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ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION IN THE FIELD
OF PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION
OF MINORITIES

Note: The Secretary-General has received the following statement
from the International Refugee Organization of the
United Nations:

1. "The International Refugee Organization has always been interested in the question of how to avoid discriminatory measures. Although the general aspect of the problem was never lost from sight, the activities of the Organization necessarily were of a restricted nature. They concern only refugees - and there again, such refugees who, according to its Constitution, are within its mandate.

Consequently, IRO's task mainly consisted in:

- (a) ensuring non-discriminatory application to refugees of existing legislation;
- (b) endeavouring to have abrogated legislation resulting in discrimination against refugees.

2. "In this connexion it may be mentioned that the Secretariat of IRO has taken an active part in the elaboration of the Declaration of Human Rights, in order to represent the specific interests of refugees. In December 1947 a memorandum was submitted to the Human Rights Commission of ECOSOC which dealt, among other matters, with such subjects as equality before the law, prevention of discrimination, expulsion, and right of asylum (document E/CN.4/41/Rev.1). A number of suggestions contained therein were adopted by the Commission, and maintained in the Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the Commission at its Third Session.

3. "The following is a condensed survey of the activities of IRO, connected with the prevention of discriminatory measures. The specific task of IRO is to prevent discriminatory treatment of refugees within its mandate, by extending to them legal

/and political

and political protection, in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Constitution. This function aims at safeguarding the status of refugees within the mandate of the Organization, to which they are entitled on account of national legislation and international law. It equally includes activities to improve that status in future national legislation and administrative measures, and in international conventions, treaties, agreements and arrangements.

4. "The specific position of the refugee, who does not enjoy the protection of a government, necessitates action of a general character, as well as in individual cases where discriminatory treatment and the status of the refugee is involved.

5. "A few examples may suffice to illustrate the functional scope of these activities. The refugee has often to be assisted, when asking for a permit of sojourn or a permit to work. It has to be ensured that he should be granted social security rights in accordance with existing national legislation. He should be given free access to educational facilities, access to local courts should be open to him, and it should be ensured that justice is done in any case to which a refugee is a party. The refugee should be protected against arbitrary expulsion or deportation. No forcible repatriation, in particular no expulsion to a country where the refugee is threatened with persecution, should take place.

6. "IRO therefore, by reason of the specific task entrusted to it by its Constitution, is primarily interested in protecting against discrimination refugees in a particular group, and also against discrimination on account of race, sex, religion, nationality (or absence of nationality) and political opinion.

7. "It is, however, fully realised that any effort made on a more general level to prevent discrimination will simultaneously be to the benefit of the persons who are at present the special concern of the Organization. IRO therefore advocates the prevention of discrimination between nationals of a State, on the one hand, and foreigners living in that state, on the other, and equally between different categories of foreigners.

8. "After a careful study of document E/CN.4/Sub.2/40 and the Provisional Agenda for the meeting of the Sub-Commission, the Director-General should like to stress some points where IRO has a particular interest:

1. Freedom of movement and residence;
2. Freedom of peaceful assembly and association;
3. Free participation in the cultural life of the community, sharing in scientific development and its benefits;

/4. Free access

4. Free access to public services, such as the public distribution of commodities, public assistance, social security, medical treatment or hospitalization, and recreational facilities; and
5. No discrimination or segregation in schools and cultural institutions."
