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Chairman: Mr. Víctor A. BELAÚNDE (Peru).

Palestine: assistance to Palestine refugees (A/1451, A/1451/Corr.1, A/1452, A/AC.38/4); repatriation of Palestine refugees and payment of compensation due them (A/1323, A/1324, A/1325, A/1326, A/1346, A/1349, A/1366, A/1367, A/1367/Corr.1, A/1367/Add.1) (*continued*)

[Item 20 (b) and (c)]*

1. AHMED Bey TUQAN (Representative, Hashimite Kingdom of the Jordan) felt that insufficient attention was paid to the fact that the refugees had begun to be driven from their homes some weeks before the termination of the United Kingdom Mandate over Palestine, and that only refugees without adequate means had remained in the part of Palestine still in Arab hands, as well as in Jordan.

2. The Hashimite Kingdom of the Jordan had opened its doors to them because of the close ties which bound the people of Jordan to their Arab neighbours in Palestine. The refugees had not only been able to share the scanty means of livelihood of the population but had also been awarded, without any loss of time, all the privileges and immunities enjoyed by Jordan citizens.

3. Jordan, including the part of Palestine which had been unified with it by the free will of its population, had at present a refugee population of approximately half a million, to which figure should be added some 100,000 persons who had lost all their means of livelihood either as a result of the war or because of the demarcation of the armistice line. Jordan was thus providing asylum for a total of 600,000 needy persons.

4. That was a very large number indeed, if the meagre resources of the country, with its own population of one million, were borne in mind. It was therefore understandable that Jordan was keenly interested in the refugee problem and felt that it should be solved speedily and equitably.

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

5. He would not dwell on the living conditions of the refugees. The interim report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/1451) provided all the necessary information. He wished merely to quote a passage from paragraph 28 of the report, according to which the refugee, individually and collectively, was tired of his present situation and wished, above all, to return to his former home and means of livelihood. That paragraph also noted that the refugee had been repeatedly told, and generally believed, that his present condition was due to the interference of the Western world in his affairs, and it pointed out that, after more than two years of enforced idleness living under uncertain and trying conditions, more than 800,000 of those refugees constituted a serious threat to the peace and stability of the countries of the Near East.

6. He also recalled that in his statement at the 31st meeting (A/AC.38/4) the Director of the Relief and Works Agency had felt bound to warn the United Nations that explosive forces had been generated which should be dealt with before the point of detonation was reached. Coming as they did from a man who knew the substance of the problem from having worked on it for more than six months, such statements must be given their full weight.

7. On the question of aid to refugees, he doubted that the monthly sum of two dollars per person was adequate; it was unthinkable that the scanty rations which could be had for such a sum would be enough to feed children, the more so as that sum must also cover the cost of education, medical requirements and administrative expenses. The Director of the Agency would, of course, carefully consider that particular aspect of the problem.

8. The case of persons still living in their homes but no longer having any means of livelihood was no less important than that of the refugees themselves; the number of such cases was considerably in excess of the

figure of 100,000 mentioned in the report of the Director of the Agency. The definition of the term "refugee" as given in paragraph 15 of the report should therefore be revised so that persons who had lost their means of livelihood could also be aided. Any measures contemplated to deal with that problem should be taken without delay.

9. If the sum of \$20 million proposed for the period from 1 July 1951 to 30 June 1952 (A/1451, para. 76) was considered by the Director of the Relief and Works Agency to be adequate to meet the needs of refugees and of persons who had lost their means of livelihood, it should be appropriated without hesitation; but if it should prove inadequate on account of the rise in the price of goods and of the supply of relief assistance to persons who had lost their means of livelihood, more funds should be made available. The same remarks also applied to the amount of \$5 million required to bridge the gap between estimates and the actual needs for the year 1950-1951 (A/1451, para. 75).

10. He was confident that the Director and the members of the Advisory Commission would know how to spend the funds allocated to the works programme to the best advantage of the countries in which the projects would be carried out.

11. He noted that it was stated in paragraph 42 of the report that there was no opportunity for any considerable works programme in Gaza; that the programme for Lebanon was necessarily limited; and that Jordan, though willing, would not be able to provide works for any numbers approaching those of the refugees at present within its borders. The Director of the Agency had emphasized that aspect of the question in the statement which he had made at the 31st meeting. The logical inference was that the only solution to that painful problem was the repatriation of refugees. That solution was indicated, not only for humanitarian reasons and because it implemented resolution 194 (III) of the General Assembly, but also because there was no other way of putting an end to a situation which had been constantly deteriorating for the past three years.

12. The Hashimite Kingdom of the Jordan once more gave the undertaking that it would extend to the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East whatever assistance he might require to carry out his mission.

13. Mr. TAFAZZUL ALI (Pakistan) said his delegation would have preferred to intervene at a later stage in the debate, after draft resolutions had been submitted to the Committee. To save time, however, he would express the views of the Pakistan delegation concerning the various reports and documents before the Committee.

14. The problem of Palestine refugees was before the General Assembly for the third time, but it did not seem as if any real progress had been made or that the problem was any nearer to a solution. Even if the Committee should decide as it was in duty bound to do, to vote a generous financial contribution, the fact remained that, as the Director of the Relief and Works Agency had emphasized, the coming summer would not see the end of the refugee problem, fraught as it was with human misery and danger to peace in the Near

East. The refugees were entering their third winter in exile; they were weary and disillusioned because no satisfactory solution of their problem had yet been discovered.

15. Paragraph 21 of the report of the Director of the Agency was enough to provide a picture of the refugees' plight: the promiscuity due to the herding of refugees into over-crowded quarters, the lack of any privacy even when the most personal and essential aspects of human existence were concerned, the lack of sanitation and the moral isolation all combined to make the refugee's life a wretched one, like that of the philosopher Hobbes' primitive man—nasty, brutish and short. How could the refugees preserve, in those circumstances, a sense of human dignity? There were no words to describe the tragedy of more than 800,000 men, women and children, brutally torn from their ancestral homes, not by any natural disaster or act of God, but by the hand of man unleashing war and destruction. The full horror of that drama became even clearer if it was remembered that the refugees represented three-quarters of the Arab population of Palestine. The true proportions of the tragedy unfolding in Palestine would be better realized if one imagined three-quarters of the population of countries like the United States, the USSR, the United Kingdom or France reduced to such a plight.

16. Had it not been for the assistance given to the Palestine refugees by the international community, many of them would certainly have died. Only the relief granted had made it possible to keep 800,000 refugees alive. It was true that millions of dollars had had to be spent on relief. During the year 1948-1949, the governments had made a contribution of \$32 million, and the funds allocated for 1950-1951 amounted to \$30 million. According to the Director of UNRWA, an additional appropriation of \$20 million would keep those 800,000 refugees alive until the end of June 1952, that sum covering only the cost of direct relief. The Pakistan delegation believed that the only way of putting an end to the refugee tragedy was the immediate implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) of the General Assembly, which provided that the refugees "wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date," and that "compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return". The Palestine Conciliation Commission should therefore be requested to redouble its efforts to discharge the responsibility laid upon it by the General Assembly, namely, to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and rehabilitation of the Palestine refugees. In the meantime, the refugees should still be guaranteed the requisite means of subsistence, such relief being at least equal to that which had been granted hitherto, because, as the United Nations Mediator on Palestine had emphasized in the progress report which he had submitted on 16 September 1948,¹ the choice was "between saving the lives of many thousands of people now or permitting them to die". The United Nations should make its choice in the current year; to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees should not be a matter of choice, but rather a categorical imperative.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Part I, Supplement No. 11.*

17. The United Nations must maintain international peace and security; to that end, it should take effective collective measures for the prevention or removal of threats to the peace. The existence of 800,000 desperate refugees, living in a region so disturbed and of such strategic importance as Palestine, constituted such a threat. Furthermore, the General Assembly in its resolution 212 (III) had recognized the danger to the security of the Middle East resulting from the existence of the refugees, as it had stated that "the alleviation of conditions of starvation and distress among the Palestine refugees is one of the minimum conditions for the success of the efforts of the United Nations to bring peace to that land". Similarly, resolution 302 (IV) recognized that continued assistance for the relief of the Palestine refugees was necessary to further conditions of peace in that country. Finally the Director of UNRWA had pointed out in paragraph 28 of his report that more than 800,000 of those refugees, after more than two years of living in enforced idleness under uncertain conditions, constituted a serious threat to the peace and stability of the Near East.

18. The Pakistan delegation, conscious of the serious danger noted by the most authoritative sources, and believing that UNRWA should be given the requisite funds to continue relief to the refugees, wholeheartedly supported the recommendations of the Agency's Director and Advisory Commission with regard to the assistance to be given by the international community to cover the cost of the adjusted work programme; that cost would amount to \$20 million for the period from 1 July 1951 to 30 June 1952. It also supported the request for the immediate contribution of \$5 million to improve the existing scale of rations and services. On 30 October the Economic and Social Council had agreed upon the text of a draft resolution (E.L/122) expressing deep sympathy with the sufferings of the Korean people and determination to alleviate them, and charting a generous programme of international assistance for the relief of that people and the repairing of the destruction resulting from the intervention of the United Nations in that country. Palestine was a similar case, since the refugee problem was a consequence of resolution 181 (II) adopted on 29 November 1947, under which the General Assembly had decided to partition that country. That resolution had constituted a violation both of the right of peoples to self-determination and of solemn commitments previously entered into. Sir Mohammad Zafrulla Khan, at the meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Palestinian Question on 7 October 1947,² had emphasized that that resolution would entail the expulsion of the entire Arab population of Palestine. Recent events had proved the truth of that statement, and, as had been feared, the plan for the partition of Palestine had led to war in that country. The General Assembly had been warned; the tragic consequences likely to result from the policy of unlimited Jewish immigration had been emphasized, as well as the terroristic methods employed by certain groups, as in the massacre at Deir Yassen. Despite the warnings, appeals and entreaties addressed to it, the General Assembly had decided to go ahead regardless of the suffering to which its decisions had condemned a whole people.

19. He must pay a tribute to the efficiency, zeal and earnestness with which the Director of the UNRWA and the Advisory Commission had addressed themselves to that humanitarian task. He must also thank the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the private organizations for the generous part which they had played in putting into effect the relief and works programme.

20. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine had taken the initiative in establishing the Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East to study the Palestine refugee problem and to make recommendations upon it. In its first interim report,³ however, that Mission had made recommendations foreseeing the end of direct relief and had envisaged measures to ensure the transition from a programme of direct relief to a programme of public works. It had also recommended that direct relief for refugees should be continued until 31 December 1950, on a gradually reduced scale, so that there would be no duplication between direct relief and work relief. Such had been the origin of a new agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

21. The report of the Director of the Relief and Works Agency (A/1451) explained why the recommendations made in resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 had not been carried out. While the Mission had expected that only 492,000 refugees would require relief in the third quarter of 1950, 855,000 rations had had to be issued in September 1950. Practical difficulties had interfered with carrying out the terracing and afforestation programmes, and as regards the pilot projects planned for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, only preliminary studies had been made. He emphasized that, according to the Director's report, the chief reason for those miscalculations had been the lack of funds. In addition, there had been a lack of qualified personnel for the purposes of project planning and supervision of works. Technical assistance to governments in the Near East was needed in order to raise the standard of living in that region, as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission.

22. The Pakistan delegation welcomed the recommendation of the Director of the Relief and Works Agency and the Advisory Commission that the works programme should continue to be implemented, but should be gradually transformed into a programme directed towards the improvement of the refugees' living conditions. It agreed with those authorities that the technical co-operation programmes of the governments, the Technical Assistance Programme of the United Nations and the programme of the Relief and Works Agency must be co-ordinated. He associated himself with the recommendation of the Director and the Advisory Commission that a re-integration fund of \$30 million should be constituted, but wished it to be clearly understood that the projects undertaken by the Relief and Works Agency must not entail the loss of the refugees' rights to repatriation, conceded to them in resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948; further, the re-integration fund should also be available for the rehabilitation of the refugees in their original countries and homes and in their trades and professions.

² *Ibid.*, Second Session, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, 7th meeting.

³ *Ibid.*, Fourth Session, Ad Hoc Political Committee, Annex, Vol. I, document A/1106.

23. He felt constrained to place particular emphasis on the availability of the fund for purposes of repatriation, as he feared that in practice the fund might be utilized almost exclusively for resettlement of the refugees in the neighbouring Arab States and not for re-integration in their original homes in Palestine. In fact, if the works programme were gradually transformed into a programme directed towards the improvement of the refugees' living conditions and the emphasis were placed on technical assistance to the Arab Governments for their projects of economic development, it might be inferred that the Arab refugee problem would be solved by their settlement in the countries in which they had sought refuge. In support of that thesis, he cited paragraph 72 of the report of the Director of the Relief and Works Agency, as well as the Director's statement before the Committee at its 31st meeting (A/AC.38/4) to the effect that there were no work projects available which could solve the unemployment problem among refugees in Gaza and Lebanon. In other words, it was unlikely that work could be found for 600,000 refugees; yet it was planned to settle them in those very areas instead of affirming that they should be repatriated, in accordance with the principles of justice prescribed by the United Nations Charter in such cases. Moreover, he recalled that the Director had stated at the 31st meeting that any effort to transfer refugees to other areas was unlikely to meet with success, and that without a comprehensive reversal of thinking on the part of the countries and refugees concerned, there was little possibility of any general employment plan which would put a majority of the refugees to work. He wondered what was meant by "a comprehensive reversal of thinking" and whether that was a reference to the approach adopted by the Arab Governments as stated in paragraph 24 of chapter III of the general progress report of the Conciliation Commission

(A/1367.) The Arab delegations had declared that they would be ready to study the effective repatriation of refugees in the territory under the control of Israel and the resettlement of the remainder in Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not under Israel control. It was natural that Arab refugees should wish to be repatriated in the land which they had occupied for nearly 2,000 years. He recalled that an overwhelming majority of the refugees in the camps in Syria, Lebanon and the Gaza area had been in favour of returning to their homes.

24. He quoted passages from the Director's report (A/1451, para. 28) to the effect that the refugees, one and all, were weary of their present position and longed above all to return to their former homes and means of livelihood. They were resentful of the fact that they were forced to live far from their former homes and that they had received no compensation for their losses. He inquired whether that line of approach on the part of the Arab governments must be abandoned. If he had interpreted correctly the phrase "comprehensive reversal of thinking", it would appear that the salvation of the Arab refugees lay in renouncing their fundamental rights of repatriation and compensation, so unequivocally promised to them in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and reaffirmed in the preamble of resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949. The Pakistan delegation could not contemplate with equanimity a solution of the Arab refugee problem arrived at by bartering fundamental human rights. He noted that the subject of repatriation and compensation of the refugees was a separate sub-item of the agenda. He therefore reserved the right to revert to the question at the proper time.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.