



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MATHIAS (Portugal)

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AGENDA ITEM 53: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 53: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/35/13, A/35/438 and Corr.1, A/35/472, A/35/473, A/35/474 and A/35/526; A/SPC/35/L.3 to L.8)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to six draft resolutions relating to the item under consideration, which were contained in documents A/SPC/35/L.3, "Assistance to Palestine Refugees"; A/SPC/35/L.4, "Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for the Palestine refugees"; A/SPC/35/L.5, "Assistance to persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities"; A/SPC/35/L.6, "Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East"; A/SPC/35/L.7, "Population and refugees displaced since 1967" and A/SPC/35/L.8, "Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip". It was his hope that the Committee would conclude the general debate on agenda item 53 that afternoon.

2. Mr. VAN HOUTUM (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of Austria, Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Philippines, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Yugoslavia, Zaire and his own country, introduced the draft resolution entitled "Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East" (A/SPC/35/L.6). He laid particular stress on the last two preambular paragraphs and the operative part of the text. The sponsors felt that the Working Group should continue its work and hoped that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution extending the mandate of the Working Group without a vote.

3. Mr. PALACIO (Ecuador) considered that it was a pertinent historical fact that UNRWA had completed 30 years of continuous service to the Palestine refugees and had met the needs of a refugee population of 1.8 million people spread over five territories administered by four different Governments in the fields of education, health, water supply and nutrition.

4. The major problem confronting the Agency was financial: the budget deficit for the current year came to an estimated \$70.4 million. The Agency planned to make severe cuts in services to refugees and he felt that delegations should ponder that situation.

5. In view of the plight of the Palestine refugees, his delegation proposed that the Special Political Committee should urge the Governments which controlled the situation in Palestine, in the name of humanity, history and civilization, to permit the Palestinians to return to their homes and to restore their civil rights. The notes to be addressed to the respective Governments would state that the appeal was based on respect for human rights and on the urgent necessity of restoring peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Palacio, Ecuador)

6. The report also described the situation of 25 officials who were imprisoned in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, eastern Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic with no charges against them and without having stood trial.
7. He concluded by once again expressing the sympathy and condolences of the people and Government of Ecuador to the people and Government of Algeria in connexion with the earthquake which had struck Algeria.
8. Mr. SHERIFIS (Cyprus) expressed his country's appreciation to the Commissioner-General and the staff of UNRWA for their work in assisting the Palestine refugees.
9. It was the duty of all States, and indeed, of all mankind, to continue to provide financial, material and moral support for UNRWA until a just and lasting solution of the Palestine question was found. It was deplorable that for 30 years, the hapless Palestinian people had been denied their political and human rights, unjustly uprooted and forced to live in terrible conditions without being able to enjoy their fundamental right to live in freedom and dignity within the boundaries of their own State. Until that solution materialized, UNRWA should continue its work for the relief of the Palestine refugees and the improvement of their economic and social conditions. Consequently, the delegation of Cyprus would support the draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/35/L.4 concerning offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for the Palestine refugees.
10. Referring to the Agency's budget deficit, he said that it was the duty of all States, irrespective of size or wealth, to make a maximum contribution to UNRWA so that it could carry out its humanitarian programmes pending a just political solution of the Palestine question. Cyprus, for its part, had contributed and would continue to contribute to UNRWA within the limits of its means.
11. His delegation felt that the only real solution lay in honouring the right of every refugee to return to his home. The Palestinian people should not be an exception. A solution of the Palestine question was urgent for the reasons he had stated earlier and because it constituted the crux of the whole Middle East problem. There could be no comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question unless the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return and to establish a State, were recognized. Cyprus recognized the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and felt that, as such, it should participate actively in all peace initiatives. On the other hand, the state of belligerency between the parties must be ended and the territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the area must be respected. The delegation of Cyprus stressed its support for the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and its opposition to all other faits accomplis in the occupied territories.
12. Mr. JOARDER (Bangladesh) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Commissioner-General and the UNRWA staff for the excellent work they had done and to the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for its useful report.

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(Mr. Joarder, Bangladesh)

13. He pointed out that the Agency, established in 1950 as a temporary body, had remained in operation and, in the view of his delegation, should continue to provide its humanitarian services in the form of relief assistance, health care and education until there was a just and comprehensive solution of the Palestine question. As the Commissioner-General had said, UNRWA had become a significant factor in the political equation as an agent for change and stability in the Middle East. It was therefore imperative to carry on the programmes of the Agency until the international community succeeded in compelling the occupying Power to withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right of self-determination, including their right to establish a state of their own in their homeland.

14. In his report (A/35/13), the Commissioner-General had explained clearly that financial problems of great magnitude were threatening the continuation of the Agency's programmes and that, unless additional contributions were forthcoming, there would have to be cutbacks which would not only be unjust, but would have serious consequences for the Palestinian population. As the Commissioner-General had stated, that would mean that tens of thousands of Palestinian young people would be deprived of the opportunity to become self-sufficient and that thousands of Palestinian teachers and instructors would be unemployed. Bangladesh believed that the continuation of UNRWA's services was an obligation of the entire world community, and expressed its appreciation to those countries which had made additional contributions. Within the limits of its means, Bangladesh was extending all possible help to its Palestinian brethren and opening the doors of its educational institutions, especially medical and engineering establishments, to Palestinian students, with financial assistance provided by the Government.

15. Among other areas of concern to the Bangladesh Government were the frequent invasions of educational institutions by the military authorities of the occupying Power and the harassment to which members of UNRWA were often subjected. It was clear that the root of those troubles was the obstinate defiance by Israel of international norms and practices. He would also draw the Committee's attention to the negative attitude of the Israeli military authorities in the occupied territories towards various voluntary organizations which were engaged in alleviating the sufferings of the Palestine refugees.

16. Bangladesh believed that the ultimate solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees would be found only through a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question, with a complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories and restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to repatriation or compensation. As long as that solution was not found, UNRWA's mandate should be extended. His delegation also supported relocation of UNRWA headquarters within the area of its operations as soon as practicable.

17. Mr. KAZI (Pakistan) said that UNRWA had done a commendable job under difficult circumstances in meeting the needs of the Palestinian refugees in the fields of humanitarian relief, education, health and general welfare.

(Mr. Kazi, Pakistan)

18. It was distressing that, over the last three decades, there had been no improvement in the situation and that, in three successive conflicts more and more Palestinians had been displaced from their homeland. At present the refugees numbered over 1.8 million.
19. The unabated sufferings of the Palestinian people and their forced exile had necessitated the continued existence of UNRWA which was an example of commendable international co-operative effort but at the same time a grim reminder of the continuing tragedy of the Palestinian nation, which had been a victim of Zionist aggression and exploitation. Unfortunately, the United Nations, which had been instrumental in the creation of Israel, had been unable to secure implementation of its numerous resolutions on the exercise of the inalienable national and human rights of the Palestinian people in the face of persistent violation of those rights by Israel. That fact had been reflected in General Assembly resolution 34/52 A.
20. The international community had an obligation not only to adopt effective measures for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to live in their own sovereign and independent State in Palestine, but also to redress the sufferings of Palestinian refugees living in other countries.
21. While every effort must be made to strengthen UNRWA's capacity to provide humanitarian services to the refugees, the international community must address itself urgently to finding a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine problem. Such a settlement could be achieved only on the basis of Israel's complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the implementation of the national and human rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State in Palestine.
22. Notwithstanding an increase in the volume of contributions, the Agency was facing a large deficit which amounted to \$37 million in the current year, and was likely to reach about \$70 million in the following year. That was an alarming situation, and his delegation hoped that the international community would continue to attend to the humanitarian needs of the refugees. Since the establishment of UNRWA, Pakistan had contributed, within its limited resources, more than 9 million Pakistan rupees; and it was also providing educational and training facilities for the children of its Palestinian brothers.
23. His delegation agreed with the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA that, as long as a just and lasting settlement of the problem of the Palestine refugees had not been achieved, the Agency's humanitarian services in the form of relief assistance, health care and education remained indispensable. The continuation of UNRWA services was an obligation of the world community, but the main obligation devolved on those States which were primarily responsible for the creation of the State of Israel and for the resultant plight of the Palestinians. In saying that, his delegation did not underestimate the substantive contributions already being made by some of those States.

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(Mr. Kazi, Pakistan)

24. In conclusion, he expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Commissioner-General and staff of UNRWA and to the Secretary-General and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for the efficiency and devotion with which they carried out their work.

25. Mr. OVINNIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed his country's condolences to the people of Algeria in connexion with the disaster which had occurred in that country.

26. The situation in the Middle East had been highly inflammable for three decades, and was becoming increasingly so. The solution to the problem must inevitably be based on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The refugee problem had its origin in Israel's aggression against the Palestinian Arab people and was a political problem which could not be considered in isolation.

27. The United Nations had repeatedly affirmed the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, to return to their homeland and to recover their property, also Israel's obligation to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories. None the less, Israel, with the support of the United States, had ignored the resolutions of the United Nations and the world community. Israel and its allies were responsible for the failure to solve the problem of the Palestinian people.

28. At present world support for the Palestinian people was growing. That had been clearly seen at the seventh special session of the General Assembly when the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent sovereign State had been reaffirmed once again and Israel had been condemned for its occupation of the Arab territories and of Jerusalem, and had been called upon to withdraw completely and unconditionally from those territories.

29. Israel was nevertheless continuing its armed attacks against Lebanon and the refugee camps; it had annexed Jerusalem and was creating settlements and colonies, thus increasing the number of refugees. The separate Camp David agreement was contrary to the interests of the Palestinian people and, with the support of the United States, merely strengthened Israel's aggression against its Arab neighbours and, first and foremost, against the Palestinian people.

30. The problem could be solved only by a settlement of the entire Palestine question with the participation of all the parties involved - and, particularly, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and authentic representative of the Palestinian people - and by the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories and the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish their own independent State.

31. As Mr. Brezhnev, President of the Presidium of the USSR had stated, all the land occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, should be handed back to the Arabs, and Palestinians should be given the opportunity to exercise their national rights, including the right to establish their own independent State.

32. His delegation wished to insist once again that the voluntary nature of the contributions should be maintained. The main burden should be borne by Israel,

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(Mr. Ovinnikov, USSR)

which was responsible for creating the situation, and on those whose policies were encouraging the aggressor and preventing the solution of the problem.

33. In conclusion, he said that the Soviet Union was giving substantial assistance to Palestinians and other victims of Israeli aggression under bilateral agreements.

34. Mr. BENCHEKROUN (Morocco) expressed his delegation's sincere condolences to the Algerian delegation in connexion with the terrible disaster which had occurred in that brother State.

35. Turning to the item under consideration, he said that in the last 30 years, UNRWA had managed to discharge its humanitarian tasks under conditions that were often difficult and sometimes dangerous. He paid a tribute to the staff of UNRWA for its devotion, and said that his delegation supported the report submitted by the Commissioner-General (A/35/13).

36. With regard to the financial crisis which had beset the Agency for several years and would lead to abandonment of some of the essential services provided by UNRWA, he urged the international community, and above all Israel, to co-operate with the Agency. Morocco would continue to support UNRWA and to provide it with substantial assistance; the amount of that assistance would be announced at the appropriate time.

37. The refugee problem could be resolved once and for all only if the refugees were given an opportunity to choose between returning freely to their homes and receiving equitable compensation if they decided not to do so. The Palestinian people, all of whom were refugees both inside and outside Palestine, did not wish to become extinct; and his delegation opposed the "final solution" which Israel was seeking to apply to them by eliminating or weakening UNRWA. It was no secret that Israel was now a meeting place for a number of Jews whose only excuse for being there was the hateful persecution of which they or their parents had been victims. Morocco, too, had been a meeting place for Moslem, Jewish and even Christian refugees from the Iberian peninsula who had chosen that country as their home in exile. They had settled there and had identified with the local population to such an extent that it was now difficult to distinguish them from the rest of the population. The Jewish population, which consisted largely of Sephardic Jews, had shared the rigours of exile with its Moslem compatriots and, like them and with them, had experienced the sufferings of expatriates. Morocco had a long tradition of respect for different creeds, as had been demonstrated during the Second World War when King Mohamed V had opposed the enactment of laws against his Jewish subjects.

38. Israel must make peace with the people which it was attempting to destroy and pay heed to the voices throughout the world, and especially in Israel, which were denouncing the Israeli Government's manoeuvres against their Palestinian brothers. It was reassuring to note that the diabolical plans of certain Israeli leaders had failed owing, first, to the Palestinians and their responsible attitude; secondly, to the segment of the Jewish population of Israel which was becoming increasingly aware of the atrocities perpetrated by the Government against the Palestinians and,

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(Mr. Benchekroun, Morocco)

lastly, to near unanimous international opinion in opposition to Israel's policies. It was in Israel's own self-interest to contribute to the promotion of the Agency in order to safeguard its future and leave open the possibility of reconciliation between two peoples of Semitic origin, the Jews and the Palestinians.

39. Mr. VIRGIN (Sweden) expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the tireless efforts of the Commissioner-General and staff of UNRWA. The Agency had shown itself to be an invaluable instrument for providing essential humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees during its 30 years of existence, and until a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East was reached, the work of the Agency must continue.

40. His delegation had carefully studied the report of the Commissioner-General (A/35/13) and the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/35/526), and considered it most unsatisfactory that the Agency's financial situation should continue to be a major problem. Should the shortfall between projected income and planned expenditure continue or increase, severe reductions in the services provided would undoubtedly have to be made. It was incumbent on the international community to find a solution that would ensure the effective financing of UNRWA, and it was not fair that a limited number of Member States should shoulder the major part of the financial burden. His delegation therefore urged those Governments which had not contributed in the past to do so and those which had so far made only relatively small contributions to contribute more generously to the financing of UNRWA.

41. Since 1950 Sweden had contributed some \$75 million to UNRWA and was currently the second largest contributor. It would continue to give substantial support to the agency on a multiyear basis and hoped that other countries would do likewise. Such a practice would certainly facilitate the work of the Commissioner-General and enable him to carry out more long-term planning. His delegation would like the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA to deal more actively with the question of multiyear financing.

42. The Commissioner-General discussed in his report two main alternative methods for cutting expenditure on services to refugees. The first was to curtail programmes to an equal extent in all five fields of operation, while the second was to differentiate selectively between the fields when cuts in services became inevitable. The Commissioner-General pointed out certain advantages of the second method, which would allow the Agency to give priority to maintaining the education and health programmes in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. His delegation concurred with that assessment and endorsed the proposed course of action.

43. With regard to the specific problem dealt with in the report in the section headed "Legal matters", he expressed concern over the continuing problems relating to the detention and interrogation of UNRWA staff members, and the restrictions imposed on their movements. He appealed to all Governments to vote in favour of extending the mandate of UNRWA and to make generous contributions to it in order to enable it to resolve its financial crisis.

(Mr. Virgin, Sweden)

44. He introduced draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.5 entitled "Assistance to persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities". He emphasized that over the preceding 13 years the General Assembly had authorized the Commissioner-General to provide humanitarian assistance as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to other persons in the area who were currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 hostilities. His delegation was confident that all members agreed on the need to continue to provide such assistance and, together with the delegations of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway and the Philippines, it hoped that, as in previous years, the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.
45. Mr. AL-ERIANI (Yemen) said that item 53, concerning Palestine refugees, illustrated the tragedy of a people who had been subjected to torture, exile and imprisonment for 30 years. The Zionists were continuing to establish settlements in the occupied territories, where they wished to settle Zionists from around the world. The question of Palestine would continue to be a focus of tension, until a just and equitable solution was found to the problem of the Palestinian people, who must be given the possibility of returning to their homes and establishing their own State under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole authentic representative.
46. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/35/13) referred to the Agency's deteriorating financial situation and chronic deficit, which was approaching \$70 million and which made it difficult to maintain operations at a bare minimum level. The Commissioner-General planned to make cuts in education and health services and to suspend educational programmes in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic beginning on 1 August 1981. In paragraph 7 of the report, two main alternative methods were mentioned for cutting expenditure on services for refugees. The first was to cut programmes to an equal extent in all five fields of operation, and the second was to differentiate selectively between the fields. The curtailment of services was fraught with danger not only in human terms but also in terms of the serious political conflicts which might ensue.
47. The international community should, therefore, assume responsibility for the Agency's deficit by transferring it to the regular budget of the United Nations. He stressed that that responsibility was incumbent on the entire international community and not only on the Arab States. As could be noted from the Commissioner-General's report, the deficit was due not only to the quality or quantity of services, but also to world-wide inflation. Moreover, if those States whose financial assistance enabled Israel to persist in its aggression against the occupied territories would allocate part of that assistance to the budget of the Agency, it would be possible to ease its financial situation. The problem of the Palestine refugees would always be a source of danger and the United Nations should therefore make every effort to solve it and compel the Israeli authorities to comply with United Nations resolutions affirming the right of the refugees to return to their homes. The international community should also apply sanctions against the Zionist entity for disregarding its decisions.

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(Mr. Al-Eriany, Yemen)

48. Lastly, he expressed condolences to the Government of Algeria on the earthquake which had struck that country.

49. Mr. BACHBAOUAB (Tunisia) said that as a result of the Commissioner-General's selfless dedication and humanitarian attitude, and despite the limited financial means available to him, the picture of the Agency's work was in general positive. His delegation congratulated the Commissioner-General on carrying out his functions in conditions that were frequently difficult and unfavourable. The report of the Commissioner-General (A/35/13) again showed the extent of the Agency's financial crisis, which could affect the assistance it provided to the Palestinian refugees. The budgetary prospects described by the Commissioner-General for the next fiscal year were a cause for profound concern. The solutions proposed to alleviate that situation seemed extremely limited. As was indicated in paragraph 7 of the report, there were two main methods available for reducing expenditure on services to the refugees; those methods were realistic, if tragic. Unless it received additional contributions, UNRWA would be obliged either to cut the services to an equal extent in all the five fields of operation or to differentiate selectively between those fields and reduce the education programme. That option must be avoided because, for the refugees, education was a vital factor which enabled them to aspire to an honest and dignified social advancement.

50. For 30 years, the Agency had had budgetary deficits. Clearly, a solution to that problem could be found only through an over-all settlement of the Palestine question and implementation of the right of the Palestinian people to return to their land. Despite the generosity and goodwill of States, the system of voluntary contributions had its limits, and, in the long run, it was inadequate and unpredictable. Logically, the countries which in 1947 had made the fatal mistake that had led to the sufferings of the Palestinian people should now be financing the Agency. If the financing of UNRWA was included in the regular budget of the United Nations, the Commissioner-General would be able to programme the requirements of the Agency's services and plan rational and effective activities. Unfortunately, an attempt had been made during the general debate to convince the Committee that the problem of the Palestine refugees was merely a figment of the imagination of States that were opposed to Israel. The representative of Israel had taken astonishing liberties with history and had tried to make out that, when Palestine had been partitioned, neighbouring Arab States had urged Palestinians to leave their homes. The delegation of Israel argued that the Arab States should absorb the refugees, just as Israel had helped and absorbed the oppressed Jewish refugees who had been expelled from Arab countries.

51. The Zionist conspiracy had led to the worst tragedy of modern times, forcing an entire people to live in exile in camps in which living conditions were precarious and humiliating. However, the representative of Israel had spoken at length of the reasons for the alleged exodus of Jews from Arab countries. In fact, the Zionist leaders had been concerned at the low population density of their country and had organized a far-reaching plan of emigration from Arab countries, supported by extensive financial resources. They had sought to attract Jews with promises and often with threats, in the case of those who had hesitated. They had organized diabolical operations in which Jews had been sacrificed in order to cause panic and create pretexts for accusing Arab States of racism and segregation.

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(Mr. Bachbaouab, Tunisia)

52. However, the international community had not accepted Israel's simplistic theories. The United Nations had adopted a large number of resolutions reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty. Paragraph 11 of the well-known resolution 194 (III) affirmed the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes or receive compensation for their land. Count Bernadotte had reaffirmed that right in his 1948 report. However, because of Israel's obstinate refusal since then to comply with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations, the situation of the refugees had not changed in any way, and they still required the Agency's assistance and services. Until a final settlement had been achieved, the Agency's work could not be halted. The international community had a moral obligation to provide the Commissioner-General with the means he needed to accomplish his task in satisfactory conditions. Since the method of voluntary contributions had not proved satisfactory, consideration should be given to the possibility of replacing that method by financing from the regular budget of the United Nations. His delegation would continue to support UNRWA and requested that its mandate should be prolonged.

53. Mr. FONT (Spain) said that Spain was one of the most constant contributors to UNRWA and, with the sole exception of 1978, had contributed approximately \$1 million a year to its budget. Clearly the Agency's situation should be a matter of concern to all delegations, and the international community could not ignore the situation of the Palestine refugees. However, it would be wrong to transform a question which related to certain States in particular into a problem for all States, and thereby to shift responsibility from a few States to the whole community of States. Such a distortion of reality could be excused if its purpose was to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees, but it was counter-productive if it absolved from responsibility those parties which were directly named in United Nations decisions. The obstinacy of States which persistently failed to comply with the United Nations resolutions placed a heavy burden on the humanitarian conscience of the majority. His delegation wished to repeat that the solution to that problem must be a political solution, and it would be achieved only through the acceptance and implementation in good faith, by all parties, of the relevant United Nations resolutions and by a general and global peace based on those resolutions.

54. Mr. KALUPALA (Zaire) said that it was truly regrettable that, though the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Special Political Committee itself had for decades been calling for peace in the Middle East, no progress had been achieved. He reiterated his country's position, which had been expressed at an earlier stage of the present session of the General Assembly and during the seventh emergency session on Palestine. His delegation appealed to the parties to the conflict to find an appropriate solution to the tragic problems of Palestine, since the economic difficulties described in the reports of the Commissioner-General and of the Working Group on the Financing of the Agency gave the impression that the lives of many Palestinian refugees were in danger.

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55. Mrs. JOKA BANGURA (Sierra Leone) reminded the Committee that UNRWA had existed for longer than many African and other States Members of the United Nations. For an agency which had been established as a temporary measure, 30 years of existence and numerous unimplemented resolutions were a sad comment on the international community's ability to resolve a problem which involved a lot of suffering for part of mankind. What was even more disturbing was the fact that the situation had worsened and that, during the present session of the General Assembly, even the continued existence of the Agency was being called into question because of the lack of financial resources. Apart from the financial problems, other measures recommended previously had never been implemented. For example, no action had been taken on the question of compensation or repatriation and reintegration. The Agency might have been established for humanitarian reasons, but over the years it had acquired political dimensions, as was clear from paragraph 4 of the Commissioner-General's report (A/35/13).

56. All members of the international community should honour their financial obligations to UNRWA to enable it to continue its very important and necessary existence. Her delegation wished to pay tribute to Governments that had increased their contributions, to those that were still providing various types of assistance to the Palestine refugees, and also to the specialized agencies involved in the work of UNRWA.

57. With regard to the question of the Agency's headquarters, her delegation felt that it should be located in the area of operations. Relocation of the headquarters in that area would ensure the efficiency of its work and would reassure the refugees themselves.

58. Apart from the humanitarian aspect of the question being considered by the Committee, it had to be said that 30 years was a very long time for any group of people to remain refugees. As had already been stated, a refugee was someone who left his home for some reason to seek refuge in another country. All refugees cherished the hope of returning some day to their homeland. That phenomenon was not characteristic only of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the statements made in the Committee in exercise of the right of reply left little hope of a speedy settlement of the problem.

59. The Palestinian issue was at the root of many problems in the Middle East, especially between Israel and the Arabs. When the General Assembly had decided to grant observer status in the United Nations to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) there had been no objection from any other Palestinian organization. The PLO was the spokesman of the Palestinian people. Israel was also a reality and a Member of the United Nations. Israel should give up the land it had occupied since 1967 and stop hiding behind the excuse that the PLO did not accept its existence. His delegation called on Israel and the PLO to negotiate to put an end to the heart-breaking conditions of the Palestinians in the region.

60. The peoples of many States Members of the United Nations had been forced to resort to armed struggle to gain their independence and they had been called terrorists by those who preferred the peoples to remain forever subjugated, oppressed and repressed. In other parts of the world the peoples that had resorted to armed struggle to rid themselves of repressive Governments had been called

(Mrs. Joka Bangura, Sierra Leone)

terrorists by some, heroes by others. Whether as terrorists or as heroes, the PLO had an important part to play in the solution of the Palestinian problem. The friends of both Israel and the PLO should draw them together and into negotiations.

61. His delegation called once more on the international community to give every support to UNRWA in its efforts to make the life of the Palestinian refugees less unbearable.

62. Mr. PITA ASTUDILLO (Cuba) reiterated the firm belief of his Government that the true causes of the present afflictions of the Palestinian people, which were of course reflected in UNRWA, should be sought first and foremost in the monstrous act of despoliation committed more than 30 years previously by the Zionist State of Israel which had generated the Palestinian diaspora. Any conclusion reached in a United Nations forum should point the finger at Israel, a convicted and confessed criminal, at its principal ally, the United States of America, and at those countries which had given and were continuing to give political and material support to Israeli expansionism in the area. His delegation maintained, as a matter of principle, that the moral responsibility for financing the Agency lay with Israel and its allies. It was precisely those who had caused the disaster who should take ethical, moral and legal responsibility for their actions.

63. With regard to the report of the Commissioner-General (A/35/13), it was understandable that the Agency's budget deficit should give cause for concern. However, he believed that the very existence of UNRWA was evidence of commitment on the part of the international community to assist a flood of Palestinian refugees, currently numbering over 1,800,000. Such a commitment could not be suddenly abandoned or pushed off on other Arab countries in the region which had been making countless sacrifices on behalf of the Arab people of Palestine. His delegation could not fail to be alarmed at the fact that, for financial reasons, the Agency was going to stop providing school programmes, food and medical care for large numbers of Palestinian refugees. Neither could it agree with the idea of making selective cuts in educational or aid programmes in certain Arab countries, while leaving programmes in other countries untouched, as proposed in paragraph 7 of the report (A/35/13).

64. Inflation was an import which gnawed at the flesh of the developing countries and particularly affected the Palestinian refugees cared for under the Agency's programmes. However, all those difficulties should certainly not lead to resignation or to the breach of international commitments. That would be tantamount to saying that the complexities of the Middle East situation and the question of Palestine were such as to justify abandoning the common cause, which consisted in working towards a just and a lasting solution in the region and the full attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Additional efforts should be made to find new sources of funding. His delegation pointed out that it would be appropriate to concentrate on obtaining fellowships from the international community for Palestinian students, given the need for the Palestinian people to train their sons and daughters for a new, not too far distant, future. He reiterated his delegation's belief that the Gordian Knot of the problem of Palestine could only be untied by the speedy achievement of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine; that was the only solution that

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(Mr. Pita Astudillo, Cuba)

would really guarantee there would be no need in future to deal with such pressing problems as those mentioned in the reports under consideration.

65. Mr. KAMBIRIGI (Burundi) said that all Member States should support the appeal of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for an increase in humanitarian contributions to the Agency. His country had always demonstrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people who were pursuing their struggle to regain their inalienable rights, dignity and independence.

66. The United Nations had adopted many resolutions calling upon Israel to withdraw its troops from Arab and Palestinian territories, and to respect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, but all the resolutions on the subject had remained a dead letter. His delegation believed that the time had come for Israel to comply with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the question of the Middle East and Palestine.

67. He quoted the statement made in the General Assembly on 1 October 1980 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of his country, in which his Government had condemned the occupation by Israel of Arab and Palestinian lands and called upon the Israeli authorities to respect the sanctity of the city of Jerusalem. He added that the people of his country believed that all the peoples of the world should stand shoulder to shoulder in aiding the Palestine refugees.

68. Miss VALERE (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the problems currently facing UNRWA were well known to the international community. The Commissioner-General had aptly summarized the situation in his report to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly when he had stated that the threat which hung over UNRWA was that adequate income to maintain its services to the refugee community would cause it to collapse, and instead of an orderly transfer of responsibilities, turmoil would ensue.

69. In his address to the Committee on 15 October 1980 the Commissioner-General had stated that the Agency's current deficit stood at \$37 million. The projected deficit for 1981 was between \$56 and \$90 million, the highest in the Agency's history, and it would force the Agency to cut back its programmes in the areas of health and education.

70. The educational programmes of UNRWA played a crucial role in the lives of the Palestinian refugees; any curtailment of the Agency's resources in that sphere would therefore aggravate further the difficult conditions under which the refugees were living, a factor which would undoubtedly exacerbate tensions in the Middle East.

71. Her delegation hoped that each Member State, especially non-contributors, would give consideration to the problems of UNRWA and respond positively to the appeals made by the Commissioner-General and the Working Group.

72. With regard to the location of UNRWA's headquarters which was currently divided between Vienna and Amman, the most practical solution for all the parties concerned would be to reconsolidate the Agency's headquarters at Beirut or elsewhere within the area of operations.

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(Miss Valere, Trinidad and Tobago)

73. Her delegation hoped that a renewal of the Agency's mandate would be accompanied by constructive action on the part of all States Members of the United Nations which would ensure continuation of the Agency's indispensable services to the Palestine refugees until a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement was achieved in the Middle East.
74. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan), introducing draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.4, said that that draft concerned the educational needs of the Palestinian refugees, for education was their only support in their dispersal pending their long-awaited repatriation to Palestine in accordance with paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) and other related resolutions. However, there was no reason to expect that until that time the Palestinian people would remain immobile, restricting themselves to a life at a mere subsistence level. At enormous sacrifice they had managed to obtain for their sons and daughters the kind of higher education that had enabled the majority of them to rise to the higher levels of productive employment.
75. He was grateful to the countries and non-governmental organizations that had responded to the Secretary-General's appeal for more scholarships for refugees. Australia was particularly to be commended for its offer of scholarships.
76. In operative paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.4 it was proposed that ways of establishing a university at Jerusalem to cater to the pressing needs of Palestinian refugees in the area should be studied. Such a university, which would be under the aegis of the United Nations, would meet the needs of a quarter of a million Palestinian refugees and inhabitants of Jerusalem and its environs, whose sons and daughters could only receive higher education by studying abroad, where it was, moreover, becoming harder and harder for them to enrol at universities owing to the fact that their parents had been born in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus or Jaffa, as though that were shameful.
77. With regard to the financial implications of establishing the proposed university, it should be pointed out that there were many Palestinians who had been successful in life and that their Arab brethren throughout the region and all friendly countries and peoples were willing and able to share financial responsibility for that noble project. Furthermore, it was inconceivable that, for political reasons, the establishment of such a university or of any other cultural or social institution intended to assist refugees and inhabitants of occupied areas should be impeded, which was the reason why the United Nations should play an active role of a catalyst, in accordance with its Charter. With regard to possible impediments, there was the sad experience of a college at Abu Dees, a suburb of Jerusalem, whose Board of Trustees had tried to transform it into a university. The Israeli military governor had informed the Board that the Palestinians did not need additional universities, and the land had been confiscated so that an Israeli colony might be built on it.
78. His delegation hoped that the Committee would adopt draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.4 by consensus and that, at its following regular session, the General Assembly would have before it a comprehensive report on the various aspects of establishing the proposed University of Jerusalem so that implementation of the draft could begin promptly and without delay.

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79. Mr. KAZI (Pakistan) said that the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip (A/35/473). In the light of the contents of that report his delegation, together with the delegations of Bangladesh and Yugoslavia, had sponsored a draft resolution on the question (A/SPC/35/L.8), which recalled the provisions of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, called once more upon Israel to desist from removal and resettlement of Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip and from destruction of their shelters and requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly by the opening of its thirty-sixth session on Israel's compliance with the foregoing. He expressed the hope that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution unanimously.

80. The CHAIRMAN announced that the general debate under agenda item 53 had been concluded, with the exception of the statement that the Commissioner-General of UNRWA would make at the following meeting.

81. Mr. RAMIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that in the course of the meeting a number of speakers had referred to the problem of the Jewish refugees who had been obliged to leave Arab countries in 1948 and subsequently, to go to Israel. Those speakers had asserted that the Jews had not been obliged to leave the Arab countries in which they had been living and had stressed the need to consider the problem of Jewish refugees from Arab countries in conjunction with the problem of Arab refugees. In that connexion, he quoted the view expressed by the Arab scholar Sabri Jiryis, as published in the Lebanese daily Al Nahar on 15 May 1975, namely:

"There is no need now to recount the circumstances which brought about the dislodgement of the Jews from Arab States from their countries, where they lived for centuries, expelling them in the most ugly manner, after confiscating their property or seizing control of it at the cheapest price. It is impossible to justify the matter by saying that it was the past régimes in the Arab world, aided by the imperialist power which worked in co-ordination with Zionism who did it ... The historical results ensuing from such an operation cannot be wiped out by such simple pretexts ... There is no need to say that the problem of those Jews and their transfer to Israel is not merely theoretical, at least as far as the Palestinians are concerned. It has a very practical repercussion on the future of the Palestinian problem."
(A/34/337).

82. Mr. RAHMAN (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that he would not enlarge on the question of who was responsible for the flight from Arab countries of the Arab Jews who now lived in Palestine, since that was already well known. On the other hand, he would make reference to a further crime committed by the Israeli military occupation authorities on 20 October, in violation of the human and political rights of two elected mayors: the Mayor of Halhul and the Mayor of Alhalil. After having detained them in a cafeteria near the Allenby Bridge over the River Jordan for about five days the Israeli authorities had refused to comply with the Security Council resolutions calling for their return or to heed the appeal made by the international community that they should be permitted to return to their families and continue to carry out their duties of elected mayor in the two towns he had mentioned.

(Mr. Rahman, Observer, PLO)

83. He urged all those who supported human rights as part of their national policy not to remain silent with regard to the issue, since it was a question of a violation of human rights by the Israeli authorities against two Palestinian citizens. Remaining neutral with regard to that question was tantamount to not taking any action on it, and that would only enable the aggressors to continue their acts of aggression.

84. The CHAIRMAN announced that the following countries had joined the sponsors of the draft resolutions that the Committee had before it: Bangladesh (A/SPC/35/L.4 and L.5); Bangladesh and Spain (A/SPC/35/L.6); India and Indonesia (A/SPC/35/L.7 and L.8). At the following meeting the Committee would vote on the six draft resolutions and at the morning meeting on the following Thursday, it would take up agenda items 55 and 56 on the peaceful uses of outer space.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.