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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
24th meeting
held on
Thursday, 5 November 1981
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 60: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/SPC/36/L.6, L.7 and L.8)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (A/36/13)
- (b) REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/36/615)
- (c) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE (A/36/529)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/36/385 and Add.1 and 2, A/36/558, 559 and 593)

1. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that his delegation wished to commend the Commissioner-General on the perseverance, determination and self-denial with which he had fulfilled his mandate in the face of tremendous difficulties. In view of the Agency's increasingly serious financial problems, the General Assembly should renew its urgent appeal to Member States to pledge appropriate voluntary contributions without delay and to take special steps for the rationalization and management of the Agency's projects. The Committee must consider practical measures urgently if peace and stability in the Near East were to be safeguarded.

2. The international community must be more detached in its approach to the situation in the Near East, where thousands of refugees were living in conditions of great hardship, by considering not only the humanitarian aspect of the problem but also the threat to peace posed by the attitude of one country which persistently violated the legal and moral standards of the United Nations. By disregarding the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX) defining the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and Security Council resolution 476 (1980) on the status of Jerusalem, Israel was entrenching itself in a kind of permanent illegality, characterized in particular by unjust measures of depersonalization, expropriation, expulsion and destruction of Arab cultural property.

3. The international community must respond to that situation by taking exceptional measures to place the Agency's finances on a sound footing. His country assured the Agency of its support and co-operation. The situation also required that the international community not only find ways to permit the return of the Palestine refugees to their homes but also create the conditions for a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question through the liberation of the occupied Arab territories and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Palestinians, like their African brothers in Namibia and South Africa, only wished to live in peace and dignity and the international community must not fail them.

4. Mr. RAMIN (Israel) said that it was the policy of belligerence of a number of Arab countries that was impeding a solution of the refugee problem. That problem had been increasingly politicized and magnified by rhetoric and it would

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(Mr. Ramin, Israel)

be appropriate to recall a few elementary facts. There was an Arab refugee problem because the Arab States had not accepted United Nations resolutions, starting with resolution 181 (II), affirming the Jewish people's right to independence, and because they had invaded Israel in defiance of the Charter even before the end of the British mandate. Those facts were fully documented in the records of the United Nations: in its report to the Security Council on 16 February 1948, the United Nations Palestine Committee had stated that the Arabs were defying General Assembly resolution 181 (II); Trygve Lie had written in In the Cause of Peace that the Arabs intended to resist partition by force and were attacking the Jewish community in Palestine; on 16 April 1948, the representative of the Arab Higher Committee had told the Security Council that the Arabs were publicly claiming responsibility for their acts of aggression; the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs had told the Security Council on 21 May 1948 that the Arab States had carried out military operations aimed at the suppression of the national liberation movement in Palestine and that Israel had only ever acted in self-defence; and, finally, the United States representative had told the Security Council on 22 May 1948 that the five countries that had invaded Palestine had admitted that they were carrying on a war.

5. The hostilities thus unleashed in 1948 had promoted population movements in both directions between Israel and the Arab countries, with Jewish refugees leaving Arab countries and Arab refugees leaving Israel in approximately the same numbers. It would be inconceivable to reverse those two movements of large masses of people. The only solution was to integrate them. The attitude of the Arab countries in that connexion had been radically different from that of Israel, however. Israel had welcomed its refugees and provided them with food, clothing, medical assistance, education, houses and work. It had been left to do that by itself, for no relief agency had been established to help it and no one at the United Nations had concerned himself about the plight of the Jewish refugees. The Arab refugees, on the other hand, had received considerable attention; they had become wards of the United Nations and the Relief and Works Agency had been set up to assist them. Yet they had not been in a worse plight or more drastically uprooted than the Jewish refugees, who had had to leave places where their families had lived for centuries and abandon considerable property. The Arab Governments, abusing the humanitarian sentiments of the international community and encouraged by the resignation or assent of certain Member States, had constantly exploited the existence of the Arab refugees in their campaign of unabated hostility towards Israel. As a former head of UNRWA and other observers had rightly noted almost 25 years previously, for the Arab Governments the refugee problem was above all a means of pressure, an open sore which they wanted to keep festering in public. They had done everything to prevent the refugees from resettling and finding work or from emigrating to other countries. In short, the Arab States did not want the problem to be solved because their inhuman policy was to maintain a menacing population on the frontier with Israel. Throughout history, there had always been refugees in one place or another but that was the first time that they had been used as an instrument of continuing warfare and international conflict.

6. As a result, it was a dismissal of fact and reason to claim that Israel should systematically permit persons displaced by the 1967 hostilities to return. That would open Israel's frontiers to saboteurs and agents of terrorist

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(Mr. Ramin, Israel)

organizations which proclaimed publicly that they intended to continue their collective, indiscriminate attacks. It was unjust and harmful to listen to only one side and to overlook the other's right to safety and security when all it was doing was trying to defend itself.

7. With regard to the over-all question of the refugees' right to return to their homes, the Arab States claimed that that right stemmed from paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). However, by isolating that paragraph from its context, when all the paragraphs of the resolution were interdependent, and by giving it their own particular interpretation, the Arab States were distorting the resolution, the sole objective of which was a peaceful Arab-Israeli settlement. The Arab countries were trying to deal with the refugee problem as if it existed in a vacuum and to disregard its background of continued Arab belligerence against Israel. The problems created by population displacements in 1948 and 1967 could be resolved only within the context of an over-all peace settlement. The Security Council had recognized that fact in its resolution 242 (1967) which applied to both Jewish and Arab refugees. In the absence of such a peace, the Government of Israel had taken several tangible steps over the years: the reunion of Arab families; the resettlement of displaced persons; the release of funds belonging to Arab refugees; its offer to participate in any programme to assist the resettlement of refugees in the Arab world; the granting of permits for the return of persons displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities; and the payment in 1981 of more than \$US 21 million in contributions from public funds to finance social services for the refugees. In Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Israel had made it possible for the refugees to improve their economic situation and their outlook on life and to be assimilated fully into all aspects of local life. They were also free to travel to and from neighbouring Arab countries. Their standard of living had improved significantly, as the then Commissioner-General of UNRWA had noted as early as 1966. The refugees' substantial absorption was not immediately apparent, however, because it was Agency's rule to keep refugees and their descendants on its registers indefinitely, even when they became self-supporting. It was essential that the Agency's records be updated, especially in view of the Agency's permanent financial difficulties. There should also be a change of approach to the UNRWA camps in Lebanon. The Agency could not continue to serve camps which were now under the control of terrorist organizations, nor could the United Nations give assistance to persons engaged in warfare against a Member State.

8. The problem of the Palestinian Arab refugees, which had already been partly solved by force of events, could be solved fully. For that to happen, however, Governments must stop exploiting the refugee problem as a weapon against Israel and be prepared to deal with it within the context of peace negotiations based on mutual respect for the rights of Israel and the Arab States. A just and lasting peace was vital to the region as a whole and would be in the interest of the international community. With the Camp David accords, considerable progress had already been made towards that goal and that progress must be sustained for it was within such a process that the refugee problem would find its proper solution.

9. Mr. SHI (China) said that his delegation had noted with satisfaction the excellent work done by the Agency. But it had also noted the difficulties caused for it by the lack of financial resources and, in particular, by the attitude of

(Mr. Shi, China)

the Israeli authorities. In the past year, the occupation authorities had demolished the shelters of many Palestinian refugees on so-called punitive grounds. Even the staff of the Agency had frequently been interrogated, arrested and detained without charge and their work and travel had been restricted. But, most serious of all, the Agency staff had been subjected to Israel bombing and shelling. According to incomplete statistics, 107 people had been injured, including 3 Agency officers, and 25 people killed in 12 months. His delegation wished to express its appreciation to the staff of the five Agency offices in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

10. Persisting in its expansionist policy, Israel was flagrantly violating the principles of the United Nations Charter and the fundamental rules of international law. That hostility was made possible by the support of the super-Powers. One super-Power was openly intensifying its political, economic and military support to Israel, while the other was seizing every opportunity to undermine Arab unity. But the Palestinian people had not let themselves be intimidated by Israeli persecution or deceived by the schemes of the super-Powers. Under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), they had taken up arms and withstood hardships and their cause had won the sympathy of the whole world.

11. Mr. Hu Yaobang and Mr. Deng Xiaoping, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, at their meeting with the PLO delegation headed by Mr. Yasir Arafat on 9 October, had reaffirmed that China resolutely supported the Palestinian people. His country had always striven to render assistance to the PLO within the limit of its capabilities. His delegation was convinced that if the Arab States and peoples showed their solidarity and the international community gave its support, the Palestinian people would receive the assistance they needed. With the support of the countries and peoples which upheld justice, they would succeed in regaining their national rights and fulfilling their national aspirations.

12. Mr. TOPCUOGLU (Turkey) said that the Agency had been established 30 years ago for humanitarian purposes to meet an emergency situation. But it should not be forgotten that the question of the Palestinian refugees was primarily political in nature. It would not be possible to put an end to the miseries and sufferings of the Palestinian people until lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict was found, which would only be possible, as his country had often stated, through the withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and through the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish an independent State in their own territory and to live within secure and recognized boundaries along with every other State in the region. The Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, must participate in any negotiation process undertaken to that end.

13. His country was concerned by the humanitarian aspect of the Palestine refugee problem and by the grave financial difficulties which the Agency had to face and on which the Commissioner-General's report had once again focused. The Agency had entered 1981 with a deficit of \$71 million. Since then, special contributions had been made as a result of fund-raising appeals launched in particular by the

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(Mr. Topcuoglu, Turkey)

Secretary-General and by the Chairman of the Working Group. His own Government, despite its economic difficulties, had contributed some \$20,000, which was proof of the importance which it attached to maintaining the services of the Agency.

14. Towards mid-1981, the deficit had been \$45 million. The Commissioner-General had been able to meet that deficit, without closing any of the schools, only by taking a calculated risk, in other words, by drawing on reserves and eliminating expenditure on many items.

15. The prospects for 1982 were just as worrying. A deficit of \$80 million was envisaged, a figure unprecedented in the history of the Agency. Confronted with that critical situation, the Commissioner-General had stated that he would soon be obliged to contemplate a further reduction in Agency expenditure, but that it would not be possible to do that "without doing irreparable damage to the education programme" of the Agency. If people wished to avert the closure of Agency schools, with all the consequences that that would involve for the 175,000 Palestinian students who were enrolled there, the volume of contributions would have to be considerably increased.

16. His Government was firmly convinced that the Agency's humanitarian services were indispensable and irreplaceable. In addition, it fully endorsed the view of the Commissioner-General, expressed in 1980, that developments which had occurred within the last three decades had made UNRWA a significant factor in the political equation. Lastly, it believed that the responsibility for maintaining UNRWA services rested not only on a small group of countries but on all States, particularly those which had the necessary means.

17. Like many other States, his country considered it urgent to endow the Agency with a sounder and more stable financial basis. Several suggestions had been made to change the system of financing the Agency by making it obligatory. They deserved to be studied and it would doubtless be very useful to begin informal consultations on the subject between Member States.

18. For his part, the Commissioner-General had proposed that Governments which had shown their concern for UNRWA's fate should hold informal consultations with a view to reaching an agreement on a reasonable apportioning of the Agency's expenses among themselves. His country urged the delegations concerned to consider that suggestion seriously. Such informal consultations would contribute greatly to improving the Agency's financial situation and could lead to consultations on a larger scale aimed at improving the Agency's financing system. They should begin immediately after the Pledging Conference.

19. Two questions of an administrative kind had been raised in the Commissioner-General's report. Firstly, it was to be hoped that it would be possible, with the co-operation of all interested parties, to put a stop to the arrests of Agency officers who were detained or interrogated without being charged or brought to trial. Secondly, UNRWA's headquarters ought to be relocated to its area of operations.

20. In conclusion, he pointed out that his country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group on the

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(Mr. Topcuoglu, Turkey)

Financing of UNRWA, wished to emphasize the urgency and importance of the appeal addressed by the Working Group to all Governments to support the Agency financially or to increase their contributions.

21. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) said that among all the refugees who were innocent victims of conflicts and aggressions, the list of which grew longer every year, there was one group which had been excluded from its homeland for more than 30 years and was suffering from a brutal policy of aggression, expropriation and denial of the most basic human rights.

22. Several waves of Palestinian refugees had followed one another since 1948 and their situation had done nothing but deteriorate, especially as a result of the continual aggressions against the north and south of Lebanon. But despite being separated physically from their land, the Palestinians had never stopped and would never stop belonging to Palestine and they would strive by every means to return to their homeland.

23. The world had now understood that the question of Palestine was at the heart of the Middle East problem. Those who continued to claim that the Palestinians were only a group of refugees who would allow themselves to be destroyed by despair were making a serious mistake. The Palestinian people, who had been struggling for more than 30 years, would never resign themselves to their plight and would continue to struggle until they had created their own independent State.

24. The refugee problem could be solved, not by giving aid to the Palestinian people, but rather by finding an equitable and permanent solution to the Middle East question which would make it possible to guarantee the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the right to return to their homes in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11.

25. Egypt had long since warned the international community of the risk of financial collapse for UNRWA. As was stated in paragraph 25 of the report, it was the system of financing the Agency, by reason of its purely voluntary basis and its lack of co-ordination, that had caused the current financial crisis.

26. However, as was stated in paragraph 24 of the report, the financial difficulties of UNRWA did not seem to stem from any lack of awareness on the part of Governments of the important role that the Agency played in the Middle East. Paradoxically, the international community realized only too well how serious the consequences of the partial or total collapse of the Agency would be, yet it continued to behave as if UNRWA was not part of the world community and had no role to play in international relations.

27. Instead of blaming one another on historical, political or moral grounds for the tragedy, the international community would do better to share the burden of financing UNRWA so as to help it to overcome the crisis and to endow it with a sound and permanent financing system.

28. In view of the stabilizing role of UNRWA in the region, his delegation was extremely disquieted about the prospect of a reduction in the Agency's education programmes which, in its view, should have the highest priority.

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

29. Those who questioned the intentions of UNRWA should be reminded that it was the United Nations which, following the 1948 tragedy, had decided to create UNRWA in order to assist refugees who had lost their lands and property. Until such time as an equitable and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis emerged, the Organization would remain responsible for maintaining the services that were being provided to refugees through UNRWA.

30. For all those reasons, the international community would, as a short-term measure, have to make itself responsible for UNRWA's current deficit and, for the long term, consider the possibility of compulsory funding. His delegation accordingly endorsed the Commissioner-General's proposal that those States that had shown their concern for the activities of UNRWA should consult one another informally with a view to reaching an agreement on the level of financing required and on a reasonable apportioning of UNRWA's expenses. He pointed out that fewer than 20 States made the voluntary contributions to UNRWA which enabled it to finance two thirds of its costs. That situation was unjust, and other States must demonstrate their willingness to help to maintain the Agency. In that connexion, his delegation fully endorsed the PLO proposal for the establishment of a special fund to meet the deficit of UNRWA.

31. The problems facing UNRWA were not, of course, solely of a financial nature. The report of the Commissioner-General indicated that UNRWA staff members were being interrogated, questioned or detained without a charge being preferred or being brought to court. Those acts were not attributable solely to the Israeli occupation authorities but also even to countries that made fine speeches about the rights of Palestinians and their tragedy.

32. His delegation condemned all measures taken against the staff of the Agency and of the refugee camps. It also condemned the methods of collective punishment applied by the occupation authorities to refugees. Those measures of harassment, which were being applied daily to refugees, were contrary to the most elementary human rights. His delegation demanded that the demolition of Palestinian family shelters by the Israeli authorities should be ended; in its view, the Palestinians had the right to fair compensation. The same applied to the destruction caused by the continued Israeli bombing of southern Lebanon.

33. Egypt had always been one of the most ardent defenders of the Palestinians and would never abandon its commitment to them. Proof of that was provided in table 13 of the report, which summarized the direct assistance given to Palestine refugees.

34. His delegation fully supported the comments in paragraphs 23-26 of the report of the Working Group (A/36/615) concerning the financing and activities of UNRWA. It was prepared to co-operate fully with the Working Group in informal consultations.

35. His delegation paid a tribute to the efforts made by the Secretary-General, by UNESCO and by UNRWA to establish a university in Jerusalem and it regretted the lack of co-operation from the Israeli authorities with regard to that project.

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

36. The fact remained that a major requisite for a settlement of the question of the Middle East was the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which provided for the return of refugees to their homes. The fact that the descendants of a great people which had from time immemorial contributed to the spread of civilization in the region and throughout the world currently had to be described as refugees merely strengthened the ties of the Palestinian people to their native land. The sufferings endured by the people of Palestine and their longing for their land had made Palestinian nationalism one of the principal factors in the history and the future of the region. Accordingly, until such time as that people had recovered their land, peace, security and stability would remain only a dream for the region and for the entire world. That was the reason why the international community, while shouldering its moral and political responsibility for rescuing UNRWA from its current financial crisis, should also strive to encourage efforts to peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian people had recovered their rights, their homeland and their State.

37. Mr. AL DUHEIM (United Arab Emirates) said that he deeply regretted the fact that UNRWA was experiencing recurrent and growing financial difficulties and was in danger of having to curtail its activities.

38. However, consideration of the activities of UNRWA should not be confined to the humanitarian aspect of the problem of refugees, because what was at stake was the tragedy of a people expelled from its lands after imperialist forces had agreed to the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel. In his view, it was primarily because it was to blame for the refugee problem that the international community had a duty to find a solution to the financial problems of UNRWA.

39. The admission of Israel to the United Nations, which had happened only because of the fact that the majority of countries had at the time been under colonial domination, had been conditional on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), of 1948, paragraph 11 of which provided for the right of refugees to return to their homes or to be paid compensation. Israel, however, with the support and assistance of the United States, had complied with neither that resolution nor other resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the subject and had continued its activities of expropriation and aggression.

40. Since the international community had condemned Israel and affirmed the right of the Palestine people to return to their homeland, it was more than ever incumbent on the United Nations to shoulder its responsibilities, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, by enabling Palestinians to recover the rights of which they had been deprived and by producing an equitable over-all solution to that problem before it was too late.

41. The problem of the Palestine people did have financial aspects and it had imposed very heavy burdens on Arab States, particularly the host States for the refugees. The international community, which was responsible for that problem, was also responsible for providing help to Palestinian refugees, and it was its imperative duty to find a solution to the financial problems of UNRWA by putting its budget on a more stable foundation. In that connexion his delegation proposed that the budgetary deficit of UNRWA should be met by: (a) charging that deficit

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(Mr. Al Duheim, United Arab Emirates)

to the budget of the United Nations, as had been done by other agencies; (b) requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a study on the feasibility of incorporating the budget of UNRWA into the regular budget of the United Nations and of establishing new scales of assessment in which account would be taken of the special responsibility of certain States because of their unconditional support for Israel; and (c) enabling Palestinian refugees to enjoy the income from their property, which would suffice to cover their needs and to dispense with international assistance which in some cases was made subject to conditions.

42. The United Arab Emirates, recognizing the humanitarian nature of UNRWA's activities and in response to the appeals made to Member States by the Secretary-General, had decided to increase their contribution to UNRWA by 10 per cent and to make a special contribution of \$500,000 to the Agency.

43. Mr. VLASCEANU (Romania) said that his delegation had constantly supported the measures taken by the Committee to support the programmes of assistance for the Palestinian refugees. Moreover, Romania had offered bilateral assistance to the refugees and had made a modest contribution, within the limits of its possibilities, to UNRWA programmes. His delegation felt that the Commissioner-General's suggestions for the solution of the financial difficulties of UNRWA deserved to be carefully examined, together with the other proposals put forward by Member States. It also shared the opinion stressed in the report of the Working Group that the humanitarian services of the Agency in the form of education, health care and relief assistance remained indispensable so long as the Palestinian problem was not settled.

44. In spite of all the efforts of the Agency, the situation of the Palestinian refugees remained intolerable and the resulting tensions in the Middle East were very dangerous for peace and international security. The difficulties faced by the Agency, especially in the fields of education, training, health and assistance, had serious implications for the future and particularly for the stability and peace of the region. Those prospects underlined more than ever the urgent need to advance beyond temporary measures and to seek a substantive political solution of the Palestinian problem as a whole; that was precisely the meaning of resolution 35/13 A of 3 November 1980, by which the General Assembly had decided to extend the mandate of UNRWA pending a political solution of the Palestinian problem.

45. Accordingly, while supporting the efforts made by the Committee to ensure the continuity of the programme of assistance for the refugees, his delegation felt that the General Assembly should tackle without delay the main causes of the problem and, by a greater mobilization of the international effort and the achievement of a unity of will of Member States, should achieve a just settlement of the Palestinian problem. The perpetuation of the present situation constituted not only an act of grave injustice towards the Palestinian people but also was a source of permanent tension and danger for peace with implications which went far beyond the Middle East region.

46. His delegation considered that a genuine solution of the problem of the refugees could not be found outside the exercise by the Palestinian people of

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(Mr. Vlasceanu, Romania)

its legitimate rights. That required the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 and respect for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and to an independent national State. Such a settlement should ensure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all the States of the area.

47. Romania considered that the interests of peace, co-operation and security required the mobilization of world public opinion and the intensification of efforts to organize an international conference with the participation of all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. Such a conference would enable the people of the region to put an end to the destruction and suffering caused by war and to concentrate their efforts on their economic and social and free and independent development in a climate of understanding and fruitful co-operation.

48. His delegation was ready to co-operate with other interested delegations with a view to working out new measures which would help overcome the present difficulties of the Agency and to achieve more rapidly a just and lasting solution of the Palestinian problem. The adoption of such measures would constitute an important contribution to the cause of détente, international co-operation and world peace.

49. Mrs. DADDAH (Mauritania) said that during the consideration of the item concerning the peaceful uses of outer space the international community had been able to rejoice in the conquests of the human spirit in the field of science and technology. However, there was no cause for rejoicing at the situation in the Middle East and in southern Africa where two peoples were deprived of their dignity and their most elementary human rights, in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and many other international legal instruments.

50. Mauritania, which was privileged to belong both to Africa and to the Arab world, had always supported the cause of Africans who were victims of apartheid and the cause of Palestinians who were the victims of zionism.

51. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA called for three types of comment.

52. Firstly, a tribute should be paid to the Commissioner-General for the far-sightedness and devotion with which he was discharging his difficult task. Moreover, in that respect it was regrettable that the health and relief programmes had been reduced, although it was gratifying that priority was still given to educational programmes. Indeed, education and culture were essential for the future of the Palestinian people and the exercise of their rights.

53. Secondly, the financial difficulties mentioned in the report were all the more disquieting because, besides its humanitarian vocation, the Agency constituted an important factor of stability and peace in the region. In order to maintain the Agency's programmes, the uncertain nature and inadequacy of voluntary contributions

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(Mrs. Daddah, Mauritania)

should be remedied. For that purpose, her delegation felt it was necessary to finance the Agency from the regular budget of the United Nations and to apportion the costs equally among Governments. Such a system did not exclude voluntary contributions, which would at least lose their charitable nature so wounding for the dignity of the Palestinian people. In that respect, the international community must realize that it was not a question of charity but a duty and a responsibility. Her delegation was disappointed to note that, on the question of Palestinian refugees as on that of information, the member countries of EEC had been represented by a single spokesman, who could not reflect the nuances of opinion peculiar to each country and revealed an attitude close to indifference. In fact, those two questions required new approaches and the renunciation of any form of hegemony.

54. Thirdly, the report of the Commissioner-General made it clear that the Israeli authorities, in disregard of the United Nations, international law and universal morality were arresting and interrogating international officials with diplomatic immunity and were restricting their freedom of movement. Furthermore, the sufferings of the refugees, the destruction of their housing and infringements of their most elementary human rights were now common practice on the part of the Israeli authorities. The official nature of that attitude could be seen in the letter addressed by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs (A/36/593, Annex I, p. 3) in which the assistance programmes to refugees were considered to be too generous. Moreover, in that document the representative of Israel recognized that the situation of the refugees was abnormal, the solution, according to him, being to integrate the Palestinians in the host countries i.e. to let them disappear purely and simply. However a people could not disappear like that, On the contrary, they became stronger in their suffering and tribulations. The Palestinian people existed more than ever and for that reason it was essential for the United Nations and for the peace of the world that they should fully regain their rights, especially because they had a representative recognized by the United Nations and by a growing number of Governments, namely, the PLO, which Israel could not continue to ignore.

55. Finally, she stressed that the work of the United Nations in favour of decolonization and human rights must be completed by the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

56. Mr. SAAID (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that he shared the Commissioner-General's deep concern with regard to the financial deficit of UNRWA at a time when its activities were already at a minimum level.

57. The Commissioner-General's report (A/36/13) evoked awareness of the cause of a people condemned to be constantly on the move, hoping for a miracle that would enable the international community to apply the many resolutions it had adopted in that field. The problem of the Palestinian refugees, apart from its economic, social and humanitarian aspects, was primarily the political problem of a people dispossessed of its homeland by a racist force, and he wished to draw attention in that regard to the many resolutions of the Security Council and recommendations of the General Assembly which reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

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(Mr. Saaid, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

58. The financial deficit of UNRWA worsened year by year, thereby threatening to give rise ultimately to a reduction in the Agency's basic expenditure. It was not surprising that the refugees refused to acknowledge the financial crisis of UNRWA, whatever its cause, when they noted that the Zionist authorities took advantage of the property confiscated from the refugees by deriving an income of several million dollars per year. International public opinion was aware of that situation, which was an insult to justice and equity.

59. His country, which was devoted to humanitarian causes, would have liked the Commissioner-General's report to contain information on the property and wealth which the refugees had had to abandon when they had been evicted from their lands by the Zionists.

60. Moreover, the Commissioner-General alluded in various parts of his report to the possibility of reducing UNRWA activities. The question arose, however, as to what extent it was still possible to reduce UNRWA services, whether in quantity or quality. In paragraph 25 of his report, the Commissioner-General said that "In spite of this, it has proved increasingly difficult to raise the necessary funds to meet the very basic needs of the Agency". It should be pointed out that the Agency's basic needs were none other than those of the Palestinian refugees, who had been led to believe that two or three years of UNRWA operations would be enough to remedy the wrongs caused by the Zionist occupation. The Agency was now entering its fourth decade and the Palestinians were still threatened, even in respect of their basic needs. While recognizing the efforts of the Commissioner-General, his delegation would have liked to see in the report—so as to ensure that the truth was revealed to the international community—a comparison between what the Agency provided for the Palestinian refugees and the aid from which the Zionist entity had profited since its establishment in order to satisfy its expansionist dreams at the expense of the Palestinians and the efforts of the Agency. The activities of the Zionist entity, which were aimed at eliminating the just cause of the Palestinians, would never achieve the results expected. The problem of the Palestinian refugees could be solved not by partial measures but only by means of a radical solution based on the undeniable fact that the Palestinian people had not simply departed from its homeland but had been evicted from it by force of arms and by an inhuman collusion between zionism and imperialism.

61. Pending such a solution, his delegation emphasized the responsibility for financing UNRWA which rested mainly with the States that had conspired with international zionism and continued to support the Zionist entity. In the light of the responsibility which the international community bore in that tragedy, his country urged it to demand that the Zionist entity must repay to the legitimate owners the profits extracted from the exploitation of the property of the Palestinians.

62. For the purpose of covering the deficit of UNRWA, his delegation was convinced of the overriding need to seek more stable financing, and requested that the deficit for 1982 should be met out of the United Nations regular budget.

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(Mr. Saaïd, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

63. Furthermore, it was important to have the UNRWA headquarters speedily moved closer to the region in which it operated, so that its activities might be rendered more effective.

64. He declared that the solution of the problem of the Palestinian refugees and, in general, of the question of the Middle East rested on the return of the Palestinians to their homeland. Any other measure would be merely a palliative which would in no way change the nature of the problem.

65. Mr. LOISELLE (Canada) said that the humanitarian problem of the refugees had a tragic dimension which could leave no member of the international community indifferent; however, the need to aid the refugees should not obscure the fact that the solution to that problem was basically political. In that regard, Canada continued to urge the international community to eschew violence and confrontation in favour of moderation and compromise.

66. As the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs had said in his statement to the General Assembly on 21 September 1981, all the interested parties must participate in a negotiated settlement, the Israelis and Palestinians having legitimate rights and concerns which must be taken into account. He had declared that "Israel's quest for security and recognized boundaries and the right to be fully accepted by its neighbours can be met only in a political, not a military, framework. The same holds true for the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to a homeland within a clearly defined territory—the West Bank and the Gaza Strip". He (Mr. Loïselles) wished to extend that same appeal, addressed to the parties concerned, to all the participants in the debates of the Special Political Committee with a view to avoiding fruitless discussions, and he urged the sponsors of draft resolutions submitted to the Committee to display the necessary flexibility to enable the widest possible consensus to be achieved for the benefit of UNRWA.

67. It was also necessary for the Agency to receive moral and financial support to enable it to continue to provide the Palestinian refugees with basic services. Despite the lack of structures and resources, UNRWA was, in his delegation's view, one of the most efficient agencies of the United Nations. He was deeply concerned, however, about the increase in the costs of UNRWA operations and the precarious state of its financial resources. In addition to the need to keep the costs of aid programmes to the minimum, it was important for all Member States to respond more generously to the Agency's financial needs.

68. In order to tackle the serious financial crisis which was undermining the Agency, Canada proposed long-term solutions and, for its part, was determined to maintain its financial support of UNRWA and to increase the level of its contribution for the next fiscal period.

69. He pointed out that his country's concern remained that of a comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis, the only hope of the Palestinian refugees.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.