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Chairman: Mr. Emilio ARENALES CATALAN
(Guatemala).

AGENDA ITEM 26

**Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief
and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the
Near East (A/3686 and Corr.1, A/3735, A/SPC/20)
(continued)**

1. Mr. WASHINGTON (United States of America) said that the United States delegation had been greatly impressed by the statement which the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), had made to the Special Political Committee on the previous day (A/SPC/20), and expressed its pleasure that the Agency should be headed by so competent a Director.

2. The Committee could now seek to support the efforts of the Director of UNRWA in a concrete manner, could examine the problems confronting that body and seek the best means for pursuing programmes on which the fate of so large a number of people depended. The question was, as the Director had clearly pointed out, what sums the General Assembly was prepared to pay during the coming year towards the Agency it had established.

3. The Secretary-General had invited States Members to state during the current session the new or extra contributions they were prepared to make towards the Agency's programmes, and he had rightly stressed that their replies would have a direct influence on which elements in the Agency's 1958 programmes might have to be eliminated if sufficient contributions were not forthcoming. The members of the Committee should therefore first consider the Secretary-General's appeal and their response to it. The Committee could discuss the continued work of the Agency only if it knew to what extent possible contributions would help to cover the Agency's expenditure; otherwise the Committee would have the thankless task of considering how the Agency might continue to operate effectively in reduced circumstances.

4. At the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole Assembly, held on 4 October 1957, the United States representative had given details of the contribution which the Government of the United States was prepared to pay for the financial year ending 30 June

1958. ^{1/} Further to the Secretary-General's appeal, the Government of the United States had decided to pay an additional 500,000 dollars for the relief programme and an additional 1 million dollars towards the Agency's rehabilitation programme, which brought the United States pledges for the Agency's programmes up to 18 million dollars for the relief programme and 5 million dollars for the rehabilitation programme, or 70 per cent of the contributions to the relief programme and to the reduced rehabilitation programme respectively. Those pledges were made on the same conditions as the earlier pledges, i.e., United States payments could not exceed 70 per cent of the total amount of contributions paid by all countries contributing to the relief and rehabilitation programmes. It was therefore clear that new or extra contributions were required if the budget was to be met and the total United States pledge to be contributed. Otherwise the Agency would be unable to continue the limited work which it was at present carrying out.

5. The Committee's decisions could affect the lives and futures of more than 900,000 refugees. The co-operation of all Member States and, in particular, their financial support were therefore essential if the Agency was to continue its work. He believed that Member States would do all in their power to solve the budgetary problems confronting the Agency.

6. Mrs. VON LOWZOW (Denmark) congratulated the Director of UNRWA on behalf of the Danish delegation on the outstanding work he had carried out. In his annual report (A/3686 and Corr.1) the Director had stressed the gravity of the situation. The Danish delegation did not think that an over-all solution of the complex problems in the Middle East would be found at the present time. However, faced with the tragic situation of the refugees, it was the duty of the General Assembly to consider all possible means of bringing their plight to an end. The international community would hardly be able to go on providing substantial financial aid indefinitely.

7. The Danish delegation was fully aware of the burden which the refugees imposed on host countries. However, it also realized that any large-scale repatriation would at present create insurmountable difficulties for Israel. The Danish delegation did, however, hope that within the framework of the over-all settlement of the refugee problem Israel would find the means to take in a small number of refugees and particularly to allow the reunion of dispersed families.

8. With regard to the question of compensation to refugees, she hoped that a solution would soon be found through co-operation on the part of Israel; in that respect, it was promising that Israel had recently released the frozen bank accounts of Palestine refugees.

^{1/} See A/AC.90/PV.1, p. 27.

9. If it was unrealistic to count on massive repatriation of refugees, it seemed essential to promote their rehabilitation and resettlement. The Danish delegation was gratified to learn of some change of attitude on the part of the refugees. The General Assembly should invite host countries to encourage and support that change of attitude without prejudice to any rights the refugees might have. The report showed that no difficulties had been encountered in finding positions for refugees with vocational training and, as a relatively large number of refugees already possessed some skill, their rehabilitation would probably be of benefit to certain Middle Eastern countries which were faced with a shortage of labour. Unfortunately the rehabilitation programme had suffered particularly from lack of funds. It was to be hoped that the sum of 15 million dollars which the Director deemed necessary for the continuation of current activities and the resumption of abandoned projects would be made available to him. She recalled that it was possible to earmark contributions to UNRWA for a specific part of the programme. That practice might indeed complicate the administration of funds, but certain countries which did not at present contribute might be induced to do so if they were given assurances that their donations would be earmarked for the most constructive part of the Agency's programme—namely, rehabilitation.

10. The Danish delegation noted with concern that the number of refugees, instead of declining, was rising, owing to the fact that the Agency's means for determining eligibility of refugees for assistance were unsatisfactory. She hoped that the Governments of host countries would help the Director to exercise effective control in that respect, since the present system adversely affected certain groups of beneficiaries, including certain categories of children.

11. The Danish delegation would support any draft resolution that might be conducive to a constructive solution of the refugee problem. She hoped that the present difficulties in the Middle East would be solved in the near future, and that the area would finally settle down to the exploitation of its economic resources in a spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding. The 900,000 refugees could then play a constructive part in that work.

12. Mr. MALOLES (Philippines) associated himself with those who had congratulated the Director of UNRWA on the generous work done by the Agency and on the remarkable manner in which that work had been carried out. The humanitarian work of the Agency was a thankless task which it had to carry out in the midst of apathy caused by perpetual inactivity and hostility induced by disappointment. The condition of the refugees could not fail to touch every compassionate heart. At the same time it constituted a threat, inasmuch as unstable social conditions were a source of unrest and agitation.

13. The chronic problem of the Agency was lack of funds. Fortunately there had been no disruption of the relief programme, although relief had had to be reduced to the barest minimum. In the field of rehabilitation, on the other hand, shortage of funds had forced the Agency to cancel all projects which might have helped to make the refugees economically self-supporting, with the exception of vocational training and general education programmes which were themselves inadequate. What made the whole situation all the more regrettable was

the fact that for the first time in eight years some headway had been made. There had been a change in the attitude of the refugees towards rehabilitation and there seemed to be a growing desire on their part not to continue to depend on the charity of others.

14. The Philippine delegation was glad to note the improvement in the relations between the Agency and the host Governments; he quoted a passage from the annual report of the Director of UNRWA noting that improvement. That aspect of the activities of the Agency was not without significance and it could be a sign that a final solution of the problem was possible.

15. He urged those Member States which were in a position to do so to increase their contributions, and asked the Soviet Union and the States associated with it to express their sympathy for the refugees in the tangible form of contributions of funds. It would be a mistake to regard the problem of the Palestine refugees as being the exclusive responsibility of certain States. The problem was above all a humanitarian one and had to be dealt with without reference to any political consideration. Nevertheless, the annual report of the Director of UNRWA referred to a number of political questions which were at the root of existing difficulties.

16. In 1948, by its resolution 194 (III) the General Assembly had offered the parties the choice between repatriation and compensation for refugees who might not wish to be repatriated. The Arab States had always been in favour of repatriation, whereas Israel had favoured integration. Israel had once offered to pay compensation, but the question arose whether that offer still stood. The refugees, for their part, had opted for repatriation, and their attitude had on many occasions led to the failure of self-help projects. So long as Israel and the Arab States persisted in their refusal to compromise, the prospects for settlement would remain dim.

17. It was time to examine in the light of present conditions the hard choice offered by the resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. The situation in Israel had changed considerably since the refugees had fled during the hostilities. A new social and economic structure had arisen to which the refugees would find it difficult to adapt themselves. Even if repatriation were accepted, Israel could resettle such new inhabitants only by resettling the existing population, which consisted partly of Jews who had fled from Arab countries. A solution could not therefore be hoped for in that direction.

18. Integration, on the other hand, was not an ideal solution either. It was, however, the more practical solution, because the refugees were themselves Arabs; besides, a number of Arab States had the requisite land to spare and the manpower provided by the refugees would benefit the economic development of the host countries. The refusal of the Arab countries to consider that solution was based on principles which could not be ignored, but it was to be hoped that the practical necessities of the situation would modify the inflexible stand of those who demanded repatriation and compensation.

19. To begin with, Israel could renew its offer of compensation and consider the principle of repatriation in certain defined terms so as to provide a basis for negotiation. A settlement of the problem could be reached only if both interested parties were prepared

to accept a compromise. In the meantime the United Nations could make the 200 million dollar integration fund available to the Agency to enable it to undertake more ambitious projects. It could also initiate the renewal of negotiations on the Jordan-Yarmuk Valley scheme as well as on the project for the diversion of the Nile waters to the Sinai peninsula. Those projects would, if carried out, provide employment for a substantial number of refugees and release a considerable economic potential in the countries concerned. They

would also provide an opportunity for international co-operation which might well pave the way towards a lasting peace. Lastly, it might be possible to draw on the fund intended for the implementation of the Eisenhower doctrine, which corresponded to the basic purposes of the United Nations. He invited the Committee to consider those suggestions if it deemed them worthy of more thorough study.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.