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**THIRD COMMITTEE 801st
MEETING**

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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) (continued)**
**Review of the arrangements for the Office of the United
Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/3669)
(continued)**

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. DELHAYE (Belgium) paid a tribute to all who were trying to improve the lot of the refugees, in particular by facilitating their integration in a new, normal community. The High Commissioner and his assistants deserved special congratulations for their work. Although much had been achieved, much still remained to be done because the refugees from Hungary had been added to the large number of old "difficult" cases. In less than a year, 165,000 Hungarian refugees had been resettled in forty countries. That was a remarkable achievement and very gratifying; it demonstrated the speed and spontaneity with which a large number of countries had reacted to a tragic situation.

2. Belgium had always welcomed political refugees of every kind, and in keeping with that tradition it had accepted 6,150 Hungarian refugees. They had nearly all been settled already because the restrictions which normally applied to alien workers had been lifted in their favour.

3. With regard to international protection, it was encouraging to note from the High Commissioner's report (A/3585/Rev.1, chap. III) that twenty-one countries, including Belgium, were now parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The conventions of the Council of Europe had been ratified by Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany. In Western Europe, many arrangements had been made to make the living conditions of the refugees more normal: for example, France and the Benelux countries had concluded agreements exempting refugees from travel visas within the signatory countries. It would appear that, generally speaking, the High Commissioner had encountered fewer diffi-

culties in international legal protection. However, there was still much to be done and the United Nations, with the co-operation of Governments, must make every effort to improve the situation in that respect still further.

4. The Belgian delegation noted with satisfaction that the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) programme of permanent solutions was making good progress. Obviously, the greater part of the limited funds available to UNREF must be used for the more serious situations, including the closure of the camps and assistance to the difficult cases. He recalled the contributions which Belgium had made to UNREF since its inception. For 1957, the High Commissioner's report (A/3585/Rev.1, para. 128) referred to a "pledge" of \$200,000 without any indication as to payment. In accordance with national budgetary practice, the Belgian Government had made arrangements for the payment of that sum as follows: \$117,500 out of the 1957 budget, which had been paid a few weeks previously; and \$82,500 out of the 1958 budget, which would be paid at the beginning of 1958. In addition, Belgium was receiving and resettling on its territory refugees from camps in Italy, Greece and Turkey.

5. The Belgian delegation paid a tribute to all those Governments which by integrating refugees, even if only partly, in the economic life of the nation, were trying to hasten the closure of the camps in their countries. The United States Government was also entitled to the gratitude of all for the financial help it was giving.

6. After examining all the circumstances, the Belgian Government had also come to the conclusion that the Office of the High Commissioner should be extended for a further term. The Belgian delegation was ready to vote for a reasonable extension, say five years, as recommended by the Economic and Social Council (Council resolution 650 B (XXIV)).

7. Mr. PETER (Hungary) was glad that the general atmosphere of the debate enabled him to speak impartially on the question of the Hungarian refugees, which was of direct interest to his country. That favourable atmosphere was due in particular to the success of the High Commissioner, who had managed in spite of great difficulties to carry out his duties in a purely humanitarian and social spirit in accordance with his terms of reference. The Hungarian Government was most grateful to the Governments, organizations and individuals that had helped to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees. The Hungarian Government had been forced to devote all its material and moral resources to national reconstruction, so as to prepare for the return of those who had felt compelled to leave their native country for one reason or another. At the same time, the Government had done its utmost to represent voluntary repatriation as undoubtedly the best solution in most cases. That had

been the opinion of the General Assembly when it had approved the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner (resolution 428 (V)).

8. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, which had recently held a conference in London, had adopted a resolution requesting the High Commissioner to continue to study practical means of facilitating the voluntary repatriation of refugees. That idea was particularly important for the Hungarian refugees, because the problems facing them could not be solved in the same way as those facing ordinary refugees. The situation of the former was more complicated; their flight had been caused by various factors which had led to domestic and international tension. He realized that the High Commissioner had been unable to pay special attention, in the early stages, to promoting voluntary repatriation. The refugees, still under the shock of their experiences, were incapable of a rational decision; many of them knew nothing of the possibilities offered to them of returning home in complete safety. It was interesting to note that the number of refugees repatriated from Yugoslavia was almost as great as that from Austria, although there were nine times as many refugees in Austria as in Yugoslavia. Moreover, the High Commissioner might have felt that the General Assembly had not authorized him to intervene more actively in favour of voluntary repatriation. According to paragraph 8 (c) of the Statute of his Office, the High Commissioner was to assist government and private efforts to promote the voluntary repatriation of refugees. On the basis of that limitation, the High Commissioner had perhaps felt that he could do no more than send an observer when the repatriation missions had visited the camps and refugee centres in Austria and Yugoslavia.

9. Many questions which had arisen with regard to repatriation were currently being discussed by the Governments and organizations concerned and the High Commissioner would shortly receive a memorandum dealing with certain sides of the question and asking for his help.

10. Although it was correct that the Office of the High Commissioner was not authorized in general by the General Assembly to undertake operational tasks connected with the repatriation or resettlement of refugees and that the Office had not been provided with funds for such work, the General Assembly, in its resolution 1129 (XI), had given it special authorization with regard to the resettlement of Hungarian refugees. The Assembly however had not extended that authorization to repatriation. Nevertheless, its decision was based on paragraph 9 of the Statute, in which repatriation and resettlement were placed on the same footing; it would have been natural for the General Assembly to respect the fundamental principle of the Statute, which was voluntary repatriation. That regrettable omission was probably to be explained by the haste in which the resolution had been adopted. Today, the outlook was brighter and the Hungarian delegation hoped that the authorization given to the High Commissioner by the General Assembly could be completed. There would be no need for a new resolution by the General Assembly, if the High Commissioner deemed that the omission mentioned had been repaired by resolution 1039 A (XI) adopted later, on 23 January 1957, in which the General Assembly requested the High Commissioner

"to continue his efforts to effect a solution in accordance with the Statute of his Office".

11. He recalled, in conclusion, that more than 25 per cent of the Hungarian refugees were minors, among them 18,000 children under fourteen years of age, 10,000 of whom had been separated from their parents. Those children must be returned to their families as soon as possible and for that, the assistance of the High Commissioner and of the Third Committee was essential. The fate of the Hungarian refugees was closely linked to the world situation. As the international tension lessened, it would be easier to find a permanent solution, so that those who returned to Hungary and those who remained abroad could form a bond of fellowship, instead of serving the interests of the protagonists of the "cold war".

12. Mr. COLOMA (Ecuador) had studied the report before the Committee (A/3585/Rev.1) with the greatest interest. The High Commissioner's statement at the beginning of the debate (800th meeting) had shown the valuable work done during the past year and had drawn attention to the fact that in an age when a Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been solemnly adopted thousands had been compelled to leave their countries and disperse all over the world to preserve those rights.

13. He paid a tribute to the work of the High Commissioner's Office and the UNREF Executive Committee and recalled that Ecuador—the only Latin American country which had so far ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees—had offered free land to the refugees for their resettlement.

14. His delegation was in favour of the extension of the mandate of the High Commissioner's Office and reserved the right to state its views after studying the text of the draft resolution on the subject.

15. Mr. DE VAUCELLES (France), after associating himself with the tributes paid to the work of the High Commissioner, recalled that France was one of the sponsors of Economic and Social Council resolution 650 B (XXIV).

16. The report of the High Commissioner (A/3585/Rev.1) showed that the various public and private organizations concerned with refugees had drawn closer together during the past year; it had thus been possible to co-ordinate the assistance to the Hungarian refugees more effectively, and generally to adapt the programme to the real needs of the refugees. In the circumstances, it would be a pity to put an end to the activities of the High Commissioner's Office; for that reason, the French delegation would recommend and vote for the extension of its mandate.

17. In 1956 and 1957, France, true to its traditions, had welcomed 31,000 refugees, many of whom were unfit for work because of age or the state of their health. A special effort had been made to help students. It was interesting to note that three-quarters of the Hungarian refugees in France were manual workers and that the proportion of children under fourteen years did not exceed 8 per cent. By 30 June 1957, only 500 refugees had asked to be repatriated.

18. In spite of the additional expenditure it had thus incurred, France was prepared to contribute to the financing of UNREF as in the past. The Permanent Representative of France had announced some weeks

previously that, subject to the approval of Parliament, his Government intended to make available to the Fund the same sum as in the preceding year, namely, 90 million French francs.

19. His delegation would vote in favour of the extension of the mandate of the High Commissioner. Everyone was anxious that a solution to the distressing question of the refugees should be found as soon as possible but it would be misleading to imagine that it could be found by the end of the current mandate of the High Commissioner's Office.

20. The essence of the matter was that international responsibility for the refugees should be transferred as soon as possible to the receiving countries, as the international community could not be called on to assume the burden permanently. To be able to calculate accurately the additional effort which Member States would be called on to make, it would be necessary to know for a certain period at least the exact number of refugees for whom the international community would remain responsible. A demarcation line must therefore be drawn as soon as possible

between international and national responsibilities. His delegation regretted that it had not been possible to complete the survey requested by the UNREF Executive Committee before the current session of the General Assembly, owing to lack of time.

21. In view of the provisional nature of the figures available and of the liabilities—liabilities which, he felt, unpredictable political and economic developments might place on Governments—it would be premature to ask Member States to accept precise commitments with regard to the distribution of the financial burden between them. His delegation was extremely anxious to see the camps closed as soon as possible, but it also believed that the task which had to be carried out should benefit all the refugees and not only those still living in camps.

22. The General Assembly should settle those questions before the UNREF Executive Committee fixed the Fund's new financial target at its next session.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.