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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, A/SPC/91, A/SPC/L.98, A/SPC/L.99) (continued)

1. Mr. KARASIMEONOV (Bulgaria) said that the documents before the Committee and the debate so far showed that no progress had been made toward a solution of the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees. He noted with regret that year after year the problem had become more difficult. According to the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/5513), in the past fifteen years there had been little change in the lamentable living conditions of the refugees. One of the most tragic aspects of the problem was the fate of some 30,000 young people coming of age each year with scant future prospects. It was difficult to believe that the young refugees would be content to live indefinitely in such humiliating conditions.

2. It had become customary for the Committee to hear the spokesmen of the Palestine Arab refugees. Their testimony and the UNRWA report had made it possible for the Committee to interpret the feelings and point of view of the refugees. In the introduction to his report, the Commissioner-General had said that they were still embittered by the conviction that a grave injustice had been done to them through the loss of their homes and homeland to which they continued to demand the right to return. In support of their plea, they cited operative paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Commissioner-General's observation was very important, first because it faithfully reflected the view of the Palestinian refugees and their determination not to give up hope of returning to their homes, and also because it showed clearly that resolution 194 (III) was still the most satisfactory basis for a just solution to the problem. Any attempt, therefore, to seek another solution outside the framework of that resolution was doomed to failure. Similarly, attempts to use temporary relief measures as a substitute for a radical solution of the problem would fail.

3. His delegation agreed that the key to the solution of that difficult problem lay in the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), which gave the refugees the right to choose between repatriation and adequate compensation. His delegation attached particular importance to an early and final solution of the question of the Palestine Arab refugees, which would help to strengthen peace and security in that part of the world and would have favourable repercussions on the whole international situation.

4. Mr. DOSUMU-JOHNSON (Liberia) said that mankind was divided by fear and suspicion. If fear were removed or reduced to a minimum, the whole political atmosphere of the world would change to the advantage of peace. To that end the founding fathers of the United Nations had decided to replace political isolation with international co-operation and had established the United Nations, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and promote justice and respect for treaty obligations, to promote social justice and neighbourly coexistence.

5. It was the duty of all States Members of the United Nations to settle their disputes by peaceful means and refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations. The parties to any dispute likely to endanger international peace and security had the obligation to seek a settlement by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, reference to the International Court of Justice or other peaceful means. The United Nations was still the only authority competent to effect the settlement of the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees, and Members should hold fast to that conviction.

6. His delegation trusted that funds would be made available for the work of UNRWA to continue and joined in the expressions of gratitude for the able manner in which Mr. Davis, the Commissioner-General, had performed the task assigned to him.

7. In its attitude to the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees, his delegation was inspired by altruism and humanitarian motives. President Tubman himself had said that everything must be done by the United Nations to relieve the plight of the refugees. The crux of the problem was whether a way could be found whereby both Jews and Arabs could live together in the Middle East in peace and happiness. Invective was no compensation to the refugees for all that they had lost. The overriding concern of the present session of the General Assembly was the creation of an attitude of mind that would help to reduce tension in the Middle East and make coexistence possible. Just as it had been possible for the United Kingdom, the United States and the USSR to reach agreement after many years of wrangling, so now it was for the Jews and Arabs to do the same. Given the will, a way would be found. Intolerance was both wrong and likely to lead to self-destruction. Pending a permanent solution of the problem, ways and means must be sought of

giving the Palestine Arab refugees all possible help and comfort.

8. Just as Liberia believed in holding talks with white South Africa and with Portugal, so too it now appealed to its Arab friends for a rational and responsible approach based on the need for negotiation. The choice was between the highly dangerous path followed since 1948 and another, worth trying, which would prove to the world that Arab and Jew earnestly desired to work together to achieve peace and justice. What the Committee did could change the course of events in the Middle East.

9. Apart from the fact that Liberia was a member of the Organization of African Unity which was composed of Arab and non-Arab States, he himself represented Liberia on the Executive Committee of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference and had thereby acquired a closer insight into the problems of the Palestine refugees. He could not support the argument that the problem was not negotiable; a rigid adherence to that view led nowhere. So long as the issue was debated in an open forum where speeches might be made for home consumption or for influencing people abroad, it would continue to be protracted and insoluble. In view of what had been achieved in graver issues by a small top-level conference, his delegation suggested that the issue before the Committee should be handed over to a small group of Member States or to the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine so that it could be thoroughly examined with leaders of both parties to the dispute or with leaders of the Arab States as a whole. There were precedents for such action, and after fifteen years of failure a new approach should be tried. His delegation earnestly advocated the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) but felt that an intermediary was necessary for that purpose. All concerned should be willing to compromise and work together for a just solution, mindful of the sufferings of both Jews and Arabs.

10. Mr. AL-RASHID (Kuwait) after paying a tribute to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for his valuable services to the Palestine Arab refugees and to the United Nations, said that his delegation was happy to note the presence of a body truly representative of the Palestine Arabs, including two women; incidentally, the Arab women of Palestine deserved the highest tribute for the part they were playing in the struggle of the refugees to regain their homeland.

11. Despite the magnitude of the Palestine tragedy and its disruptive effect on international relations, little had been done to remedy the situation. He recalled the Commissioner-General's expression of growing concern that the world at large failed to understand the importance of the basic feelings of the peoples in the Middle East with respect to the Palestine issue. As Mr. Davis had noted, many seemed to think that the major problem was that of 1 million refugees and that it was being kept alive by the Arab Governments, which could quite easily change their policies if they wished. Mr. David had dismissed that view. Accordingly, any attempt to settle the problem must be based on the premise that the establishment of Israel and the displacement of the indigenous population of Palestine constituted an attempt to liquidate a nation. That nation, the Palestine Arab nation, was thus the rightful party to the Palestine dispute, was alone entitled to negotiate the problem and alone had the right to accept or reject any pro-

posed solution. Israel's appeal for negotiation was misleading in that Israel refused to recognize the Palestine Arabs as the principal party concerned. As a prelude to any negotiations Israel would have to recognize in the United Nations the rights of the Arab refugees and to guarantee those rights by putting a stop to Jewish immigration forthwith, giving the refugees the opportunity to choose between repatriation and compensation and immediately placing all Palestine property under the custodianship of the United Nations pending a final solution.

12. Israel's record was one of continuous aggression and defiance of the numerous resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine reaffirming the rights of the Palestine Arabs. Former Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and the present rulers of Israel had made it clear that force of arms, not the adoption of resolutions, would determine the outcome of the problem. Moreover, Israel was now working to divert the river Jordan, a further act of aggression which would have the most serious consequences for the area if the United Nations did nothing to prevent it.

13. The Arabs of Palestine had the firm support of the people of all the Arab nations, who looked upon the Palestine problem as their own. Peace-loving peoples everywhere stood behind them, and he was confident that the nations which had combated colonialism and aggression in the past would continue to do so in the case of Palestine. His own country donated over \$220,000 annually to UNRWA, and those Palestine Arabs who had taken refuge in Kuwait and were temporarily working there had the benefit of all the services, including free schooling and medical care, that the citizens of Kuwait enjoyed. The people of Kuwait felt that it was their duty to extend all possible assistance to their Arab brothers from Palestine. At the same time they recognized that despite the contribution which the refugees had made to the building of the new State they themselves desired only to return to their homeland.

14. The United Nations had created the problem and was in duty bound to find a solution which would be in conformity with its own resolutions. As long as Israel was permitted to go on defying the United Nations, UNRWA would have to continue its work. It was performing its task in a creditable manner, but he thought that there was room for expansion of its activities and that the Azazmeh bedouin should be included in its programmes.

15. The Israelis, in order to absolve themselves from their guilt, had repeatedly claimed that the Arabs had left their homeland of their own free will; yet the testimony of military authorities showed clearly that military, political and psychological pressures had been exerted on the Arabs by the Israelis to oblige them to flee.

16. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Republic in his statement to the General Assembly at its eighteenth session (1236th plenary meeting) had asked four straightforward questions: whether the Arab nation of Palestine had political and human rights which it was entitled to have restored; whether those rights were largely recognized and confirmed by United Nations resolutions; whether all Member States were ready to abide by the choice of the Palestine Arabs to return to their homes and their homeland, exercised freely through a plebiscite

organized and supervised by the United Nations; and whether all Member States were ready to call for the cessation of Jewish immigration into Palestine. His delegation too was awaiting the answer to those questions.

17. As far as the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine was concerned, he noted that its establishment in 1948 had been an *ad hoc* arrangement and that its mandate had had a time-limit and had later been drastically restricted. General Assembly resolution 394 (V) concerning the establishment of an office to work out arrangements for the implementation of resolution 194 (III) had been perhaps the first sign of recognition by the Conciliation Commission of its failure. Its latest report (A/5545) confirmed his delegation's opinion that it had not carried out its task of ensuring the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). One of the principal reasons for its failure to do so was its inability to consider the political realities of the situation; there was accordingly a feeling that the Commission, with its present membership, had perhaps outlived its usefulness. There was no escaping the conclusion that the Conciliation Commission had come to be utilized as the instrument of delaying tactics aimed at liquidating the Palestine question once and for all. His delegation thought that the Conciliation Commission should be given new terms of reference and revitalized so as to enable it to carry out the duties entrusted to it under its original mandate.

18. If the Palestine question remained unsettled it would endanger international peace and security not only in the Middle East but throughout the world. Preventive measures should be taken by all Member States separately and collectively to curb Israel's aggression and preserve peace, and these measures should include the withholding of the financial and technical aid upon which Israel's prosperity was based. The world should not be deceived by the material accomplishments of Israel, for they had been made possible only by extensive foreign aid and at the expense of the legitimate inhabitants of Palestine. The noted historian Professor Arnold J. Toynbee had said that the destructive character of Zionism arose from the fact that, like the rabid nationalisms which had given rise to nazism and fascism, it was determined to do something for its own adherents no matter what the cost to other people.

19. In conclusion, he cited the statement made by the Kuwait Minister for Foreign Affairs to the General Assembly at its eighteenth session (1222nd plenary meeting) to the effect that the establishment of Israel in Arab territory was in conflict with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that it threatened the peace of the world, and that it had created a situation which could be remedied only by justice and a humane approach. He hoped that those words, translated into action, would become a source of inspiration and guidance to the United Nations in its search for a just solution.

20. Mr. PAPAGOS (Greece) observed that during the fifteen years in which the problem of the Palestine refugees had been on the Assembly's agenda the refugees' situation had remained fundamentally unchanged and no solution was yet in sight. His country knew from its own experience the full significance of the word "refugee" and the sufferings which it implied. It knew that the process of becoming a refugee was something which could take place only too quickly and easily, whereas it might cost a great deal of effort and perseverance for a refugee to re-establish himself.

21. The longer it took to solve the problem of the Palestine refugees the more difficult the task would become, for the original difficulties of meeting the need for housing and food were being aggravated by the problems of health, education and settlement. Those problems, in turn, gave rise to others of a political and economic nature which made it still harder to find an equitable solution.

22. His delegation had consistently emphasized the humanitarian approach to the problem, which, although it perhaps did not involve an examination of the substantive aspect, was more closely in keeping with the way in which the item was presented in the agenda.

23. The only encouraging aspect of the situation as described in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA was the work done by UNRWA to improve the status of the refugees by the distribution of rations, the organization of educational and vocational training courses and the provision of medical care. The tenure of the Commissioner-General, who had succeeded in winning the confidence both of the refugees themselves and of the General Assembly, was marked primarily by the impetus he had given to various educational and training schemes with a view to removing the younger generation of refugees from the demoralizing atmosphere of the camps, thus transforming a large number of refugees into a productive element that would contribute to the economic development of the Middle East. His delegation wished to express its deep appreciation to Mr. Davis for the work he had done in that field and the exemplary way in which he had discharged his duties as an international civil servant.

24. With respect to the two draft resolutions submitted to the Committee (A/SPC/L.98 and A/SPC/L.99), while they coincided on a number of points they differed in regard to the delicate mission of the Conciliation Commission. In the opinion of his delegation, the Conciliation Commission would be unable to attain its objectives unless it had the full endorsement of the parties concerned. The Committee could not overlook the reservations which the Arab States had expressed in that connexion.

25. His delegation hoped that the Assembly's eighteenth session would be marked by definite progress towards a fair solution of the refugee problem.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.