

United Nations

Nations Unies RESTRICTED

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

ASSEMBLEE
GENERALE

A/C.3/SC.2/SR.4
4 November 1948

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Dual Distribution

Third Session

SUB-COMMITTEE 2 OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Held at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris,
on Wednesday, 3 November 1948, at 3.30 p.m.

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Chairman:

Mr. G. de BEAUMONT

France

Rapporteur:

Mr. PEREZ CISNEROS

Cuba

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REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS: (a) PART III OF THE PROGRESS REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIATOR FOR PALESTINE: ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES (A/648, A/649, A/689/Add.1, A/689/Corr.1, A/C.3/315, A/C.3/316, A/C.3/317, A/C.3/318, A/C.3/SC.2/W.1, A/C.3/SC.2/1, A/C.3/SC.2/2, A/C.3/SC.2/3 (continue

The CHAIRMAN requested Mr. Hill (Secretariat) to present a memorandum by the Secretary-General (A/C.3/SC.2/W.1).

Mr. HILL (Secretariat) expressed regret that, through no fault of the Secretariat, it had not been possible to submit the memorandum earlier. It contained a plan which was acceptable to the Secretary-General and would, it was hoped, be equally acceptable to the General Assembly. The Secretary-General felt that, if the plan were adopted, there would be an excellent prospect of quick and effective action with respect to relief of Palestinian refugees.

The plan provided for maximum administrative simplicity, economy, and the concentration of responsibility in the hands of the director of relief operations and of the Secretary-General himself. It was felt that the director should be given the widest possible terms of reference, enabling him to deal with problems relevant to the most effective allocation and distribution of supplies.

Mr. Hill pointed out that, while changes could be made with respect to many points in the plan, certain basic features, such as the small committee mentioned in paragraph 1 (e), could not be altered without invalidating the plan as a whole. He stressed the fact that the Secretary-General remained convinced of the need of a small body to which he could refer at his discretion for advice on matters of principle and policy.

At the second meeting of the Sub-Committee, the Belgian representative had made two points with which the Secretary-General was in complete agreement: the existence of an advisory committee would greatly strengthen the authority of the Secretary-General's decisions; while the members of that committee should have expert qualifications, they must be competent to advise not only on administrative and operational matters but also on questions of policy which might have political overtones. Past experience had shown that questions of policy, jeopardizing the relief operations in progress, might arise. On such occasions the Secretary-General wished to be able to avail himself of the advice of a competent and informed body which would share with him the responsibility for the decisions he would have to take.

It had been said that there was little or no need for an advisory committee in view of the fact that distribution of supplies in the field

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would be performed by voluntary relief organizations. The truth of the matter was, however, that in negotiating with those organizations the Secretary-General must be able to assure them that they would not be called upon to solve any problems save purely operational ones and that they would not be involved in issues that might in any way prejudice their standing.

It had also been said that the functions, composition, place and time of meetings of the committee remained vague and that a great deal of time might be lost in establishing them. To meet that objection, the Secretary-General submitted the following concrete proposals for the consideration of the Sub-Committee. The Secretary-General did not insist that the proposed committee should have executive functions. He was willing to accept an advisory committee, the terms of reference of which could state briefly that it was set up in order to give advice to the Secretary-General and to the director of Palestine refugee relief at their request and whenever they felt that it was needed. He agreed with the suggestion of the Bolivian representative that the Committee might consist of seven members, appointed by the President of the General Assembly. It would meet whenever asked to do so by the Secretary-General. Three or four sessions, lasting perhaps twenty days in all, might be required during the whole period of relief operations. As the members of the committee would be experts, their travel expenses and living allowances would be paid by the United Nations, and might, at a tentative estimate, amount to \$25,000. Meetings could be held at Lake Success or at Geneva, as circumstances directed.

It was the hope of the Secretary-General that the plan which he proposed might, after such amendment as the Sub-Committee deemed necessary, be approved unanimously. He was firmly convinced that he needed an advisory committee to assist him in his task.

With respect to questions asked by members of the Sub-Committee Mr. Hill wished to give the following information:-

Without prejudice to decisions yet to be taken by the Fifth Committee it could be said that paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of the joint draft resolution on Palestine refugees (A/C.3/315) would not require modification in the light of the Secretary-General's proposals. The only paragraph which required amendment was paragraph 7, which could be redrafted to read as follows: "Requests the Secretary-General to take all necessary steps to extend aid to Palestinian refugees in accordance with the plan annexed". The memorandum submitted by the Secretary-General, as amended by the Sub-Committee, might then be annexed to the resolution. Mr. Hill

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pointed out that the appendix to that memorandum was not an integral part of the plan, and should consequently not be annexed.

Representatives of the Secretariat would be present during the Sub-Committee's discussion of the plan to give any additional information desired.

The Secretary-General of the International Children's Emergency Fund would be available for a brief period to answer questions on the Fund's present operations and future plans with respect to the relief of Palestinian refugees.

After a procedural discussion, the CHAIRMAN acceded to the request of Mr. BORISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) that detailed consideration of the Secretary-General's memorandum, as suggested by the United Kingdom representative, should be postponed until the following day.

Mr. ALTMAN (Poland) reserved the right to speak later on the Secretary-General's memorandum as a whole and on the statement made by the representative of the Secretariat.

Although the Bolivian proposal with respect to an advisory committee had been withdrawn, the Secretary-General suggested the establishment of a similar body. The Polish delegation was opposed to that idea. While it agreed that Palestinian refugees must be helped and accepted the principle of voluntary contributions by Member States, it could see no need for an advisory body.

The fact was that from the technical point of view the proposed relief operation was not complicated. All it required was collection of funds and distribution of supplies; those could be administered by a director appointed by and responsible to the Secretary-General with the assistance of voluntary relief agencies and, if necessary, single experts.

The tragic example of refugees and displaced persons in Europe showed clearly that the creation of cumbersome machinery tended to perpetuate rather than to solve the refugee problem. A repetition of that state of affairs must be avoided. Mr. Altman stressed the fact that the solution of the problem of emergency relief depended upon the solution of the Palestine problem as a whole and upon the repatriation or resettlement of the refugees in question.

The close relation between the political aspect of the Palestine problem and the plight of the Palestinian refugees was clearly established in part III of the Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator for Palestine. While that political aspect was for other United

Nations organs to consider, the Third Committee should stress the urgent need for a rapid solution of the whole problem.

In reply to a statement made by the Egyptian representative at an earlier meeting, Mr. Altman stated that he considered the Palestinian refugee problem to be a direct consequence of the sabotaging of the General Assembly resolution 181 (II), a resolution which should be implemented by the General Assembly at the earliest possible moment.

In order to further that purpose, he submitted an amendment to the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/SC.2/3).

Mr. DEHOUSSE (Belgium) pointed out that although the Bolivian resolution had been withdrawn it was still a subject of debate, in addition to the Memorandum by the Secretary-General and the joint draft resolution submitted by New Zealand and France (A/C.3/SC.2/2). Paragraph 9 of that joint resolution spoke of a special advisory committee, so that there was a justification for the continued support which the Belgian delegation had given to the original Bolivian proposal. The representative of the Secretary-General had also agreed that such a Committee would have an authority and prestige derived from the General Assembly, not from the Member States. It would have more authority than any of the other organizations which had been mentioned.

He appreciated the reluctance of the Secretary-General to undertake full responsibility. The budget for assistance to Palestinian Refugees would be almost as large as that of the entire annual budget of the United Nations; that reluctance, therefore, was not unreasonable. He must assure the representative of Egypt that there was no intention whatever to divide that budget into two equal parts for the Jews and Arabs respectively. The funds would be allocated in strict proportion to the number of refugees to be relieved. Mr. Dehousse had not heard any valid argument against the Bolivian proposal to set up an ad hoc board; there had been some reservations, but no real opposition. The Bolivian proposal was no longer before the Sub-Committee, but the Belgian delegation would now adopt it and resubmit it, with a few changes, in its own name. He would be willing, however, to reconcile the Bolivian text with that of paragraph 9 of the resolution submitted by New Zealand and France by specifying that the ad hoc board suggested by Bolivia should be a special advisory committee. The number of eleven experts suggested in the joint New Zealand and French resolution seemed excessive; he would prefer five or seven, but he would not press the matter.

/He agreed

He agreed with the representative of Bolivia that the Committee would gain prestige if its members were designated by the President of the General Assembly. Paragraph 9 of the New Zealand and French resolution needed amplification on the lines suggested by paragraph 1, sub-paragraph (e) of the Secretary-General's memorandum: the Ad Hoc Committee should be seized of matters of principle and policy by both the Secretary-General and the United Nations director for Palestine refugee relief. He did not wish to submit a new text in writing but believed that it would be sufficient to redraft document A/C.3/SC.2/W.1, when the Sub-Committee had decided whether or not the policy committee should be set up. The very composition of the policy committee would be a guarantee of impartiality and would thus allay the fears of certain representatives. He reserved his right to intervene in the discussion again when the Secretary-General's memorandum was debated paragraph by paragraph.

Mrs. VERWAY-JANKER (Netherlands) said that she fully supported the operational side of the Secretary-General's memorandum. She had been disappointed, however, in the administrative proposals, which had remained too vague even after the representative of the Secretary-General had given his explanation to the Sub-Committee. While a certain lack of rigidity might be desired in order to leave room for subsequent interpretation, it was essential that the functions and responsibilities of the persons and bodies concerned should be defined immediately. A paragraph making such a definition should be inserted in the Secretary-General's memorandum.

She agreed with representatives who had suggested that no committee should be set up. She could not accept an executive board, because it would tend to delay action. An advisory committee would also mean excessive delay and the expenditure of funds which, as the representative of the USSR had said, would be better spent upon the refugees themselves. She had similar objections to the idea of a committee of experts designated on a basis of personal qualifications, since that would lead to heavy expense which would fall upon the United Nations. A committee composed of representatives of Governments, however, would include too few experts, and therefore might be useless. If the Secretary-General insisted that a committee should be set up and if the existing agencies were considered inadequate, the body might have purely financial terms of reference: there would be many difficulties in auditing and control in view of the methods of contribution suggested. She would be willing to accept a small advisory committee with purely consultative-- and no executive -- functions which would have no final responsibility. It should be

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established by the General Assembly and its members should be designated by the Assembly on proposal by the Secretary-General. All responsibility should be left to the director for Palestine refugee relief who, in turn, would be responsible to the Secretary-General. Such a committee should sit at Lake Success and should be composed of members appointed by the Governments. The Secretary-General's proposal for operational measures, however, could be accepted because the experts needed would already be in the field.

ANDRAOS BEY (Egypt) took issue with the representative of Belgium's statement that he had heard no valid argument against the Bolivian proposal. It was for the proposer to convince the Sub-Committee; he himself had not been convinced. He did not believe that it was necessary to relieve the Secretary-General from responsibility for dealing with the funds suggested by the Mediator; that sum was not so very large. Considerable time had been spent on the general debate while refugees were dying. That debate had not even brought agreement on the composition of the suggested committee. In any case, if it were set up, it might well be subject to the same political currents which had been felt in other Committees of the General Assembly. The Polish amendment had proposed the intrusion of politics into a humanitarian question. It might never be possible to settle that question if it continued to be bedevilled by politics. He would not, however, oppose the establishment of some committee if there were some guarantee that politics would be excluded.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Sub-Committee's terms of reference excluded politics and recommended urgency.

Mr. GRUMBACH (France) disagreed with the representative of Egypt; the debate had been valuable. The representative of Bolivia should not have withdrawn his amendment. The joint New Zealand-French resolution had been intended to condense and reconcile the ideas contained in the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/315) and in the Secretary-General's memorandum with those expressed during the debate. That was in accordance with the Sub-Committee's terms of reference.

He agreed with the representative of the Netherlands that the committee to be set up should be advisory. He also agreed that unnecessary delay might be caused if that committee was at the disposal of both the Secretary-General and the director for Palestine refugee relief. For that reason paragraph 9 of the joint New Zealand-French resolution had mentioned only the Secretary-General.

Paragraph 3 of the New Zealand-French resolution introduced a new idea. Its intention was twofold: it was desired to raise a sum in dollars as speedily as possible; and also to lay a moral obligation on the Member States, not simply to rely upon a world-wide popular collection.

His delegation had repeatedly warned the Third Committee against permitting the intrusion of political bias. If the proposed committee did not show complete objectivity, it would be entirely useless. He wished to ask the representative of the Secretary-General whether the proposed committee would be asked to give advice on political questions. He pointed out that the French translation of the word "policy" in paragraph 1, sub-paragraph (c) of the Secretary-General's memorandum might give rise to misunderstanding: "policy" was not the same as "politique" in French; he would suggest the words "conduite à tenir".. The French translation of that paragraph in the Secretary-General's memorandum contained other difficulties: representatives should take into consideration that the French words "comité directeur" and "statuer" did not reproduce the sense of the English.

He thought that the amendment proposed by the representative of Poland had a certain value but could not be placed in the recital or the text of the resolution which the Sub-Committee would submit. It might be included in the Rapporteur's report. He disagreed with the Egyptian representative's pessimism; the Sub-Committee should not despair of drafting an acceptable and valuable resolution.

Mr. HILL (Secretariat) said that he would suggest drafting changes (document A/C.3/SC.2/W.1/Corr.1).

The Secretary-General had never intended that the Committee should have any power to advise him on political matters. The suggestions of the representative of France about changes in the translation of the document would be taken into consideration.

Mr. PEREZ CISNEROS (Cuba) moved the adjournment under rule 107 of the rules of procedure.

The motion for adjournment was adopted.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.