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Chairman: Mrs. Lina P. TSALDARIS (Greece).

AGENDA ITEM 31

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees (A/3828/Rev.1, A/3828/Rev.1/Add.1, A/
3848, chap. VI, sect. II) (concluded)**

1. Mr. DUMITRU (Romania) said that his delegation had always been convinced that voluntary repatriation and the return of unaccompanied minors to their parents were the only real solutions of the refugee problem. For that reason, he had voted for the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.697), and against the ten-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.695/Rev.1), which did not provide for action to prevent the exploitation of the refugee problem for political purposes and to prohibit practices which were prejudicial to good international relations. He had also voted against the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.696), which merely called for the continuance of efforts which had already proved ineffective.

2. He had voted for the Moroccan-Tunisian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1) because the sad plight of the refugees from Algeria entitled them to greater assistance from the High Commissioner's Office. However, his vote must not be interpreted as indicating that his Government had changed its general position with regard to contributions.

3. Mr. MAKIEDO (Yugoslavia) said that he had voted for the draft resolution on the World Refugee Year (A/C.3/L.695/Rev.1) because he was in sympathy with its generous purposes and on the understanding that it had no political implications. He had voted for the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.697) to the last paragraph of the preamble because it would have clarified the purposes of the original proposal, and because it was in harmony with the established practice in Yugoslavia; the Yugoslav Government had faithfully implemented Economic and Social Council resolution 157 (VII). Although he was not opposed in principle to the USSR amendment to operative paragraph 1, he had abstained on it because he had felt that it would be out of place in the ten-Power draft resolution. He had voted for the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.696) and the Moroccan-Tunisian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1) for the reasons he had given during the debate.

4. Mr. BARRATT (Union of South Africa) said that

while he had voted for the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.696) he wished it to be clearly understood that his vote did not commit his Government to any financial contribution. The Union Government would consider the question of a contribution when the High Commissioner made the appeal for funds provided for in operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution.

5. Mr. DOBROSIELSKI (Poland) said that he had voted against the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.696) because his delegation opposed some of the recommendations of the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) Executive Committee, particularly those concerning the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, and because the draft resolution contained no reference to voluntary repatriation.

6. Mr. ELMANDJRA (Morocco) said that he had voted for the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.697) to the last paragraph of the preamble to the ten-Power draft resolution because it set forth clearly the principle of voluntary repatriation. That vote had not been inconsistent with his consent at the 874th meeting to the deletion of the words "until the return of the refugees to their homes" from the last paragraph of the Moroccan-Tunisian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1); in the latter case, the words deleted had had strictly financial implications. He thanked the delegations which had supported the Moroccan-Tunisian draft resolution, which, together with the resolution adopted by the Conference of Red Cross Societies at New Delhi in December 1957, would permit the maximum help to be extended to the refugees from Algeria. Its adoption by a large majority showed that the need for help was recognized and that the High Commissioner had the Committee's full confidence.

7. Mr. KANG (Cambodia) said that his vote for the Moroccan-Tunisian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1) must not be interpreted as imposing any financial commitment on his Government, which already had a substantial refugee problem of its own. He had voted for the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.696) on the same understanding.

8. He had abstained on the ten-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.694/Rev.1) because it had financial implications: he did not feel that the project proposed warranted placing an extra burden on the United Nations budget at the current time.

9. Mr. LINDT (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked the Committee for the tribute it had paid to the work of his Office. The views expressed during the debate would give useful guidance to the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, which was to replace the UNREF Executive Committee at the end of the year. As in the past, his programmes would be planned on the basis of General Assembly resolution 1166 (XII) and the prin-

ciples laid down in the Statute of his Office (General Assembly resolution 428 (V), annex). He hoped that it would be possible to assist the refugees from Algeria in Morocco in the near future. He would also give special attention to the painful problem of unaccompanied refugee children, always bearing in mind paragraph 2 of the Statute of his Office.

AGENDA ITEM 71

The organization of an international public health and medical research year (A/3920 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.698)

10. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Ukrainian Socialist Republic) said that item 71 had been placed on the agenda for the current session at the initiative of his delegation. Under the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, Members had undertaken to promote social progress and better standards of life; and Article 55 provided that the United Nations should promote solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems. The need for developing international co-operation on health and medical questions had also been stressed at the San Francisco Conference, and it had been decided to set up a specialized agency to deal with those matters.

11. The World Health Organization (WHO), which had been established in pursuance of that decision, had achieved considerable success in strengthening and developing co-operation; the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also had done valuable work in that connexion, and the collaboration between the two agencies in combating such diseases as malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy had been most fruitful. The interest of the United Nations in health matters had also been exemplified in the adoption of article 13 of the draft Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/3525, para. 157).

12. Medicine was an inherently international science, since its effects embraced all mankind, and WHO had already rendered valuable service by bringing about exchanges of experience and convening meetings of specialists from various countries. In proposing the inauguration of an International Public Health and Medical Research Year, the Ukrainian delegation in no way wished to minimize the achievements of WHO, but it considered that its work should be broadened. At the current stage of the development of medical science, effective means were available for combating the majority of the known diseases. Epidemics which had formerly threatened whole populations had been virtually eliminated; great strides had been made in the study of micro-organisms; medical practitioners now had a much more profound understanding of the human organism and could therefore make more reliable diagnoses; and the production of medicines and other means of combating disease, such as radioactive isotopes, had progressed immeasurably. If all the means at the disposal of modern medicine could be applied to people all over the world, the general health situation would be greatly improved.

13. The rising life-expectancy figures and declining mortality rates showed that levels of health were gradually improving, but disease still took an annual toll of millions of lives. Thus every year there were 5 million deaths from tuberculosis and 3 million from malaria, which afflicted 300 million people, mainly in Asia, Africa and Latin America; about 400 million

people were suffering from trachoma, which often led to blindness and incapacity for work; there were between 10 million and 12 million lepers in the world; sleeping-sickness was widespread in many areas of Africa; and the peoples of some parts of the world still lived under the threat of outbreaks of smallpox, cholera and plague. The elimination of those diseases would greatly stimulate the economic and social development of the countries concerned.

14. On the other hand, the solution of those difficult problems called for the rapid and considerable expansion of medical services and supplies in the under-developed countries, and that expansion was dependent on their general economic and social development. Many States which, since the Second World War, had been doing everything in their power to wipe out the effects of a long heritage of backwardness would undoubtedly succeed in improving their health standards by means of national efforts; nevertheless, those efforts could and should be supported by international action, in particular by assistance from countries with advanced public health systems. The organization of an international public health and medical research year would help the under-developed countries to make full use of their available resources, which were often limited by the requirements of economic and social development.

15. A joint effort could be made to combat a number of prevalent and dangerous diseases. On the proposal of the Soviet Union, WHO was already contemplating action for the elimination of smallpox throughout the world in the near future; and competent WHO specialists also believed that the complete eradication of malaria could be achieved within the forthcoming decade.

16. It was to be hoped that the International Public Health and Medical Research Year would be marked by success in finding cures for cancer and the cardiovascular diseases, which were prevalent in economically advanced countries. Thanks to advanced methods of prevention and treatment, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases no longer represented a serious threat to life in those countries; but in Western Europe and North America, where life-expectancy was over sixty years, the so-called degenerative diseases accounted for 48 to 60 per cent of all deaths. Statistical data showed an annual increase in deaths from cancer in all countries, particularly from stomach and lung cancer and leukemia. Although cancer research had advanced considerably, the problem had not yet been solved, either theoretically or practically. Cardio-vascular diseases headed the list of causes of death in economically-advanced countries, especially among older people, and widespread research on those diseases had not yet yielded the desired results.

17. The data he had adduced showed that while specific public health and medical research needs varied from country to country, many of the problems involved were common to all countries and regions.

18. The aims underlying the Ukrainian delegation's proposal for an international public health and medical research year (A/3920 and Add.1) were purely humanitarian. After informal consultations with a number of delegations, the Ukrainian delegation had produced a revised version (A/C.3/L.698) of its proposal which

should satisfy all views. The two primary purposes of the proposal were set forth in the explanatory memorandum (A/3920/Add.1). The preamble listed a number of widely prevalent major diseases on which it was suggested that medical attention should be concentrated during the proposed "year"; but the list was not meant to be exhaustive. In operative paragraph 1, WHO was invited to organize the International Public Health and Medical Research Year, primarily on a national basis. He pointed out that although article IV of the Agreement between the United Nations and WHO ^{1/} empowered the United Nations to make recommendations to WHO on questions within the latter's competence, the language used in the draft resolution was less categorical. He had no doubt that WHO would be interested in the proposal, which was of direct relevance to its work. At the same time, the terms of operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution would give WHO every opportunity to state its own views on the matter. He therefore failed to see any valid reason for the joint amendment (A/C.3/L.699) that had been submitted, and he was unable to accept it.

19. As his delegation saw it, the work to be undertaken during the proposed year could be based on the various public health and medical programmes already being planned or carried out by different countries. An important feature of the project would be the exchange of knowledge and experience among countries and the co-ordination of their several efforts. Operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution outlined the action that could usefully be taken, without in any way limiting the initiative of WHO. Furthermore, the methods of financing the project were left entirely to WHO. In his own view, the necessary funds should be furnished by WHO and by voluntary public and private contributions. The year 1961 had been proposed in accordance with the views of WHO and a number of delegations. It would allow WHO to present its proposals to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in 1959 and to use the intervening period for the necessary preparations.

20. He trusted that all countries would welcome the proposal and take part in its execution. The Ukrainian Government, for its part, would contribute to it at home and abroad to the full extent of its not inconsiderable capabilities. He hoped that the Third Committee, and after it the General Assembly, would unanimously approve the Ukrainian proposal, which should result in the saving of millions of human lives.

21. Mr. TUAN (China) said that while his delegation was convinced of the importance of international co-operation in improving public health, it felt that the organization of an international public health and medical research year would serve little purpose unless it was followed up by concerted action in the years to come. Moreover, the action suggested in the Ukrainian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.698) included a number of measures which were already being put into effect by the United Nations and the specialized agencies under the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. Thus to set aside a particular year for action in the field of public health might adversely affect the existing technical assistance machinery.

22. Some of the diseases mentioned in the draft resolution, such as malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy,

were already being dealt with on a national or regional basis with the aid of UNICEF and WHO. There again, any action taken under the proposed project would have to fit in with the long-range programmes already under way.

23. Lastly, any major programme undertaken by WHO must first be approved by the agency's own organs; he therefore welcomed the joint amendment (A/C.3/L.699), which would leave the final decision on the matter to WHO.

24. His delegation, together with that of Brazil, had taken the initiative in the founding of WHO, and China had been one of the agency's earliest members. The Chinese delegation would be unable to take a final position on the proposal for an international public health and medical research year until WHO and the Economic and Social Council had had an opportunity to go into the matter thoroughly.

25. Mrs. LORD (United States of America) said that the Committee's understanding of the importance of improved health was a matter for satisfaction. The President of the United States had shown the same understanding in his "State of the Union" message of January 1958, in which he had emphasized that malaria could now be eradicated and had indicated the United States Government's willingness to co-operate with the USSR in efforts to combat cancer and cardiac diseases. The President had been supported by the United States Senate, which in August 1958 had adopted a resolution inviting countries, through WHO, to discuss the feasibility of a world health year.

26. There could be no doubt of her country's interest in the fight against disease. In the budget estimates for 1960 a substantial appropriation was to be included to finance a campaign against disease in the Middle East under the auspices of the International Co-operation Administration. She herself had been intimately connected with such work for many years, and had had the opportunity of seeing both the enormous problems which existed, in her own country as in many others, and the efforts that Governments were making to solve them with the help of international agencies like WHO.

27. Although she was fully in sympathy with the idea contained in the Ukrainian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.698), she had one reservation and she had therefore agreed to co-sponsor the joint amendment (A/C.3/L.699). The following were her reasons. First, by replacing the words "to organize" by the words "to consider organizing," the Committee would be respecting the autonomy of WHO. The mere adoption of the draft resolution by the Committee would carry enormous weight in the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board; therefore great care must be taken not to make any recommendations which might restrict the freedom of action of WHO. If the draft resolution was adopted as it stood, WHO would have no opportunity to pronounce upon the desirability of the proposed year; it would be able to decide only on how it was to be organized.

28. Secondly, without the word "consider" the Economic and Social Council would also be bypassed in the decision on the desirability of the year. It was true that operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution invited WHO to transmit its views on the matter to the Council at its twenty-eighth session; but having already been invited, in paragraph 1, to organize the year,

^{1/} United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 19 (1948), No. 115.

all it would be able to do would be to submit its plans to the Council, which in turn would have no opportunity of considering the matter in principle.

29. Thirdly, the idea for a "year" of one sort or another was becoming increasingly popular. With the increase in popularity, however, there was a risk that specially designated years might before too long become meaningless. What was called for, therefore, was co-ordination. Possibly, for example—and she emphasized that it was only an example—it might be found desirable to hold a year on health in conjunction with a food year. That would call for co-ordination between WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organiza-

tion. She reiterated that that was not a suggestion but that she used it only as an example to illustrate the kinds of problems which the designation of a year implied. In conclusion, she stressed that the purpose of the joint amendment was not to weaken the draft resolution. Her only purpose was to ensure that the established methods of operation for the United Nations should be maintained, methods whereby the autonomy and independence of the specialized agencies were assured and the services of the Economic and Social Council as well as of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination were fully utilized.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.