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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Report of the Third Committee

Rapporteur: Miss Florence ADDISON (Ghana)

1. At its 752nd plenary meeting on 22 September 1958, the General Assembly allocated to the Third Committee item 31 (Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) of the agenda of its thirteenth session.
2. The Committee considered this item at its 870th to 876th meetings, held between 3 and 7 November 1958.
3. The Committee had before it the report of the High Commissioner^{1/} and chapter VI, section II, of the report of the Economic and Social Council.^{2/}
4. At the invitation of the Committee, the High Commissioner made an introductory statement (870th meeting). He stressed that refugee problems were not insoluble and observed that, in the past four years, despite an increase of 300,000 persons in the non-settled refugee population - chiefly newly-arrived refugees - permanent solutions had been found for the problems of some 440,000 refugees within his mandate; the camp population had decreased by 45,000.
5. The High Commissioner reviewed the progress of the United Nations Refugee Fund programme, now coming to a close. By the end of September 1958, it had

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/3828/Rev.1) and A/3828/Rev.1/Add.1.

2/ Ibid. Supplement No.3 (A/3848).

assisted a total of 56,000 refugees. Direct costs to UNREF had amounted to some \$13 million, and supporting contributions from local sources in the countries of residence had exceeded \$19 million.

6. The High Commissioner reported that in the past year the work of camp clearance had been intensified with the result that, at the end of 1958, of the refugees eligible for the programme there would remain in the camps only 14,000 persons still in need of assistance and for whom no provision had yet been made. The camp clearance programme would be completed by the end of 1960 if the necessary funds were received and if the funds became available early enough each year to avoid delay in implementing projects. Camps would then be transit centres for newly-arrived refugees and not places of permanent residence. Italy, however, presented a special problem because there the number of non-settled refugees in camps was increasing.

7. The High Commissioner referred to the problem of 120,000 non-settled refugees living outside camps in Europe. The number included some 32,500 refugees in households affected by physical, social or economic handicaps. At present, it was not possible to plan more than a minimum programme for this group.

8. The High Commissioner drew attention to a number of new refugee problems in Greece, in the Middle East and in Tunisia. A permanent solutions programme had been authorized to deal with the first problem, while in the other cases international assistance had been provided within the frame of the provisions governing the Emergency Fund.

9. With regard to the Far Eastern programme, the High Commissioner drew the Committee's attention to the fact that some 10,000 refugees were now registered for emigration, a three-year programme had been drawn up to deal with the problem. The successful continuation of the programme, which had already benefited some 11,500 persons, depended on his being able to finance care and maintenance costs for the refugees while they were in transit in Hong Kong and on transportation funds being available to the Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM).

10. The High Commissioner reported that all Hungarian refugees wishing to leave Yugoslavia had been able to do so. In Austria, there were still 15,900, including 5,900 in camps. Emigration visas were still required for some 4,100 Hungarians, including 100 in Italy, who wished to emigrate. A \$3.5 million permanent solutions programme existed for those remaining in Austria.

11. The High Commissioner stressed the importance of the task assigned to his Office of providing international protection to refugees. The Office worked towards safeguarding the rights of refugees, and always took into consideration the freely expressed wishes of the refugees in terms of repatriation or their assimilation within new national communities. Refugees remained entitled to the international protection of his Office until they availed themselves of the protection of the Government of the country of their origin, or acquired a new nationality.
12. A more generous approach was being taken by Governments towards the admission of refugees. Several immigration countries had shown a willingness to accept refugees who had previously been inadmissible on health grounds.
13. The High Commissioner also referred to the UNREF Executive Committee's request that he brings to the attention of the General Assembly a proposal for a world refugee year "as a practical means of securing increased assistance for refugees throughout the world, in accordance with the wishes and needs of each country".
14. During the discussion, many delegations complimented the High Commissioner on his report, expressed appreciation for the work of the past year and welcomed the proposal for a world refugee year. Most delegations emphasized as paramount the humanitarian aspect of refugee problems, although such problems originate in many cases from political circumstances.
15. A number of delegations referred to the problem of refugees in Tunisia and Morocco and expressed the hope that the international community would be able to make further efforts on their behalf.
16. Many delegations were gratified by the progress which had been made as regards the (re)-settlement of the Hungarian refugees and the solution of the camp problem in Europe. Others stressed the importance of voluntary repatriation as a factor in solving the refugee problem. Some delegations considered the question of the repatriation of minors as particularly acute.
17. Several representatives drew attention to the problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong and to General Assembly resolution 1167 (XII) relating to that problem.

18. At the 871st meeting Morocco and Tunisia submitted a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694) on refugees from Algeria, which they subsequently revised (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1). The operative paragraph of this revised text read as follows:

"Recommends the High Commissioner to continue his action on behalf of the refugees in Tunisia on a substantial scale and to undertake similar action in Morocco until the return of the refugees to their homes."

19. The sponsors emphasized the urgency of the problem, thanked all those countries which had responded to the High Commissioner's appeal, and expressed their gratitude to the Red Cross for the assistance it had provided. They felt, however, that more assistance was needed, particularly in view of the large numbers of women, infants and young children among the refugees from Algeria. Several delegations expressed support of the draft resolution presented by Morocco and Tunisia.

20. Some delegations felt, on the other hand, that although the plight of these refugees was to be deplored, a draft resolution was unnecessary in view of the fact that the High Commissioner's Office was already providing assistance to supplement the efforts of the Red Cross and following the situation closely.

21. The representatives of Morocco and Tunisia accepted a suggestion by the representative of Japan to delete the phrase "until the return of the refugees to their homes" at the end of the operative paragraph.

22. At the 875th meeting, the revised draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1), as amended, was approved by a roll-call vote of 57 to 2, with 15 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

<u>In favour:</u>	Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Burma, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cambodia, Canada, Ceylon, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Federation of Malaya, Ghana, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia.
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Against: France, Union of South Africa

Abstaining: Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Peru, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The text recommended by the Committee appears in paragraph 34 below as draft resolution III.

23. At its 872nd meeting the Committee received a draft resolution submitted by Argentina, Austria, the Dominican Republic, France, Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America (A/C.3/L.695), in accordance with which the General Assembly,

"Having considered the proposal for a World Refugee Year from June 1959,

"Noting that this proposal has two aims, namely:

- (i) To focus interest in the refugee problem and to encourage additional financial contributions from Governments, voluntary agencies and the general public for its solution,
- (ii) To encourage additional opportunities for permanent refugee solutions,

"1. Urges States Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies to co-operate, in accordance with the national wishes and needs of each country, in promoting a World Refugee Year as a practical means of securing increased assistance for refugees throughout the world;

"2. Requests the Secretary-General to take such steps as he may think fit to assist in the promotion of a World Refugee Year in accordance with this resolution."

24. The sponsors stated in support of their draft resolution, that the basic object of the scheme was to focus public attention on the plight of refugees throughout the world, and to enlist both governmental and private support in solving the problems. The scheme was regarded essentially as a series of national efforts, each fitted to the needs of their particular country. The scheme was intended to apply to all groups of refugees, whether internationally recognized or not. It was expected that different countries would go about

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supporting the scheme in a number of different ways, perhaps by contributing financially to accredited agencies, by taking further refugees into their territory, or by extending greater legal assistance to refugees through, for instance, the adoption of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

25. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics introduced two amendments (A/C.3/L.697) to the ten-Power draft resolution which read as follows:

"1. To replace the last paragraph of the preamble, beginning with the words 'Noting that this proposal', by the following text:

'Considers that the basic aim of all measures put into effect by the United Nations with respect to refugees should be, above all, to promote the earliest voluntary return of the refugees to their home countries and the unconditional return thereto of children who have been separated from or have lost their parents as a result of events,'

"2. In operative paragraph 1, after the words 'of each country', to replace the existing text by the following:

'for the purpose of promoting practical measures to solve the problems of refugees throughout the world, in particular by securing material assistance for the repatriation of refugees and by carrying out the requisite work of information among refugees with a view to their earliest voluntary return to their home countries; by disseminating among refugees objective information in their mother tongues concerning life in their countries and concerning the laws designed to facilitate the return of refugees to their home countries and their employment therein; by providing facilities for the official representatives of the countries concerned to visit the displaced persons' camps freely and to converse freely therein; by terminating completely the inadmissible practice of taking advantage of the plight of the refugees in order to recruit them for hard labour under discriminatory conditions, and of using refugees for subversive and diversionist activities against their countries of origin and recruiting them for military or para-military organizations of various kinds;''.

26. It was stated, in support of these amendments, that the ten-Power draft resolution would not help to bring about a final solution of the refugee problem. The draft resolution, although it appealed for assistance to refugees, was silent about the methods to be used and it sanctioned by implication the policies of the UNREF Executive Committee. The amendments stressed the importance of voluntary repatriation and set forth the best methods for achieving it. In particular, the amendments sought to eliminate the employment of refugees in very heavy work and their use for diversionist activities against their countries of origin.

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27. In the course of the discussion the sponsors of the ten-Power draft resolution revised (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1) by changing sub-paragraph (ii) of the last preambular paragraph to read:

"(ii) To encourage additional opportunities for permanent refugee solutions, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement or integration, on a purely humanitarian basis and in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the refugees themselves,"

and operative paragraph 1 to read:

"1. Urges States Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies to co-operate, in accordance with the national wishes and needs of each country and from a humanitarian point of view, in promoting a World Refugee Year as a practical means of securing increased assistance for refugees throughout the world;"

28. At its 875th meeting, the Committee voted on the revised draft resolution (A/C.3/L.695/Rev.1) as follows:

(a) The USSR amendment to the last preambular paragraph (A/C.3/L.697) was rejected by a roll-call vote of 42 to 19, with 12 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Ceylon, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Hungary, Indonesia, Iraq, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, Yemen, Yugoslavia.

Against: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Federation of Malaya, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela.

Abstaining: Burma, Cambodia, Finland, Ghana, Greece, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay.

(b) The USSR amendment to operative paragraph 1 was rejected by 47 votes to 9, with 18 abstentions.

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(c) The revised draft resolution as a whole was approved by a roll-call vote of 56 to 8, with 9 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Federation of Malaya, Finland, France, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

Against: Albania, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Abstaining: Burma, Cambodia, Hungary, India, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Uruguay, Yemen.

The text recommended by the Committee appears in paragraph 34 below as draft resolution II.

29. At the 873rd meeting a draft resolution was submitted by Canada, the Dominican Republic, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America (A/C.3/L.696).

The operative part read as follows:

"1. Welcomes the recommendation of the UNREF Executive Committee that the protection activities of the Office of the High Commissioner should be increased;

"2. Takes note of the programme recommended by the UNREF Executive Committee for 1959;

"3. Notes that the High Commissioner has been authorized by the UNREF Executive Committee to appeal for the funds required for the programme;

"4. Urges Governments Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies to support the High Commissioner's programme either through financial contributions or through offers of resettlement or both."

30. The sponsors stated that the main purpose of this draft resolution was to ensure the full implementation of the High Commissioner's programme for 1959.

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A great number of delegations supported it, stressing the need for international solidarity and co-operation in solving the refugee problem. In this connexion, the sponsors agreed to a suggestion by the representative of Austria to replace the words "substantial effort" in the second preambular paragraph by the words "substantial international effort".

31. Other delegations, however, were critical of the methods of work of the UNREF Executive Committee; they also pointed out that no mention was made of voluntary repatriation in the draft resolution. They could not, therefore, support it as a whole, although they would vote in favour of the first two preambular paragraphs.

32. A suggestion by the representatives of Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia to replace the word "Urges", at the beginning of operative paragraph 4, by the words "Appeals to" was accepted by the sponsors.

33. At the 875th meeting, the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.696), as amended, was approved by 57 votes to 8, with 5 abstentions. The text recommended by the Committee appears below as draft resolution I.

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

Draft resolution I

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The General Assembly,

Having taken note of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,^{1/}

Bearing in mind that a substantial international effort still needs to be made in order to achieve solutions for non-settled refugees and in particular for those living in camps,

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Supplement No.11 (A/3828/Rev.1) and A/3828/Rev.1/Add.1.

Having considered the decisions taken by the UNREF Executive Committee at its ninth (special) session pursuant to resolution 1166 (XII),

1. Welcomes the recommendation of the UNREF Executive Committee that the protection activities of the Office of the High Commissioner should be increased;

2. Takes note of the programme recommended by the UNREF Executive Committee for 1959;

3. Notes that the High Commissioner has been authorized by the UNREF Executive Committee to appeal for the funds required for the programme;

4. Appeals to Governments of States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies to support the High Commissioner's programme, either through financial contributions or through offers of resettlement or both.

Draft resolution II

World Refugee Year

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,^{1/} together with the resolution adopted by the UNREF Executive Committee at its ninth (special) session on 26 September 1958,

Convinced of the need to make a further world-wide effort to help resolve the world refugee problem,

Having considered the proposal for a World Refugee Year to begin in June 1959,

Noting that this proposal has two aims, namely:

(a) To focus interest on the refugee problem and to encourage additional financial contributions from Governments, voluntary agencies and the general public for its solution,

(b) To encourage additional opportunities for permanent refugee solutions, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement or integration, on a purely humanitarian basis and in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the refugees themselves,

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/3828/Rev.1).

1. Urges States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies to co-operate, in accordance with the national wishes and needs of each country and from a humanitarian point of view, in promoting a World Refugee Year as a practical means of securing increased assistance for refugees throughout the world;
2. Requests the Secretary-General to take such steps as he may think fit to assist in the promotion of a World Refugee Year in accordance with the present resolution.

Draft resolution III

Refugees in Morocco and Tunisia

The General Assembly,

Having examined the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,^{1/} in particular chapter III,

Considering the efforts made by the United Nations Refugee Fund to assist refugees,

Taking note of the action taken by the High Commissioner on behalf of refugees from Algeria in Tunisia in 1958,

Considering that a similar problem exists in Morocco,

Recommends the High Commissioner to continue his action on behalf of the refugees in Tunisia on a substantial scale and to undertake similar action in Morocco.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/3828/Rev.1).