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Chairman: Mrs. Aase LIONAES (Norway).

AGENDA ITEMS 30 AND 31

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/3585/Rev.1 and Add.1, A/3613, chap. VI, sect. IV, A/C.3/L.639) (continued)

Review of the arrangements for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/3669, A/C.3/L.638) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. ROSSEL (Sweden) expressed her Government's appreciation of the High Commissioner's devoted and efficient work and said that it fully shared his views on the existing situation and the means of reaching a final solution. The High Commissioner had rightly stressed (800th meeting) that the three lines of action were resettlement, voluntary repatriation and integration in the country of first asylum.

2. Refugees should be in a position to decide their final destination for themselves without undue persuasion or pressure. Even in emergency cases, they should not be transferred passively to an unknown destination, with vague promises of being allowed to choose a country later. Even after emigration from the country of asylum the main difficulties still remained when the refugee had arrived at his destination.

3. Receiving countries must be prepared to offer suitable work, under the conditions prevailing for their own populations. Refugees must not be treated as cheap labour or provide unfair competition for the indigenous workers, for that might lead to dissatisfaction and xenophobia. The passive conditions of camp life must be abolished and refugees should not be accepted as immigrants in order to offset a labour deficit in unattractive occupations. The refugees' previous vocational experience and social circumstances must be taken into account; those with intellectual training or with some physical defect were too often denied the possibility of emigration or were allowed to emigrate only on condition that they accepted manual labour. A refugee who had participated actively in a resistance movement should not be prevented from emigrating and starting a new life because his profession was not marketable or because he had contracted tuberculosis or had been disabled

in his fight for freedom, while a physically fit person who had no definite political attitude but belonged to a more acceptable occupational group was given an immediate choice of countries of immigration. It was of course fortunate when a country's labour requirements coincided with refugees' needs, but, as the High Commissioner had said, countries receiving valuable additions to their labour market should continue to liberalize their immigration policies.

4. The High Commissioner had paid a tribute to the Scandinavian countries for receiving refugees suffering from tuberculosis. The experience of Sweden had shown that many of those persons had the will and power of resistance to benefit both themselves and the host country. Approximately 800 active cases of tuberculosis had been received between 1950 and 1957, and all but seventy of the persons concerned were now earning their living normally. Approximately one-sixth of the 9,000 refugees transferred to Sweden in the past two years were so-called post-tuberculosis cases, who had, however, been included in the category of able-bodied refugees. The general policy of employing disabled persons in occupations where their disability was not a hindrance should also be applied to refugees. Adaptability, intelligence, ambition and the will to co-operate were more important than complete physical fitness.

5. Refugees should not be regarded as humble objects of charity, but must be given the feeling that they were valuable members of society. The purely humanitarian wish to assist refugees could be most genuinely and unsentimentally expressed by giving refugees a chance to contribute to the welfare of the community. One way of achieving that aim was to avoid breaking up families. That was one of the fundamental aims of the Swedish refugee policy but it could not be attained when members of families were in different countries or when some of them had remained in the home country. Sweden tried to bring families together where possible and granted immigration visas for that purpose.

6. Her delegation shared the High Commissioner's hope that the humanitarian attitude shown to Hungarian refugees would also be shown to earlier refugees. Her country's experience of that category, which represented 25 per cent of the total number received, was very favourable, even in the case of those who had spent years in camps owing to a physical defect of a member of a family. The long-awaited chance to emigrate often filled them with enthusiasm and the will to start a new life. Sweden would concentrate its future efforts on that largely neglected group.

7. The preparation of individual documents on refugees who wished to emigrate was important. Unfortunately, the High Commissioner's Office lacked the funds and the staff for the preparation of such docu-

ments and it was to be hoped that the joint efforts of the High Commissioner's Office and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) would lead to a solution. Persons with insight and capacity to judge labour conditions should be entrusted with the documentation for presenting the cases of refugees to selection missions.

8. Mr. BEAUFORT (Netherlands) observed that the report of the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/3585/Rev.1) was a source of both satisfaction and disappointment to his delegation. The High Commissioner's Office had performed a magnificent task in providing international protection and material assistance and in working for permanent solutions. The fact that the General Assembly had immediately recognized the tragic plight of the Hungarian refugees and that final solutions had been found for approximately 175,000 of the 200,000 persons involved was particularly gratifying.

9. Unfortunately, that was not all. The High Commissioner had said (800th meeting) that 39,000 of the group of earlier refugees within his mandate were still living in camps and that some of them had known no other home for thirteen years. The desperate fate of those people could not fail to shock the Committee, which would doubtless agree with the High Commissioner that first priority should be given to clearing the camps. There was also a large group of refugees living outside camps for whom no solution had yet been found; although the complete statistics were not available, the preliminary report showed that there were at least 67,000 of them in only three countries. Thus, the High Commissioner's task and the responsibility of the international community were by no means at an end.

10. The steps taken in behalf of the Hungarian refugees showed what could be done with adequate funds when the conscience of mankind was aroused and restrictive immigration regulations were abolished. Nevertheless, the High Commissioner was faced with a serious financial set-back, because the \$16 million estimated in 1954 for the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) programme had not yet been fully subscribed. According to the report, there would be a deficit of approximately \$2.7 million by 1958 at the current rate of contribution. Furthermore, the original estimates had had to be revised, owing to the increasing proportion of difficult cases, the large number of additional refugees under the High Commissioner's mandate and a general rise in costs. The deficit stood at \$4.8 million, making a total debit balance of \$7.5 million. He was sure that the Members of the United Nations were both able and willing to give the High Commissioner generous assistance in achieving his lofty goals.

11. With regard to the review of the arrangements for the High Commissioner's Office, the need to prolong the Office was evident from the fact that on 1 January 1959 there would still be approximately 1 million refugees within the High Commissioner's mandate, many of whom would still need material assistance and all of whom were entitled to legal protection. Even if all camps could be closed by the end of 1960, the problem of refugees living outside camps, and especially the difficult cases, must not be forgotten. He associated himself with the High Commissioner's remarks on the humanitarian and

social importance of maintaining family unity in migratory movements. While it had been distressing to hear that families had to stay in camps because a member had been refused a visa for age or health reasons, it was encouraging to hear about the recent experiment of deliberately selecting for emigration families which had previously been refused overseas resettlement. He agreed with the High Commissioner that the general acceptance of the family concept in emigration would not be a risk to the receiving country, but would add an element of stability.

12. In view of those considerations, the Netherlands delegation had submitted a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.638), proposing that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should be continued for a period of five years from 1 January 1959 on the basis of the Statute of the Office contained in the annex to the General Assembly resolution 428 (V).

13. Mr. ROJAS (Venezuela) congratulated the High Commissioner and his staff on their achievements and in particular on the efficient way in which, with the aid of voluntary organizations, they had coped with the Hungarian refugee problem. He hoped that the Hungarian refugees still in the countries of first asylum would be taken care of within the year. He paid a tribute to the Governments of Austria and Yugoslavia for their generous aid. His own country had accepted 5,000 Hungarian refugees for resettlement, had undertaken to contribute towards their expenses and was giving every assistance to those who had already arrived.

14. He was gratified to note that in the course of a year permanent solutions had been found for 35,000 of the earlier refugees, and he entirely agreed with the High Commissioner that for humanitarian reasons every effort should be made to remove the remaining 50,000 from the refugee camps. He supported the resolution for the intensification of the UNREF programme, adopted by the UNREF Executive Committee at its sixth session (A/3585/Rev.1, annex III, appendix). Lastly, since it was obvious that the Office of the High Commissioner must be continued, he would vote for the Netherlands draft resolution (A/C.3/L.638).

15. Although the UNREF Executive Committee was not competent to deal with the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, the latter were entitled to international assistance and their plight should therefore be considered by the General Assembly at the current session.

16. Mr. PYMAN (Australia) expressed his appreciation of the able manner in which the High Commissioner for Refugees had carried on the work of his distinguished predecessor. In his statement to the Committee (800th meeting), the High Commissioner had rightly emphasized the supreme importance of allowing refugees complete freedom of choice between repatriation, emigration and integration.

17. The Australian Government had done all it could to assist the refugees. Since 1945, it had received over 200,000 refugees, including 10,000 Hungarian refugees the vast majority of whom had been absorbed into useful employment, and was planning to admit up to 5,000 more Hungarian refugees in the next twelve months. In an effort not to separate families, it had admitted persons unable to comply with its

normal standards of health and other conditions. Its financial contributions to UNREF, Hungarian refugee relief and the Palestine refugee fund now totalled \$3 million, to which large-scale private contributions should be added. In the current financial year, 1957-1958, Australia would, subject to parliamentary approval, maintain its contribution to the General Refugee Fund, at a figure of \$112,000, thus bringing its total contribution to the Fund to over \$500,000. Australia would provide a further \$56,000 for the financial year 1956-1957 for the assistance of Hungarian refugees.

18. Owing to the speed with which the problem had been tackled and, even more important, because of the sharing of the burden by many nations, the Hungarian refugee situation had been quickly reduced, as the High Commissioner had put it, to manageable proportions. That was a cause for legitimate satisfaction but it was distressing that the situation of the earlier refugees, thousands of whom were still in the camps, had not elicited sufficient response to enable the High Commissioner to carry out all his projects of permanent solutions for those unfortunate persons.

19. His delegation fully supported the recommendations of the UNREF Executive Committee and of the Economic and Social Council (Council resolution 650 C (XXIV)) that an intensified effort should be made to complete the dissolution of existing refugee camps by the end of 1960. His Government could not, however, commit itself to an increased financial contribution and other contributing Governments might find themselves in a similar position; consequently, it was of the greatest importance that Governments which had not yet contributed should respond to the High Commissioner's appeal and thus do their share towards the early elimination of a painful human problem. They would thereby help to bring to an end the period of international responsibility and usher in the stage at which the host Governments could assume full responsibility themselves.

20. As it was unrealistic to anticipate that the intensified programme could lead to the closure of all camps by the end of 1958, the Committee must provide some machinery whereby projects still requiring implementation at the end of 1958 could be implemented. Under the prevailing world conditions it would be wise to make provision for emergency situations. The thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.639) that had just been circulated appeared to provide an answer and the Australian delegation agreed in principle with the proposals in the draft resolution.

21. He fully supported the United Kingdom representative's appeal (800th meeting) to other Member States and to non-governmental organizations to do whatever they could to assist the United Kingdom and Hong Kong authorities in dealing with the complex problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong. He agreed with the United Kingdom representative that such aid would be most effective if it was administered either by the Government of Hong Kong or by a private agency in the colony, acquainted with local problems and accustomed to working in the area.

22. He would support the Netherlands draft resolution (A/C.3/L.638), which provided for the extension of the High Commissioner's mandate for a period of five years with a review of the arrangements for the

High Commissioner's Office not later than at the seventeenth session of the General Assembly.

23. Mr. EFFENDI NUR (Indonesia) said that his Government, which had always been deeply concerned with the problems of all refugees, both within and outside the High Commissioner's mandate, was unfortunately unable to give material support to UNREF, owing to the country's difficult financial situation and its other obligations. The economic, social and demographic positions of countries should be taken into account when appealing for financial support for refugees and for their resettlement.

24. The High Commissioner and his staff had done admirable work in a year when additional responsibility for the Hungarian refugees had been placed upon them. It was gratifying to see that assistance to those refugees had been prompt, generous and concrete. Despite its financial difficulties, the Indonesian Government had made contributions in the form of relief goods. It was to be hoped that the experience thus gained could be applied to the refugees who had long been awaiting a solution. He expressed his delegation's admiration for the efforts made by the Governments of Austria and Yugoslavia in behalf of the Hungarian refugees and hoped that the residual problem in Yugoslavia would eventually be solved.

25. It was regrettable that the purely humanitarian problem of refugees had been charged with heavy political overtones. It would seem that the care and protection of refugees should be an ideal field of international co-operation, but solutions had been hampered by political controversies almost from the outset. Differences of opinion concerning the best methods to use should not hinder solutions. An essential factor of such solutions was complete freedom of choice on the part of the refugees between the alternatives offered, including voluntary repatriation. If refugees chose repatriation, they should be helped in every possible way and assured that they would not be persecuted in their country of origin. The High Commissioner's report (A/3585/Rev.1) showed that some attention was being paid to repatriation, which had been insufficient in the past; it was to be hoped that the High Commissioner's Office would pursue that course and would also take into account the useful suggestions made by delegations in the debate.

26. The High Commissioner's report showed that, although progress had been made, much remained to be done. Solutions must be sought for refugees in camps, difficult cases, Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, the Middle Eastern refugees under the High Commissioner's mandate and the remaining Hungarian refugees. Since it was doubtful whether a permanent solution for the whole problem could be found for some time, his delegation would support the proposal to prolong the High Commissioner's mandate for five years and to review it again after that period.

27. Miss AMMUNDSEN (Denmark) said that the High Commissioner and his staff had performed their work in a spirit which was in accordance with the best traditions of the United Nations.

28. In her Government's view, UNREF in its existing form should be liquidated as soon as possible and thereafter the countries in which the refugees had

been placed should bear the main responsibility for them.

29. However, since the existing refugee situation would not be finally solved before 1 January 1959 and since it was necessary to maintain international machinery which could deal with new refugee problems as they arose, she supported the Netherlands draft resolution (A/C.3/L.638) calling for the prolongation of the High Commissioner's mandate for five years.

30. Her delegation had co-sponsored the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.639) outlining the High Commissioner's future work.

31. In view of its difficult economic position and of the humanitarian work in which it was already engaged, Denmark could not increase its contributions for the High Commissioner's Office. Financial participation by a larger number of countries would enable that Office to give more effective assistance to refugees.

32. She agreed with the Swedish representative that greater responsibility for preparing refugees for resettlement should be entrusted to the High Commissioner and the ICEM.

33. The High Commissioner's outstanding achievement as regards the Hungarian refugees proved the importance of having a central office to co-ordinate the work of voluntary agencies.

34. The Hungarian representative had emphasized that young refugees whose families had remained in Hungary should be repatriated; in her view, repatriation should take place only in accordance with the wishes of the refugees themselves, even if they were young.

35. She hoped that the problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, to which the United Kingdom representative had drawn attention (800th meeting), would soon be solved through co-ordinated effort.

36. She agreed with the High Commissioner that the earlier refugees who were still living in camps should be given preference in future programmes. Many of those people had not been resettled because they or members of their families failed to meet the health requirements of host countries. Denmark had taken a special interest in such persons, had admitted a number of them and had placed them in sanatoria where they were now regaining their health.

37. The experience of the past few years had shown that a United Nations agency could achieve great efficiency in dealing with an international humanitarian problem and she wished it success in the future.

38. Miss FUJITA (Japan) congratulated the High Commissioner for Refugees on his splendid work. With the generous aid of many Governments and voluntary agencies, he had almost solved the entire Hungarian refugee problem in the space of one year. She was deeply appreciative of the special care shown to the so-called difficult cases of the aged and sick and to the unattached young refugees. She would therefore support the Netherlands proposal (A/C.3/L.638) that the High Commissioner's mandate should be extended.

39. She was aware of the legal and practical difficulties inherent in the situation of the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, yet, whereas European refugees

in Hong Kong received international assistance, the 700,000 Chinese, living in appalling misery, had so far received none. Governments and private agencies should be invited to give assistance, preferably through the good offices of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

40. Mr. MESSADI (Tunisia) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner and his staff, and to the Governments and organizations for their effective efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees.

41. The progress made towards a solution had been most encouraging, yet much still remained to be done. Between 1 May 1957 and the present, the number of Hungarian refugees in Austria and Yugoslavia had been reduced from 193,000 to 23,000. That outstanding result had been achieved thanks to three main factors. First, Austria and Yugoslavia had made an extraordinary effort. Secondly, contributions in cash and in kind had been received from all parts of the world. Tunisia had been one of the first to offer its assistance and had provided a medical unit and nearly \$3,000 in cash, which was a considerable sum for its small budget. Thirdly, the action taken by the High Commissioner's Office to organize relief had been dynamic and effective. The High Commissioner's Office had co-ordinated the efforts of Governments and organizations, including the specialized agencies, particularly the World Health Organization, the Council of Europe, the ICEM and the Red Cross. Such success showed that co-ordination should be a guiding policy in future action.

42. It was clear from a study of the facts that the Yugoslav Government's request for assistance in dealing with the Hungarian refugees was fully justified. The Government of the country of first asylum was entitled to any financial or other aid it might require. It could not be expected to bear the whole burden and the international community must accept its share of responsibility.

43. Chapter III of the High Commissioner's report (A/3585/Rev.1) dealt with the international protection of refugees, which involved many complicated questions relating to the status and rights of refugees. As the High Commissioner had pointed out (800th meeting), the prolongation of his mandate was closely linked with the question of international protection, which would continue to be necessary for many years. That was evident from the fact that in Europe alone there were now 1 million refugees coming under the High Commissioner's mandate. The Tunisian delegation therefore fully endorsed the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council in resolution 650 B (XXIV), that the Office of the High Commissioner should be continued for five years from 1 January 1959.

44. Chapter IV of the report dealt with repatriation and resettlement. Voluntary repatriation was the obvious and ideal solution since a refugee could never become part of his adopted country in the way he belonged to his own. Repatriation, however, was not always possible or even advisable and care must be exercised to ensure that it was really voluntary. If an individual had abandoned his home and country to become a refugee, he had done so either because his life had been in danger or because his existence had become intolerable; he must be under no pressure to return to such conditions and he must be helped

to remake his life in another country if he chose. Thus, although voluntary repatriation should be encouraged, it should not be given absolute priority as a solution and the free nations should facilitate the integration or resettlement of those who did not wish to be repatriated. The results already achieved in that direction were encouraging.

45. His delegation fully concurred in resolution 650 C (XXIV) of the Economic and Social Council endorsing the request of the UNREF Executive Committee that the High Commissioner should intensify his programme to the fullest extent possible in order to achieve permanent solutions for the maximum number of refugees remaining in camps, without losing sight of the need to continue to seek solutions to the problems of refugees outside camps. He entirely disagreed with those delegations which had considered that no priority should be given to the refugees remaining in camps and that all efforts should be directed towards a general solution of the whole refugee situation.

46. There were certain guiding principles which the High Commissioner should keep in mind when planning further action. First, in accordance with paragraph 2 of the Statute of his Office (General Assembly resolution 428 (V), annex), the work of the High Commissioner should be entirely non-political in character; it should be humanitarian and social. The Tunisian delegation was happy to note that the High Commissioner had fully complied with the terms of that paragraph. Secondly, the refugees must be placed as soon as possible in a position in which their human dignity would be fully restored. The adverse physical, moral and psychological effects of prolonged camp life were only too well known. Refugees living in camps were so near to physical and moral collapse that they succumbed to diseases and disappointments which refugees living outside camps were able to withstand. Thirdly, the duration of the High Commissioner's mandate should be directly related to the duration of the refugee problem. There were still refugees from the Second World War and others were constantly appearing. The fact that it was proposed to prolong the High Commissioner's mandate for only five years was encouraging. It would be unrealistic to expect the countries of asylum to take over full responsibility for the refugees at the end of that period. The international community must expect to continue its efforts for as long as might be necessary. Fourthly, as a logical consequence of paragraph 2 of the Statute of his Office, the High Commissioner's work should not only be non-political in character: it should ensure fair and equal treatment of all refugees. The only consideration must be the needs of the refugees and the conditions required for a solution regardless of any geographical or other factors.

47. In comparing the excellent results achieved with regard to the Hungarian refugees with all that still remained to be done for some other groups, such as the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, his delegation did not intend to criticize the High Commissioner's efforts, for which it had only the highest praise. It trusted that the same dynamism and efficiency which had been displayed in solving the Hungarian refugee situation would also be applied to the refugees from other areas. The Tunisian delegation not only supported the prolongation of the High Commissioner's mandate, it

would also support any proposal to amend the Statute of his Office so as to make its action more effective.

48. Mr. CARASALES (Argentina) said that his delegation deeply appreciated the work done by the High Commissioner and his staff. It had been complicated by the influx of Hungarian refugees into Austria and Yugoslavia: that situation had been solved thanks in large measure to the response of the international community, one of the most encouraging facts in recent history. He paid a tribute to all the Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies, particularly the Red Cross, which had participated in the task. The co-ordination of the efforts of so many organizations by the High Commissioner's Office was extremely satisfactory. It was clear from the report of the High Commissioner (A/3585/Rev.1) that the League of Red Cross Societies had, to a very large extent, financed its own programmes by appeals to the public. That was a noteworthy fact which should be taken into consideration in future refugee plans.

49. The conclusion to be drawn from the Hungarian refugee programme was that the most effective and economical way of dealing with such an exodus was to seek rapid solutions. For that it was necessary to mobilize public opinion so that there would be a quick response to appeals for funds. Furthermore, a quick solution of the problem, by repatriation, resettlement or integration greatly reduced the danger of the refugees being adversely affected by camp life. After a long stay in camps, refugees became psychologically and physically unfitted to earn their own living and therefore a burden on the international community. Rapid solutions obviated that possibility.

50. The Argentine Government and private organizations had done their utmost to respond to the High Commissioner's appeals. Their response to the Hungarian crisis did not mean, however, that the Argentine people were indifferent to the plight of the other refugees coming under the High Commissioner's mandate. The High Commissioner could rest assured that his efforts would be followed with sympathy and close attention. His work had proved most effective and was obviously still needed. The High Commissioner's Office should therefore be continued after December 1958; the Argentine delegation supported the Netherlands draft resolution (A/C.3/L.638). Although it had not had time to study the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.639), it was favourable to it in principle and expected to be able to vote for it.

51. Mrs. QUAN (Guatemala) said that the strictly humanitarian and non-political spirit in which the Third Committee had considered the question of refugees was a tribute to the work of the High Commissioner. As most other aspects of the matter had already been commented upon, she wished to refer only to the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, to whose situation the UNREF Executive Committee had paid particular attention at its fourth session. At that session, the Executive Committee had adopted a resolution in which it had suggested that the General Assembly, at its twelfth session, should examine the question of the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong when considering the High Commissioner's future activities (A/3585/Rev.1, annex I, appendix II, resolution No. 5). The Chairman had stated at the same session that the resolution would be brought to the attention of the Economic and

Social Council (A/3585/Rev.1, annex I, para.113), but the Council had taken no action on it, in spite of the fact that it had been stated at the Council's twenty-fourth session that that was the largest and most neglected group of refugees in the world and that it constituted a difficult situation which was the responsibility of the international community.^{1/}

52. She recognized that certain legal difficulties and the lack of funds had retarded a solution, but it should not be impossible to assist those refugees, whose cry for help had so far been ignored. The burden was too heavy to be borne indefinitely by the Hong Kong Government and private organizations. She associated herself with those delegations which had pressed for a decision by the Committee on the matter.

53. She was happy to note that the High Commissioner's report made special mention of the co-operation

^{1/}See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-fourth Session, 988th meeting, paras. 23 and 24.

and interest of women's organizations in the camp adoption scheme and of the awarding of the Nansen Medal to Mrs. Dorothy Houghton for her outstanding work on behalf of refugees (A/3585/Rev.1, paras.218-224). The Guatemalan delegation wished to acknowledge the generosity of those Governments which had co-operated in the camp adoption scheme and agreed to admit aged and ailing refugees who were unable to work. Her delegation had no hesitation in supporting the Netherlands draft resolution (A/C.3/L.638).

54. She was happy to be able to announce that her country's contribution of \$5,400 to the High Commissioner's fund for the resettlement of Hungarian refugees, which was noted as "Promised but not yet paid" in footnote c/ to the table in paragraph 20 of the High Commissioner's report (A/3585/Rev.1), had in fact been paid on 26 April 1957.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.