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Chairman: Mr. Emilio ARENALES CATALAN
 (Guatemala).

In the absence of the Chairman, Ato Gebre-Meskel
 Kifle-Egzy (Ethiopia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 26

**Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief
 and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the
 Near East (A/3686 and Corr.1, A/3735, A/SPC/20/
 Rev.1, A/SPC/21) (continued)**

1. Mr. AZIZ (Afghanistan) said that the Palestine refugee problem was the greatest human tragedy of the present day. Almost 1 million persons had been forced by circumstances to leave the property and way of life which they had enjoyed for generations and were now eking out a miserable existence on the charity of the United Nations. By themselves they constituted the greatest factor making for unrest in the Middle East.

2. The delegation of Afghanistan had always supported the right of the refugees to repatriation. The Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had rightly emphasized in paragraph 92 of his annual report (A/3686 and Corr.1) that the work of the Agency must be considered against the political background of the Palestine question, for it was the Palestine question that had created the refugee problem. The Director had made the position even clearer when he stated, in paragraph 94, that the absence of an acceptable solution to the Palestine question caused the great mass of the refugees to remain opposed to the development of large-scale projects for self-support, which they linked with permanent resettlement and the abandonment of hopes for repatriation. No permanent solution to the refugee problem could be found unless the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly were implemented and the refugees were given a choice between repatriation and compensation. The United Nations must renew its efforts to secure the implementation of those resolutions, for the longer the problem remained unsolved the more difficult its solution would be.

3. The delegation of Afghanistan wished to associate itself with the tributes paid to the Agency and its Director, the specialized agencies which had worked with it and all the voluntary contributors to its activities. Nevertheless, despite the work of the Agency, no lasting solution to the refugee problem would be possible unless and until the resolutions of the General Assembly were implemented fully and unequivocally.

4. Mr. RODRIGUEZ FABREGAT (Uruguay) said that the annual report of the Director of UNRWA and his full, clear statement to the Special Political Committee at its 64th meeting had brought out the realities of the Palestine refugee problem, the progress that had been achieved against heavy odds, the difficulties caused by the absence of a political solution, and the pressing need for increased contributions from Member States. The report gave a clear picture of the negative side: the dangers and uncertainty by which the Agency was beset. Chapter IV, which referred to the improvement in the relations of the Agency with the host Governments, gave an indication of the positive side. The introduction to the report also intimated that the great mass of the refugees continued to believe that a grave injustice had been done them.

5. During the discussion of the refugee problem some delegations had rejected the spirit of human solidarity, with which Uruguay was deeply imbued, and, instead of seeking to raise the level of contributions or to solve the problem by means of conciliation, had concentrated upon allocating the blame for the present situation. That attitude was an injustice to those delegations which were seriously concerned to preserve peace and harmony. The allegation had been made that responsibility for the Palestine refugee problem and the concomitant unrest in the Middle East rested squarely on those delegations which had voted in favour of the partition of Palestine in 1947 and had thus assisted at the birth of Israel. The Uruguayan delegation had been one of them; and it still maintained that the decision had been right.

6. It should not be forgotten, when discussing the misfortunes of nearly 1 million Arab refugees, that more than 6 million Jews, including 1.5 million children had been sacrificed to racial discrimination before and during the Second World War. It was not unrealistic to appeal to Israel and to the Arab States, as peace-loving and freedom-loving States, to settle their differences—it was a very important contribution to human solidarity. The United States representative had made such an appeal at the previous meeting, and Uruguay endorsed it wholeheartedly.

7. According to General Assembly resolution 181 (II) on the partition of Palestine, two equal and independent States, one Arab and one Jewish, were to have arisen in the place of the former Mandated Territory and to have lived and worked in peace side by side. The Jewish State, the State of Israel, had proclaimed its independence, but the Arab State in Palestine had never become a sovereign State. Instead, war had been declared on the infant State of Israel by its neighbours, and hostilities had broken out among peoples who had lived together peacefully for a long time. Like all wars, that conflict had caused great misery and sacrifice on both sides.

8. Both the Arab and the Jewish cultures had made great contributions to civilization, particularly to the

civilization of Spain out of which the New World had been born. The Uruguayan delegation hoped profoundly that Arabs and Jews would settle their differences and establish a lasting peace. As long as there was no true peace in Palestine, but only a cease-fire, the refugee problem would subsist. Some delegations had charged that it was neither necessary nor desirable for the dispersed Jews of the world to return to their ancient homeland; yet those same delegations insisted that the Arab refugees must be allowed to return to Palestine. The Uruguayan delegation believed that each community was entitled to its own land, as defined in General Assembly resolution 181 (II). Moreover, by no means all the Jewish masses that had flowed into Palestine had done so at the behest of the Israel Government: they too had been forced to take refuge from violence which they had never sought.

9. Clearly the refugee problem was only an aspect of the Palestine question as a whole. Nevertheless it could be studied and dealt with separately, in a purely humanitarian spirit. The Government of Uruguay was determined to maintain its moral and material interest in the welfare of the refugees, and the Uruguayan delegation would vote in favour of any draft resolution which would keep the item on the agenda for consideration in the atmosphere of solidarity which had so far prevailed. It hoped that there would be no more unjust references to those States which had supported the partition of Palestine and the independence of Israel.

10. Mr. JUNG (India) paid a tribute to the Director and staff of UNRWA on their achievements in spite of many discouraging difficulties. During the years of the existence of the problem under discussion, India's resources had been taxed by the necessity of dealing with a similar problem, nine times larger, involving an influx of refugees into India which was still continuing. That was the only reason why his country had not been able, in spite of the fullest sympathy for the plight of the Palestine refugees, to make more than modest contributions to their relief and rehabilitation. In the present year his country additionally confronted certain difficulties in the matter of foreign exchange. Nevertheless, his Government was considering how best it could help, after its last contribution in the form of a medical unit scheduled to be withdrawn at the end of January 1958, and hoped shortly to be able to announce the nature and value of the contribution it would make, probably in the form of goods.

11. His delegation admired the generous way in which some Member States, large and small, had been contributing to the Agency, and it hoped that a large majority of the Members would similarly come forward to help. The Agency, under the competent guidance and inspiration of its Director, was doing its best in the circumstances, and he was confident that it was particularly aware of the needs of the younger generation of refugees. The Agency had to provide them with not only basic relief but also such essentials as education and skills. Whatever the future of the refugees, that was a matter to which primary importance should be attached.

12. He was bound to say that the very idea of setting a time-limit for the Agency without envisaging a settlement of the problem within such time-limit appeared to be incompatible with the responsibility undertaken by a majority of the Members of the United Nations in forcing, in spite of warnings and with eyes wide open, a major decision on an unwilling people

while still under tutelage. Pending an adequate solution of the refugee problem, the United Nations thus had a duty to continue to shoulder the burden of relief and rehabilitation, and that duty devolved primarily on those who had so enthusiastically rushed into a decision while fully aware of its probable consequences. It was mainly to that decision that the present situation owed its origin. The decision to create two separate States in Palestine, taken by a majority of the Members of the United Nations against the opposition of the majority of the people of Palestine at a time when they were not able to exercise their voice in freedom, was of itself an important factor.

13. Reference had been made in the debate to the undeniable fact that refugees in other parts of the world had been integrated into host countries. So far as the case of India and Pakistan was concerned, there was a very great difference between the division of the Indian sub-continent and the partition of Palestine. The former had occurred with the consent and approval of the major political parties concerned and the United Kingdom Government. Integration had taken place because there was a willingness on both sides, which had sprung from the mutually agreed division. That had not happened in Palestine. In fact the reverse had happened.

14. He recalled that India, as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, had opposed the plan of partition and had favoured the creation of a federated Arab State, with the areas predominantly Jewish and predominantly Moslem forming units in a single federation^{1/}. It had also opposed immigration and had endeavoured to separate the problem of the future of Palestine from that of the persecuted Jews of Europe, who had the sympathy of the whole world, including the Arabs at the time. It had been, and still was, the view of his delegation that the countries most sympathetic to the plight of the Jews should have been the first to offer their own wide spaces instead of foisting a people on an unwilling land. The problem under discussion had been created by the conversion of a minority into a majority and the displacement of a majority outside its own country.

15. That was the origin of the problem and of the bitterness and strong feelings which to outsiders might appear to be unreasonable. It was therefore somewhat naïve to quote documents which, even if not one-sided, had been prepared by outsiders and not by the people directly involved. Apart from the question of rights and wrongs and of past history, the problem could not be divorced from the present inclinations of the refugees themselves. The Director of UNRWA had again reported that they wished to return to their homeland, and it was not for outsiders to say what was best for the refugees. The Special Political Committee had been told by a previous speaker that there was a fairly unanimous expression of opinion by various authors and institutions in various countries in favour of integration as such. He was bound to say that there were some Members of the United Nations—leaving aside Israel and the Arab States—which did not altogether favour the kind of integration that had been urged.

16. He wished to make it quite clear that his delegation was in favour of integration, but only after the

^{1/}See Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, 11th meeting.

wishes of the refugees had been ascertained. There was a great deal of difference between forcing the refugees to integrate and asking them first whether they wished to go back or preferred compensation. Even apart from the General Assembly resolutions, it was the inherent right of a refugee to return to his own country. Moreover, the Indian delegation did not believe that all the arguments against returning would not be taken into account by a refugee when he made his choice.

17. His delegation did not minimize the sovereign right of a Government to decide on the admission of people into its own country. It considered, however, that there was a possibility—so far rejected from year to year by Israel—for the United Nations to set up machinery by which certain things could be done simultaneously. The refugees could be consulted and simultaneously offered compensation and, if necessary, explanations. He did not envisage the return of a refugee unless he accepted the constitution of the country. He could only return if he wished to live in peace and accommodation with his neighbours. If there was any fear of subversion, both the statesmanship of the Arabs and Israelis and the good sense of the United Nations machinery, as well as the decision of the General Assembly, could ensure a satisfactory solution.

18. Such a solution required the consent and co-operation of Israel. Although it was easy to ascribe the situation to decisions taken by others, the sole beneficiary of those decisions and of the whole situation was the State of Israel which, as a new-comer in the Near East, could certainly take steps likely to lead, if not to the solution of the larger problem, at least to an ultimate solution of the problem of the refugees. He had read with satisfaction of increasing co-operation by the Arab States and the refugees themselves with the Agency. He had also read with satisfaction the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine concerning the return to the Arab refugees by the Government of Israel of their blocked accounts and deposits^{2/}. That was a step in the right direction, but much more was necessary. He therefore felt bound to express his delegation's disappointment at the change, reported by the Conciliation Commission, in the attitude of the Israel Government towards the question of compensation. His delegation had hoped that by the time of the current debate there would have been a clear indication of willingness to pay compensation.

19. In previous correspondence with the Conciliation Commission, Israel had indicated that the basis of compensation was being examined, but in the latest correspondence Israel had gone back on that and had attached certain conditions^{3/}. The representative of Israel had said at the previous meeting of the Committee that the matter would be viewed by his Government in the context only of economic and financial considerations, but he had then proceeded to quote from a document referring to several other questions, including the Suez Canal and the question of belligerency. There appeared to be some contradiction in that presentation of the position, and he hoped he had misunderstood the representative of Israel.

20. Although logically the question was linked with the larger political question, the regrettable events of the previous year made the present moment hardly propitious for tackling that larger question. His delegation therefore felt that to wait until a solution was found to it would be to gamble with the lives of 1 million people. His delegation was convinced that the payment of compensation, both by law and by morality, was a matter of right and not a concession. Not to pay it would be confiscation or seizure. The United Nations could not impose a decision on any independent State, but the past being what it had been, there should be a move on the part of the State of Israel, as a new-comer in an Arab region, to rehabilitate itself by actions which would remove some of the underlying causes of trouble, including the bitterness felt by the refugees. It had been said that, in some instances, action taken by Israel had produced no response. He firmly believed that no amount of political manoeuvring could obliterate the effects which any right action could have on populations, peoples and Governments in spite of their differences. That was the standard by which the question of compensation and repatriation should be judged. Without those two essential elements it would be impossible to approach a solution of the refugee problem.

21. He hoped that the views of his delegation would be well received by the parties concerned and that the time would soon come when both Arab and Israel statesmanship would realize the need for emerging from a situation which left the refugees no hope whatever of a solution and endangered the peace of the Middle East and of the whole world.

22. Mr. BOUAZZA (Morocco), after paying a tribute to the Director of UNRWA and his staff on their devotion to their humanitarian task, said that the unhappy situation of the Arab refugees was due to the United Nations decision in 1947 to partition Palestine (resolution 181 (II)). The problem of the refugees had not found its just solution, which was the repatriation of the refugees, simply because Israel was systematically opposed to the implementation of the United Nations resolutions.

23. After citing paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), he drew attention to the Director's statement in paragraph 6 of his report that the great mass of the refugees continued to express a desire to return to their homeland. The conscience of mankind could not conceive of the settlement of new-comers in Palestine at the expense of 1 million Palestinians who had been driven from their homes and property. In their misery they had turned to the United Nations to demand justice, and the United Nations must not fail them; it must secure the implementation of its resolutions.

24. Meanwhile the United Nations had a duty not only to provide for the subsistence of the refugees but to raise the standards of relief. Normal nutrition and resistance to disease could not be maintained on the present ration of 1,500 calories in summer and 1,600 in winter. The Agency should also have sufficient funds to provide for essential education and vocational training. There was imminent danger of curtailment of many of UNRWA's activities if substantial funds were not provided at the current session. The solution lay in contributions from countries which had so far not contributed and in larger contributions from those which had regularly contributed in the past.

^{2/} *Ibid.*, Eleventh Session, Annexes, agenda item 23, document A/3199.

^{3/} *Ibid.*, document A/3199, annex A.

25. His country, although burdened by a development plan and a refugee problem of its own in the form of a constant influx of refugees from Algeria, would again make a symbolic contribution in order to show its interest in the problem of the Arab refugees and the humanitarian work of the Agency.

26. Mr. VOUTOV (Bulgaria) said that the Palestine refugee problem was essentially political. The measures proposed each year to relieve the suffering of the refugees could not really settle the problem as a whole. The only just and lasting solution would be to allow the refugees to return freely to their homes. Their right to do so was recognized by international law and practice and by a number of General Assembly resolutions. It was also endorsed in the preamble to the resolution establishing UNRWA (302 (IV)), and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

27. Paragraph 6 of the current report of the Director of UNRWA again emphasized that the overwhelming majority of the refugees wished to be repatriated. However, the Government of Israel had taken no steps to solve the refugee problem either by repatriation or by compensation. The Director of UNRWA believed that unless the refugees were given that choice, as stipulated in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), it would be unrealistic for the Assembly to hope that the Agency could accomplish any decisive progress towards reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East as advocated by resolution 393 (V). Instead, the Government of Israel was proceeding to the illegal sale and confiscation of Arab refugee property.

28. The Assembly had recommended the Conciliation Commission to take steps to protect the rights, property and interests of the refugees, but the Government of Israel had seized property estimated by neutral experts to be worth 2,000 million dollars. One-third of Israel's entire population was using property owned by Arab refugees; 30 per cent of the foreign currency earned by Israel came from exports from olive and citrus groves owned by Arab refugees; income from the exploitation of Arab property in Israel over the past eight years amounted to 400 million pounds sterling.

29. The United Nations must insist on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The suggestion by the representative of Israel, at the previous meeting, that the refugees should be settled outside Palestine, was unacceptable. Even as a temporary expedient it would be detrimental to the peace and security of the Near East. Pending a satisfactory resolution, the income obtained from the exploitation of Arab property in Israel should go to support the refugees. The refugees themselves would obviously prefer to enjoy decent standards provided out of the income from their own property than to live wretchedly on charity.

30. As a final solution, the refugees must be allowed to return to a Palestine in which Jews and Arabs would enjoy equal rights. The United Nations had a moral responsibility for the emergence of the Palestine refugee problem. It must therefore do all that lay in its power to settle the problem on the basis of the resolutions already adopted by the Assembly. The Bulgarian delegation would support any proposal to that effect.

31. Mr. ALI KHAN (Pakistan) said that the problem of the Arab refugees was a direct consequence of the United Nations decision in 1947 to partition Palestine. At that time his delegation had expressed the fear that the Arabs in the proposed Jewish State would be gradually eliminated by a process of economic strangulation. It had not anticipated the tragic suddenness of the expulsion of the Arabs from the territory assigned to Israel.

32. The creation of the State of Israel had deprived the Arabs of about 55 per cent of their best land, and the property and homes that went with it. The situation had become even worse when Israel, in its urge to expand, and with the powerful support of the States responsible for its creation, seized more than three-fifths of the area which had been allocated to the Palestine Arabs by the United Nations. Faced with an accomplished fact, the United Nations had failed to take any action. He fully appreciated the tragic situation of the Palestine refugees, as his own country had experienced a similar tragedy.

33. He did not believe that the problem could be solved by gradual absorption of the refugees into the economies of neighbouring countries; he felt that a fresh approach should be adopted to ensure the fulfilment of the purposes of the United Nations Charter.

34. His delegation appreciated the fine work done by UNRWA, but viewed its financial position with alarm. In confirming that Pakistan would make a contribution of 100,000 rupees in the current year, as it had done for many years past, he expressed the considered view of his Government that the countries which had voted for the creation of Israel ought to bear the full burden.

35. He commented on the inadequacy of the rations, inquired to what extent refugees were, or could be, employed by the Agency, and expressed sympathy with the host countries, which were already subjected to considerable strain and would face still graver difficulties if contributions declined or ceased.

36. He strongly urged that Israel should transfer the income from Arab property unconditionally to UNRWA and should pay compensation to those Arabs who were willing and able to settle elsewhere. He also felt it was essential to prevent a further influx of Jews into Israel; if more people could be accommodated there, there was obviously no reason why the Arab refugees should not be repatriated. His delegation believed that if Israel took a first step towards the implementation of United Nations resolutions the general situation in the Middle East would improve.

37. Mr. MARTINO (Italy) felt that false conclusions would inevitably be reached on the problem of the Arab refugees unless that problem were considered in its wider context. Italy, with its close concern in the Mediterranean, was convinced that a peaceful solution could be found to the problems of the Eastern Mediterranean. To ensure a lasting peace, however, the settlement effected would have to be equitable and to the common advantage of the parties concerned.

38. The problem of the Arab refugees affected all the countries of the Middle East. It was wrong to think in terms of short-range measures for the relief of the refugees. What was required was long-term arrangements conceived with courage and imagination.

39. From the outset the United Nations had envisaged a settlement along two lines: repatriation or financial compensation and integration into the economies of the host or other countries. While recognizing the difficulties inherent in the latter course, his delegation believed that if the parties concerned were to show a willingness to implement that policy the prospects of the refugees would be considerably improved, as would the chances of peace in the area.

40. It was to be regretted that no comprehensive or definite arrangements had yet been made. If the refugees were to be used as weapons in a political struggle, without regard to their sufferings, then it would be difficult indeed to solve the problem. He hoped however that all the parties to the dispute would recognize that it was in the general interest to provide the refugees with a secure future.

41. It was unrealistic to believe that the problem could be solved either by repatriation alone or by integration alone. He believed that a start should be made simultaneously along both lines. The extent to which either solution should be adopted could be decided subsequently.

42. Turning to the annual report of the Director of UNRWA, he expressed his warm appreciation of the Agency's work, which had been carried out in the face of serious financial and political difficulties. It was a matter for regret that during the past year, because of financial stringency, the Agency had been compelled to concentrate almost entirely on the provision of relief. It was to be congratulated on having none the less managed to continue the education and to a lesser extent the training programme.

43. So far as the relief programme was concerned, he was happy to note that the system of varying the degree of assistance according to family income, which had been instituted in Lebanon at the beginning of 1956, had proved successful, and he hoped that it would in due course be applied in all areas. It was also to be hoped that the names of deceased persons could be systematically deleted from the lists, so that refugee children born since 1951 would be able to receive rations.

44. With regard to the rehabilitation programme his delegation, while realizing the limitations necessitated by the financial resources available, believed that vocational training was of the utmost importance if the refugees were ever to become self-supporting. For the same reason, it also felt that the individual grants programme should receive special attention.

45. It was to be regretted that the works projects and general development programme could not be implemented, as that appeared to afford the most promising approach to a final solution of the problem in that it would convert the refugees into productive assets and assist in the long-term development of the area.

46. He was happy to note that the situation in the Gaza Strip was more settled. It was equally gratifying that relations between the Agency and the host Governments had markedly improved during the previous year.

47. His delegation was well aware of the Agency's financial difficulties. Although at the present juncture he could not commit his Government, the Foreign Minister of Italy was taking the necessary steps to

obtain an annual allocation of 25 million lire a year for a four-year period starting with the financial year 1955-1956.

48. Mr. JA'AFAR (Federation of Malaya) expressed great appreciation of the work of UNRWA. The Director had made the grave financial position of the Agency very clear and had drawn attention to the appalling consequences to the refugees of a failure to maintain contributions at the existing level.

49. His Government regretted that it was unable to make any large contribution to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees; for the past eight years it had been engaged in a bitter fight against militant Communism which was costing the country approximately 100 million dollars a year. It would however, subject to the approval of the Malayan legislature, make a modest contribution towards the cost of the rehabilitation programme.

50. His delegation felt that, unless the principles of repatriation and compensation laid down by the United Nations in 1948 (resolution 194 (III)) were respected by Israel, there was little prospect of peace in the Middle East. While recognizing that it might not be feasible for Israel to reabsorb large numbers of the refugees immediately, it believed that an agreement by Israel to absorb a certain number each year would remove one of the causes of friction in the Middle East.

Mr. Arenales Catalan (Guatemala) took the Chair.

51. Mr. SINGH (Nepal) congratulated UNRWA on its work, which deserved the highest praise. While his Government had the greatest sympathy for the refugees, its financial position was such that it could not make any contribution at the present time.

52. Mr. NUÑEZ (Costa Rica) paid a warm tribute to the Director and staff of UNRWA. He fully agreed with the delegate of Uruguay on the importance of true peace in Palestine, and appealed to the Arabs and Jews to settle their differences. He believed that the problem of the Arab refugees could not be treated as an isolated problem. It was a problem for all the people, of different racial stock and different traditions, who inhabited the area. It was moreover essentially a human problem, although like other human problems it had its political aspect.

53. He agreed with the representative of Italy that it was a mistake to seek a purely technical solution. What was needed was a scientific approach to the social realities which were implicit in the actual facts of the situation—the existence of 1 million refugees living outside their homeland and the possibilities for their eventual resettlement elsewhere. His delegation believed that the refugees should have the right to decide where they would live. It also felt that, should they choose repatriation, the resources necessary to implement that choice would be found and Israel would co-operate in the task of resettling them in their homeland. It was however important that before the refugees made their choice they should be fully aware of the alternatives before them. His delegation was prepared to support so far as its means allowed the proposals and programmes which the Director of UNRWA had outlined.

54. The CHAIRMAN declared the general debate closed. He then drew attention to the letter (A/SPC/21), in which the permanent representative of Iraq to the

United Nations had requested a hearing for Mr. Izzat Tannous, Director of the Palestine Arab Refugee Office.

55. Mr. HARARI (Israel) said that his delegation did not consider Mr. Tannous qualified to represent the Palestine refugees. He had not been appointed by them and could do no more than repeat the views of Arab States which were already adequately represented

in the Committee. He would not, however, formally oppose a hearing. He reserved his right of reply at a later stage.

56. The CHAIRMAN said that, since there was no formal objection, the hearing would be granted at the following meeting.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.