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CONTENTS

	Page
Annual Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2171 and Add.1, A/AC.61/L.1) (<i>continued</i>)	11

Chairman: Mr. Alexis KYROU (Greece).

Annual Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2171 and Add.1, A/AC.61/L.1) (*continued*)

[Item 20]*

1. Mr. JESSUP (United States of America) said that the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee again had before it one of the most important problems facing the United Nations, namely, that of the Palestine refugees.

2. The Annual Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2171) and the special report of the Director and Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (A/2171/Add.1), together with Mr. Blandford's admirable statement to the Committee (3rd meeting) furnished an excellent account of what the Agency had accomplished during the first year of its three-year programme of relief and reintegration, which had been initiated by the General Assembly the previous year by its resolution 513 (VI).

3. The programme was significant not only for the refugees, to whom it offered a real hope of a self-sustaining and self-respecting future, but also for the Near Eastern States, which had sheltered the refugees and to which it meant a substantial increase in financial and human assets and an easing of one of the most difficult problems besetting that region. Finally, to the United Nations, it was a graphic example of the practical ways in which the international community could deal with the problems of widespread human misfortune.

4. The Relief and Works Agency's programme had been launched; it was now for the General Assembly

to take the necessary administrative steps to maintain the programme it had set in motion the previous year. Those steps were set out in the two reports before the Committee.

5. It was important not to lose sight of the magnitude of the Agency's task and the extent of its accomplishments. During the past year the Agency had housed, fed and clothed over 880,000 Palestine refugees scattered over an area of more than 100,000 square miles. It had also made progress with large-scale and long-range projects which would mean work and wages for thousands of refugees at present on relief.

6. The difficulties with which the Agency was confronted would continue as long as its major task remained one of relief. Neither the refugees, nor the countries which had sheltered them, nor the contributing States, nor the United Nations could accept in perpetuity a programme of relief which, at best, could furnish only a stop-gap solution of the problem inherited from the Palestine conflict.

7. His Government agreed with the statement in the Director's report that large projects, which would enable refugees to live by their own efforts, should be sought. Individual projects, the principal goal of which was to enable refugees to live by their own efforts, could be successful only if co-ordinated with each other and with the economic development of an area of which they would become a useful part. It was encouraging to note the welcome given to the Palestine refugees in Jordan and Syria. Only through a co-operative effort by the refugees, the Near Eastern countries, the contributing States and the Agency, could real and lasting progress be made.

8. The United States Government was encouraged by the general interest in that co-operative effort which was demonstrated by the contributions which, with notable exceptions, had been forthcoming from Member

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

and non-member States. The United States Government had so far contributed \$110 million towards the \$250 million programme and of this \$110 million only part had so far been required for the Agency's operations. The executive branch of his Government was ready to ask Congress for further funds for the prosecution of the Agency's programme, with the promise that a fair share of the cost should be met by other nations. If the long-range plan was to succeed, wider and more generous support than hitherto would be needed.

9. It was regrettable that the Agency's three-year plan of diminishing relief and expanding development had thus far not been achieved. Development programmes, on which refugees could be gainfully employed, were not yet sufficiently advanced. Adjustments in earlier relief budgetary levels were necessary. Clearly the relief budget for the current year would have to be increased beyond the \$18 million set at the General Assembly's sixth session by its resolution 513 (VI). It was unfortunately equally clear that adjustments within the \$250 million programme would be necessary for the ensuing financial year.

10. His Government and the Governments of France, Turkey and the United Kingdom considered that the appropriate relief figure for the current year should be the \$23 million recommended in the Special Report of the Director and Advisory Commission. In considering the adequacy of that figure, note should be made of generous contributions in kind, and also of anticipated savings due to a drop in food prices and to the removal from relief rolls of the 19,000 refugees for whom Israel had assumed responsibility, the refugees transferred to projects, and those persons not properly classifiable as refugees. Those anticipated savings and contributions might total nearly \$4 million.

11. The United States Government, and the Governments of France, Turkey and the United Kingdom, which were jointly sponsoring the draft resolution just circulated (A/AC.61/L.1) felt that it would be unwise to set a definite ceiling to expenditure for relief for the coming year. The proposed budget of \$23 million was the most accurate figure which Mr. Blandford and the members of the Advisory Commission could reach. Some flexibility should, however, be allowed for any necessary modifications. The joint draft resolution would permit the Agency either to increase its expenditures on relief, namely, to exceed the \$23 million in order to maintain adequate standards, or to reduce expenditure if unexpected economies could be effected or if progress on reintegration projects proved faster than had been anticipated.

12. By contrast, the draft resolution proposed a definite figure for the relief budget for the fiscal year 1954; it did not however provide for any revision of that figure by the Agency since the matter could be reviewed at the General Assembly's eighth session. There would be a substantial reduction in the relief figures which the sponsors of the draft resolution had in mind for 1954 as against those for the current year. That did not however imply that less would be done for the refugees; on the contrary, more would be done but in more helpful ways. It was the hope of the United States Government that, before the next General Assembly, the considerable capital funds available to the

Agency would have been utilized on programmes of economic development on a co-operative basis. As more and more work was found for refugees on such programmes, wages would replace relief and the refugees would move forward as self-supporting members of an increasingly prosperous Near Eastern community.

13. The joint draft resolution was a brief and simple statement of the administrative provisions necessary to carry out the three-year programme approved by the General Assembly. Its preamble recalled previous General Assembly resolutions and the two reports on which the joint draft resolution was based, making it clear that the draft resolution itself did not abandon the principles already accepted by the General Assembly for the programme for Palestine refugees. Paragraph 1 of the operative part authorized the Agency to increase the budget for relief to \$23 million for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1953; that was a net increase of \$5 million over the figure set by the General Assembly the previous year. Furthermore there was available for use in the current year some \$2 million of inventory adjustments and outstanding commitments. The first operative paragraph also authorized the Agency to make such further adjustments as might be necessary to maintain adequate standards. Furthermore, the Agency was authorized to adopt a budget of \$18 million for relief for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1954. Paragraph 2 of the operative part authorized the Agency to allocate any funds remaining after relief needs had been met to long-range projects according to such time schedules as the Agency deemed appropriate. That provision, in effect, left the Agency free to allocate available funds for reintegration purposes. Paragraph 3 of the operative part requested that negotiations regarding contributions for the programme should be carried out with Member and non-member States by the Negotiating Committee for Extra-Budgetary Funds.

14. The United States delegation hoped that the Committee would give its approval to the joint draft resolution and that the seventh session of the General Assembly would provide for the continuation of that important work.

15. Mr. CROSTHWAITE (United Kingdom) also wished to compliment the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency on his excellent report on the work accomplished during the years 1951-1952. He also thanked Mr. Blandford and the members of the Advisory Commission, on which his Government had the honour of serving, for the guidance they had given the Commission in its special report, and the numerous private organizations which had done so much to supplement UNRWA's work.

16. The General Assembly had, the previous year, by resolution 513 (VI), unanimously adopted a \$250 million programme to help the victims of the conflict in Palestine. The programme expressly left the refugees the right, recognized by the General Assembly in 1948 by resolution 194 (III), to return to their homes or to receive compensation. The General Assembly had addressed itself to the practical question of whether 900,000 human beings were to be left to rot in camps where they would become demoralized, losing hope and self-respect, or whether a tremendous effort was to

be made to assist them to get out of the camps, to help themselves and to engage in occupations which would, incidentally, give lasting benefit also to the countries of the Middle East. The General Assembly had decided unanimously that that effort should be made. That was surely a decision of which the United Nations could be justly proud.

17. The United Kingdom representative then went on to review the terms of the initial UNRWA programme, which had been designed to reduce relief expenditures progressively as more and more refugees were absorbed in works projects.

18. As could be seen from the report, the programme had suffered a set-back for unavoidable reasons which had resulted in a delay; that meant that during the current year more would be needed for relief than had been anticipated. But there was no need to be downcast, as much had been achieved in spite of that set-back. The best proof of his Government's belief in the programme was afforded by the fact that it was prepared, during the current year, to contribute no less than \$15 million towards its realization.

19. The Agency had asked for \$23 million in its special report which it was to be hoped would be sufficient since every dollar spent on relief meant a dollar less spent on productive works. To be on the safe side, however, the joint draft resolution also authorized the Agency to make such further adjustment between the relief and works projects as might be necessary to maintain adequate standards. Mr. Crosthwaite hoped that the need for such a provision would not be disputed and that no one would suggest that the works budget should be further depleted in order to find more money for relief. The refugees, whose plight must be pitiable, could best be helped by pressing on with the works programme which would make them self-supporting. The Assembly had been right in deciding that that should be the main task. Those unhappy people had lost their homes more than three years ago. A generation was growing up in forced idleness and must be given the possibility of a better life before it was too late.

20. Nor could it be forgotten that much of the \$250 million for the programme was still to be collected. It was a sum which it would not be easy to find, but the programme had so much vision that if the United Nations stood by it the money would surely come. The United Kingdom Government would certainly continue to play its full part.

21. Mr. ESENBEL (Turkey) associated his delegation in praising the Agency and its Director for the substantial initial progress made in carrying out the tremendous task of alleviating the plight of the Palestine refugees. UNRWA's accomplishments had won the gratitude of thousands of refugees without prejudicing their interest in eventual repatriation and compensation. The draft resolution which Turkey had sponsored jointly with the United States, the United Kingdom and France, reserved their rights in the latter respect and recognized the continuing need for assistance from the international community until such time as the large-scale works projects designed to render the refugees self-sustaining were in full operation. The Agency was relying on the generosity and goodwill of

governments and private organizations to procure the necessary additional funds.

22. Turkey's deep concern to relieve the distress of the refugees had been demonstrated by the contributions it had made either directly to the Agency or through the Turkish Red Crescent. Owing to its pre-occupation with its own refugee problem—the resettlement of persons of Turkish origin coming from Bulgaria—it did not, unfortunately, have sufficient financial resources to permit it to make a formal commitment in respect of the Turkish contribution for the current fiscal year. Consequently, its sponsorship of the joint draft resolution, which it commended for adoption by the Committee, should not be construed as a financial commitment.

23. Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) recalled his Government's continuing concern to improve the lot of the Palestine refugees and expressed the hope that UNRWA would find it possible to resolve its difficulties with a view to advancing the resettlement and reintegration of the refugees through its works programme. To that end, the Agency must settle its budgetary problem, and the draft resolution which France had co-sponsored offered a practical solution. The \$23 million figure for relief for the fiscal year 1952-1953 would be supplemented by the \$2 million held in reserve from the budget of the past year, thus bringing the relief budget up to a total of \$25 million—a sum comparable to what was actually spent for the previous year's operations. On the other hand, the draft resolution deliberately omitted to fix a ceiling on funds to be spent both for relief and for works projects. It provided the flexibility required to permit continual adjustment between the two sums to ensure the maintenance of adequate living standards for the refugees. The Director of UNRWA and his Advisory Commission could be counted on to administer the Agency's budget judiciously.

24. Mr. JOHNSON (Canada) noted that the reports of the Director of UNRWA clearly indicated that much remained to be done in the rehabilitation of the Palestine refugees, one of the most important tasks before the United Nations. While that task could not be accomplished without the active co-operation of all Member States, those in a position to render the most important assistance were undoubtedly the countries closest, both geographically and in other respects, to the refugees themselves. Canada had been gratified by the encouragement to build a new life outside Palestine given to the refugees by Middle Eastern leaders, and by the knowledge that the first long-range works project, expected to employ and make self-supporting over 100,000 refugees, was under survey. Canada had also been encouraged by the progress made in negotiating agreements with governments, both of a general nature and on specific projects, which would clear the way for direct technical operations.

25. The Canadian Government had contributed over \$3 million to further the work of the United Nations in relieving the suffering of the Palestine refugees. It was neither sound nor equitable, however, for a few great Powers and a small number of other States to assume almost the entire financial responsibility for the United Nations' undertaking. The generous im-

pulses of some peoples might lose their warmth unless they were convinced that Member States as a whole were doing their share and that opportunities for rehabilitation and not mere relief were being offered to the victims of war.

26. The Director of UNRWA and his staff deserved high commendation for their devotion and patience in the performance of their difficult duties. It was gratifying to find that the Agency had attempted to exploit every opportunity for new development projects, even when that involved changes in its administrative structure. Canada hoped that the Agency would continue its work in the same spirit and would not cease to create opportunities for self-support and a productive, normal life for the Palestine refugees.

27. The increases in the relief budgets for the next two fiscal years provided for in the joint draft resolution represented a considerable departure from the programme originally adopted by the General Assembly and the Canadian delegation reserved its right to revert to that question at a later stage of the discussion.

28. Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) emphasized that the problem of the Palestine refugees was one of the most complex and serious political and human problems before the United Nations. Its political nature was confirmed not only by the statement of the Director of UNRWA that it might constitute a threat to the peace and stability of the Middle East, but by the urgency clearly attached to it by the Member States in referring it to the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee as the first item on its agenda.

29. Unfortunately, the urgency of an equitable solution had not been given similar recognition. The General Assembly's basic resolution (194 (III)) proclaimed the right of the refugees to repatriation and compensation but had not been given effect. With Israel's admission to the United Nations in 1949, that State had automatically assumed the obligation to comply with the Assembly's decision and the Conciliation Commission for Palestine had the duty of ensuring fulfilment of that obligation. In fact, by signing the Lausanne Protocol of 1949, the Israel representative on the Commission had committed his Government explicitly to respect the General Assembly's recommendation. The Israeli Government had nevertheless persistently disregarded its commitment. The Lebanese delegation reserved the right to deal more fully with that political aspect of the Palestine problem in connexion with items 5 and 6 of the Committee's agenda.

30. The reports of the Director of UNRWA provided ample evidence that the majority of the Palestine refugees still lacked adequate housing, proper clothing and sufficient means of subsistence. The rigours of the winter of 1951-1952 had resulted in a catastrophic housing situation; for clothing, the refugees were forced to depend upon voluntary contributions and the majority were still dressed in rags and tatters; and while the nutrition levels were satisfactory, account should be taken of the fact that the removal of refugees from ration rolls as soon as they had acquired resources equal to the average income of the population in the countries sheltering them—an action approved by the United States representative—further increased the crushing economic burden placed upon those countries. The re-

port conceded that the influx of refugees had in many cases glutted labour markets and depressed wages, with a consequent general lowering in the host country's standard of living. Lebanon had directly experienced those effects on its economy and felt that a continuation of such a policy was not calculated to encourage contributions from the States which actually sheltered the refugees.

31. The lamentable inadequacy of the means of existence available to the Palestine refugees could well be appreciated if the amount to be spent per capita under the provisions of the joint draft resolution were compared with the average per capita income in Lebanon and the general living standard in Palestine, or with the daily income of refugees in other world centres. The obvious disparity arose mainly from the absence of adequate basic services such as medical care, education and social welfare. There was an acute shortage of trained doctors, of hospital beds and of homes for orphaned children. More than three-quarters of refugee children received no schooling whatsoever, despite the co-operation of the host countries: Lebanon, for example, was providing education for 12,000 children even at the risk of depriving Lebanese children of the schooling they normally would receive.

32. For all those reasons, the Lebanese delegation considered that the \$23 million for relief provided in the joint draft resolution was inadequate and should be increased to at least \$27 million, pending further implementation of the works programme. The additional amount should be ear-marked for medical services, assistance to children and educational facilities. Since the number of refugees to which it gave shelter amounted to 10 per cent of its total population, Lebanon had unfortunately, after a \$6 million contribution, exhausted the resources available to it for refugee assistance, and could only hope that the required sum would be forthcoming from other countries.

33. Immigrants into Israel, who were being settled in the very homes from which the Palestine refugees had been driven, were receiving three times the assistance given to the latter. Moreover, further voluntary help was being granted to Israel through agreements negotiated with the West German Government at Bonn. The Lebanese delegation wished to point out the dangerous consequences inherent in Israel's claim to represent the Jews of the whole world in demanding reparations from Germany. It was to be hoped that the West German Government would not ratify the draft agreements.

34. Finally, it appeared to Mr. Ammoun that the United Nations was deliberately neglecting to implement the General Assembly's resolution on refugee repatriation, despite the fact, which Mr. Blandford has rightly emphasized, that the unresolved refugee situation continued to be a potential danger to the safety and security of the Near East. The Director of UNRWA and those countries and organizations which had provided assistance to the Palestine refugees deserved all praise.

35. Mr. MOSTAFA (Egypt) thought that, since the question of relief to Palestine refugees was part of the larger issue of the Palestine problem as a whole, it must be considered as a purely political matter. It was a

problem of concern to all Members of the United Nations and to the Arab States in particular.

36. After paying tribute to the achievements of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and to all the other agencies which had provided relief to the refugees, the Egyptian representative went on to survey the problem, for which he declared that the new State of Israel must bear the primary responsibility. The plight of the refugees had been described many times, many resolutions had been passed on the subject but still the question remained unsettled. He quoted reports of the Mediator, of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine and of the Relief and Works Agency itself, all of which led to the same conclusion, namely, that the only final solution must be the return of the refugees to their homes, and the restoration of their property. Egypt had always maintained that view but had still given full collaboration to the work of the Relief and Works Agency. The Agency's latest report bore out his contention once again. The refugees, in their condition of indigence and their lack of a permanent home, were both a heavy economic burden on the host countries and a threat to the peace and security of the Near East.

37. Mr. Mostafa wished particularly to stress the undesirability of linking aid to the refugees with any plans for the economic development of the Near East. Such development must depend solely on the efforts of the countries concerned and not be made the object of political pressure from outside. There was a tendency in certain quarters to seek to force all countries in the Near East to retain perpetually their present agricultural economy.

38. Commenting briefly on the joint draft resolution before the Committee, the Egyptian representative wished to associate himself with the proposal of the Lebanese delegation for an increase in the funds allocated for relief from \$23 million to \$27 million. He noted the statements made by the sponsors of the joint draft resolution to the effect that flexibility in the handling of the funds might make it possible to go beyond the ceiling set in the draft resolution and provide the refugees with a basic subsistence level.

39. Mr. Mostafa expressed his agreement with the United States representative on the desirability of organizing relief work as efficiently and economically as possible and hoped that the Director of the Relief and Works Agency would see his way to cutting down administrative machinery to a minimum. He also drew

the Director's attention to rumours in the Near East concerning the mishandling of funds.

40. In conclusion, he read out two telegrams, the first of which came from refugees at Ramallah and ran as follows: "We absolutely refuse Blandford's schemes and insist on return to our homes"; and the second, from refugees at Amari camp, also at Ramallah, read: "We absolutely refuse Blandford's schemes. We insist on return to our homes by United Nations decision."

41. Mr. FRAGOSO (Brasil) thought that the report of the Director of UNRWA was a highly significant document which revealed the valuable contribution made by the United Nations to the solution of one of the most difficult problems created by the political dissensions in Palestine. He drew particular attention to section D of part II of the report, in which reference was made to the danger that continued relief might end in the creation of a professional refugee mentality. That danger, coupled with the fact that the shadow of economic crisis might limit the contributions which Member States were able to make for relief, was a source of justifiable concern to the Agency. In face of the obvious impossibility of continuing to provide relief indefinitely, it was the duty of the Agency to seek to remove the need for it. Brazil, subject to the limitations of her own financial resources, would support any project for the alleviation of the situation.

42. U TUN SHEIN (Burma) expressed his appreciation of the Agency's achievements and his hopes for a final solution of the problem. His delegation would vote for the joint draft resolution before the Committee, but Burma, which was already faced with a refugee problem of its own, would be unable to make any financial contribution to the relief of Palestine refugees.

43. Mr. CHIEH LIU (China) after a tribute to the work of the Director of UNRWA, pointed out that although relief was a matter of great importance, it could at best be no more than a palliative. United Nations should acknowledge and reaffirm the principle of repatriation. Whatever the difficulties, some initial steps should be taken in that direction. In view of his Government's inability to make any substantial contribution, he was diffident of proposing any increase in the sums voted for relief but felt that the sums allocated should be as large as possible and that the main objective—the return of the refugees to their homes—should not be forgotten. His delegation would vote for any resolution designed to assist in the solution of the problem.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.