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Chairman: Mr. Carlet R. AUGUSTE (Haiti).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Gamboa (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Organization of the Committee's work

1. The CHAIRMAN reminded the members of the Special Political Committee that a decision was to be taken concerning the resumption of the debate on the question of agenda item 23, an increase in the membership of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.
2. Mr. TETTAMANTI (Argentina) said that as the debate had been suspended (199th meeting) to enable members of the Committee to hold unofficial consultations, which were now nearing conclusion, it would be advisable to defer discussion of agenda item 23 until the following week. While the report (A/4478) of the Director of UNRWA was of great importance, the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should nevertheless be discussed as soon as possible, since certain decisions in plenary session depended on the outcome. The Committee might resume discussion of agenda item 23 on, say, the following Monday, if the general debate on the report of the Director of UNRWA could be finished during the course of the current week. Otherwise, it might be well to dispose of that item before consideration of an increase in the membership of the Councils was resumed.
3. Mr. BOURGUIBA (Tunisia) supported the Argentine representative's suggestion. That procedure would enable the Committee to continue its general debate on the UNRWA report without interruption while the current consultations on the question of an increase in the membership of the two Councils could go on in the meantime.
4. Mr. BEELEY (United Kingdom) thought it would be best first of all to finish off the item dealing with the report of the Director of UNRWA, if that could be done without undue delay. If he understood the Argentine representative's suggestion correctly, the Committee would decide, in any event, to take agenda item 23 at the beginning of the following week, at the end of the general discussion of the report of the Director of UNRWA.

5. Mr. TETTAMANTI (Argentina) confirmed that interpretation.
6. Mr. NASIR (Jordan) felt it was important that the general debate on the refugee question should not be unduly rushed.
7. Mr. CHAI (Secretary of the Committee), replying to a question asked by Mr. HOOD (Australia), said that in his opinion, as a tentative and very rough estimate, the Committee would need at least forty more meetings to complete consideration of the items on its agenda.
8. The CHAIRMAN proposed that consideration of agenda item 23 should be resumed on the following Monday, provided that the Committee in the meantime had finished the general debate on the report of the Director of UNRWA.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 26

Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/4478) (continued)

- At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. John H. Davis, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, took a place at the Committee table.*
9. Mr. DJIKIC (Yugoslavia) recalled that at the fourteenth session, when UNRWA's mandate was extended, his delegation had pointed out that assistance to refugees constituted only a temporary remedy, and that a long-term solution of the problem required implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). The Yugoslav delegation stood by that view, but considered that maximum efforts should be made at the same time to alleviate the lot of the Palestine refugees. For that reason, Yugoslavia had always endeavoured to pay its contributions to UNRWA in good time. For the period of 1961-1963, UNRWA would need additional resources to carry out its three-year programme. As the financial means of UNRWA were barely sufficient to cover the minimum assistance requirements, it seemed reasonable to take up the proposal that an individual, or an agency of the General Assembly, should be appointed to administer the assets of the Palestine refugees and the income from those assets. That would provide additional funds from a source upon which the refugees were entitled to count.
 10. He regretted that paragraph 4 of resolution 1456 (XIV) had not been implemented. The Committee should consider how to inject new life into the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, in order to cope with the present stalemate. Without wishing to embark on a concrete study of the whole

problem, which was first and foremost a matter for the countries directly concerned, his delegation was prepared to support all genuine efforts to put the Conciliation Commission in a better position than hitherto to carry out, in the interests of peace and justice, the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly.

11. Although the question was primarily a humanitarian one, the Committee should bear in mind the political implications and seek a solution which would strengthen the prospects of lasting peace and lead to international co-operation in that highly sensitive part of the world.

12. Mr. CUNNINGHAME (New Zealand) said that the question of the Palestine refugees was not only a humanitarian problem, but should be approached in a human manner. Because it was deeply conscious of the tragic situation of the refugees, New Zealand had never considered them as a remote people who were not its concern; and its contribution to UNRWA enabled it to take part in the debate without shame. Public opinion in New Zealand supported that humanitarian tradition, as was indicated by generous additional private contributions.

13. He deplored the waste of human resources of which the Director of UNRWA had spoken (199th meeting) and which could have been avoided with greater political imagination. Because of the necessary priority given to relief services the margin for creative endeavour by UNRWA had all along been too slender. Expenditure on education, vocational training and individual assistance still represented less than a quarter of the total expenditure. The three-year plan called for an increase of about 8 per cent in the total of annual contributions, but the benefits would be out of all proportion. It was fair to appeal to others to take the lead in overcoming this new barrier. With the help of the funds collected for World Refugee Year, it should be possible to execute the main provisions of the first phase of the plan. A more equitable sharing of the financial burden would also enable the second phase to be implemented. Subject to those observations, the three-year plan was to be commended.

14. During the past year, UNRWA had done all it could, within its financial limitations, to alleviate the refugees' lot. By providing them with food and shelter, the Agency had executed an inescapable international duty. The absence of major epidemics was an indication that the worst evils had been avoided, and the special attention given to mothers and children and to preventive health measures indicated that the relief programme was operating on sound lines. He stressed the value of social welfare work, community development and co-operatives, for the morale and self-respect of the refugees.

15. Even greater importance ought to be attached to the provision of general education, without which the children would be deprived of an essential spiritual need and also of the prospect of living useful lives on terms of equality with their fellows. In seeking a modest expansion of general education, the Director of the Agency had shown a proper awareness of the need to maintain a balance between general education and vocational training. That was of particular significance for the future, for if the refugees were allowed to degenerate into a pool of surplus unskilled

labour in a developing world, the problem would become insoluble.

16. It was essential that UNRWA should have the fullest support of the host countries. It was gratifying to note, therefore, that those countries continued to assist UNRWA through financial contributions and the provision of valuable services; it was to be hoped that the next annual report would record further progress in the settlement of claims and the conclusion of revised agreements. The rectification of the ration rolls was doubly important, in that present anomalies lent themselves to unfavourable publicity at a time when the refugees needed and deserved sympathy throughout the world. Host countries could assist in creating a climate of mutual confidence between UNRWA and the refugees; the gradual but persistent approach which UNRWA was adopting in that connexion was sound, and with the help of the host Governments it should enable practical results to be obtained before the next session of the General Assembly.

17. The broader problem which remained was a serious one, since it needed something more than the passage of time to solve it. From that point of view, the precise wording of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) was less important than the element of justice and so of realism to which it sought to give expression. The time before UNRWA came up again for review was time to be valued. As to the rather meagre results obtained by the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, they were attributable to the fact that the Commission had not had a fuller opportunity to exercise its conciliatory function for want of greater disposition towards settlement by the parties themselves. A change of attitude must precede visible actions. For that reason, pending review of UNRWA's mandate, the Special Political Committee should exercise restraint but should also emphasize its watchfulness. In the interests of the refugees, the parties should exercise moderation, but even more, should devote sober thought to the real nature of the problem. An accommodation in the Middle East was ultimately as necessary as was peaceful coexistence in the world at large; only the terms were disputable and important. The difficulties which arose were not dissimilar to those arising in other of the more resistant political problems such as disarmament; without agreement between the parties principally concerned, nothing could be done, and if nothing was done, the problem might set in motion forces which the parties had not willed and which would not serve their interests.

18. Since the atmosphere of confidence needed to bring about an over-all Palestine settlement appeared not to exist at the present time, he recommended concentration on the central refugee problem and gradual progress rather than inactivity. The suggestion made by the representative of Ireland at the fourteenth session (159th meeting) seemed to promise some possibility of such a solution. If the principle of free choice were implemented in respect of even a small sample of the refugees, it would be possible to gauge the dimensions of the problem much better, to test mutual confidence, and to assess the weight of security objections.

19. Mr. BOURGUIBA (Tunisia) said that in twelve and a half years nothing had as yet been achieved

which could be called even a beginning of a solution to the problem. On the contrary, the situation was becoming steadily worse, because life in the camps accentuated the population increase of a nation in exile—which was what the Palestine Arabs had become. They were indeed a nation in exile, for the term "refugees" did not describe 1.1 million human beings expelled from their country, their homes and their lands. Deprived of their property, their means of livelihood and their reason for living, those people were reduced to bare subsistence level. Compelled as they were to live on charity, they were in danger of gradually losing the sense of human dignity.

20. It was tragic that, for reasons of procedure, all the Committee could do was to examine the organization, the administration and if necessary the improvement of an institution which was a kind of charitable undertaking. There were those who, in the face of that vast drama, were thus able to salve their consciences in regard to the decisions taken in 1947 by the United Nations, when Tunisia was not yet in a position to make its voice heard in the Organization.

21. However, he was anxious to keep strictly to the item under discussion, and he quoted paragraph 4 of the annual report (A/4478) of the Director of UNRWA, which recalled that under resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, the refugees were to be granted the choice between repatriation and compensation for loss or damage to property. The refugees had made their choice: they wished to return to their homes. But Israel's unhelpful attitude was paralysing the implementation of resolution 194 (III) and the subsequent resolutions which had repeated the same promises. The fact that those promises had not been kept explained why the refugees remained bitter and why tension in the Middle East was increasing. The Organization ought therefore to direct all its attention to that obstructionist attitude. It should not acquiesce in seeing its principles flouted and its resolutions remain a dead letter; that was the kind of abdication which had sounded the death-knell of the League of Nations.

22. Hence his delegation wished to repeat that consideration should be given to the idea of appointing an administrator of refugee property. The Director and staff of the Agency had carried out their task competently and devotedly without losing faith in the United Nations, and the Agency thus seemed to be the institution best qualified to undertake such a mission. If it was decided to undertake such a measure of conservation, the Agency would have to administer the property of the refugees and the income from that property, and to ask for compensation or rent for the occupation and use of it. In that task UNRWA would be effectively helped by the Conciliation Commission, though the latter would have greater weight if its membership was increased on the basis of the equitable geographical representation being discussed by the Committee under another of its agenda items.

23. Such measures would not, of course, obviate the need to grant the Agency the necessary funds to carry out its activities. The United Nations bore a share of the responsibility for the fate of the Palestine Arab refugees, and the budgetary limitations mentioned in paragraph 4 of the report of the Director of UNRWA must not paralyse or reduce the scope of the work or the programmes undertaken by the Agency. But the Special Political Committee should not merely concern itself with assistance to refugees; it should also contribute to the solution of the tragic problem presented to the conscience of the civilized world by a nation in exile which had the right to the treatment due to all nations.

24. Mr. COMAY (Israel) said that, irrespective of his place on the list of speakers, he reserved the right to exercise his right of reply at an appropriate time.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that that procedure was in conformity with article 116 of the rules of procedure.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.