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at 3.10 p.m.

**New York**

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**President: Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand).**

**Order of discussion of agenda items**

1. Mr. MARTIN (Canada) said that his delegation was very interested in a question to be dealt with by the Committee, that of admission of new Members, and inquired when it might be considered.
2. Mr. MENON (India) thought that the item on the admission of new Members should follow the item on Palestine refugees. His own delegation would prefer that the item on the treatment of people of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa should come after the item on the admission of new Members.
3. The CHAIRMAN stated that he estimated that the item under consideration would not take more than a week, so that the item on the admission of new Members could be taken up at the beginning of the next week. However, if the question became ripe for discussion before that time, a procedure would be found whereby it could be taken up at any time. He saw no inconvenience in considering the item on the treatment of people of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa after the item on the admission of new Members.

**AGENDA ITEM 22**

**Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2978 and Add.1, A/3017)**

*At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Henry R. Labouisse, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and Mr. Abdul Monem Rifai Hashemite King-dom of the Jordan, took seats at the Committee table.*

4. Mr. LABOUISSSE (Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the period which had elapsed since he had addressed the Committee at the ninth session (37th meeting) had been one of limited progress and increasing difficulties, although it had provided further insight into the problems and mentality of the refugees. They were at once one of the causes and the victims of the existing state of tension in the Near East—a cause, owing to the difficulties arising from the fact that they constituted so large a proportion of the population of the host countries, of whose national

life they did not anticipate becoming a part, and victims in so far as the state of tension was delaying a constructive solution to the problem. Hence the manner in which he had related his comments on the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a non-political organization, with the disturbing political situation in the Near East.

5. In order to clarify any possible misunderstandings about the Agency's work, he recalled the provisions of the various resolutions on the subject adopted by the General Assembly, from resolution 302 (IV), establishing the Agency and providing that direct relief should be terminated not later than 31 December 1950, unless otherwise determined by the Assembly at its fifth regular session, to resolution 818 (IX), in which the Assembly, recognizing the longer-term nature of the problem, had extended the Agency's mandate until 30 June 1960, although the budgets for relief and rehabilitation had been approved only for the year ending June 1955. It was clear that the Assembly had intended the Agency to undertake the tasks of both relief and rehabilitation, and had hoped that its operations, particularly in the field of relief, would be of short duration. But the Agency had so far succeeded in rehabilitating only a relatively small number of people, while the relief rolls grew steadily owing to the natural increase in the refugee population. He had commented on that situation in his report (A/2978) and accordingly intended merely to give the reasons for the situation as he saw them, describe the full scope of the Agency's achievement and suggest possible future lines of action.

6. The Agency's most controversial task, that of rehabilitation, had been rendered difficult by human, political and economic reasons deriving basically from the unhealthy situation prevailing in the Near East since the conflict of 1948. Both the refugees and the Governments of the countries in which they lived held the United Nations largely responsible for the plight of the refugees and were bitterly critical, arguing that General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 referring to repatriation and compensation, quoted at each regular session of the General Assembly since that year in resolutions dealing with the Agency, had never been implemented. That in his opinion was one of the main reasons for the resistance to the Agency's rehabilitation work. Despite repeated United Nations statements to the contrary, a large majority of the refugees considered participation in a rehabilitation project as tantamount to renunciation of the rights guaranteed to them by the United Nations. But, as he had pointed out in section III of the annual report, there was a difference in the degree of that resistance, depending upon the nature, size and location of each particular project. In view of that difference, and the anxiety of many refugees to become self-supporting, he believed that the United Nations should continue to seek

means of making that possible, whether through individual grants or through larger-scale agricultural or other projects. Despite political and other difficulties, and the fact that only part of the refugees on relief would be provided for by that means, he thought that every effort should be made to continue the irrigation projects in the Yarmuk-Jordan valleys and in the Sinai desert. In his opinion it would not prove feasible for the Agency to carry out fully the intent of the Assembly resolutions concerning the reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East unless the refugees were given some opportunity to make the choice provided for in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), or some other political solution of the Palestine problem could be arranged. He knew that that matter would involve most serious and difficult political decisions, and had no intention of making any recommendations as to what the decisions should be. But he hoped that, pending some action in that respect, Member States of the United Nations would appreciate the limitations on the Agency's work in the field of rehabilitation.

7. Turning to the question of relief, he said that, regardless of the ultimate solution of the refugee problem, relief would continue to be needed in some areas for several years. Even without the immediate political difficulties, a great effort would be required over a long period of time to provide such a large number of refugees with opportunities for self-support. He consequently considered it important for the General Assembly to understand fully all the implications of relief and to consider how it would wish to have that relief administered in the future. The Agency had to cover a wide area and to provide numerous services, its most extensive task being the distribution of foodstuffs to about 900,000 refugees. Efficient as those services generally were, he still did not consider them entirely satisfactory, and was happy to state that the Advisory Commission of UNRWA had approved the improvement of relief standards, subject to the contribution of additional funds (A/3017, para. 11). He hoped that the Assembly would find both the relief budgets and the recommended improvements acceptable, and that Member States would take the necessary steps to ensure prompt availability of the funds needed. Even with improvements, the Agency would still be providing relief at a rate of less than \$30 per capita per year.

8. Although the relations between the Agency and the host Governments and refugees had improved somewhat, new difficulties had recently arisen, and might, if not overcome, seriously hamper the Agency in its relief work. He was referring to a tendency to interfere in the internal affairs of the Agency, particularly in personnel matters, to the reluctance of certain Governments to accord the Agency the rights and privileges due to an organ of the United Nations, and also, in a different context, to recent attempts by small groups of agitators to obstruct the Agency's operations by organizing hostile demonstrations, destroying the Agency's property and seeking to do bodily harm to its personnel. Such difficulties arose largely from the fact that the Agency was in that area the living symbol of the United Nations, which was held responsible for the plight of the refugees. In the circumstances, UNRWA was regarded by some officials and some refugees as the debt owed to the refugees by the world at large, rather than as a gesture of human solidarity, and they expected it to continue its services indefinitely,

regardless of their co-operation. In the final analysis, the Agency's ability to carry on would depend on the attitude of the refugees and the host Governments, the last-named alone being able to accord it the necessary facilities and protection. He hoped that appropriate arrangements could be made, but if the difficulties continued or intensified, he would consider it his duty to bring those matters before the General Assembly again, and in more detail. One difficulty which he would mention before leaving the subject was that entailed by the refusal of the State of Israel to allow the Agency to transport its Arab employees over Israel by air.

9. He drew the Committee's attention to the Special Report of the Director concerning other claimants for relief (A/2978/Add.1) prepared pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 818 (IX). In accordance with that resolution, he had confined himself to studying and reporting on the matter, but he wanted to impress upon the Committee his belief that some form of additional assistance was seriously needed by the various groups of claimants for relief not yet receiving it, and he drew particular attention to the needs of a group of children in Jordan, dealt with in section VI of the special report. Implementation of the agreement mentioned in the special report would require the full co-operation of the refugees and the Governments. If that were not forthcoming, the Agency would be unable to issue rations to all the eligible children in Jordan, unless the General Assembly instructed otherwise and additional funds were made available by contributing Governments.

10. In the time available to him, he had not been able to cover all the aspects of the Agency's work, but had tried to show, in summary, that the Agency could not complete its task of reintegration in the spirit of the General Assembly resolution until the consent and co-operation of the refugees and the Governments of the area were fully forthcoming. That co-operation and consent appeared to him to depend on political decisions over which the Agency had no control. He could only point out the facts as he saw them, and express the hope that, however difficult those decisions might be, they would be taken as soon as possible.

11. In the meantime, the Agency could and should provide relief and educational facilities at adequate standards, and such limited rehabilitation assistance as was possible. In the present year, it needed \$26.8 million to maintain current relief standards, \$1.7 million to improve those standards, and \$16 million for its education programme and foreseeable small-scale rehabilitation projects. If the Yarmuk-Jordan valley and Sinai desert projects could be started, a further \$76 million would be needed. In addition, the Agency had suggested increasing the working capital by \$14 million, to carry it through the period between the expenditure of funds and the receipt of contributions. There was also the question of possible assistance for other claimants for relief, concerning whom he hoped for definite instructions from the Assembly.

12. In conclusion, he expressed his appreciation for the support forthcoming from the Agency's contributors, both large and small. He paid a tribute to the staff of the Agency, who had worked efficiently under trying conditions. He had said that difficult political decisions were a prerequisite to the solution of the refugee problem. But he also believed that, with a genuine will to reach a settlement and the necessary concessions on all sides, a way could be found out of the impasse. He

was convinced that the refugees, sick with frustration as they were, would give their whole-hearted consideration to a proposal for an equitable solution. In the meantime, the Agency would make every effort to carry on the work assigned to it by the General Assembly.

13. Mr. EBAN (Israel) requested clarification of certain matters in the Director's report (A/2978):

14. First, the General Assembly, by resolution 513 (VI) of 26 January 1952 had endorsed the expenditure of \$200 million for rehabilitation. That fund had apparently not been touched, except for \$18.7 million spent for a variety of purposes not all connected with rehabilitation, and financial shortage had therefore not apparently been a cause of the disappointing progress in the rehabilitation programme; he would like the Director to confirm those facts and figures.

15. Second, in paragraph 34 of his report, the Director had said that the attitude of the refugees was a fundamental obstacle to making them self-supporting, whereas paragraph 40 of the report said that none of the large-scale projects referred to had progressed to a point where refugees had, in fact, had an opportunity to decide whether or not to participate. He asked the Director whether, in fact, any rehabilitation project had had to be abandoned because of the lack of refugee applicants.

16. Third, in annex B, paragraph 25, of his report to the ninth session of the General Assembly (A/2717) the Director had stated that the Agency expected to spend or contract \$36 million on rehabilitation in the fiscal year 1954-1955. The question was how much had actually been spent or contracted.

17. Fourth, it would be interesting to know what action had been taken pursuant to the authority requested by the Director at the previous session, and granted by the General Assembly, to utilize a part of the rehabilitation fund for general economic and agricultural improvements of indirect benefit to the refugees.

18. Fifth, General Assembly resolution 720 (VIII) noted that programme agreements envisaging the commitment of approximately \$120 million had been signed by UNRWA with the Governments of several Near Eastern countries. He inquired what progress had been made towards the implementation of those agreements, and what was their present status.

19. Sixth, he referred to paragraph 77 of the special report of the Director concerning other claimants for relief (A/2978/Add.1), which said that at least 70,000 names on the rolls of ration claimants should be deleted. In view of the fact that the number of improper registrations constituted as much as one-sixth of the number of ration recipients in Jordan, it was pertinent to inquire whether the procedure agreed with the Jordan Government, whereby the Director had abandoned the idea of a census (para. 89), would result in the deletion of fraudulent registrations. He also wished to know under what authority the Agency had undertaken that, whatever the result of the inquiry into ration recipients, there would be no net reduction in the total number of such persons (para. 86). That undertaking appeared difficult to reconcile with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, which had established the policy of reducing the numbers of rations by progressive stages.

20. Seventh, the table in annex A of the report (A/2978) showed that some 161,000 refugees were receiving education; approximately 105,000 of those children attended UNRWA/UNESCO schools. He would welcome information on the nature of the education given under international auspices, and who drew up the syllabuses. More specifically, the question was what measures were being taken or could be taken by the Agency to ensure that no political propaganda was conducted in United Nations schools, and to ensure that there was no recurrence of political demonstrations such as those referred to in paragraph 15 of annex E to the report.

The meeting rose at 4.5 p.m.