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Chairman: Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand).

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,
 A/AC.80/L.6) (*concluded*)**

1. Mr. SHAWARBI (Yemen) thought that the plight of the Arab refugees was largely due to the continued failure to implement General Assembly resolutions. That failure had been caused by the attitude of Israel, which was all the more illogical in that the State of Israel itself had come into being as the result of a General Assembly resolution. Not until the relevant General Assembly resolutions came into force, or at least until the refugees had been given the opportunity of choosing between resettlement and repatriation, as the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had suggested, could the Committee discuss development projects.

2. He regretted that the three-Power draft resolution (A/AC.80/L.6) had tried to transfer responsibility for the settlement of so large a part of the refugees to private organizations. The problem was too grave and too tragic for any private organization. The question of the additional claimants for relief was part of the refugee problem as a whole, and the United Nations could not evade its responsibility. For those reasons, his delegation would be unable to support the draft resolution.

3. Mr. KING (Liberia) said that his delegation was anxious that a practical solution, acceptable to both parties to the dispute, should be found to the entire question of the Palestine refugees.

4. His delegation deeply appreciated the work of the Agency and its Director, and fully realized the benefits which would accrue to the entire Near East when the vast rehabilitation scheme in process of negotiation was eventually put into effect. But the increase in numbers of the refugees was adding steadily to the responsibilities of the Agency, and that was a matter of concern when it was remembered that the Agency's lifetime was limited.

5. The political aspect of the refugee problem was being stressed more and more with the passage of time, and the debates in the Committee had provided evidence of strong feeling on both sides. His delegation had

accordingly been gratified to read in the Press that there were signs that an agreement might be reached between the Arab States and Israel. Up to that point, his delegation had seen no possibility of reaching a practical solution to the problem through the draft resolution submitted by Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, and had been intending to abstain from voting on it. It had felt that, by adopting that draft resolution, the United Nations would be evading its responsibility for the maintenance of world peace, to which the present situation in the Near East undoubtedly constituted a threat. Such an evasion would be a serious blow to the prestige of the Organization.

6. In view of the new possibilities for negotiations, he would be able to vote for the draft resolution, and he would join with previous speakers in an appeal to the Arab States and Israel to settle their differences in an atmosphere consonant with the United Nations Charter. It should be the primary concern of the General Assembly to help to create such an atmosphere.

7. Mr. WADSWORTH (United States of America) said that, after consultation with the other sponsors of the draft resolution, he was offering some further comments on the text. The draft resolution was designed primarily to provide directives for the operation of the Agency during the next year. It also made an appeal for continued support of the Agency. It was very similar to General Assembly resolution 818 (IX) adopted the previous year, which had earned many favourable votes, including those of the Arab States.

8. Much comment had been caused by paragraph 3 of the operative part of the draft resolution, and the United Kingdom representative, in reply to a question from the Syrian representative, had said that the paragraph had been intended as a general request. That was indeed the case; no particular Government was excluded from the request, which referred to all the Governments of the area. The same principle applied to the projects mentioned, which need not be taken as meaning only those now under consideration. The paragraph should not be construed as imposing any new commitments on anybody.

9. With regard to the allegation made by some speakers that paragraphs 6 and 7 transferred responsibility for the other claimants for relief to the Arab States, he would remind the Committee that the Agency had never assumed responsibility for those claimants or provided them with relief. The draft resolution recognized that there were other needy people in the area, and made an appeal for help from charitable organizations. There was every sympathy with the claimants, and the United States Government had been making arrangements with the Agency to provide certain food supplies for them, but he did not think that they should be included on the relief rolls and thus increase the Agency's tremendous responsibilities. He was already concerned at the lack

of financial support for the Agency, which was making it difficult for it to meet even the present requirements.

10. There was an urgent need for the settlement of the political issues which had been debated at length in the Committee. The Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and others were actively co-operating in seeking a solution, but those issues, however important, should not be allowed to deflect the General Assembly from the immediate task of providing, through the Agency, the best obtainable life for the Arab refugees.

11. Mr. LABOUISSSE (Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the Committee's discussions had thrown light on some of the problems confronting the Agency. He would not reply to some of the comments that had been made, as a reply would serve no useful purpose at that time. He would merely reaffirm the views set forth in his report (A/2978) and in his introductory statement (13th meeting) to the Committee.

12. In order to obviate certain difficulties and misunderstandings that might arise, he wished to comment on some points of the three-Power draft resolution (A/AC.80/L.6). He was the servant of the General Assembly from which he derived his powers and responsibilities but on occasion he had encountered a lack of understanding of the extent and the limits of his authority. Some thought that the Agency commanded unlimited funds and that it was within the Director's discretion to say whether or not the Agency would provide a particular service. At times, when the Agency had said that it could not undertake certain tasks, it had been subjected to severe public criticism, largely on the erroneous theory that the Agency was in some way responsible for the creation of the refugee problem and, hence, that there should be no limits to what it could do. Accordingly, it was essential that the Director should be able to explain the precise conditions and limits of the tasks entrusted to the Agency by the General Assembly.

13. With reference to the third paragraph of the preamble and to operative paragraph 1, the budget for relief envisaged the expenditure during 1955-1956 of \$26.8 million, a sum sufficient only for the continuation of relief services at current levels to the same categories of people. As the Committee knew, he would like to improve the standards of relief, but that would be impossible unless additional funds were received. Yet he had felt in duty bound to recommend to the Agency's Advisory Commission that an effort should be made to improve standards in certain areas. The special report of the Advisory Commission (A/3017, paras. 10 to 13) discussed the proposed improvements which would require the expenditure of \$1.7 million for the first year. But the present position was that the Agency could not expand or improve its relief operations under the relief budget of \$26.8 million.

14. Paragraph 13 of the Advisory Commission's report was particularly noteworthy. It requested the Director to make a world-wide appeal to all oil-producing countries and to all companies engaged in the production or marketing of oil for gifts of kerosene for distribution to the refugees. He had discussed that question at a recent pledging conference of the Negotiating Committee for Extra-Budgetary Funds and would like to repeat the appeal now. The Agency's staff would help any Governments responding to it to work out the details. Letters on the subject would shortly be sent to

the principal oil-producing and oil-marketing companies.

15. The rehabilitation budget called for the expenditure of \$92.6 million for the financial year 1955 to 1956, although in all likelihood only a small part of that sum would actually be needed. The first part of the rehabilitation budget covered the Agency's education programme, currently foreseeable small-scale rehabilitation projects and the general costs of rehabilitation services, and would require not less than \$16 million during the financial year. The Agency believed that it could finance the outlay by calling in outstanding pledges of funds for rehabilitation purposes. The second part of the rehabilitation budget totalled \$76.6 million for commitments which he hoped could be made during the year in connexion with the Yarmuk-Jordan Valleys and the Sinai projects, but for reasons with which the Committee was familiar, it was not certain that the Agency would be able to make substantial commitments for those projects before 30 June 1956.

16. Nonetheless, it was very important to proceed with the projects. They would absorb some of the refugees, would be useful to the countries in which they were constructed and their completion would not prejudice any existing rights of the refugees or the terms of any ultimate political settlement of the refugee problem. If it became possible for the Agency to proceed with the projects, additional funds would be needed and he hoped that the requisite pledges would be given, pledges which could be called in at the proper time.

17. The Agency had requested an increase of \$14 million in its working capital to provide for the time-lag between the expenditure of funds and the receipt of contributions.

18. The delays in the receipt of contributions were mechanical but nonetheless real, and unless monies to increase the working capital fund were forthcoming, the Agency would have to continue the expedient of drawing temporarily upon rehabilitation funds. As the available funds for rehabilitation projects were being used up, another solution would soon be required. The most desirable arrangement would be for Governments to transmit their relief contributions earlier in the year. To that end, the Agency had proposed that its accounts should be placed on a calendar-year basis, and as there had been no objection to that proposal, the necessary arrangements were now being worked out.

19. With regard to operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, as he had told the Committee at the ninth session (37th meeting), he had interpreted the General Assembly's instructions on the issuing of rations to eligible children in Jordan to mean that the Agency was to grant them rations as soon as possible, to the extent that savings under the improved registration system would permit. His special report concerning other claimants for relief (A/2978/Add.1) made it clear that if rations were to be granted to all eligible children in Jordan hitherto not on the Agency's rolls, the Agency would either have to receive additional relief contributions or ineligible persons now receiving relief would have to be removed from the rolls. As no additional funds had been made available for relief purposes, he interpreted operative paragraph 4 as a confirmation of the position approved by the Assembly in 1954.

20. Through the procedures described in the special report, and with the co-operation of the Jordan Government and of the refugees, the Agency would begin as

soon as possible to remove ineligible from the relief rolls and to transfer their rations to eligible children. He had also proposed that a maximum of 10,000 additional rations should be issued to the extent that the results of verification of the lists of refugees permitted. He hoped that the proposed procedures, which would benefit the refugees as a whole, could be carried out promptly.

21. With regard to operative paragraphs 5, 6 and 7, in accordance with the Assembly's request, he had submitted a special report on the question of other claimants for relief in which he had drawn attention to the serious need of additional assistance for them. As the Agency's financial position would not permit it to participate in such additional assistance, he understood operative paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 to mean that it was not authorized to assist the claimants, except in the special cases already provided for as in past years.

22. He thanked the Committee for the tributes that had been paid to the Agency and to its staff. He hoped that during the coming year, further efforts would be made by all concerned to improve the conditions in which the Agency carried out its day-to-day operations. He knew that the representatives of the host countries would endeavour to convince the officials of their Governments and the refugees of the Agency's need for their full co-operation. He was always more than willing to discuss with the Governments of the area any differences of view that might arise and to work out solutions that would improve the conditions in which the Agency operated in a manner consonant with its position as an organ of the United Nations and with its terms of reference. The Agency would do its utmost to co-operate with the host Governments in order to ensure the efficient discharge of the tasks for the greatest possible good of the refugees.

23. During the debate, reference had been made to the desirability of co-operation in the appointment of Agency staff. It was a fundamental policy of the Agency to employ staff native to the area, and particularly refugees to the fullest possible extent, having regard to technical qualifications and the applicant's willingness to act with the objectivity required of a United Nations official. Staff were recruited from outside the area only when qualified local applicants could not be found. While he was prepared to consider the recommendations of both host and contributing Governments concerning staff, the final decision must rest with the Agency. If a staff member selected by the Agency proved objectionable to the Government of the country in which he was to work, the Government should so inform the Agency, giving the reasons underlying its objections.

24. During the debate, conflicting opinions had been expressed on the origins of the Palestine problem and on where responsibility for the plight of the refugees should lie. Political statements of that nature were not irrelevant, for the sources of the Palestine problem were indubitably political and the solution of the problem would necessarily involve difficult political decisions. While it would not be appropriate for him to enter into the political aspect of the problem, it was incumbent on him to draw attention to the close relationship between the Agency's ability to discharge its responsibilities and the general political situation.

25. The hard realities of the refugee problem — providing the refugees not only day-to-day relief, but also

with an opportunity to work and to settle in a country offering them the prospect of becoming self-supporting — confronted the Agency with many formidable obstacles both material and psychological. He earnestly hoped, therefore, that regardless of their differences of views, all Governments would offer tangible as well as moral support to the Agency in performing its task of bringing material help to the refugees and preparing them for a better life.

26. The CHAIRMAN put the three-Power draft resolution (A/AC.80/L.6) to the vote.

At the request of the representative of Syria, a vote was taken by roll-call.

Haiti, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Israel, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala.

Against: None.

Abstaining: India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Venezuela, Yemen, Afghanistan, Burma, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Egypt.

The draft resolution was adopted by 38 votes to none, with 19 abstentions.

27. U HLA MAUNG (Burma) said that his delegation had been in favour of those provisions in the draft resolution which accepted international responsibility for the refugees and expressed support for, and appreciation of, the Agency's work. In present circumstances, the problem could not be solved by international action alone. The United Nations, not being a world government, could not impose any solution which did not rest on the full co-operation of the parties directly concerned.

28. The draft resolution did not entirely reflect that viewpoint and his delegation had consequently been unable to support it as a whole.

29. Mr. CARAYANNES (Greece) had voted for the draft resolution without enthusiasm, since it offered little immediate prospect of alleviating the refugees' situation. At least, however, the draft was confined to the practical tasks which the Agency had to face, and to the budgetary limitations involved. Had the Agency's financial position permitted, it would have been only natural and human to take some action in support of the populations referred to in operative paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of the draft resolution, but in the circumstances, the text adopted seemed to reflect the only possible course of action. His delegation had voted for it in that spirit, and his Government would try to maintain its contribution at the present level.

30. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Director of the Agency and the representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan for their contributions to the discussion.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.