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Chairman: Mr. Alexis KYROU (Greece).

The Conciliation Commission for Palestine and its work in the light of the resolutions of the United Nations (A/2184, A/2216 and Add.1, A/AC.61/L.23/Rev.2, A/AC.61/L.25, A/AC.61/L.26/Rev.1, A/AC.61/L.27) (*continued*)

[Item 67]*

1. Mr. NINCIC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation had followed the various phases of the Palestine question with interest and had always co-operated in trying to find a solution for it. Although his country was not directly concerned with the Palestine problem it could not but be aware of its effect on peace and stability in the Middle East, which was near to Yugoslavia. If the present situation in that area were to go on, the tension between the countries concerned would be bound to increase and make the solution of the problem even more difficult. A further determined effort should therefore be made to find a way out of the present dead-lock.

2. It was primarily up to the countries concerned to try to settle their dispute by direct negotiation. The Yugoslav delegation was fully aware of the difficulties in the way of such a settlement, but it was convinced that they could be overcome. Although direct negotiation gave the best hope of a settlement, that did not mean that the United Nations should be divested of all responsibility. The Conciliation Commission should, on the contrary, continue to assist the parties.

3. Although the Yugoslav delegation approved the principles set forth in the eight-Power draft resolution (A/AC.61/L.23/Rev.2), it would nevertheless warmly welcome any amendments likely to make it acceptable to both parties. Indeed, that was essential if the draft resolution was to contribute to the settlement of the problem. The four-Power draft resolution (A/AC.61/

L.25), on which his delegation reserved the right to comment later, contained some elements which could usefully be embodied in the first draft resolution, thus enabling it to obtain a substantial majority.

4. Finally Mr. Nincic expressed the hope that when the question came up again at the eighth session, the General Assembly would be able to take note of the fact that the parties had reached a settlement and that the problem had been solved.

5. Mr. MUNRO (New Zealand) said that once again the Committee had heard a variety of opinions on the question of responsibility for the present situation in Palestine. According to some delegations, responsibility rested upon the United Nations because of the decision taken in 1947 by resolution 181 (II), which it had failed to provide means to implement; others had contended that responsibility for the situation rested upon Israel, whose attitude had forced the Arab States to intervene in Palestine; other delegations again had expressed the view that responsibility rested upon the Arab States, whose armed forces had, in defiance of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), crossed the frontiers laid down in that resolution.

6. The New Zealand delegation believed that in fact the responsibility for the present situation in Palestine rested on all three—the United Nations, Israel and the Arab States. The time had come, however, for the Committee to turn from the sterile process of apportioning responsibility to the more fruitful process of seeking a solution. The war in Palestine had had certain results. It had left the State of Israel with boundaries other than those laid down in resolution 181 (II). It had enabled the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to extend its frontiers and had forced over a million refugees to seek shelter in the Arab States where they now constituted a grave social and humanitarian problem. It had caused the city of Jerusalem to be occupied simultaneously by both Jordan and Israel. And finally, it had created a state of tension which threatened sta-

* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

bility in an area which was vital to the stability and peace of the entire world.

7. The New Zealand delegation agreed with the view that it was primarily for Israel and the Arab States, which were parties to the armistice agreements, to remove that tension. The United Nations, of course, had a considerable responsibility but not a decisive one. The United Nations had acknowledged its responsibility by setting up the Conciliation Commission by General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The provisions of that resolution were clear. The Governments had been invited to negotiate directly or otherwise while the Conciliation Commission had been instructed to assist them in reaching agreement. Negotiations had been going on between the Conciliation Commission and the Governments concerned for four years, but there was no consistent record of direct negotiations between the Governments. Thus, it would appear that the Conciliation Commission had fully honoured the responsibility placed upon it by the General Assembly, while the Governments concerned had not.

8. The time had come to place the primary responsibility on the parties, as proposed in the eight-Power draft resolution. The Conciliation Commission would continue to play its part by assisting the Governments concerned in settling their differences, but its role must be one of assistance; it could not be expected to direct. The Conciliation Commission had no power to secure the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. To suggest the contrary, as had been done by some delegations, would be to repeat the error committed by the General Assembly when, by resolution 181 (II), it had called upon the Trusteeship Council to implement the plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem.

9. The point at issue was whether the General Assembly should seek to lay down the basis for the direct negotiations which it called upon the parties to enter into. The General Assembly should not, of course, turn away from its previous resolutions, but it would be well to note that those resolutions had been designed to meet existing situations that both parties had had a hand in altering those situations, and that their attitude towards those resolutions had varied accordingly.

10. Israel, for example, considered that those resolutions could no longer serve as a basis for direct negotiation. While appreciating Israel's efforts to establish itself as a State and while not minimizing the difficulties raised by the influx into so small a territory of Jewish refugees from Europe and the Middle East, the New Zealand delegation was bound to confess that it was disappointed in Israel's attitude in regard to the question of the repatriation of Palestine refugees.

11. For their part, the Arab States had been prepared to enter into direct negotiations provided they were based on rigid adherence to existing resolutions. That attitude of the Arab States did not completely square with the facts. Those States had opposed resolution 181 (II) adopted by the General Assembly at its second session (128th plenary meeting) and had disregarded the provisions of paragraph 5 of resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

12. It would therefore be unwise to bind negotiations between the parties to resolutions of the General Assembly since neither side had been consistent in its

attitude towards them. There was, however, no reason why either party should not use the previous Assembly resolutions as a basis for discussion.

13. Furthermore, it would appear that the Arab States had misconceived the part of the United Nations in the present situation. The United Nations had not, as the Arab delegations seemed to think, attempted to arbitrate, but only to mediate. The United Nations had fulfilled that role through the Conciliation Commission, which had made every effort to bring the parties together. It could not be blamed for the failure of its efforts and the remedy did not appear to lie in changing its composition or its location from New York to Jerusalem.

14. It was wrong to suggest, as the representative of Pakistan had done (32nd meeting), that the United Nations had not always given the Palestine problem the attention it merited. The long debates in the General Assembly on that matter testified to the contrary. The feelings of the Arab States could not, however, be disregarded. It was true that neighbours had been thrust upon them; but it was to be hoped that in that situation the States concerned might recognize that the obligations and benefits of good neighbourly relations remained as great.

15. Mr. YIN Pao-Yu (China) thought that the Committee's best hope of reaching an ultimate solution was to approach the problem with patience and in the spirit of understanding and conciliation for which the Mexican (25th meeting) and Uruguayan (28th meeting) representatives had appealed. The Conciliation Commission had so far been unable to complete its task, but it had done useful work; it had, for example, arranged the release of the blocked accounts of the Palestine refugees in Israel, and it should continue to enjoy the Committee's support.

16. The Palestine refugees who had been driven from their homes must be permitted to return and those who decided not to do so must be compensated for their property. To disregard that principle would be contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Charter.

17. The Chinese representative wished to reply to the Israel representative's allegation that an amendment (A/AC.38/L.64) submitted by China to the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee and adopted by that Committee (72nd meeting) at the General Assembly's fifth session, had held up the solution of the Palestine problem for two and a half years. Under that amendment, the General Assembly had urged the Governments concerned to seek agreement by negotiations conducted either with the Conciliation Commission or directly, with a view to the final settlement of all questions outstanding between them. He drew the Israel representative's attention to the fact that that text did not exclude direct negotiations and said that the Chinese delegation's purpose in submitting it had been to facilitate the adoption of the draft resolution then before the Committee. The door had therefore always been left open for direct negotiation.

18. Because of the Conciliation Commission's efforts, progress had been made towards the solution of the problem. There were still important issues to be solved, such as the repatriation of refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the territorial questions. Only in an

atmosphere of amity and co-operation between the countries concerned could the Israel representative's laudable plan for the development of the Middle East be carried out.

19. China had abstained from voting on General Assembly resolution 181 (II) but, as a Member State, it accepted the decisions of the Assembly in their entirety and would do nothing to hinder the application of the resolution in question. It had been rightly said that General Assembly resolutions were not substitutes for solutions, but Members must endeavour to achieve solutions on the lines recommended by the General Assembly.

20. The Arab States and Israel had said not only that they were in favour of direct negotiations but also that they were prepared to begin them. They laid down different conditions for the opening of such negotiations, but the essential thing was that they agreed to them in principle. It should be remembered that the General Assembly had fixed the conditions for the conduct of the negotiations. The Conciliation Commission must pay an important part in that connexion and must for that reason be continued in existence.

21. There was no reason why the United Nations should change the stand it had hitherto taken on the Palestine question, but it should avoid bringing pressure to bear on the parties to the dispute. The Chinese delegation therefore called on the sponsors of the two draft resolutions before the Committee to examine the possibility of combining them in a single text, taking into account the various views which had been expressed.

22. Mr. SOTO (Chile) said that it was the duty of all members of the Committee, on the basis of the Charter itself, to be guided by the spirit of conciliation for which a number of speakers had appealed. The Committee must realize the importance of its task and direct its efforts towards establishing relations of friendship and co-operation between Arabs and Jews in accordance with their traditions of tolerance. To dwell constantly on past events might hinder progress and complaints and mutual recriminations must now give way to action.

23. The eight-Power draft resolution recommended direct negotiation between the two parties. Israel and the Arab States would succeed in finding a basis for the settlement of their dispute as they were prepared to negotiate and were inspired by a sincere desire for peace in Palestine.

24. The most important of the outstanding difficulties was the weight and value to be given to earlier resolutions as affording a basis for settlement or partial solution of the problem. The Arab States considered that any solution must be based on the previous decisions of the General Assembly and made it a prior condition for negotiation that the relevant resolutions must be respected. The Arab States were justified in arguing that the United Nations could not disregard its own decisions. While the resolutions of the General Assembly were not legally binding, they nevertheless had unquestionable moral weight, since they were the expression of the principles of the Charter. They could not therefore be regarded as mere academic recom-

mendations. It would be a very serious matter if the United Nations came to regard them as null and void; it would undermine the very foundations of the Organization.

25. On the other hand, Mr. Soto could not agree with the manner in which the Arab States considered those resolutions should be applied. To make them a prerequisite for negotiations was to create a stumbling-block to those negotiations and was thus directly counter to the purpose of the resolutions themselves. The spirit, not the letter, of the previous resolutions was important, and the principles they established. Time and events had unquestionably made some of the original practical details out-of-date.

26. The eight-Power draft resolution suffered from a regrettable omission in that it did not sufficiently emphasize the importance of the earlier resolutions. The argument that the value attached to those resolutions was implicitly brought out in the preamble had not been convincing. The Chilean delegation therefore submitted an amendment (A/AC.61/L.26/Rev.1), paragraph 4 of which urged the parties to bear in mind the need to give consideration in their negotiations to the fundamental principles contained in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. That reference to the principles adopted by the General Assembly was essential and the negotiations might be facilitated if the earlier resolutions were not taken too literally. The Chilean delegation hoped that Israel and the Arab States would find that formula acceptable. The other paragraphs of the Chilean amendment were concerned only with drafting changes.

27. With regard to the four-Power draft resolution, the reaffirmation of General Assembly resolution 512 (VI) contained in paragraph 1 was quite pointless. The success achieved as a result of that resolution was open to question and no purpose was served by insisting on it when new prospects of a settlement were dawning. Paragraph 6, on the other hand, contained an interesting idea: it might be expedient to increase the membership of the Conciliation Commission. The paragraph might be inserted in the eight-Power draft resolution.

28. Mr. Juan B. DE LAVALLE (Peru) said that his delegation's intervention was inspired by its feelings of deep friendship for the two parties. The Peruvian delegation ardently desired a just and honourable solution to the problem.

29. His delegation agreed with the Chilean delegation that the views expressed in the General Assembly's various resolutions were consistent and that the Assembly's authority gave them a legal status. It was therefore unwise to give any one of those resolutions greater prominence, as did the four-Power draft resolution; it would be better to adopt a more general formula and to invite the Conciliation Commission to ensure compliance with all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the question.

30. The discussion had brought out the extent of the difficulties inherent in the Conciliation Commission's task. The Commission deserved the highest praise for its persistent efforts and for the progress it had made with regard to the release of the blocked accounts. The Peruvian delegation had no objection

to increasing the membership of the Commission, as proposed in the four-Power draft resolution, if that would enable the Commission to perform its task more easily and to enjoy a greater measure of confidence.

31. The eight-Power draft resolution took into account the changes which had occurred in the situation and its current realities. He welcomed the reminder to the parties that it was their duty to settle their dispute by peaceful means and the appeal to them to refrain from any act of hostility in the future. It was unwise, however, to insist on the principle that it was primarily the duty of the Governments concerned to settle their outstanding differences. While the value and importance of direct negotiation were obvious, the part to be played by the United Nations should not be minimized on that account. The Peruvian delegation therefore proposed the following amendment (A/AC.61/L.28) to the eight-Power draft resolution:

"In paragraph 2 of the operative part, insert the following passage after the words 'their outstanding differences': 'with due regard for the jurisdiction vested in the United Nations pursuant to the Charter, and in particular in the General Assembly and Security Council under the previous resolutions relating to the Palestine problem,'."

32. Mr. de Laval emphasized moreover that it was essential to take the proper steps to ensure freedom of access to the Holy Places. Peru, a Catholic country, was one of the champions of that cause and would continue to defend it.

33. In conclusion, he associated himself with the Mexican representative's appeal. He too hoped that the Committee's discussions would be inspired by a spirit of human brotherhood and he supported the Yugoslav and Chinese representatives' suggestion that the various amendments and proposals should be combined in a single text which might prove acceptable to all members.

34. Mr. ALGHOUSSEIN (Yemen) said that Yemen, like all the other Arab States, had a direct interest in the problem of Palestine and in the fate of the legitimate population of that area.

35. The failure of the Conciliation Commission to discharge its mandate had been a deep disappointment to the Arab States. The Commission's only tangible achievement had been the release of the Arab refugees' blocked accounts in Israel. Yet under the terms of resolution 194 (III) it had received both general directives and specific duties. According to the general directives it was to have assisted the parties concerned to reach an early settlement of their differences in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The specific tasks had been listed in paragraphs 7, 8 and 11 of the operative part of resolution 194 (III) stating the solutions to be reached on the three aspects of the problem. Jerusalem was to be placed under effective United Nations supervision; the refugees wishing to return to their homes were to be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and compensation was to be paid for the property of those choosing not to return. Lastly, it provided for positive measures with regard to the Holy Places. It had been difficult for the Commission to achieve positive results in view of Israel's refusal to comply with the General Assembly resolutions, but at least it could have been

expected to make a sincere effort and, in case of failure, to state the reasons for its failure clearly and precisely.

36. Mr. Alghoussein appreciated the spirit in which the Mexican (25th meeting) and Norwegian (26th meeting) representatives had made their statements but the main thing was to understand the problem clearly and to solve it justly, in conformity with the General Assembly resolutions. Israel had not only failed to carry out General Assembly resolution 181 (II) on the internationalization of Jerusalem, but had even made that city its capital. Its actions had caused one million Arab refugees to be driven from their homes. It was occupying a territory far larger than provided for under the plan of partition contained in General Assembly resolution 181 (II). That territory had, to some extent, been determined by the armistice agreements, but those agreements did not prejudice the boundaries as laid down in the plan of partition. As the Arab States had emphasized in their explanatory memorandum attached to their request for inclusion of the item in the agenda (A/2184), the belief that the Palestine question had been settled by armistice agreements was dangerous inasmuch as such a belief created an illusion conducive to indifference and inertia on the part of the Organization. The Arab States had made known that they were prepared to settle the Palestine problem in conformity with the General Assembly resolutions. Mr. Alghoussein urged the Mexican and Norwegian representatives to examine the facts in a spirit of equity and to consider whether there could be a just solution to the problem other than that provided for by the General Assembly resolutions.

37. Mr. Alghoussein whole-heartedly agreed with the Canadian representative (30th meeting) that a lasting settlement must be fundamentally a fair settlement. The parties to a dispute must be prepared to make some concessions; yet Israel refused to make any, as shown by its so-called peace plan. Peace, in order to be real and final, must of necessity be fair and just even if that meant changing a *de facto* situation. That principle had been stressed in the First Committee during the debate on the Korean question. There was no reason why the United Nations should stand by its resolutions in the case of Korea, and disregard them in that of Palestine.

38. Whereas Israel took an intransigent position, the Arab States, by expressing their willingness to accept all the United Nations resolutions on Palestine, had made an important concession. Their counter-proposal to Israel's peace plan called for the settlement of three main issues—refugees, the internationalization of Jerusalem and territorial adjustments—in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions on those questions.

39. The eight-Power draft resolution, on the other hand, reaffirmed that it remained a primary duty of all Members of the United Nations, when involved in an international dispute, to seek settlement of such a dispute by peaceful means. The provision, though logical and not questioned by anyone, nevertheless implied that the United Nations was washing its hands of the Palestine question which it had itself created. That conclusion appeared justified in the light of the operative part of the draft resolution.

40. The second and third paragraphs of the preamble referred to the General Assembly resolutions on Palestine, but only, it seemed, to invite the parties to settle their outstanding differences at an early date. No indication whatever was given of the kind of solution to be achieved. It might be of interest to recall, in that connexion, the draft resolution submitted at the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee, during the General Assembly's sixth session, by the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Turkey (A/AC.53/L.22/Rev.1) which called for an equitable and just solution of the Palestine question.

41. The main provision of the eight-Power draft resolution was contained in paragraph 3 of the operative part which urged the Governments concerned to enter at an early date into direct negotiations for the establishment of such a settlement. The question might be asked whether such an invitation to enter into direct negotiations would add anything new to the problem. The answer was obvious when considering the attitude taken by Israel which asked to be released from all the obligations imposed by General Assembly resolutions, rejected the internationalization of Jerusalem, refused to admit the principle of repatriation of refugees and had stated time and again that territorial adjustments, if any, would follow the boundary lines laid down in the armistice agreements. Consequently there was no ground of agreement on which direct negotiations could be started. The Conciliation Commission itself had recognized that fact.

42. Obviously in the circumstances direct negotiations would lead to nothing. The General Assembly would adopt a new resolution inviting the parties to resort to mediation and, two or three years later, a resolution calling for conciliation, and the situation would not have changed in any way. That was why Mr. Alghoussein felt that the eight-Power draft resolution would contribute nothing to the settlement of the question. If adopted, it would have negative, if not harmful, results.

43. The Committee also had before it the four-Power draft resolution. The Yemen delegation supported it without qualification, as the solution of the Palestine question could be equitable and fair only if it was strictly in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions, and that was what the draft resolution provided for. It would therefore vote for that draft, and urged the authors of the other draft resolution not to press for the adoption of their proposal. They would thus show to the world that the United Nations had not forsaken the principles of the Charter or abandoned its responsibilities. The Yemen delegation reserved in any case the right to speak later on the various amendments which had been submitted.

44. In conclusion, Mr. Alghoussein wished to draw the Committee's attention to a very important aspect of the question, namely, the desire of the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be placed under United Nations authority until action was taken to determine the city's future in conformity with the General Assembly resolutions. The inhabitants of Jerusalem—Christians, Arabs and Jews—refused Israel nationality, and they were willing to send representatives to New York to plead their case before the Committee.

45. Lord LLEWELLIN (United Kingdom) recalled that almost four years had passed since the armistice agreements between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States had been signed. It was most regrettable that so little progress had been made towards a final settlement of the differences in spite of repeated interventions of the Security Council and the careful study which the General Assembly had given to the problem year after year.

46. The Committee had two draft resolutions before it. One, submitted by Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran and Pakistan, was hardly likely to bring a solution any nearer. It was, of course, unfortunate that the efforts of the Conciliation Commission should not have been more successful. Nevertheless, the value of the preliminary work it had undertaken on the valuation of Arab property with a view to compensation should not be underestimated. Moreover, the unconditional release of the blocked Arab accounts in Israel was a great step forward and an augury of future progress in that field. That was not enough, however, and the members of the Conciliation Commission were the first to realize it. The Commission had successively tried different procedures: conciliation, mixed commissions, mediation. It had been equally unsuccessful in all, but the responsibility for that failure lay with the parties concerned and not with the Commission itself. As a former Mandatory Power, the United Kingdom well understood the difficulties involved. Lord Llewellyn did not think that a larger commission or one with a different composition could have done more. With no authority over the parties and unable to impose a settlement upon them, the Commission had worked tirelessly and with great tact and patience to bring the parties together. It would therefore be unwise to change the Commission's composition in any way. If, however, enlarging the membership of the Conciliation Commission to five would help the parties to negotiate objectively, the United Kingdom would be prepared to consider the proposal in the four-Power draft resolution, provided, of course, that the two additional members were selected from among absolutely neutral States.

47. The four-Power draft resolution also proposed that the Conciliation Commission should have its headquarters in Jerusalem. In that connexion, it was advisable to recall the discussions that had taken place on that point at the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee during the General Assembly's sixth session. The United Kingdom delegation, supported by a number of other delegations, had submitted at the 34th meeting a draft resolution (A/AC.53/L.22) proposing that the headquarters of the Conciliation Commission should be in New York at United Nations Headquarters; other delegations had then proposed that the Commission's headquarters should remain in Jerusalem. The General Assembly, by resolution 512 (VI), finally decided not to take a decision on that question and to leave it to the members of the Conciliation Commission to decide for themselves where they could work most effectively. That conclusion seemed logical. The Conciliation Commission had met in turn in Jerusalem, Beirut, Lausanne, Geneva, Paris and New York. It certainly would meet in Jerusalem at once if it thought that a meeting there would facilitate its work; it was therefore preferable to leave the decision to the Commission.

itself. There seemed to be no point in requiring the Conciliation Commission to sit in Jerusalem as long as the attitude of the parties gave no reasonable hope that that decision would have a favourable effect on its activities.

48. The eight-Power draft resolution urged the Governments concerned to enter into direct negotiations. The Conciliation Commission had repeatedly stressed the desirability of that procedure. It should be noted with satisfaction that neither Israel nor the Arab States had rejected the principle of direct negotiation. Since conciliation and mediation had failed, the United Kingdom delegation was convinced that that new procedure should be tried. Certainly, if the parties agreed to enter into direct negotiations, they could find an initial point of agreement; as soon as a single point had been satisfactorily settled, the other problems would certainly seem less intractable.

49. The representatives of the Arab States had said that their Governments were prepared to enter into direct negotiations provided that Israel accepted certain preliminary conditions. Lord Llewellyn appealed to them not to maintain that position. When the parties were seated around a table they could and must put forward their points of view and their arguments; but so long as preliminary conditions were imposed, the parties might never reach the conference table at all. He noted that at the sixth session the United Kingdom delegation had been one of the sponsors of a draft resolution (A/AC.53/L.22/Rev.1) inviting the Governments concerned to strive to seek agreement promptly in a spirit of justice and realism and on the basis of mutual concessions. That proposal had not gained general approval and the sponsors had agreed to amend it. In any case, it was obvious that agreement could be reached only by way of mutual concessions and on a realistic basis.

50. It was claimed by some that direct negotiations must be on the basis of previous resolutions of the General Assembly. An Assembly resolution was a recommendation to the parties to a dispute and, as such, carried great authority; nevertheless, it inevitably took account of the situation at the time of its adoption and did not necessarily bind the Assembly for ever. In the present case, the General Assembly would certainly not wish one of its resolutions to stand in the way of an agreement between the parties.

51. To illustrate his point of view, Lord Llewellyn quoted paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) relating to the Arab refugees. He certainly did not challenge the validity of that provision but he thought that it was perhaps not the only acceptable solution at the present time and that the parties might be prepared at any rate to discuss other solutions. At the sixth session, the United Kingdom representative had already said in the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee (34th meeting) that, in his opinion, a majority of the refugees would find a happier and more stable home amongst their Arab brethren. The Committee must devote particular attention to the question of the fate of the Arab refugees. So long as there was no definitive settlement of the Palestine question, those refugees would continue to live in a state of uncertainty. Would their future not be brighter if they were helped to settle in countries whose inhabitants were of the same

race, the same culture and the same religion as they? Of course they were entitled to fair and full compensation for the property they had left in Palestine and that was a subject on which the efforts of the Conciliation Commission had been especially encouraging.

52. The United Kingdom delegation felt that the question of refugees was one of the problems on which the parties should seek settlement as promptly as possible by direct negotiation, calling for assistance, if necessary, from the Conciliation Commission which was particularly well-informed in the matter.

53. The United Kingdom delegation would support any proposal leading to the negotiation of an agreement between the parties but would oppose any amendment which would tie the hands of the negotiators even before the negotiations began. Certainly the conclusion of a mutually satisfactory agreement would require sacrifices from both parties but that was the spirit in which they must approach the problem.

54. Mr. SIRI (El Salvador) said that his delegation associated itself whole-heartedly with those delegations proposing that an appeal should be made to the Arab States and to Israel to enter into direct negotiations with a view to an honourable and satisfactory settlement of their tragic differences. That appeal was genuinely consistent with the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter which, in Article 33, provided that the parties to any dispute should first of all seek a solution by negotiation.

55. The delegation of El Salvador joined in the appeal made by the Mexican delegation at the beginning of the discussion. It urged the parties to heed that appeal and to agree without reservation to any initiative designed to assist in the restoration of peace and order in the Middle East.

56. The delegation of El Salvador was convinced that the sole object of the sponsors of the eight-Power draft resolution was to encourage the re-establishment in the Middle East of a genuine peace based on justice and equity, law and honour. Nevertheless, while fully approving the intentions of that draft resolution, it would be unable to vote in favour of the text in its present form. As a number of representatives had stated, that draft resolution would tend to complicate and even to paralyse direct negotiations between the parties. It seemed that the draft resolution might be interpreted as a tacit recognition that the decisions of the General Assembly in the past were null and void. That unquestionably was the interpretation which the Arab States gave to that draft and which Israel would also give to it, as evidenced by the very frank statement of the representative of that country. Having regard to the title of the agenda item, "The Conciliation Commission for Palestine and its work in the light of the resolutions of the United Nations", it was impossible to believe that the sponsors of the joint draft resolution proposed to adopt a decision which would be tantamount to ignoring the very resolutions of the General Assembly by which the Committee was to be guided. The delegation of El Salvador would vote against the eight-Power draft resolution if it was not amended by provisions which completed it and made it clearer. Mr. Siri directed the attention of all delegations to the great responsibility they would assume if, by hasty action, they nullified decisions which the

United Nations had adopted after long discussion and mature reflection.

57. Moreover, how could the Committee decide, particularly after hearing the statement of the representative of Israel, to place responsibility for the settlement of the Palestine question in the hands of Israel and the Arab States and to allow them to conclude a general or partial agreement through direct negotiation without giving consideration to the unquestionable interests of the Christian world in Jerusalem? In advising the parties to enter into direct negotiation, the United Nations could not lose sight of the fact that certain aspects of the Palestine question did not merely concern the parties to the dispute, but also involved United Nations responsibility. The Organization could not abandon its interest in the fate of the Palestine refugees when the General Assembly had repeatedly recognized their right to be repatriated or to receive fair compensation.

58. Accordingly, the delegation of El Salvador would vote in favour of the eight-Power draft resolution only if it were modified as proposed in the amendment submitted by the delegations of Colombia, Costa Rica, Haiti, Honduras and El Salvador (A/AC.61/L.27). It hoped that the Arab States and Israel would heed the United Nations appeal and make a sincere and determined effort to restore peace in the Middle East. The States concerned could be certain that all Members of the United Nations and all the peoples of the world would follow the course of their negotiations sympathetically. The whole world hoped that those negotiations would bring to an end the unhappy conflict dividing Israel and the Arab States. It must be hoped that a time would come in the near future when the Arab people and the Israel people would work together as the brothers they really were to achieve happiness and prosperity in the Middle East.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.