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REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS (1)

Statement submitted by the Friends World Committee for  
 Consultation, a non-governmental organization in  
 category B consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following statement  
 which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 22 and 23  
 of Council resolution 288 B (X):

Recommendations for the Office of the United Nations High Commission for  
 Refugees

Since it is obvious that upon the expiration of the mandate of the  
 International Refugee Organization there will remain many thousands of refugees  
 requiring care, resettlement opportunities and legal protection, we are gratified  
 that the United Nations Assembly has re-affirmed the principle of international  
 responsibility for these unfortunate people by its resolution providing for a  
 High Commissioner's Office for Refugees.

Out of our years of experience in working with refugees in various parts of  
 the world, out of our deep Christian concern for the fate of the refugees as  
 individuals and for the contribution that a solution of their problem can make  
 to the peace of the world, we should like to make herewith some recommendations  
 in regard to the proposed office.

(1) See item 32 of the agenda of the Economic and Social Council.

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1. We would accept for the present the definition of the term "refugee" as proposed in the draft resolution. We would urge, however, that provisions for the inclusion of additional categories be as flexible as possible, and that means be devised whereby their inclusion can be decided upon with maximum dispatch, in order to avoid the hardships that individuals would suffer from an undue waiting period.
2. The moral responsibility for the refugees remains an international one, even though operational phases of the services needed by refugees may to a considerable extent be transferred to the countries of refuge. To discharge this moral responsibility we feel:
  - (a) That the High Commissioner must be in a position to observe at close hand the actions undertaken by countries of refuge for the refugees within their borders. To this end the High Commissioner's budget should be large enough to provide for resident field staff. Attempts should be made to work out arrangements with countries of refuge and resettlement whereby High Commissioner staff members may be present as representatives of the interests of the refugees. Such staff members should be readily accessible to the refugee.
  - (b) That the High Commissioner's Office should play a more active part in resettlement and repatriation and, where necessary, in interim maintenance than is now envisaged. In view of the numbers of refugees now under the care of the International Refugee Organization who are likely to remain unsettled at that agency's termination and the number of so-called neo-refugees who have not been taken on by the International Refugee Organization because of administrative deadline, but who are in equal need of its services, we feel that it is unrealistic and inhumane to limit the functions of the High Commissioner's Office at this point to legal protection.
3. In line with the above and to ensure the effectiveness of the High Commissioner's Office we hope that funds will be placed in the hands of the High Commissioner's Office sufficient (1) to provide transportation funds in

connection with acceptable resettlement plans, (2) to give some help to the work of the voluntary agencies, and (3) to provide grants-in-aid to those countries which due to their geographical position are over-burdened with refugees and therefore with problems beyond their own ability to handle.

4. The principle of voluntary government contribution or appeals for funds from private sources appears to us inadequate to meet the immediate gap in services that the termination of the International Refugee Organization will occasion. We recommend, therefore, that funds for the adequate functioning of the High Commissioner's Office should be appropriated to it by the participating governments, according to a pre-arranged formula having relation to national income.

5. Since there are three possible solutions to the Displaced Persons problems - emigration, integration or repatriation - the relationship between the refugee, the country of refuge and any international organization should be one that might be favourable to any one of these solutions.

Although the set-up should provide adequate representation for refugees and the possibility of direct contact between refugees and international organization, action should be taken only after consultation with and, where appropriate and possible, through the competent ministry of the country of refuge.

6. The paramount need of Displaced Persons is for a country of permanent residence, whether attained through repatriation, integration in the country of refuge or through resettlement in a new country. Steps toward one of these solutions should be initiated as soon as possible after a person is accepted as a bona fide refugee.

7. Provision should be made for the fullest use of voluntary agencies in supplementing the essential services of the High Commissioner's Office, and in providing advice and counsel to the High Commissioner through an established channel for this purpose. We suggest that an Advisory Committee of private agencies such as functioned in the Office of High Commissioner for Refugees in the League of Nations should be provided.

8. In order that the refugees may have some say in matters affecting their own future, we suggest that they have representatives on the Advisory Committee referred to in paragraph 7 above.

9. The calibre of the person appointed as High Commissioner should be such as to command international respect and co-operation and to assure competent, dynamic and concerned leadership to the development of an adequate programme for refugees. We would suggest that if possible the High Commissioner be selected from one of the smaller nations. Likewise it is essential that appointments to staff positions at all levels should assure not only professional competence but also personal integrity and concern for the individuals to be served.

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