions of the inhabitants. The report also mentioned the proposed relations between the university of Al-Quds and the United Nations University, UNESCO and other United Nations agencies; in that connection, his delegation supported the establishment of such relations provided that the independence and freedom of the university were preserved. He wondered why paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report did not clearly mention Israel's opposition to the establishment of the university of Al-Quds and its refusal to implement the relevant General Assembly resolutions (36/146 G and 37/120 C). Similarly, paragraph 3 of the report mentioned the correspondence about the Israeli position concerning the university, which showed that, with respect to

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that question, Israel was behaving as if it was not an occupying State, subject to the principles of international law and the Conventions of The Hague and of Geneva governing the powers and responsibilities of military occupation. The General Assembly must adopt, at the current session, the measures necessary for the effective establishment of the Arab university of Al-Quds, using the possibilities offered by existing international institutions and establishments in the Holy City. The establishment of that university under United Nations auspices would awaken and enrich Arab science and culture because it would represent a qualitative change for the Arab Palestinians of the occupied Arab territories in the university sphere. In return, that university would benefit from the historic and religious situation and importance at the international level of the Holy City, which millions of Arabs and Moslems had written on their hearts.

54. In conclusion, he pointed out that, before the 1967 Israeli aggression against the Arab nation, no trace could be found in the activities of the Agency of difficulties or problems similar to those currently threatening it, the danger and seriousness of which had increased since the Israeli invasion of Lebanese territory in 1982. The policy of aggression and occupation of Arab lands pursued by Israel since 1967 and the inhuman practices resulting from that occupation were the reasons for those difficulties and problems, which were threatening the structure and operation of the Agency. There could be no doubt that the abolition of the Agency had become a political objective pursued by Israel because the Agency and the services it provided reflected the international community's recognition of the rights and the tragedy of the Palestinian people and were a constant reminder of the reality of the Israeli aggression and practices against the Palestinian Arab people. The difficult international situation, especially in the region of the world in which the Palestinian people were suffering, showed the need to support and strengthen UNRWA and the danger that would lie in reducing or interfering with its services or resources, which would be a new factor causing additional trouble and instability that would affect the peace and security of the region. He therefore appealed to the international community to assume its responsibilities towards that vital international institution, the continued existence of which was a necessity if new catastrophes were to be avoided in the constantly worsening situation in the region, which deeply affected the Palestinian Arab people and Jordan. The question of the Palestine refugees would continue to trouble the world conscience until a comprehensive, just and lasting solution had been found to the Palestinian question which guaranteed the Palestine refugees' right to return or to receive compensation and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arab people over their national land, Palestine.

55. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) formally proposed, on behalf of his delegation, that the text of the Jordanian representative's statement should be reproduced in extenso in the summary record of the meeting.

56. It was so decided.

57. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) said that he reserved the right to reply to the representative of Jordan at a subsequent meeting. With regard to the situation in northern Lebanon, he asked the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for a clarification, because he had noted a discrepancy between the figures quoted in the report issued by the Agency on 4 November 1983 and those given the same day by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with regard to the number of refugees killed or wounded in the region. ICRC had said that tens of thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians had been direct victims of the fighting, whereas UNRWA spoke of a smaller number of killed and wounded, and said that hundreds of refugees had fled from southern Lebanon, which had nothing to do with what was happening in the north of the country.

58. Mr. RYDBECK (Commissioner-General of UNRWA) said that the figures given by UNRWA and ICRC were not contradictory. The UNRWA field director had himself been in Tripoli and the figures published by the Agency were based on the information provided by the area officer responsible for UNRWA activities in northern Lebanon. Those figures referred only to Palestinian dead and wounded, whereas ICRC gave figures for all victims.

59. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, pointed out that, if Israel had not pursued its policy of occupation and of uprooting Palestinian people in 1948 and 1967, there would now be no need to massacre the Palestinian people in northern and southern Lebanon and in the West Bank.

60. Mr. LEVIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the remark by the representative of Jordan was quite out of place: if the Jordanian Government had adopted a different policy since 1967, the current situation would be completely different and the problem would be much less serious, or even non-existent.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.