



CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Budget estimates for the financial year 1952: (a) Budget estimates prepared by the Secretary-General (A/1812 and Add.1); (b) Reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/1853)	
Part IV, Section 20a. Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (continued)	259

Chairman : Mr. T. A. STONE (Canada).

Budget estimates for the financial year 1952: (a) Budget estimates prepared by the Secretary-General (A/1812 and Add.1); (b) Reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/1853)

[Item 41]*

Part IV, Section 20a. Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee had considered the budget estimates for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees at its 311th meeting, at which it had approved a provisional estimate of \$500,000 for section 20a on the understanding that the estimates would be discussed at a later stage in the light of the Third Committee's discussion on the functions and work of the High Commissioner's Office. That Committee's views were contained in document A/C.3/L.215 and Corr.1, which had been circulated to members of the Fifth Committee.
2. He invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to make a statement.
3. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, while he was fully aware of the need to stabilize the United Nations budget, his Office had only been in existence since January 1951 and could not reasonably be expected to achieve a stabilized budget in the first year of operations. The appropriation of \$300,000 for the year 1951, which had been approved at the end of the General Assembly's fifth session without detailed discussion had had regard to the fact that the International Refugee Organization would still be in operation during that year, which could and should therefore be a year of preparation for the High Commissioner's Office. The situation

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

would be entirely different in 1952, since the IRO would close down at the end of January and the Office of the High Commissioner would assume full responsibility for the functions assigned to it.

4. In preparing the budget estimates for 1952 (A/1812), the first full year of operations, he had come to the conclusion that the sum of \$803,000 was required for the execution of the tasks assigned to him. The reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its second report of 1951 (A/1853) had thus been a serious blow.

5. It seemed to him that there was a very real difference between the High Commissioner's Office and agencies such as the IRO, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, which were engaged in large-scale operational activities and the budgets of which were necessarily substantial. The High Commissioner's Office was not concerned with the operational aspects of repatriation, resettlement or economic reconstruction programmes. As he had stated in the Third Committee (320th meeting), "the functions of his Office could best be defined by saying that they were to encourage, to assist, to promote, to co-ordinate and to co-operate. His office would co-ordinate the work of the voluntary agencies and promote and supervise the implementation of international conventions and agreements designed to improve the status of refugees". It could therefore manage with a more limited budget than IRO, UNKRA and UNRWAPRNE.

6. The Advisory Committee had suggested in paragraph 296 of its report that part of the work which it was proposed to allocate to branch officers could be undertaken from his headquarters in Geneva. He had, however, always disputed that contention. To keep in close touch with governments, as he was required to do by his Statute, his Office must have representation in countries where large numbers of refugees were living or where serious refugee problems arose. The presence of a representative of the High Commissio-

ner's Office was also of psychological value to the refugees themselves.

7. Being anxious to submit a budget estimate which could not possibly be criticized as unreasonable, he had reduced the figure of sixteen branch offices, which he had originally proposed, to eleven; this he regarded as a minimum. Two branch offices were already in operation and the governments concerned had taken every opportunity of expressing their satisfaction with the daily contact with the High Commissioner's Office, which the existence of those branch offices permitted.

8. The Advisory Committee had also criticized (para. 299) the composition of branch offices and had recommended that the provisional establishment should be substantially scaled down. He could assure the Committee that he had no desire for a larger staff than was necessary. There was, however, little room for scaling down in branch offices with a staff of only five or six. He had tried to make reductions and had even considered reducing the number of branch offices from eleven to ten.

9. A member of the Third Committee had suggested that the High Commissioner's Office should learn to walk before it tried to run. He was in full agreement with that principle but, while 1951 had been a year of preparation, 1952 would require the Office to assume full responsibility for many of the important functions hitherto exercised by the IRO. The substantial reduction in the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee would necessitate a review of the entire programme for 1952. No one would deny the importance of the task assigned to his Office. It was a constructive task and if properly done, would redound to the credit of the United Nations. But to do it properly the sum of \$500,000 was not enough, even though direct operational activities were not involved.

10. While he was in principle convinced that the original estimate was required, he had, in a spirit of compromise, reviewed the situation again in the light of the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee. By scaling down the staff of branch offices and by reductions on items such as temporary assistance, overtime, travel and excluding hospitality, he had found it possible to make a reduction of \$52,000 in the original estimate. Instead of the original estimate of \$803,000 (including common staff costs), he hoped that the Fifth Committee would feel able to approve an estimate of \$751,000 (including common staff costs). He would of course regard that figure as a maximum and assured the Committee that, whatever funds were appropriated, he would spend only what the interests of refugees required.

11. Mr. FAHMY (Egypt) asked the Chairman's permission to put three questions to the High Commissioner relating to the publication *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, which had been financed by a grant of \$100,000 to the High Commissioner from a charitable foundation and had been the subject of a decision (A/C.3/L.214) adopted by the Third Committee, at its 386th meeting.

12. Apart from the question of the contents of the publication, on which he would not comment, it was a matter of grave concern that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner, who had sponsored the publication, should now be declining all responsibility for its contents and should have undertaken to remove the United Nations seal and symbol from all

copies still in the possession of the United Nations and to suspend all circulation of the work through the Secretariat or the High Commissioner's Office. He wished to know from the High Commissioner, first, the total cost of the publication, including the emoluments of the authors; secondly, whether the High Commissioner did not consider that such action constituted misuse of the funds entrusted to him; and thirdly, whether he did not consider that such evidence of irresponsible administration would impair the faith of Member States and more important, of the refugees themselves in his Office.

13. As regards the Secretariat's share in that story of failure, he felt it was the duty of his delegation to draw the Assistant Secretary-General's attention to the fact that from an administrative point of view it was not to the credit of the Secretariat nor did it add to the prestige of the United Nations for the seal and symbol of the United Nations to be placed on a publication and then for them to be removed by a resolution of the General Assembly.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that he was prepared to permit the questions put by the representative of Egypt. However in view of the fact that the Third Committee's report would contain a statement to the effect that the Committee had expressed itself satisfied with the assurances given by the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, and considered the incident closed so far as it was concerned, he could not permit any discussion of substance bearing on the publication.

15. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he had been convinced of the need for a full and independent investigation of the problem of refugees and had accordingly requested the Rockefeller Foundation for a grant for the purpose. A grant of \$100,000 had been made and he had then assumed the responsibility of requesting Mr. Jacques Vernant, in whom he had full confidence, to carry out the inquiry. It was entirely within the Office's sphere of activities to have such a survey made.

16. He had never requested that the publication should bear the United Nations seal and symbol: his own introduction in fact made it perfectly clear that it was an independent investigation carried out by scientific experts.

17. As regards the cost, approximately \$40,000 had been spent by the Rockefeller survey group. No United Nations funds had been involved either in the printing or in the distribution of the publication.

18. Mr. CARRIZOSA (Colombia) recalled that during the Committee's discussion at the 311th meeting of the estimates for the High Commissioner's Office, a number of delegations had stressed the need for a clear definition of the term "administrative expenses", the Australian representative having proposed that the Advisory Committee should be requested to prepare a definition of the term in relation not only to the High Commissioner's Office but to other similar bodies as well. Since, however, no action had yet been taken on that proposal, the Committee's decision would have to be taken on the basis of the Third Committee's report and of the High Commissioner's statement regarding his requirements in 1952.

19. The Third Committee had endorsed the High Commissioner's policy and his programme for 1952, and had expressed full confidence in him. Where branch offices

were concerned, a large number of delegations had concurred in the need for such representation and some had even stated that the principle was not open to discussion in view of the terms of the Statute of the High Commissioner's Office.

20. On the question of the interpretation to be placed on paragraph 20 of the Statute, the Colombian delegation considered that the cost of personnel, supplies, and transport should be regarded as administrative expenses both in the case of the headquarters and of branch offices; expenditure on repatriation, installation and assistance to refugees should not be so regarded and should be covered by voluntary contributions. The High Commissioner should receive from the United Nations budget only the funds required for the normal fulfilment of the functions assigned to him by the Statute.

21. Those funds must however be sufficient. After assigning to the High Commissioner responsibility for the protection of refugees, the United Nations could not deny him what he regarded as the minimum funds for the execution of his task. There was no question of any increase in the budget; a smaller appropriation had been required in 1951, because the Office had not then been fully in operation. In 1952, however, it would be acting as the sole agent of the United Nations in the protection of refugees. In 1949, experts had estimated the probable cost of the operations of the High Commissioner's Office at \$750,000 per annum. His delegation would therefore vote for the appropriation requested by the High Commissioner and against the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee.

22. Mr. MACHADO (Brazil) recalled that when the High Commissioner's Office had been set up, Brazil had agreed to the principle that its administrative expenses should be paid by the United Nations, because it believed that the persons responsible for any activity in which the United Nations was directly concerned should come within the general structure of the United Nations Secretariat, in accordance with Article 97 of the Charter.

23. The question of the publication of the book *The Refugee in the Post-War World* raised certain administrative principles and clearly showed the need to clarify the responsibilities of the authorities involved, as other similar cases might arise in the future. In the present case the Secretary-General appeared to have been completely responsible for the publication of the book as a United Nations document. The Brazilian delegation regretted what had happened and hoped that stricter control in such matters would be exercised in future.

24. For the budget of the High Commissioner's Office, the Secretary-General had requested \$803,000, the Advisory Committee had recommended a reduction to \$500,000 and the High Commissioner had just proposed \$751,000 as a compromise, justifying his proposal mainly on the ground of the need for branch offices. In that connexion, reference should be made to paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of the Third Committee's draft report (A/C.3/L.215 and Corr.1) which revealed that opinion in that Committee as to the necessity for branch offices was not unanimous, although a substantial number of delegations were prepared to agree to their creation if the High Commissioner considered them essential. In the circumstances it would perhaps be useful if the

High Commissioner could state the numbers of refugees in the countries where branch offices were to be created. With regard to South America, Mr. Machado noted that one office was proposed and he would like to know where it was to be located; it seemed doubtful that any one office could cover the area and a more suitable arrangement would seem to be a travelling representative. The Advisory Committee had suggested that offices should first be established in places where the need was acute and that a go-slow policy should be followed in regard to others during the first year of full activity of the High Commissioner's Office.

25. With regard to the principles governing the financing of the Office, it was difficult to speak of stabilizing its budget until the exact meaning of the term "administrative expenses" had been defined. That was a most important problem and if it was impossible to reach a definition, a fixed sum for such expenses should at least be established. His delegation was anxious to be fair in its attitude towards the Office and therefore might eventually accept the budget figure suggested by the High Commissioner provided a decision on the exact responsibility for the administrative expenses was reached and the term more clearly defined.

26. Mr. CHECHETKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, as his delegation had already stated its attitude towards the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in the Third and Fifth Committees, he would confine himself to summing up its position with regard to the appropriation now requested.

27. It considered that the United Nations should cease to finance any of the activities of the Office for the reason that they were contrary to the decisions taken by the General Assembly in 1946 and 1947 (resolutions 8 (I), 62 (I), 136 (II)) concerning the repatriation of refugees. He referred to the Soviet Union representative's statements in the Third Committee, in which he had shown that the High Commissioner's Office ought to be closed, as it had become the chief obstacle to repatriation and an instrument in the hands of ruling circles in the United States and the countries of the Atlantic bloc in their preparations for an aggressive war against the Soviet Union. The responsibilities at present entrusted to the High Commissioner should be carried out by means of bilateral agreements between the countries concerned. For those reasons his delegation would vote against the appropriations requested for the Office.

28. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), referring to the question of administrative expenses, explained that no definition of that term had yet been established. He quoted the Australian representative's proposal, mentioned in paragraph 88 of the summary record of the 311th meeting and in the passage referring to the High Commissioner for Refugees in the Fifth Committee's report (A/2022), that the Advisory Committee be asked to provide a definition at a subsequent session of the General Assembly.

29. Mr. FOURIE (Union of South Africa) asked the High Commissioner for Refugees how many of the countries in which it was proposed to establish branch offices at present had permanent representatives in Switzerland, either at the United Nations Geneva Office or accredited to the Swiss Government; and whether

the function of branch offices in the receiving countries was to protect refugees already there or to try to foster further immigration and, if the former, how many refugees there already were in those countries.

30. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (High Commissioner for Refugees), answering the Brazilian representative, stated that there was one branch office in the German Federal Republic responsible for the protection of 150,000 refugees, and one in Austria where refugees numbered 350,000. Negotiations had just been completed with the Greek Government for a representative in Athens to look after the 40,000 refugees in that country and to serve the Near East area. It was hoped to open a branch office in Italy within a few weeks to serve the 25,000 refugees living in very difficult conditions there. (Incidentally, he informed the Committee that he had asked for another independent report by medical experts on the situation of the refugees in Trieste, some 20 per cent of whom were tubercular cases.)

31. The exact number of refugees to be served by the one branch office for the Far East was unknown, but there were at least 5,000 in Shanghai; there were also the refugees in the Philippines for which the Philippine Government had assumed temporary responsibility. To illustrate the desperate situation of the refugees in Shanghai, he read a telegram he had just received stating that they were facing eviction from their living quarters on 31 January and urging the United Nations and voluntary agencies to raise further funds immediately. He has already placed that problem before the Third Committee.

32. Although it was true that the 280,000 refugees in the United States of America did not need protection, it seemed essential for his Office to have a representative in Washington, inasmuch as the United Nations Headquarters and those of many refugee organizations were in the United States.

33. He would have liked two branch offices in Latin America but he hoped to manage with one representative who would be accredited to a number of governments; eight or nine governments had already expressed a desire for his services.

34. There was one branch office in Brussels to care for 40,000 refugees in Belgium, 10,000 in the Netherlands and 1,000 in Luxembourg. France, traditionally generous in her policy towards refugees, had 300,000 within her borders, and was willing to have a representative in Paris. A London office was needed, not only for the 300,000 refugees in the United Kingdom but also in order to keep in touch with the migration offices there of the Commonwealth countries. In all, his Office knew of roughly 1,500,000 refugees for whose protection it was responsible.

35. In reply to the South African representative, he stated that although it was true that most countries had representatives in Switzerland they always had to refer matters concerning refugees to their own governments and could not provide the close and continuing contact which branch offices could maintain and which was needed for the many technical questions raised by the various problems affecting refugees. The task of his office where the receiving countries were concerned was not to embarrass governments by trying to persuade them to accept more refugees but to assist them in providing the necessary protection for those already there.

36. Mr. HALL (United States of America) expressed appreciation of the High Commissioner's efforts to meet the Fifth Committee's desire for economy and of the energy and vigour he brought to his task. The United States delegation felt, however, some concern at the High Commissioner's declaration that he was unable to accept the not unreasonable budget figure recommended by the Advisory Committee and urged him to reconsider the possibility of doing so, thereby helping the Fifth Committee to balance the United Nations budget. The obligation to carry out their responsibilities with fewer staff than they would have liked was one with which national authorities were constantly having to cope and the High Commissioner might have to face the same problem. He felt that from his knowledge of the situation in his own country he was justified in suggesting that a staff of six for an office in Washington was perhaps excessive and the same might therefore be true of the other offices. The refugees in the United States had no need of legal protection and the United States' representative in Geneva could maintain the necessary contact with the High Commissioner's headquarters there, any additional contacts required being made in New York. Cuts in the staff of the other branch offices, especially those in Europe, might also be possible, in view of the size of the High Commissioner's staff in Geneva. Possibly the twelve members of the Protection Division could be employed as travelling representatives in Europe and the staff of fifteen in other divisions could be reduced. The High Commissioner should, in particular, make all possible use of the administrative and financial services of the United Nations Geneva Office.

37. Miss WITTEVEEN (Netherlands) said that in accordance with the deep sympathy traditionally felt in her country with the refugees and the appeal recently made on their behalf by Queen Juliana, the Netherlands delegation had supported the High Commissioner for Refugees in the Third Committee and was willing to give sympathetic consideration to the budgetary requirements of his Office. She felt that if the Advisory Committee had had before it the draft report of the Third Committee on problems of assistance to refugees (A/C.3/L.215 and Corr.1) when considering the High Commissioner's budget, it might have recommended a figure less remote from the Secretary-General's estimate.

38. It was clear from the discussions in the Third Committee that most delegations, including that of the Netherlands, recognized the need for the High Commissioner to be represented in a number of countries in which refugees had settled. The High Commissioner had given an assurance that he would proceed with caution and as economically as possible, and would appoint representatives only in those countries where it was felt they were absolutely needed. He had also stated that the number of staff at the branch offices would be carefully considered. He had shown, by his administration of his 1951 budget, that he fully appreciated the necessity for keeping down expenses to a strict minimum, and she agreed with him that there was a limit below which it was impossible to go. The words used twenty-eight years previously by Dr. Nansen, League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at a plenary meeting of the League of Nations Assembly¹ regarding the need for delegations of the High Com-

¹ *League of Nations, Records of the Fourth Assembly, Text of the debates, 18th Plenary Meeting.*

missioner instead of national commissions, were entirely apposite to the present situation.

39. It was difficult to budget with almost 100 per cent precision, particularly for an activity like that of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, especially in its first year of full operation, but the Netherlands delegation did not feel that the appropriations requested under section 20a of the 1952 budget were too lavish, although experience might prove that some saving could be effected. The Netherlands delegation would have been prepared to approve the Secretary-General's estimate, with the exception of the \$5,000 foreseen for hospitality, for which purpose the funds appropriated under section 24 of the 1952 budget could be used. The High Commissioner was to be congratulated on his statement that he might be able to reduce his estimates by approximately \$50,000. The Netherlands delegation was in favour of that reduction and hoped that the High Commissioner would find it possible to carry out his task satisfactorily on that basis.

40. Emphasizing that the refugees looked to the United Nations for protection, now that the International Refugee Organization had ceased to exist, she recalled the high praise given by the Third Committee to the High Commissioner and his staff for the way in which they had discharged their duties and hoped that the Fifth Committee would not fail to do its part by recommending approval of the necessary funds for that work.

41. Mr. KRAJEWSKI (Poland), after recalling the Polish representative's statement in the Third Committee at the 378th meeting of the Third Committee, drew attention to the resolution (8 (I)) on the refugee question adopted by the General Assembly on 12 February 1946 and said that in his delegation's opinion the first right of every refugee under that resolution was to return to his native land. The International Refugee Organization and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had, however, attempted to substitute the enforced settlement of refugees in foreign countries for the policy of repatriation. The Polish delegation had every reason to believe that had they been consulted the great majority of refugees and displaced persons would have opted for return to their own country. That point of view agreed with the decisions taken at the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Moscow in 1947 and with General Assembly resolution 136 (II). If the High Commissioner would see that refugees were repatriated to their own countries, there would be no need for any branch offices. The existence of the High Commissioner's Office was prejudicial to the interests of all refugees and was an obstacle to the solution of the refugee problem. The Polish delegation would therefore vote against the appropriation requested by the Secretary-General for section 20a of the 1952 budget.

42. Mr. MACHADO (Brazil), drawing attention to the High Commissioner's statement that he had requested experts on tuberculosis to prepare an independent report on the refugees in Trieste, asked whether officials under the jurisdiction of the Secretary-General were authorized to make such requests without prior reference to the Publications Board.

43. As for the question of branch offices, while it might be necessary to have such offices in the Far East and perhaps in Italy and Austria, it was absolutely unnecessary to open any in the other countries mentioned by the High Commissioner. Any liaison work that was

required could be carried out between the Headquarters Office of the High Commissioner and the permanent delegations of Member States in Geneva.

44. Mr. PRICE (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services) said that the policy to be followed by the High Commissioner for Refugees as regards any book or document which he wished to have published would be governed by the Statute of the High Commissioner's Office (resolution 428 (V), annex), chapter I, paragraph 1 of which read: "The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, acting under the authority of the General Assembly...", while chapter I, paragraph 3 stated: "The High Commissioner shall follow policy directives given him by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council". No mention was made in the Statute of policy directives to be given by the Secretary-General to the High Commissioner.

45. Replying to the Brazilian representative's second question, he said that the issue of all books and documents published by United Nations officials was controlled by the Publications Board.

46. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (High Commissioner for Refugees), replying to the Brazilian representative's first question, said that when in November 1951 he had received very disturbing reports concerning the refugees in Trieste he had felt it his duty to investigate. He had therefore approached the World Health Organization which had appointed a London expert on tuberculosis who had visited Trieste and submitted to WHO a report which had then been forwarded to the High Commissioner.

47. Mr. FOURIE (Union of South Africa) assured the High Commissioner that his delegation was most anxious not to hamper his work. He would suggest that while the Fifth Committee should not shirk its responsibilities, it might propose a system of priorities in the activities of the High Commissioner's Office.

48. Branch offices of the High Commissioner's Office were certainly required in countries where there was a big temporary refugee problem, but were unnecessary in countries to which refugees had emigrated and in which they intended to settle permanently. In the case of the latter countries, all problems could be dealt with on the diplomatic level by the High Commissioner in consultation with the permanent representatives of Member States in Geneva. He hoped, therefore, that the High Commissioner would carefully consider the United States representative's appeal and submit a compromise proposal which would enable delegations to support the High Commissioner's request for funds for branch offices as a whole without voting separately on each office.

49. Mr. VOUGT (Sweden) referred to the position adopted by his delegation in the Third Committee, and to previous discussions in the Fifth Committee on the budget estimates of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. As it was essential that the High Commissioner's work should not be hampered, the Swedish delegation would vote for the amount he had requested. The High Commissioner should however concentrate on the more urgent needs of the refugees.

50. Mr. FRIIS (Denmark) said that the general point of view of the Danish delegation had been explained at length in the Third Committee. As regards the financial implications of the work to be carried out

by the High Commissioner, the Danish delegation's position was very similar to that of the Colombian and Netherlands delegations.

51. While generally agreeing with the High Commissioner as to the number of branch offices that might ultimately be required, he wondered whether they could or should all be actually set up in 1952. He had full confidence in the High Commissioner who would no doubt consider very carefully whether every branch office was necessary. It should also be mentioned that in the light of experience the question of maintenance or elimination of the various branch offices could always be examined in later years.

52. He agreed with the Advisory Committee and the High Commissioner that full use should be made of the clerical and other facilities of the United Nations European Office but could not agree that the legal and technical functions assigned to the High Commissioner's representatives should be carried out by the staff of United Nations Information Offices or the experts attached to the branch offices of specialized agencies.

53. He concurred in the remarks on delaying of recruitment and the revision of manning tables and grading contained in paragraph 300 of the Advisory Committee's second report of 1951 (A/1853) and felt sure that the High Commissioner would keep them in mind. There had, in the last few years, been a tendency toward over-grading in international organizations and when a new international organ was created, this matter ought to be considered from the very beginning.

54. With regard to the definition of the term "administrative expenses" in the Statute of the High Commissioner's Office, he was glad to note that the Advisory Committee would study that matter thoroughly before the General Assembly's seventh session.

55. He did not quite understand the reason for the fears expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 296 of its second report of 1951 and suggested that the Chairman of the Committee might like to give some additional explanations.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.