



C O N T E N T S

	<i>Page</i>
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)	9

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)

[Item 20]*

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Blandford, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, took a place at the Committee table.

1. Mr. BLANDFORD (Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) thanked the Committee for giving him the opportunity to report on the situation and receive the guidance necessary to the performance of his task.

2. The current report to the Committee (A/2171) was intended as a sober and faithful story of the living conditions of the Palestine refugees and of the programme designed to help them. The special report of the Director and Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (A/2171/Add.1) which was an addendum to the annual report, briefly indicated the purpose of the programme and made a number of recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly.

3. It might be helpful, however, if he recalled the main purpose of the programme and explained his conception of the common effort necessary to enable it to bear fruit.

4. The Agency's function was to help improve the living conditions of the Palestine refugees and to enable them to become self-supporting. To banish despair from the hearts of the refugees and rekindle the hope of social and economic recovery was a hard task. In that connexion, Mr. Blandford recalled that it had been

agreed that the assistance the refugees received did not prejudice their right to repatriation or to compensation if they decided not to return to their homes.

5. The success of the programme would depend upon the co-operation of the governments of the host countries, the generosity of contributing governments, a spirit of understanding on the part of the refugees and administrative effectiveness on the part of the Agency. Nine months previously the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee and the General Assembly, by resolution 513 (VI), had approved the principles of the new programme for improving the living conditions of the refugees. It was important to record that the programme had received the endorsement of the Arab League. With that solid foundation, the Agency had laboured to translate programmes into action. It had drawn up work projects which had been submitted to the governments of the host countries and received their approval. But the preparation and execution of the projects formed a long, difficult and exacting task. In the meantime, the refugees were accommodated in camps or temporary quarters and were living on the relief and rations supplied by the Agency.

6. For the refugees, for interested governments, for the contributing governments and for the Agency, the current financial year would be decisive. Relief expenses would amount to about \$23 million, but that sum would cover only the most urgent needs and would, moreover, only suffice if food prices remained stationary, if relief was restricted to refugees really in need and if the operation of the new programme progressed as planned. In addition, it should be noted that the estimated relief expenses for the current financial year would exhaust the allocation for relief. Any increase in expenditure would have to be met out of funds allocated for the financing of the projects and hence would jeopardize their execution.

7. Direct relief was, of course, of vital importance; nevertheless, the situation had to be faced realistically.

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

Fortunately the new programme held out the prospect that direct relief and its demoralizing influence might gradually be dispensed with.

8. On retrospect, it was heartening to record the progress achieved: preparation of a three-year programme for which substantial financial support was promised; large projects accepted by the Agency, as a necessary basis for small projects; programme agreements with the interested governments sufficient to promise a substantial flow of projects; the commencement of vocational training programmes in three host countries; the materialization of schemes for loans for small refugee enterprises in two host countries; preparation of the first large-scale project with a promise of early construction, which would ultimately enable 100,000 refugees to become self-supporting; recent reiteration of Arab League approval of the Agency's programme; administrative reorganization of the Relief and Works Agency, making it possible for Palestinians and nationals of Arab countries increasingly to hold posts in the Agency's technical and supervisory services; establishment of closer liaison between the Agency, the United Nations Headquarters and the specialized agencies to strengthen the programme and assure maximum co-ordination.

9. That was the setting for the Agency's future action. During the current financial year it would have 100 million dollars to devote to the work of improving the circumstances of the refugees and freeing them from the precarious existence which direct relief afforded. That was a heartening fact which held out fresh hope.

10. In conclusion, Mr. Blandford wished to thank all the agencies and bodies working in association with the Agency, in particular the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee, which advised, guided and inspired it. He wished also to thank the governments of the host countries for their valuable assistance to the Agency in the constant and often difficult effort to solve the innumerable problems which arose; without them the Agency would be unable to perform its task successfully.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that the statement by the Director of the Relief and Works Agency, and his report, were evidence of his integrity and complete devotion to his task. Members of the Committee would surely wish to assist the Director in his work and endeavour therefore to maintain the discussion on a purely humanitarian level appropriate to the subject. The political aspects of the Palestine problem could be discussed at leisure when the Committee examined items 5 and 6 of its agenda.

12. Recalling the assurance he had given to the representative of Iraq at the preceding meeting, the Chairman asked the Director of the Agency to tell the Committee what steps he had been able to take concerning the representation of Palestine refugees at the Committee's meetings.

13. Mr. BLANDFORD (Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency) felt sure that the reason why the representative of Iraq had urged that representatives of the refugees should take part in the Committee's debates was not that he feared that the

Committee might lack the assistance of persons who were well informed on the problems of the refugees and were determined to defend their interests. That was the very task entrusted to the Relief and Works Agency. In addition, the governments of the States in the area, which provided considerable assistance to the refugees, were represented on the Committee by diplomats who had a thorough knowledge of the problem and, in certain cases, were themselves refugees.

14. In reply to the Chairman's question, Mr. Blandford stated that before his departure, he had had several conferences with Mr. Tannous, the leader of the refugees, during which he had expressed the hope that Mr. Tannous would be able to come to New York to attend the Committee's discussions.

15. Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) thanked Mr. Blandford for the confidence he showed in the Agency staff and the representatives of the countries concerned. It was true that the delegations of those countries did everything in their power to represent the interests of the Palestine refugees effectively, but it would be preferable to hear the refugees' own representatives, particularly as the latter had expressed the wish to speak before the Committee. Accordingly, those representatives should have been informed that the agenda item dealing with Palestine refugees was to be discussed immediately, so that they could have made the necessary arrangements to come to New York without delay.

16. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee Secretary had not yet received any request for a hearing from a representative of the Palestine refugees and that the Committee could not decide to hear the representatives of non-governmental organizations unless it received a request to the effect from the organization concerned or from a delegation.

17. On the other hand, so far as the priority given to the Palestine refugee problem was concerned, the Committee was entirely free to arrange the order of its work as it deemed fit. One solution might be to proceed with its programme pending receipt of a request for a hearing from the representatives of the Palestine refugees.

18. Answering a question by Mr. JOHNSON (Canada), the CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee had received, and granted, a similar request at the previous session and had heard a statement by a representative of the Palestine refugees.

19. Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) proposed that if the Committee did not receive a request for a hearing, it should invite Mr. Shoukairi—who, in addition to his varied qualifications and official capacities, was a refugee from Palestine—to address it in the name of the refugees.

20. The CHAIRMAN asked whether the Palestine refugees had authorized Mr. Shoukairi to represent them.

21. Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) said that the necessary arrangements for granting an authorization would be made.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.