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at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

later: Mr. CHOO (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled regulation 4.9 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning concerning the programme budget implications of draft resolutions and urged delegations to respect the deadline for their submission.

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST
(continued) (A/44/13 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 431, 474, 497, 505-508, 608, 641;
A/SPC/44/L.5)

2. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that, while he welcomed the new structure of the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/44/13), he was concerned that the report had been issued late.

3. The task of restoring order in Lebanon must be a frustrating one for the Agency's dedicated staff. The most remarkable aspect of the Agency's performance in Lebanon was that it continued to provide services in spite of the chaotic situation, the constant dangers and the casualties. Over the years, Austria had implemented several humanitarian projects in Lebanon. It had repeatedly called for an immediate and comprehensive cease-fire, the implementation of security arrangements and the establishment of the necessary conditions for national reconciliation, guaranteeing the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon. He hoped that current efforts would succeed in restoring peace to that country.

4. He noted with concern the following measures that had been taken by Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: schools had been closed; the Agency's premises had been repeatedly violated; and the number of staff who had been abused, arrested and detained without charge or trial had increased.

5. While the Agency functioned effectively under the circumstances, from the refugees' point of view, it was at worst only a palliative and at best only a substitute for their own State. The concept of "home" implied needs that were an integral component of individual and collective well-being, including self-determination, freedom, privacy, stability and dignity, which could not be met by an alien agency. Political and humanitarian considerations made it urgent to achieve a negotiated solution.

6. Mr. DIAMATARIS (Cyprus) said that, since its establishment, UNRWA had made a substantial contribution to the Palestine refugees and to the Organization. In 1989 it had again made every effort to provide relief under difficult and dangerous conditions.

7. Cyprus had extended all possible support to the Palestine refugees and would continue to do so. Their plight would come to an end only when a just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem was achieved and their inalienable rights were

(Mr. Diamataris, Cyprus)

restored. It was high time to start the peace process in the Middle East by convening an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. As Cyprus also continued to experience a refugee problem, it could not but support the Palestine refugees and pledged to strengthen its assistance efforts.

8. Mr. HOSSEINI (Islamic Republic of Iran) wished to commemorate the lives of all Palestinians who had been martyred by Zionist forces, particularly since the inception of the intifadah.

9. Referring to the Commissioner-General's report, (A/44/13) he highlighted the importance of educational, health and welfare programmes and services, particularly vocational training for Palestine refugees and welcomed the Agency's initiatives to promote income-generating projects enabling refugee families to become self-sufficient. The Palestinian Muslims had intensified their intifadah, as their plight had continued in spite of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. While Iran welcomed the Agency's outstanding services, it noted that the Zionist occupation was the root of the problem. The Agency's invaluable assistance was simply aimed to alleviate the suffering that was inflicted by the Zionist régime, which was sustained by generous support from certain quarters. The crisis in the Middle East would be resolved only if the Palestinians' inalienable rights to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State in the entire land of Palestine were restored. Iran would spare no effort to ensure the liberation of Palestine and firmly supported that State.

10. Mr. AL-ZAYANI (Bahrain) said that, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the creation of UNRWA, there was, as the Commissioner-General had pointed out, little cause for celebration. However, he paid a tribute to the staff of the Agency, both those who had devoted many years to the service of its noble objectives and those who had given their lives in the discharge of their humanitarian functions. UNRWA had been instituted as a temporary measure, by General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), in order to help the Palestine refugees to resolve their living problems until such time as they were able to return to their homes from which they had been driven out, following Israel's procrastination in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. Because of Israel's constant rejection of that solution, the problem had become aggravated and continued through the years.

11. Throughout all those years, UNRWA had been the primary machinery for assistance to the Palestine refugees. In spite of the obstacles placed in its way by the occupation authorities, the Agency had steadily continued its task of providing short-term relief and also long-term programmes designed to improve the social and economic conditions of the Palestine refugees, without prejudice to their right to return to their homes or to receive compensation for their losses. The fortieth anniversary of the creation of UNRWA coincided with the second anniversary of the heroic uprising in the occupied territories against the incubus of the odious occupation and its repressive measures. The uprising represented a

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(Mr. Al-Zayani, Bahrain)

natural response to the occupation authority's policy of annexation and settlement, which constituted a blatant violation of the resolutions of the United Nations and international law. The tragic story of UNRWA had been told time and again in the successive annual reports of the Commissioner-General, reminding the international community of its responsibility. The tragedy was continuing even now, as a result of the non-implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1949 which stated that the Palestine refugees should return to their homes and that those who did not return should receive compensation for loss or damage.

12. He expressed appreciation to the Commissioner-General for his efforts and for his valuable report (A/44/13) and to all the staff of the Agency for their dedication.

13. The current year's report of the Commissioner-General reflected the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories and gave examples of the plight of the Palestinian people under the occupation, both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The trend was towards escalating violence. The occupation authorities had adopted many means of repression to counter the uprising, even using live ammunition on a broad scale, including both traditional bullets and bullets enclosed in plastic. Other measures were mass arrests and detentions without charge or trial, as described in the report. Violent beatings and damage to property, including the Agency's facilities, destruction of houses and blockage of entries to camps had become regular practices on the part of occupation forces, not to mention the curfew regulations that had far-reaching effects on the movement of persons, reducing their ability to carry out their work and generally aggravating the situation. The report clearly indicated the flagrant violation of the Agency's rights, privileges and immunities. It mentioned the continual violation of UNRWA facilities by the Israeli occupation authorities and their use as control points or interrogation centres. The occupation authorities even resorted to deliberate and large-scale destruction of UNRWA property, and also to the arrest and detention of Agency staff without charge, accompanied by ill-treatment. Israel's attacks on Agency property showed disregard of the 1946 Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and should be condemned.

14. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated "Everyone has the right to education", and article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provided likewise. However, the occupation authorities ignored that right and tried to implant illiteracy among the Palestinians, who had, over the years, proved their outstanding capacity and ability in the academic field. The occupation authorities had closed down 90 schools out of the 98 belonging to UNRWA, thus depriving 63,600 pupils from studying, out of a total of 39,270. Both the Commissioner-General and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA had expressed concern regarding the future financing of the programmes relating to the emergencies for which the Agency had assumed responsibility. His delegation hoped that UNRWA would be able to obtain greater financial inputs to enable it to finance the construction budget for new schools and other essential facilities.

(Mr. Al-Zayani, Bahrain)

15. While the problem of the Palestine refugees was a serious humanitarian problem, it was also a political one. Its basis was Israel's rejection of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and UNRWA existed today as a result. The Agency was indispensable so long as a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine had not been found. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's statement in document S/19443 of 21 January 1988 regarding the need to provide protection for the Palestinian people and the other inhabitants of the other occupied Arab territories and Lebanon.

16. Mr. KIRSCH (Canada) said that it behooved all Member States to seek a prompt resolution to the Arab-Israel conflict, which alone could enable the Palestinian people to build a better and more secure future. The Committee should focus immediate attention on ways to facilitate the implementation of the Agency's mandate. In that context, Canada wished to reiterate its support for the Secretary-General's recommendations for Security Council resolution 605 (1987). It was essential to provide adequate training and support to the refugee affairs officers.

17. Canada had informed the Government of Israel of its concern about the prolonged closure of schools in the West Bank, which was an unacceptable violation of the fundamental right to education. Israel's refusal to extend the school year in the Gaza Strip was reprehensible.

18. His delegation was particularly concerned about the needs of women refugees, who were increasingly obliged to change their socio-economic roles in extremely difficult circumstances. It hoped that the encouraging political developments in Lebanon would lead to peace and national reconciliation there.

19. The agency's work was vital, as it brought a measure of stability to a troubled people. His delegation fully recognized the difficult financial situation confronting UNRWA and the continued need for emergency assistance. It called on the international community to provide the Agency's desperately needed financial support. Canada had increased its regular contributions over the years and had provided additional funding for special projects. It also called on Governments, particularly that of Israel, to help to implement the Agency's programmes and to support its work.

20. His delegation paid a tribute to the Agency's international and local staff, which had worked tirelessly in spite of frequent threats. Canada was seriously concerned about the worsening pattern of violations of the staff's privileges and immunities and interference with their humanitarian operations and objected strongly to such obstacles.

21. Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) said that the fact that the problems of the Palestine refugees came under UNRWA instead of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reflected the special responsibility of the United Nations for the Palestinian people, whose country had been partitioned by a General Assembly resolution under pressure from colonialist countries which dominated the Organization at that time.

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

22. He appreciated the efforts of the Commissioner-General and his Agency over the preceding year and called for the resumption of ration distribution to refugees in certain Arab host countries. Those rations had been diverted to refugees in the occupied territories. He also thanked the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for its efforts to find additional funds.

23. Israel had expelled Palestinians and prevented them from returning, it had pursued them in exile, shot and killed, destroyed houses and closed schools in an attempt to deprive the younger generation of education. It had also destroyed UNRWA property.

24. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) provided for the right of refugees to return to their homes and property or to be compensated for loss or damage. That choice took precedence over all others in the solution of their problem. At every subsequent session, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution upholding that right, and all countries including the United States, with the exception of Israel, had voted in favour.

25. Israel had made misleading claims that the refugees had been induced to emigrate by Arab States. Such claims had been refuted even by Israelis and their sympathizers. The logical and just solution lay in the implementation of the resolutions on return and compensation.

26. Many of those voicing concern over the financial difficulties of UNRWA were from countries which had a special responsibility for the Palestinian question and a solution to the refugee problem. The Palestine refugees would not be in need of those countries' meagre hand-outs if they could obtain the income from the property they had been forced to abandon in Israel, whose value far exceeded the UNRWA budget. Those countries should press Israel to pay that income and redirect their enormous subsidies to Israel towards reimbursement of that income.

27. Without a just settlement guaranteeing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, all measures would remain temporary and incomplete.

28. Despite new repressive Israeli measures to make more Palestinians homeless and force them to migrate, the uprising, nearly two years old, was further proof of the attachment of the Palestinian people to its land, its refusal to accept the status quo and its desire for freedom and independence.

29. It was time to end Palestinian suffering. All countries, and especially those most responsible for that suffering, should reconsider their policies and strive with the United Nations to find a just solution to the Palestinian question and the problem of the Palestine refugees.

30. Mr. Choo (Malaysia) took the Chair.

31. Mr. KATRA (Lebanon) said that the Commissioner-General's report (A/44/13) showed objectively and in clear detail under what difficult conditions the Agency had been working over the past year, in both Lebanon and the occupied territories.

(Mr. Katra, Lebanon)

It had responded laudably to the need for dangerous emergency operations in Lebanon on the one hand, and to the deliberate obstruction of its work and harassment of its staff by the authorities in the occupied territories on the other hand. It should be noted, however, that there had been a cleverly orchestrated and politically motivated outside attempt to link the Lebanese and Palestinian situations in a contrived way, which had only compounded the problems of the Palestinians as well as the Lebanese, and compromised the Agency's entire Middle East programme. He wished to make his Government's position clear: like other countries hosting refugees, Lebanon was directly concerned by the fate of the Palestine refugees in its territory, but it in no way assumed the moral, social and legal obligations incumbent on the occupying Power of the occupied territories.

32. UNRWA, which had continued to fulfil its humanitarian mission so well, needed assistance more than ever in doing so. It was beyond the Agency's power to solve the complex problem of the Palestinian refugees. It was for the international community in all awareness to mobilize efforts to find the appropriate solution which was an international conference where the Palestinian question would be dealt with in all its aspects and in the presence of all concerned parties.

33. Mr. AL-SALLAL (Kuwait) said that his country greatly appreciated the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Adviser on Economic Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He also thanked the Commissioner-General for his efforts in helping UNRWA to overcome the difficulties it faced. He commended the international and local staff of UNRWA, who had been the subject of aggression by the Israeli occupation forces, a further tactic in their war of starvation, forced migration and arbitrary repression against the Palestinian people, whose will remained unbroken.

34. Israel's terrorist policies against UNRWA were in keeping to Israel's opposition to any international presence in the occupied territories which strove to alleviate Palestinian suffering and provide humanitarian aid. Zionist schemes were aimed at emptying Palestine of its rightful inhabitants through physical elimination, economic blockades and the obstruction of educational and health services. Israeli forces had detained UNRWA staff, destroyed UNRWA property and used UNRWA premises as observation posts and interrogation cells. Such practices violated all international laws and customs and were further proof of Israel's disdain for world public opinion.

35. UNRWA had been established as a temporary agency and owed its continued existence to the lack of a just political solution guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the implementation of United Nations resolutions. Funding for UNRWA should take account of the responsibility of the United Nations regarding the Palestinian problem. The international community had failed to curb Israeli attacks against UNRWA staff and property. Israeli oppression of the Palestinian population had increased the need for UNRWA services and made it a matter of urgency to resume ration distribution in all areas. Despite its position on the responsibility for funding, Kuwait had contributed directly to the UNRWA budget and made further voluntary contributions to provide emergency support to the Palestinians in their fearless uprising. Kuwait was also

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(Mr. Al-Sallal, Kuwait)

a host country to thousands of Palestinians and thus contributed actively to their ongoing struggle.

36. What little humanitarian aid which could be offered to the Palestinian people was small consolation in the face of the tragedy and oppression they had suffered. The only way to end that tragedy was to enable the Palestinian people to exercise all its legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State.

37. Mr. Oudovenko (Ukranian Soviet Socialist Republic) resumed the Chair.

38. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand) observed that UNRWA had been functioning effectively in one of the most volatile and complex regions of the world. Crises occurred regularly in Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Agency staff lived in constant danger, and many had indeed been kidnapped, detained or deported. Yet despite the hostile environment the Agency had been able to provide services to more than 2.3 million Palestinian refugees in the past year, and their number was likely to increase.

39. Education was one of the most important services provided by UNRWA, since it offered the Palestinian refugees an escape from destitution and poverty and reserved their culture, tradition and identity. It was therefore regrettable that the disruption and closure of schools and training centres in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had continued.

40. UNRWA also had a commendable record in health care, having brought down the refugee infant mortality rate to below the target for the year 2000 set by the World Health Organization for developing countries. Mortality from communicable diseases had also decreased and there had been no major epidemics.

41. Two particularly useful programmes had been the Agency's special hardship assistance, and its credit enterprise programme in the occupied territories. In addition, the Agency's co-operation with other United Nations organizations was a step in the right direction and should be encouraged.

42. UNRWA was also contending with serious financial constraints. As things stood, it could only fund its programmes through the end of 1989, and it must receive the additional funds needed. Despite its limited resources, Thailand would maintain its own contribution. UNRWA would remain indispensable until a just and comprehensive peace was established in the Middle East. The problem of refugees concerned all members of the international community, and the burden of caring for them must be shared.

43. Mr. MENON (India) said that UNRWA deserved the international community's appreciation for continuing to provide emergency relief to the Palestine refugees under extremely adverse conditions, and in particular for its operations in Lebanon notwithstanding the constant physical danger to its staff. The Agency's financial position the previous year had happily been satisfactory, owing largely to prudent management and planning and successful fund-raising. New donors had contributed in

(Mr. Menon, India)

the past year and it was important to sustain that broad-based support in view of the Agency's ever-increasing obligations. UNRWA's indispensable activities must not be curtailed for want of funds. India had been a regular contributor from the Agency's very inception, and it also provided scholarships and training for Palestinians under various national and technical co-operation programmes.

44. The Palestinian people had waged a long and valiant struggle for freedom and independence, for fair treatment and justice, and for the legitimate right to a State of their own in the homeland from which they had been forcibly and unjustly displaced. The intifadah testified to their resolve, which would not be extinguished by the increasing Israeli atrocities. It must be recognized that the problem was basically political, not merely humanitarian. Most States had welcomed the proclamation of the State of Palestine. The Algiers Declaration had clearly stated that Palestine was committed to peaceful co-existence and had rejected the threat or use of force or violence. Recent initiatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as well as the initiation of a United States-PLO dialogue should give impetus to a resolution of the Palestinian problem, which depended, in turn, on a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict. Such a solution had to be based on the withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem; the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination, including their right to establish a State in their national homeland, Palestine; and the recognition of the rights of all States in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. It was urgent to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and with the participation, on an equal footing, of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

45. Ms. RASI (Finland), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that the living conditions of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon had deteriorated dramatically during the civil war but that UNRWA had nevertheless been able to continue its services to alleviate their hardships. Fortunately, signs of hope had finally appeared, as the peace process in Lebanon got under way.

46. Unfortunately the same could not be said of the living conditions in the occupied territories. The Palestinian uprising and the Israeli response to it had pushed UNRWA into a new situation: temporary emergency operations had tended to become permanent and to demand increasing resources; and the Agency had had to respond to the deteriorating situation with flexibility and creativeness, by, for instance, expanding its extraordinary social welfare activities and creating a general assistance programme. The Nordic countries fully supported the extension of UNRWA's mandate beyond 1990, as long as the problem of the refugees was not solved. The UNRWA staff were to be commended for working under difficult circumstances and often at high personal risk. It was unacceptable that, during the four decades of its operations, so many staff had been killed or injured or remained missing or detained. UNRWA activities themselves had become the target of increasing interference. The Nordic countries were greatly concerned at the recent reports of violations against the Agency's premises and personnel in the West Bank

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(Ms. Rasi, Finland)

and the Gaza Strip, and they asked that UNRWA operations, personnel and facilities be strictly respected.

47. The Agency's financial problems seemed to be becoming the rule rather than the exception as its emergency operations expanded. There had been a generous response and a welcome trend towards wider participation in financing the Agency's activities, but its financial situation in the coming year was still very precarious and the Nordic countries appealed to all for sufficient contributions to enable UNRWA to meet both regular and emergency needs. They themselves had contributed more than \$30 million for 1989, with some additional contributions to emergency and special operations. Also, Nordic non-governmental organizations were carrying on their own humanitarian relief work in the occupied territories.

48. Mr. AL-KHULAIFI (Qatar) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to all those who continue to extend humanitarian assistance in order to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinian peoples. The Agency's mandate had evolved since its inception in 1949, in particular as a result of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian homeland and Israel's inhumane practices. Although the Agency continued to discharge its humanitarian and noble mission with regards to the Palestine refugees, its efforts often came up against the obstacle of Israeli arrogance. Israel, as an aggressor, viewed UNRWA negatively and with hostility. Israel was striving for the failure of the Agency and paralysis of its operations.

49. In the context of extraordinary emergency circumstances, the Palestinian people had become more scattered, and the difficulties facing it from all sides had become more acute. Hopes for arrival at a just solution of the problem were increasingly frustrated, day after day and year after year. The iniquitous occupation authorities had imposed oppression and humiliation on the Palestinian people. As a result of their arbitrary treatment, the Palestinian people had responded with its uprising inside its territory, thereby declaring its rejection of subjugation and capitulation. The level of valour and self-sacrifice among the Palestinian people was manifest proof that it would accept no alternatives or substitutes that would keep it from the exercise of its legitimate rights in the territory of its homeland. It would not relinquish the goal it had been striving for for 40 years in the teeth of the Israeli occupation.

50. In view of the violence, oppression and inhumane practices to which the Palestinian people was subjected, UNRWA was forced to muster all its resources in order to cope with the situation.

51. The Agency's employees were constantly exposed to Israeli acts of aggression. One could not fail to note the constant increase in difficulties hindering the work of the Agency. UNRWA had had to change its modi operandi in order to adapt to the circumstances. The working conditions were quite abnormal. The Agency was required to make a heroic effort to continue operating, and he paid a tribute to its persistence.

(Mr. Al-Khulaifi, Qatar)

52. UNRWA's effort to help the refugees must be combined with the international community's assumption of its responsibility towards them. The international community must strive to do all in its power to find a lasting and just solution to the Palestinian problem, a solution that would restore to the Palestinian people its legitimate rights, guarantee the return of the Palestinians to their homes and ensure that they were compensated for damage and loss as laid down by the United Nations on many occasions. The General Assembly had resolved that the only solution was the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of the parties concerned, including the representatives of the Palestinian people. It was now evident also that the responsibility for prolonging the problem did not lie with the Palestinian people but with the party that rejected the solutions decided on and approved by the international community.

53. His delegation realized that the current circumstances had set new tasks for UNRWA and that those new tasks required new additional resources. He emphasized once again that it was necessary to proceed towards a just and lasting final solution of the refugee problem and to enable them to return to their homes in order that they might exercise their legitimate rights, just like other peoples of the world and in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

54. Mr. GORDON (Israel) said that for years the problem of the Palestine refugees had been discussed, but no decisive action aimed at solving it had been taken by the United Nations. On 14 May 1989, however, the Government of Israel had taken a peace initiative, the text of which appeared in document A/44/282. One of the elements of that initiative was a proposal for a solution to the refugee problem. The initiative was backed by a sustained effort at refugee rehabilitation in the area under Israel's administration.

55. Since 1972, Israel had financed a rehabilitation programme in the Gaza area. At first, very few refugee families had taken advantage of the programme because Palestinian terrorist organizations had targeted the applicants. Over time, however, the flow of refugee applications had begun to intensify as the benefits of the programme became known. Until 1975, refugee families in the programme had each received a complete housing unit built by the Government of Israel. Under the new method put into action after 1975, the Israeli authorities prepared the necessary infrastructure for housing construction as well as community services. Each refugee family whose relocation was approved received a plot of land which had previously been State-owned. Steps were taken to register the plot upon which the future owner would build his own house in the land registry in his name. The future owner could later exercise his ownership independently, by leasing, mortgaging, bequeathing or selling the property as he deemed fit. Property ownership was a profound improvement in the refugee's life, both economically, socially and psychologically, as it enhanced the social status of the head of the family. A further conceptual evolution of the rehabilitation project now taking shape in the Khan Yunis area concerned integration of commercial and residential areas while allowing space for public utilities, as well as long-range development planning.

(Mr. Gordon, Israel)

56. The image of children playing in the narrow and depressing alleys of refugee camps disseminated by various United Nations agencies and other media had created the misleading impression that Israel was to blame for the continued existence of the camps. The truth was that Israel had been unswerving in its efforts to resettle the refugees. The Arab leadership had opposed all United Nations resettlement efforts, but Israel, by itself, had undertaken the project of refugee rehabilitation, which was not imposed by Israel but rather was a humanitarian service offered to the refugees. The only limits to the scope and size of the project were financial and if more resources were available there would be no lack of families wishing to move. Rehabilitation in Gaza, Judea and Samaria would cost \$US 2 billion and extend over a period of five to eight years. With assistance from other interested parties, the solution was within reach, but the humanitarian needs of the refugees had been subordinated to political purposes and vested interests.

57. Since December 1987, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District had been affected by disturbances and riots. In many cases, refugees played a significant role in the violence. His delegation believed, however, that aspect should be discussed under agenda item 77 on the situation in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District to be addressed by the Committee later in its session.

58. The Palestinian refugee problem was a direct result of the hostilities and aggression of the Arab and Palestinian leadership launched over 40 years ago against the reborn State of Israel. The decision by some Arab and Palestinian leaders to throw Israel into the sea had catapulted the Middle East into an orbit of bloodshed and had inflicted terrible casualties and suffering on the people of Israel. Paradoxically, the main victims of the adventurist policies of the Arab leaders were the Palestinians themselves. While pretending to protect and defend them, their leadership had induced them to leave their homes. The Arabs in Palestine had then conducted a widespread campaign of terror and assassination against the Jewish community, aided by the neighbouring Arab states.

59. United Nations Secretary-General Trygve Lie had himself commented on that situation, along with the British commander of Jordan's Arab Legion, who had described the infiltration into Palestine from Syria of the Arab Liberation Army early in January 1948. After the regular Arab armies had launched their large-scale attempts to destroy the State of Israel at its birth, the President of the Security Council had asked Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia about the presence of their armed forces in Palestine. Those Governments had replied that they had sought to suppress the armed insurrection of the Zionist terrorist bands, that they had been forced to enter Palestine, that the threat inside Palestine extended beyond its borders, and that the proclamation of a Jewish State in Palestine had blocked the way to any understanding between Arabs and Jews. The representative of the Arab Higher Committee to the United Nations had stated that the Arabs regarded Palestine as one unit, over which they claimed authority, and that they regarded all opposing forces as unlawful.

60. While the Arab armies were attempting to trample the fledgling State of Israel under their overwhelming weight, the Security Council had held debates on the

(Mr. Gordon, Israel)

situation. On 21 May 1948, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Mr. Andrei Gromyko, had expressed surprise at the attempt by the Arab States to suppress a national liberation movement in Palestine, zionism. He stressed that in no case had Israel invaded the territory of other States, except in self-defence. The United States delegate to the Security Council had stated that the international character of that breach of the peace could not be ignored. The admission of the countries whose five armies had invaded Palestine that they were carrying on a war was the highest evidence of a violation of international law.

61. The Palestinians were not suffering because of the Holocaust which had befallen the Jews in Europe, as was sometimes claimed, but rather because of the failed attempt by the Arab leadership to destroy the State of Israel. The day would come when a new generation in Arab countries would pass judgement on the choice made by their leadership in 1948 not to take the road of peace and fruitful co-operation but to opt for war. After creating the refugee problem, Arab and Palestinian leaders had blocked every attempt to allow refugees to become proud members of their societies and economies, thereby relegating them to the lowest class in a caste system from which they would not be allowed to extricate themselves. They had lived in overcrowded camps as squatters and wards of international organizations, and Arab leaders were exploiting their suffering in order to lay the blame on Israel.

62. The Arab countries had refused all offers of help, making their consent contingent on conditions which they refused to negotiate with Israel, a country they refused to recognize. The proposals made in June 1959 by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld had been rejected, as had the Gordon Clapp mission of 1949, the Blandford plan, the Johnston plan for the utilization of Jordan River waters and the Sinai project. It had become clear that Arab leaders would not be influenced by humanitarian considerations, but only by political ones.

63. Despite its meagre resources and difficult economic situation, Israel had continued to contribute financially and in kind to the work of UNRWA, and had been consistently among the 25 largest contributors from 1950 to 1988. Israeli policy towards UNRWA had not changed. It continued to facilitate the discharge of UNRWA humanitarian functions, enabling the Agency to expand its activity and increase its international and local staff. However, problems had arisen when UNRWA staff, including 7,300 local staff in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza area, had at times acted in violation of the agreement between Israel and the Agency, by extending activities to non-refugees in violation of Israel's rights and duties as the sole power responsible for security, law and order in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza area. It was regrettable that the elements behind the riots in those areas were not concerned with the welfare of the refugees but with their political exploitation, and were working to exploit UNRWA for their political ends by trying to create friction between the Agency and Israel.

64. When thousands of Jews had fled Arab countries in the years immediately after its rebirth, Israel had welcomed them and integrated them socially and economically. That did not mean that they had renounced their rights, which would no doubt be addressed in any future negotiation aimed at reaching a comprehensive

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(Mr. Gordon, Israel)

settlement. But Israel would not have considered deferring their settlement pending the satisfaction of their rights.

65. In all parts of the world, ghettos and slums bred hatred and violence, and Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District were no exception. Their own brothers had rejected every single United Nations initiative to resettle the residents of the camps. Refugee suffering and resentment were being exploited to provoke and continue the riots in order to promote political goals. It was within the capacity of the United Nations to bring that suffering to a speedy end by approaching the refugee problem from a humanitarian rather than a political point of view. The means to achieve that goal was indicated in the Israeli peace initiative.

66. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement just made by the representative of Israel had consisted of a reiteration of three themes: firstly, that it was the Arab leaders who had been responsible for creating the Palestine refugee situation; secondly, that Israel was doing what it could to alleviate the situation while the Arab countries were not; and thirdly, that the Arab countries were deliberately perpetuating the refugee situation for political purposes. With regard to the first theme, it was quite clear, both from private comments made by such Zionist leaders as Ben Gurion and from massacres like that committed at Deir Yassin that a deliberate decision to expel Arabs from their homes had been taken by the Zionist leaders long before 1947. With regard to the second point, it was clear that, whatever limited efforts Israel was making at rehabilitation, it was doing nothing to alleviate the plight of the 2 million Palestine refugees scattered throughout the world. Lastly, anyone who had talked to Palestine refugees knew that they did not wish to settle anywhere but in their homeland. Moreover, the rehabilitation efforts of which the Israeli representative had spoken were themselves obviously motivated by political goals.

67. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had engaged in a series of selective quotations and distortions. Israel's actions in 1948, 1956 and 1967 showed that its fixed policy had always been one of expansion and it was even now planning to resettle 100,000 Jews on Arab territory. Its policy and actions deserved total condemnation.

68. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was easy to engage in selective quotation and distortion. However, no one could deny that a tragedy had been created since 1948, and what was important was to put an end to it as soon as possible. The best solution to the problem was that put forward as early as 1948 in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which dealt with the right of return, and reiterated many times since. That solution had never been implemented because of Israel's opposition. The Arab side had accepted that solution and challenged Israel to begin to implement it.

69. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that he was grateful for the general endorsement by Committee members of UNRWA's policies, particularly with regard to

(Mr. Giacomelli)

what it was doing in Lebanon in providing emergency relief. It was his own conviction that the Agency would be failing in its duty if it did not supply such emergency aid when it was needed.

70. With regard to the complaints that some UNRWA employees had engaged in actions violating the agreement with Israel, it was the Agency's policy to investigate such complaints promptly whenever they were received in proper form; however, it regarded unilateral action on such complaints as unacceptable.

71. He wished to offer preliminary comments on some of the concerns approved by delegations. Thus, with regard to the concern that UNRWA's emergency aid programme would mean less money for the regular programmes, he could assure the Committee that that was not the Agency's intention; the budgets for the two programmes were kept quite separate, and the Agency would make every effort to ensure that both programmes were fully carried out.

72. It had been said several times that the burden carried by the host countries for Palestinian refugees was not adequately reflected in the report. He would reflect on that concern; the report was of course limited to the Agency's own activities, but it might be possible to give more prominence in it to the information available on the contributions made by host countries.

73. With regard to the annual resolution requesting that the Agency should resume the general ration distribution, he said that the Agency was, of course, willing to do so; however, an increase of \$60 million in the Agency's budget would be required. Again, in connection with Jordan's interest in seeing the Agency take over the tenth year of education in UNRWA schools, such a step would require a large increase in the permanent budget.

74. Concern had been expressed that the Agency's support for the resettlement programme might infringe on the rights of the refugees and particularly their right of return. That was certainly not the Agency's intention, nor did he consider that any actions on the Agency's part to alleviate the situation of the refugees could do so.

75. The Agency shared the concern expressed over the delays in camp reconstruction in Lebanon. However, the reconstruction had been almost completed in Burj El-Barajneh and had now been resumed in Shatila, where, he was confident, it would be brought to completion.

76. He assured the Committee that he had taken careful note of those and other concerns expressed and would keep them in mind in the coming months.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.