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Agenda item 27

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Report of the Third Committee

Rapporteur: Mrs. Z. HARMAN (Israel)

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, at its 382nd plenary meeting on 17 October 1952, decided to refer to the Third Committee, together with other items on the agenda of its seventh session, the item "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees".
2. The Committee considered the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,^{1/} together with chapter IV, section VI of the report of the Economic and Social Council^{2/} at its 470th to 473rd meetings held on 9, 10 and 11 October 1952.
3. The Committee, at its 470th meeting, heard a statement by the High Commissioner for Refugees reviewing the particular problems on which he desired the General Assembly's guidance.

^{1/} A/2126 and Addendum, Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventh Session, Supplement No. 16.

^{2/} A/2172, Ibid., Supplement No. 3.

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

4. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in his statement to the Committee, pointed out that there were three possible solutions to the refugee problem: voluntary repatriation, resettlement in new countries or assimilation in the country of present residence. Migration offered the most desirable solution for most groups of refugees.

5. Existing possibilities for migration were, however, extremely limited and assimilation of refugees had become increasingly important. Studies had already been made in Austria, Germany and Greece on the problem of integration, but nearly all countries of present residence would need economic aid to carry out assimilation projects.

6. His Office was also deeply concerned with the protection of refugees. The High Commissioner reported that twenty States had signed the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and one State, Denmark, had deposited an instrument of ratification.

7. The fate of certain groups of needy refugees, for whose material assistance he had been authorized by the General Assembly, in resolution 428 (VI) of 14 December 1950, to make an appeal for an emergency fund, with a target of \$3 million, was causing him great anxiety. Although some governments had been able to respond generously to his appeal, the total contributions did not exceed \$800,000, which, in certain cases, would not enable him to provide vital assistance after October 1953. The situation in Shanghai, where the High Commissioner's office was in full charge of refugees would be particularly adversely affected, and he appealed to all governments and charitable institutions for new contributions to enable his Office to continue this programme, the abandonment of which could not be contemplated.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

8. During the discussion of the High Commissioner's report many representatives praised the progress made in the organization of the High Commissioner's Office and the work which it carried out. Some expressed grave concern that the High Commissioner was not at present able to extend protection or render assistance to considerable groups of refugees not included in his mandate, and particular reference was made to the situation in Turkey and Hong Kong. In Turkey there were some 154,000 refugees from Bulgaria of Turkish origin and the government of that country was unable to accept the conclusions of the High Commissioner and his Advisory Committee that refugees who had received a new nationality did not continue under his mandate. In Hong Kong there were more than 100,000 Chinese refugees who were receiving no aid from the United Nations at present and who would seem to fulfil the conditions of eligibility. The question of their material assistance was most urgent. It was stated that the High Commissioner's Advisory Committee would be consulted on the eligibility of refugees of Chinese origin residing outside China.

9. It was pointed out that the prolongation of the High Commissioner's mandate after his present term would be considered by the General Assembly at its eighth session, and that the Economic and Social Council might therefore appropriately consider this question at its sixteenth session. Other delegations expressed the view that it was necessary to alter certain articles in the High Commissioner's statute, and would have liked to see all refugee problems placed under the mandate of his Office.

10. Most delegations favoured the appeal made by the High Commissioner, under the authorization of the General Assembly, for emergency funds for the most needy groups of refugees, although in supporting the principle behind the appeal they could not all commit their governments to contributions to the fund.

11. The solution of "assimilation" appealed to many delegations, while they recognized the financial problems involved therein. Much support was given to a proposal that the High Commissioner should consult with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development as to possible sources of funds. It was pointed out that refugees having obtained a new nationality should also be allowed to benefit from such funds. Appreciation was expressed of the \$2,900,000 donation of the Ford Foundation for pilot projects, directed towards

assimilation and with special regard to young refugees. In discussing migration and resettlement, the desirability of continued co-ordination of all refugee programmes was pointed out, and also the need to find occupations for refugee suitable to their training and skills.

12. Some delegations, on the other hand, felt that repatriation was the only satisfactory solution to the refugee problem and expressed their dissatisfaction with the methods by which, in their view, the High Commissioner carried out his functions.

13. The majority of the members of the Committee were in full agreement on the underlying humanitarian aspect of the refugee problem and of the United Nations' responsibility in seeking a speedy and equitable solution to it.

DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

A

14. Columbia, Denmark, France and the Netherlands submitted a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.322), in which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would be invited, in consultation with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to examine the situation with a view to exploring what sources of funds might be available for the successful execution of long-term projects for the assimilation of refugees and the most effective means by which such funds might be utilized.
15. The United Kingdom submitted an amendment (A/C.3/L.324) to the operative paragraph to insert after the word "exploring" the following words: "...with the governments directly concerned".
16. This amendment was accepted by the sponsors.
17. The Committee voted, at its 473rd meeting on 11 December 1952, on the draft resolution, as amended (A/C.3/L.322/Rev.1). The draft resolution was adopted by 33 votes to 5, with 13 abstentions.

B

18. Colombia, Denmark, France and the Netherlands submitted a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.323) which expressed the hope that further contributions would be forthcoming to the United Nations High Commissioner's emergency fund, so as to enable him to carry out his plans of assistance to the most needy groups of refugees, and reiterated the appeal of the General Assembly to all governments and agencies interested in migration to give to refugees under the mandate of the High Commissioner every possible opportunity in and benefit from projects to promote migration, including such measures as would facilitate the transit and resettlement of refugees.
19. Sweden submitted an amendment (A/C.3/L.325) to the last operative paragraph to replace the words "and agencies" by the words "specialized agencies and other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations", and to replace the words "transit and resettlement of refugees" by the words "transit, resettlement and employment of refugees in occupations suitable to their training and skills".

20. This amendment was accepted by the sponsors.

21. The Committee voted, at its 473rd meeting on 11 December 1952, on the draft resolution as amended:

(1) It voted by division on the words "particularly in Shanghai" in the third paragraph of the preamble. These words were adopted by 15 votes to 1 with 35 abstentions.

(2) It voted by division on operative paragraph 1, which was adopted by 26 votes to 5, with 19 abstentions.

(3) It adopted the draft resolution as a whole, as amended, by 35 votes to 5, with 11 abstentions.

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22. The Third Committee therefore recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following resolutions:

Draft resolution A

INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the observations and information contained in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the problem of assimilation of refugees in the countries of their residence,

Considering that the voluntary repatriation or the resettlement in countries of immigration of refugees under the mandate of the High Commissioner, while constituting valuable elements to the solution of the refugee problem, are not sufficient in themselves under the present conditions to offer within a reasonable time a permanent solution to that problem,

Noting with satisfaction the efforts made by the governments of the countries of present residence of refugees towards their assimilation as well as the studies and plans of the High Commissioner directed towards the same objective,

Considering that, in view of the heavy financial burdens involved in the execution of integration programmes, international funds may play a useful role in the successful execution of long-term projects for the assimilation of refugees,

Invites the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in consultation with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to examine the situation with a view to exploring, with the governments directly concerned, what sources of funds might be available and the most effective means by which such funds might be utilized.

Draft resolution B

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

The General Assembly,

Concerned with the persistence of a serious refugee problem which is the direct responsibility of the United Nations;

1. Notes with appreciation the second Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

2. Takes note of the fact that contributions thus far received by the High Commissioner for assistance to refugees under the authority given to him by General Assembly resolution 538 B (VI) of 2 February 1952 will not be sufficient to provide in 1953 for emergency aid to the most needy groups of refugees under his mandate in Europe, the Near East and the Far East, particularly in Shanghai;

3. Notes with appreciation the contributions already made by governments, organizations and private individuals to the fund for emergency aid to refugees;

4. Expresses the hope that further contributions will be forthcoming to that fund so as to enable the High Commissioner to carry out his plans of assistance to the most needy groups of refugees;

5. Reiterates its appeal to all governments, specialized agencies and other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations interested in migration to give to refugees under the mandate of the High Commissioner every possible opportunity in and benefit from projects to promote migration, including such measures as will facilitate the transit, resettlement and employment of refugees in occupations suitable to their training and skills.