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CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 32:</i>	
<i>Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued)</i>	<i>141</i>

Chairman: Mr. Mihail HASEGANU (Romania).

AGENDA ITEM 32

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/5513, A/SPC/89, A/SPC/90) (continued)

1. Mr. MAHMUD-GHAZI (Afghanistan) said that the original mistake of the United Nations had been to allow itself to be persuaded to commit an act of injustice which implied a disregard of certain basic rights. What the Committee was now concerned with was the fundamentally humanitarian problem of assisting those who had been made homeless as a result of that injustice. The report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/5513) made it clear that the problem posed by the normal population increase among the refugees and the need to provide them with educational facilities, technical training and jobs was becoming increasingly acute. His delegation did not underrate the contribution of the Member States which had been trying for many years to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees, but those relief measures had definitely been inadequate, quite apart from the fact that they did not really compensate for the loss of homes and property and, above all, the loss of a homeland. It was therefore to be hoped that the Governments which had supported the relief programme so generously in the past would consider the allocation of additional sums for that purpose and that Governments which had not yet been in a position to contribute would now find it possible to do so.

2. He wished to express the gratitude of his delegation for the work of UNRWA and its competent and dedicated Commissioner-General, whose humanitarianism and remarkable qualities as an administrator would be sorely missed now that he had decided to relinquish his post.

3. It was disappointing that the United Nations Palestine Conciliation Commission had not been able to make much progress in carrying out its task of protecting the property rights and interests of the refugees. His delegation hoped that the Commission would continue those efforts and would meet with greater success in the future. It also hoped that the plight of the Azazmeh bedouin would be given the

attention it warranted and that arrangements would be made to extend adequate relief measures to that destitute tribe.

4. It was obvious that a basic misunderstanding was preventing progress towards the achievement of an equitable solution of the refugee problem. A number of delegations advocated direct talks and negotiations between the Arab States and Israel, while the representatives of the Arab States made it clear that they did not consider themselves direct parties to the dispute and insisted that any talks or negotiations should be carried out between the Palestine Arabs and the Israel authorities. He hoped that any resolutions or other measures adopted at the current session with respect to the item under consideration would take fully into account the viewpoint of the group representing the Palestine Arabs as set forth in document A/SPC/89, for he was convinced that if any progress was to be made, those basic issues would have to be clarified as soon as possible. Such a resolution would have the whole-hearted support of his delegation.

5. Mr. COOK (United States of America) reiterated the view expressed by his delegation at the seventeenth session of the Assembly (365th meeting) that a solution to the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees would only be found by patiently working out a procedure for fulfilling in so far as possible the desires of the refugees while protecting the legitimate concern of the interested States. At the seventeenth session the General Assembly had adopted by the overwhelming vote of 100 to none with 2 abstentions a resolution thanking the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine for its efforts to find a way to achieve progress on the Palestine Arab refugee problem and requesting it to continue its endeavours with the Member States directly concerned (resolution 1856 (XVII)). Pursuant to that resolution the Conciliation Commission had decided early in 1963 that the United States, as one of its members, should initiate talks with the parties principally concerned, namely Israel and the four Arab host countries—Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Republic. Those talks had been held and the Conciliation Commission had been kept informed of them. It was therefore to be regretted that statements had been made in the Committee challenging the accuracy of certain passages in the Commission's report (A/5545). The United States delegation did not wish to make a major issue of the matter, but felt it would be wrong not to reiterate that it had a different understanding of the events described in those statements.

6. The Committee's primary objective should be to develop the most conducive atmosphere in which to achieve progress in future discussions. Progress could best be made on the basis of the general approach laid down in the resolution adopted at the seventeenth

session—a moderate and sensible proposal—which the General Assembly had acted wisely in adopting. It was to be hoped that no contentious resolutions would be submitted at the present session which would either not be adopted or, if adopted, could produce no practical results. In that respect it was gratifying to note the restraint exercised by both sides.

7. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA wisely concentrated on the purposes and operations of the great humanitarian endeavour undertaken. The United States delegation regarded the progress made during the past three years in education and vocational training for refugee youth as of very great importance and it approved UNRWA's future objectives in that field. It also noted with satisfaction the many improvements made in refugee health and welfare services, and welcomed the \$900,000 reduction in relief costs in 1962. As the major contributor to UNRWA, the United States welcomed the Agency's plans for increasing the proportion of funds devoted to educational purposes through the elimination of relief in the case of persons not genuinely in need of it. Such evidence of a willingness to face the realities of the situation and to assume its responsibilities was a proof of the conscientious and constant leadership which UNRWA enjoyed.

8. The United States delegation regretted the departure of Mr. Davis, who during his five years as Commissioner-General of UNRWA had accomplished much for the refugees. The expansion and improvement of UNRWA's educational and vocational training facilities would stand as a permanent monument to his sympathy for the refugees's plight and his understanding of how UNRWA could best meet their needs. In years to come countless young Palestinians, instead of growing up without educational skills to face a hopeless and barren future, would take their places in the world as useful and productive citizens; and their contribution to a developing and progressive Middle East would be due in no small measure to the education provided by UNRWA. On behalf of the United States Government he thanked Mr. Davis for his effective service and wished him well in his new endeavours.

9. The United States Government would give to the new Commissioner-General and his staff all possible co-operation and, within available means, a high level of financial support. But an even greater measure of international generosity was obviously desirable; the

Palestine refugee question was a problem of concern to all Members of the United Nations, particularly those nations which had an interest in the peace and welfare of the Middle East.

10. The Committee must persist in its efforts to find a solution to the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees and to procure their early and effective reintegration into the life of the Middle East, not only out of sympathy for the refugees and the countries involved, which faced grave economic, social and political difficulties as a result of the persistence of the refugee question, but also because the peace and security of the Near East would be in danger as long as the tragic situation continued. All Member States should redouble their efforts not only to assist the refugees to the fullest possible extent, but also to find an honourable and just solution to the problem.

11. Mr. RIFA'I (Jordan) said that the representative of the United States had appeared to challenge the statements which he and the representatives of the United Arab Republic, Syria and Lebanon had made regarding the twenty-first progress report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, and in particular the contents of paragraphs 2 and 3, which referred to "talks ... at a high level and without preconditions as to the nature of the eventual solution of the problem" of the refugees. Although the United States representative now said there was no inaccuracy in the report, he himself had admitted such an inaccuracy at the 398th meeting when he said that the reference in the Commission's report to the talks being "without preconditions" simply meant without preconditions so far as concerned the methods of carrying out the Commission's mandate. The Conciliation Commission should issue a revised and corrected text of the two paragraphs.

12. Mr. TARAZI (Syria) said that, in view of the statement just made by the United States representative, he wished to repeat what he had said at the 400th meeting, namely that his delegation, on the instructions of his Government, contested the validity of paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Conciliation Commission's report. There had been no talks of any kind between his Government and the Government of the United States on the subject of the Palestine refugees and he wished that to be clearly understood by all the members of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.