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Chairman: Mr. Abdulrahim Abby FARAH (Somalia).

AGENDA ITEM 33

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/7213, A/SPC/126, A/SPC/1271, A/SPC/L.165)

1. Miss DEVER (Belgium) paid tribute to the excellence of the work of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, which, as the report (A/7213) showed, had been accomplished with untiring dedication under singularly difficult conditions, not the least of which was the Agency's financial situation. Despite repeated appeals to the Member States of the United Nations, the burden of the expenditure was borne by a minority of countries. It was difficult to understand how any Member State could fail to support an undertaking which, while it might not resolve the problem of the Near East, did at least help to prevent its worsening. With that in mind, her Government, which had made regular voluntary contributions since 1950, had decided to pledge the sum of \$60,000 for 1969, thereby contributing twice as much as it had in 1966. That sum took no account of the substantial contributions made by private Belgian organizations. Her delegation could not, however, support the proposal in paragraph 41 of the Commissioner-General's report. The original intention had been that the expenditure in question should be supported by voluntary contributions and a change whereby it would be financed by compulsory contributions under the regular budget, in the event that voluntary contributions were not sufficient, would not be sound practice.

2. However rapid the solution of the refugee problem, the situation could not become normal overnight. Her Government did not doubt that the Agency's mandate should be renewed for a reasonable period to allow the Commissioner-General to formulate an effective working programme. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that support for the Agency and the extension of its mandate did no more than alleviate a tragic situation which had awaited solution for twenty years. It was discouraging that, year after year, the preamble of resolutions adopted by the Committee on the refugee

problem grew longer with the mention of new resolutions deploring the non-implementation of previous ones. Since June 1967, the tragedy of the existing refugees had been compounded by the flight of thousands from their homes and camps. That being so, none could fail to support the Secretary-General's call at the 612th meeting, for urgent action, in accordance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, to facilitate the return of those who had fled.

3. The solution of the refugee problem was to be found in an over-all settlement on the lines indicated by Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 which her delegation hoped would be implemented as soon as possible. Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General had pointed out, it could not be questioned that the plight of many of the refugees could best be relieved immediately by their return to their homes and to the camps which they had formerly occupied. As her own delegation had pointed out the previous year (589th meeting), it was paradoxical that new camps should have to be constructed when the old ones remained empty. The Commissioner-General had observed that the incongruity of having to improvise and extend limited resources, while decent, permanent camps and facilities lay idle on the West Bank of the Jordan was striking. World public opinion would find it difficult to understand why the Governments directly concerned did not take the necessary steps to remedy the situation as a matter of urgency.

4. Her Government could only support the Secretary-General's appeal to Governments to afford his Special Representative, Mr. Jarring, all possible co-operation and assistance in finding a solution to the refugee problem. If further suffering was to be avoided, the United Nations, and particularly the great Powers and the countries of the Middle East, must spare no effort to further the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and thus achieve a durable and equitable solution.

5. Mr. EL KONY (United Arab Republic) expressed his delegation's high appreciation to the Secretary-General who, addressing the Committee (612th meeting) in connexion with the report of the Commissioner-General of the Agency (A/7213), had drawn the special attention of the Committee to certain acute situations requiring urgent attention. The poignant tragedy of the refugees lay in the fact that, until the General Assembly's twenty-fourth session, an increased number of them would have to lead a miserable and precarious existence, living on charity and lacking the basis on which to plan their lives and future.

6. The significant facts and figures in the Commissioner-General's report should not be considered

separately from the fact that what was at stake was the destiny of a whole people. All agreed that every effort must be made to alleviate the hardships and miseries of the refugees who were facing the rigours of yet another winter. It was also a fact that the Agency should be endowed with sufficient funds to cater for the increasing needs of the growing number of refugees. To that end, the Assembly should devise means of ensuring that the refugees had access to the income from properties usurped from them by the Israel authorities and of which they alone should be the beneficiaries. It was painful for the Arab people of Palestine to find themselves living on international charity when they should be able to sustain themselves through their property in Israel. None could now envisage the termination of Agency's activities, particularly at a time when the latest Israel aggression against the Arab States had added to the already heavy burden borne by the Agency. Nevertheless, the refugee problem could not be viewed simply as a humanitarian or financial issue. It was fundamentally a political issue involving the right of self determination and the Committee must not lose sight of that essential fact.

7. Twenty years previously, an industrious, peaceful people had been violently evicted from their land with no justification except the accommodation of the Zionist movement's insatiable ambition and the furtherance of the political designs of certain Powers. The eviction had been carried out brutally, neither women nor children being spared. For twenty years the Palestinians had waited in vain for the international community to expedite the implementation of the early resolutions concerning their repatriation and compensation. The only reward for their patience had been that many of them had had to suffer eviction yet again. The others, living under Israel military occupation, led a sad existence for, as the Commissioner-General's report stated, they were subject to the psychological stress of living under an occupied authority and to restrictions inseparable from military security measures.

8. The aim of the Israel persecution of the Arab inhabitants was to force the latter into submission or emigration. It was perfidy on the part of Israel to defy the will of the United Nations when it intervened to alleviate the refugees' suffering. It was well known that Israel had refused to comply with the Security Council resolution requesting co-operation in the investigation of the conditions under which the Arab people in the occupied territories were living. The Committee should, therefore not confine itself to the short-term objectives of increasing assistance to the Palestine refugees. No equitable and just solution to the refugee problem could ever be found if the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people were disregarded. More than 1.5 million refugees, a population much larger than that of some Member States, had been deprived of the right to determine their future. The denial of that right should not be tolerated any longer by the United Nations.

9. Certain recent proposals allegedly aimed at solving the problem had been hailed by some as constructive. His delegation did not view them in that light. Any solution of the problem through discussions at the inter-governmental level would deny the refugees their

right to express themselves freely, and could hardly be serious or constructive. Similarly any solution that was not based on the strict implementation of the various United Nations resolutions could hardly be acceptable or practical. The United Nations bore a responsibility in the creation of the problem and had prescribed a solution; the question would remain before it until its resolutions were fully implemented.

10. The implementation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling upon the Israel authorities to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of areas where military operations had taken place and to facilitate their return had been one of the main themes of the previous year's debate. Most delegations had urged the prompt implementation of those resolutions. Yet the Commissioner-General's report indicated that the Israel authorities were refusing to comply with the unanimous decisions of the Organization. The Israel authorities had authorized only 16,000 of 130,000 applications for return during the previous year. Several days earlier, the Israel authorities had announced that they would allow 7,000 of the more than 350,000 displaced persons to return on a selective basis. That was a clear indication of the respect which Israel showed for United Nations resolutions and of the real scope of its intentions with regard to the refugee problem.

11. The situation was serious. Not only did Israel's attitude weaken the Agency's capacity effectively to assist the refugees, but the aggravation of the latter's plight could only engender further bitterness, grief and tension in the Middle East where, as his delegation had pointed out at the previous session (592nd meeting), the situation was further deteriorating as a result of the inhuman treatment inflicted on the refugees following Israel's aggression in June 1967. That was still the case: peace and security in the Middle East could not long endure in view of the mounting tensions.

12. His Government had been gravely disturbed by the difficulties faced by the Agency in the pursuit of its educational activities. The unwarranted interference of the Israel authorities in the education of Arab students in the occupied territories were bound to have an adverse effect on the future education of those students. The Arab host Governments had informed the Commissioner-General that they regarded such interference as an infringement of their sovereignty and a violation of the right of each national, religious or linguistic community to pursue the educational programmes which conformed to its traditions and heritage. Those Governments had also stressed that changes in the curricula or textbooks of schools in the occupied territories violated the inhabitants' basic human rights and the basic objectives of UNESCO and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.^{1/} The Arab Government expected the Agency to stand firm vis-à-vis the occupying authorities on that very important issue.

13. The perpetuation of the misery of more than 1.5 million innocent people was one of the cruelest crimes humanity had ever known and could not be

^{1/} United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, 1950, No. 973, p. 287.

allowed to continue forever. The solution was already at hand; it had been formulated by the United Nations and upheld by the General Assembly for two decades.

14. His delegation paid special tribute to the Member States and organizations which had generously contributed to making the Agency's work easier and more effective. It was also sincerely grateful to the Commissioner-General and his associates for their dedication and untiring efforts.

15. Mr. CHORAPHAS (Greece) expressed his delegation's highest appreciation of the devotion of the Commissioner-General and his staff in overcoming innumerable difficulties, especially after the previous year's military confrontation. His delegation was not unaware that the Palestine refugee problem was only a part of a larger and complex issue. It hoped that a permanent and just solution of the larger issues would one day be achieved and the peace and prosperity would replace the explosive conditions which had lasted all too long in that part of the world. Greeks had special and obvious reasons for wishing for a speedy return to a normal situation in the area, for hundreds of thousands of Greeks had spent their lives in the Middle East, and the Arab countries had become a second homeland for them.

16. There was no doubt that a final settlement of the crisis in the Middle East would constitute the ideal framework within which the problem of the refugees could be satisfactorily and permanently solved. He nevertheless wondered whether anyone really believed that such a settlement was imminent. The interested parties could afford to await a general settlement but the refugees could not. All were aware of the urgency of their problems, clearly shown by the Commissioner-General's report (A/7213). Some action must be taken quickly if the problem were to be faced realistically. If the United Nations attempted to deal with the problem as part of a general settlement, there might be very few refugees left by the time a final settlement was achieved.

17. His delegation therefore believed that the Committee should confine itself strictly to its task under the item before it. That task consisted in bringing relief to the innocent victims of events which had plunged the Middle East into chaos and misery and, in discharging it, the Committee should try to put aside any consideration which lay outside its main objectives and might merely complicate the issue. The Committee's primary duty was to respond whole-heartedly to the Secretary-General's noble appeal at the 612th meeting and to do its utmost to enable the Agency to pursue its mission. His country would continue to pay its annual contribution to the Agency. It had also made several grants to some of the host countries and would seriously consider increasing its annual contribution within its financial limits. His delegation hoped that other States would do the same, although that would not be enough.

18. There were cases of special hardship and misery which required an additional effort—namely the plight of the many thousands of refugees who had been obliged to leave their homes during and after the armed conflict in 1967. It was absurd and inadmissible that those unfortunate people should live under miserable conditions when there were homes or camps waiting for

them on the West Bank of the Jordan. His delegation realized that there might be some fear that a massive repatriation could result in an outbreak of violence. Nevertheless, it shared the opinion expressed by the United Kingdom representative (616th meeting) that the danger was even greater under conditions of misery and humiliation. His country joined in the urgent appeal for the speedy repatriation of the newly displaced persons.

19. The extension of the Agency's mandate was absolutely necessary, given the present conditions. The United Nations must not fail in the purely humanitarian task which it had to face. Success would be proof that neighbourly compassion still existed in the world and would encourage those who believed in the mission of the United Nations. Failure would be a severe blow not only to the refugees but to the United Nations as a whole.

20. Mr. COMAY (Israel) said that his Government's prime concern was to achieve a peace settlement which would end the Israel-Arab conflict and to adopt a constructive approach to the problems of human displacement which it had caused. The bitter fruit of all war was death, destruction and displacement on both sides; that applied equally to the three wars caused by Arab hostility to Israel. The 1948 war had not destroyed Israel but it had launched a two-way migration. More than 500,000 Arabs had moved from areas under Israel control to adjacent Arab areas, but 85 percent of them had remained, and still remained, in the area that had been Palestine under the Mandate. Jews from the Old City of Jerusalem and a number of Jewish villages occupied by Arab forces had been taken into Israel. After that war, some 500,000 Jews unrooted from the Arab countries had also moved into Israel. A vast amount of their property had been confiscated in the countries which they had left and no offer of compensation had ever been made. Only small remnants of the ancient Jewish communities remained in the Arab countries of the Middle East where they were repressed and not allowed to leave. In times of war and stress, groups which felt insecure tended to move into areas where they had an affinity with the local population. Historically, such migrations had not been reversed, least of all—as in the present case—when movement took place in both directions and war was not followed by peace.

21. For twenty years Israel and its Arab neighbours had faced each other across military frontiers, and on both sides the displaced groups had put down fresh roots among their own kin. The United Nations had never been seized of the problem of Jews being displaced from the Arab countries, most of whom had been resettled in Israel and absorbed. That had meant a considerable national effort and a financial burden willingly borne by the people of Israel with material help from their Jewish brethren elsewhere in the free world. No comparable effort had been made by the Arab world to absorb its own displaced kinsmen. Indeed, the official Arab position had hardened and the refugees had been cast in the role of a political and military spearhead in a continuing struggle against the existence of Israel. They had been worked upon by professional agitators and thousands of young men had been armed and trained while remaining wards of

UNRWA. Even before the June 1967 war, the Secretary-General had warned of the danger to peace of the so-called liberation army deployed under Egyptian command in the Gaza Strip and along the Sinai border. Several thousand of them were now in the United Arab Republic receiving UNRWA rations and his delegation must question the propriety of such aid.

22. The refugees had been taught that the only solution to their problems lay in the dissolution of Israel. Although they had been increasingly absorbed into the Arab world, that fact was not reflected in the statistics which, inflated from the outset, swelled each year. UNRWA had itself become a political prisoner of the unresolved conflict and had lost its original purpose, which had been to carry out a crash programme for the regional economic integration of the refugees. In 1948, before the hostilities had ended, the United Nations Mediator on Palestine had recommended in his report^{2/} that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be allowed to do so, while the remainder should be paid compensation for their property. The Mediator had been referring to people who, at that time, had left their homes only months or weeks earlier. His recommendations had been echoed in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which had also called for the establishment of a Conciliation Commission to assist in a final negotiated settlement of all Israel-Arab issues. It had soon become apparent that expectations of peace were unduly optimistic and paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) had become the focus of a sterile textual exercise in the Committee's annual debates.

23. United Nations policy towards the refugee problem had turned in a new direction as early as 1949 when the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, known as the Clapp Mission, had been sent to the Middle East. The Assembly had approved the Mission's proposals for a programme of public works for the reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East;^{3/} a \$200 million rehabilitation fund had been voted to finance the programme, and UNRWA had been created to implement it. Nevertheless, because of Arab political resistance, all integration and rehabilitation projects had long been abandoned and UNRWA had become a permanent relief agency for a self-perpetuating refugee problem. Even persons who had become self-supporting remained registered with the Agency and could come back on relief at a future time. Meanwhile, they were included in the Agency's refugee totals. Furthermore, the Agency had, in practice, come to assume that refugee status was handed down from the original displaced persons to subsequent generations.

24. The question facing the Committee was not whether the international community should help the needy or uprooted people on humanitarian grounds—all were agreed that it should—but whether long-term help should concentrate on rehabilitation or keep them on relief. The time had come to take a fresh look at

the problem and prepare the way for constructive settlement in the framework of peace and regional and international co-operation. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) had placed the refugee problem once more in the broad context of peace-making and had wisely refrained from tying its settlement to previous United Nations resolutions. His Government was anxious to participate actively in a renewed attack upon the substance of the problem.

25. His delegation would not wish to underrate the value of the Agency's work in the education and vocational training of youth which was generally and rightly recognized. At some stage, however, those activities would need to be merged with the educational systems of the host countries. His Government intended to make a special contribution of 200,000 Israel pounds for the expansion of the Agency's vocational training centre at Gaza and was developing its own vocational training services in Israel-held areas.

26. Pending an over-all solution of the problem, it was obvious that UNRWA should continue to operate. His Government would therefore support a reasonable extension of the Agency's mandate and would continue to extend full co-operation to the Agency in all Israel-held areas. Despite certain criticisms made by Israel authorities about the way UNRWA's role had evolved since its foundation, Israel's working relations with the Agency had been harmonious and co-operation with it had continued to be effective.

27. The financial cost of the Agency's operation to the Israel tax-payer was considerable. The direct contribution of the Israel Government for the year ended 30 June 1968 had been over \$2.5 million for education, social welfare, medical, housing, security and other services. To that must be added a direct cash contribution for the period under review of I£ 1 million and almost I £2 million for port services, transport, storage and other expenses, so that Israel's total contribution was \$3.5 million.

28. His delegation wished to make a general reservation about the figures given in the report of the Commissioner-General (A/7213) for the number of refugees remaining in the areas, after allowing for movement out of them. Efforts to reconcile UNRWA's statistics with those produced in the census conducted by the Israel Government in September 1967 were still in progress and his delegation would not draw any conclusions at present. It was not, however, aware of any such joint technical study in any of the Arab host countries and considered the statistics for those countries to be unreliable.

29. With reference to the question of school text-books mentioned in paragraphs 17 to 19 of the report, in Israel-held areas text-books containing incitement to hatred were no longer in use in either refugee or non-refugee schools but their suppression had entailed no interference with the children's religious or cultural education. The question of their replacement in refugee schools would be considered by the Committee of Experts set up by the Director-General of UNESCO, with Israel approval. No steps to remedy that serious problem had been taken in the Arab host countries: their Governments had raised objections on the grounds of sovereignty and cultural heritage. Those arguments

^{2/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Supplement No. 11.

^{3/} *Ibid.*, Fourth Session, Ad Hoc Political Committee, Annex, vol. 1, document A/1106.

begged the real question, whether United Nations agencies should be responsible for teaching children hatred of another State or people.

30. The report referred to the impact on the refugees of the economic dislocation caused by the war. In general, economic activity in Israel-held areas was at least at the pre-war levels. There was no longer any serious unemployment; wage levels had risen; the production and marketing of agricultural products had returned to normal; steps were taken to promote investment; and on the West Bank, private building activity was reviving. The refugee communities in the Israel-held areas were benefiting from the general improvement in economic conditions.

31. The Secretary-General's statement (612th meeting) and the Commissioner-General's report urged that the return of persons displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities to their former homes and camps should be facilitated. The Israel Government was acutely conscious of the human aspects of that question but the extent and cadence of their return was inevitably affected by the political and security conditions in the area and could not be discussed in a vacuum. Despite the official cease-fire, there was continuous border warfare and efforts were being made to promote violence and to disrupt orderly administration within the Israel-held areas. By fomenting and supporting those activities, the Jordan Government was making large-scale repatriation as difficult as possible but such action would not deflect his Government from its humane policy towards the local population or from its search for a dialogue and for reconciliation with its neighbours.

32. Pending a peace settlement, Israel was trying to reconcile the return of displaced persons with its responsibility for the safety, welfare and security of the local population and of the State itself. During the preceding year, 14,000 persons had been repatriated in one project and another 7,000 had not taken advantage of the return permits issued to them. Under the family reunion scheme, 3,000 persons had returned and 3,000 more permits had been issued. The processing of family reunion and hardship applications was being accelerated and a further 7,000 persons were to be readmitted on the basis of permits issued but not used. Any permits not used by the end of January 1969 would be made available to other applicants. Migration eastward across the Jordan had virtually ceased and the flow was almost entirely westward back to Israel-held areas.

33. The estimated figure of 400,000 West Bank residents who had been displaced by the fighting and had moved into Jordan was grossly exaggerated. The registration in Jordan presumably included various other groups, for instance local residents who had suffered economic hardships due to the war. The Clapp Mission had estimated that some 160,000 needy non-refugees had also been registered in 1949. Some of the 60,000 to 70,000 inhabitants of the Jordan Valley who had moved further inland because the terrorists had established their bases in that area had also probably swelled the relief ranks in and around Amman. Jordan's failure to halt all those attacks also accounted for the fact that the temporary camps were in the uplands and not down in the valley where the winter

climate was mild. The West Bank area of Jordan had always been a source of migration and relief was being claimed from the Jordan authorities or UNRWA by a number of persons who had already been living in East Jordan before the hostilities. Although some of the eastward migration after the cease-fire, may have been due to reluctance to remain under Israel control, it had been orderly and voluntary and the migrants were not war-time refugees. His Government had never felt entitled to retain any of the inhabitants in Israel-held territory against their will. According to the records of the eastward migrants, kept by the Israel authorities since the beginning of July 1967, and according to estimated figures for those who crossed the river during and immediately after the hostilities, the total was believed to be less than 250,000.

34. It was not for his Government to suggest how many persons should be assisted in Jordan but the human fact remained that, wherever they came from, many families were facing a hard winter in the camps in that country and the UNRWA needed additional funds to make the camps more habitable. His Government therefore intended to make another special contribution of I £1 million to be utilized in cash or building materials at the Agency's choice. In addition to the increased freedom of movement in both directions across the river Jordan mentioned in paragraph 11 of the report, the Israel Government had encouraged the passage of goods and mail. Since the beginning of 1968, 180,000 persons had crossed backwards and forwards between the West Bank and Jordan and beyond; and 23,000 Arab visitors, including 6,000 students who had spent their summer vacation with their families, had crossed to the West Bank from Jordan and other Arab countries. Over 1,000 of the latter had sought and obtained permission to remain permanently.

35. During the same period, many thousands of truckloads of farm produce from the West Bank had crossed into Jordan and beyond, returning with imports of produce and merchandise. The volume of that traffic was much the same as before June 1967. The exchange of mail between Israel-held areas and the Arab States was also functioning smoothly, with the co-operation of the International Red Cross. The policy of that open frontier not only lessened present difficulties but widened the areas of contact between all the populations concerned and might increase the prospect of peaceful coexistence.

36. With regard to the question of a permanent solution of the Arab refugee problem as a whole, no positive response had yet been received to the suggestions made in the sixth of the nine principles for peace outlined by the Israel Minister for Foreign Affairs in his statement at the present session of the General Assembly (1686th plenary meeting). These were, first, for a conference of Middle Eastern States, Governments contributing to refugee relief, and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, to be convened in advance of peace negotiations, and secondly, under a peace settlement, for the establishment by the signatories of joint refugee integration and rehabilitation commissions. His Government thought that the refugee programme should include a reintegration and compensation fund to provide the financial means for land settlement,

economic self-support, training, migration and compensation for abandoned property, a fund to which he reaffirmed his Government's willingness to give prompt and substantial financial support. As his delegation had said in the Committee at the twenty-second session (588th meeting), his Government was ready to place at the disposal of a constructive and comprehensive plan all available resources and the skills and experience in settlement and development gained in its own nation-building and in programmes of economic and technical co-operation between Israel and over sixty other developing lands.

37. The practical aspects of a solution to the refugee problem should not be unduly formidable. The picture of 1.3 million Arab refugees eking out a precarious existence on international charity was fictitious. The total number of needy refugees existing in the area was considerably lower than the registered total and there had been substantial economic absorption. In most areas, refugee levels of employment and family income were equal or close to those of the non-refugee population. In addition, many tens of thousands of refugees were working in Kuwait and other Arab countries and sent money home to their families. In his preceding report,^{4/} the Commissioner-General had said that for some years prior to the June war, there had been a steady rise in the economic and social conditions of the refugees, due to economic development in the Arab countries, the capacities of the refugees themselves and the education and training received by young refugees. The economic aid supplied by UNRWA, though not unimportant in itself, was subsidiary. Although hostilities had had a disruptive effect on that steady absorption, at least the Israel-held territories had since shown an economic recovery. The statement in that report had been borne out by a study of one of the large camps on the West Bank carried out by a research team from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Not only was the average family income and level of employment nearly equal to local standards and even a little higher when the cash value of the UNRWA rations was taken into account, but also very few of the original refugees were left in the camp and a number of local inhabitants had moved in. Even including the special case of the Gaza Strip, only one third of the refugees lived in camps, which had themselves evolved into villages, small townships and urban quarters.

38. It was also interesting to note that the majority of names on UNRWA lists were those of children and young people born after the events of 1948. Since in most areas the distinction between refugees and non-refugees had become blurred, a practical solution would not start from scratch. It would largely consist in speeding up and consolidating the existing process of integration ensuring a productive life for all refugees willing and able to work and merging refugee and non-refugee education, health, social welfare and relief services. The need for relocation would particularly apply to refugees in the Gaza Strip, where the numbers exceeded the absorption potential. Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld had said in 1959 that the unemployed population represented by the Palestine refugees should be regarded as an asset for the future, a reservoir of

manpower which would help create higher standards for the whole population of the area.^{5/} That reservoir was already being largely tapped.

39. The statistics in the 1967 report, which the Commissioner-General had admitted did not adequately reflect the extent of refugee rehabilitation, had resulted in the projection of an unduly gloomy picture, which had been exploited for propaganda purposes. Only after a thorough factual survey to reveal the number of bona fide refugees and the extent of their absorption could any practical planning be done to rehabilitate those who still needed it and to wind up a twenty-year relief operation. The experience of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confirmed that refugees usually became integrated in the countries of asylum so that UNHCR programmes were mainly devoted to helping them to become self-supporting.

40. Despite the existing differences and hazards, therefore, there were grounds for renewed hope. There was movement and mingling such as had not existed for many years; people on both sides were weary of bloodshed and strife and longed for the chance to lead their daily lives in peace. Many years after the last such efforts had faded, the United Nations was once more engaged in a serious peace-making effort. What was essential was to forget the past and move towards a better future, in which Israeli and Arab would live and work together for the good of their shared region.

41. Mr. TOMEH (Syria), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that the Israel representative's praiseworthy desire for peace in the area could only be fulfilled by his own country. As Uri Avnery, a member of the Knesset who was opposed to Zionism, had said in his book Israel without Zionists; a plea for peace in the Middle East,^{6/} the first step had to be made by Israel, which had held the initiative since the appearance of the first Zionist settlers in Palestine. It was for Israel to change the climate of hatred and suspicion in the Middle East. Israel's idea of peace had also been described by Avnery in the same book, where he said that, like most Israelis, Ben-Gurion was convinced that it was for the Arabs to make peace and that that would mean Arab recognition of the status quo.

42. In June 1967, immediately after the hostilities, the Security Council had adopted resolution 237 (1967) calling upon the Government of Israel to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations had taken place to facilitate their return. That resolution had not been adopted in a vacuum but against a background of realities resulting from a war of aggression that had caused the exodus of thousands of persons. It had been reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 2252 (ES-V), and appeals for its implementation had repeatedly been made by the Secretary-General and in the note submitted by the Commissioner-General to the International Conference on Human Rights, held at Tehran,^{7/} an interesting document which should be

^{5/} Ibid., Fourteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 27, document A/4121.

^{6/} New York, Macmillan, 1968.

^{7/} A/CONF. 32/22.

^{4/} Ibid., Twenty-second Session, Supplement No. 13.

circulated to all Members of the United Nations. In view of the delay in the implementation of resolution 237 (1967), the Security Council had adopted resolution 259 (1968), reaffirming it, but to no avail.

43. The Israel representative had questioned the number of refugees given in the report of the Commissioner-General (A/7213) and had quoted entirely different figures. It was always possible to juggle with figures and he hoped no one would be misled by such false statements. Violence had by no means ceased in the area and on 20 November 1968, his country had lodged a complaint with the Israel-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission, regarding the destruction by the Israel occupying authorities of houses in the village of Souraman.^{8/} The Israel representative had not in fact mentioned any of the occupied areas of Syria but only those in Jordan. The greater Israel plan and other similar plans did not regard any readjustment of borders from the point of view of what should be returned to the Arabs but of what might still be retained, while keeping the Jewish majority in the occupied areas.

44. The New York Times of 23 November 1968 had quoted one of the Israel advocates of a peaceful solution criticizing General Dayan's desire to incorporate the occupied areas into Israel because there would no longer be a majority of Jews in what should be a purely Jewish State. An article in The New York Times of 14 August 1968 had said that eight Israel settlements had been established in the Golan Heights area since its capture during the 1967 war and that two more were under construction. The Jewish National Fund which, although based in New York, was an Israel Government body, had announced plans to import 16,000 head of beef cattle to that area and the National Parks Authority was developing a nature reserve in the Banias region. According to The New York Times of 4 August 1968, Rabbi Richard Rubenstein, a Jewish-American theologian, had said that the re-entry of the Jewish people into their homeland required the intelligent use of violence. In an article in the Sunday Times of London on 19 November 1967, a Jewish English writer, had described the shooting of 200 Arabs who were attempting night crossings to the West Bank and the destruction of 220 houses to provide an open space for pilgrims in front of the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. The dramatic sufferings of the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem had also been described by Sister Marie-Thérèse of the Order of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in Témoignage Chrétien on 27 July 1967.

45. It was one of the aims of the Zionist movement to convince Jews living in the Arab countries to emigrate. He referred to a book entitled Strictly Illegal^{9/} written by a member of Haganah which described the Zionist policy of establishing underground cells in Arab countries. The aim of those cells was to provoke incidents which would appear to provide justification for the claim that the Jews had been forced to leave those countries. In an article entitled "Ambiguities of Immigration" which had appeared in the Jerusalem

Post on 21 July 1964 and which he had quoted in his statement on the same agenda item during the twentieth session (452nd meeting), an Israel writer, Nissim Rejwan, commenting on the motives behind the emigration of Jews from the Arab countries, had said that the huge movement of populations was often described in Israel as "rescue operation", implying that the Jewish communities had been ejected from the lands of their birth and had been given a new home by their brethren in Israel; however, there had been cells in Arab countries which aimed at inciting the Jews to leave those countries. Yet the Israel representative spoke of the repression and persecution of the Jews in Arab lands.

46. The arguments produced by the representative of Israel concerning the number of refugees had all been taken from an article entitled "The Case of the Missing Arab Refugees" which had appeared in Look magazine on 17 September 1968. The writer of that article, Ira Hirschmann, claimed that in March 1968 he had asked for and received a commission from the State Department to make a survey in Arab countries to study the true refugee picture and had said that he was sure that the findings of UNRWA's own survey would radically change the distorted view of the nature of the refugee problem. According to Look magazine, Mr. Hirschmann had visited the Middle East on several occasions on fact-finding trips for UNRWA and the United States State Department. A high official in the United States State Department had, however, later informed Look magazine that the State Department had never commissioned Mr. Hirschmann to write such a vicious article, and UNRWA, too, had denied Mr. Hirschmann's charges in a press release dated 11 September 1968.

47. In answer to the Israel representative's claim that his Government was co-operating with UNRWA, he quoted from annex II, paragraph 8, of the Commissioner-General's report concerning damage to Agency installations during raids by Israel forces. The Commissioner-General had also indicated in his report that the damage to refugee schools in the Gaza Strip alone had amounted to \$220,000. The sum of \$2.5 million which Israel had contributed to the budget of UNRWA could not be compared with the loss of a homeland suffered by the refugees. That sum should, moreover, be considered in relation to the assistance provided by the Arab countries. As the former Commissioner-General of UNRWA had said in his book, The Evasive Peace, a Study of the Zionist-Arab Problem,^{10/} Jordan, the United Arab Republic, Syria and Lebanon had spent more than \$100 million on education, health services, camp sites, housing and road improvement, and the maintenance of security in the refugee camps, and in addition, the people of those countries had borne with courage the economic, social and other sacrifices and hardships resulting from the presence of large numbers of refugees within their borders.

48. The approach to a solution of the refugee problem which had been proposed by the representative of Israel at the 1686th plenary meeting of the General Assembly and repeated by the representative of Israel during the current meeting, an approach on which he

^{8/} See Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-third Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1968, document S/8904.

^{9/} Meir Mardon, London, R. Hale, 1964.

^{10/} John Davis, London, Murray, 1968.

himself had commented at the 1702nd plenary meeting of the Assembly, amounted to a rejection of the numerous resolutions already adopted by the Assembly which affirmed the right of the Arab refugees either to repatriation or compensation. It was, of course, in Israel's interests to forget the past. Legally, the Arabs owned the land of Palestine, and conquest did not terminate that legal right. If the present situation of the refugees was allowed to continue, the situation in the Middle East would remain explosive. Peace was not pacifism, and it would not be achieved by Israel refusing to vacate the occupied territories and insisting on peace on its own terms.

49. Mr. SAYEGH (Kuwait) said that it was clear that the representative of Israel did not understand what was meant by a Palestine refugee; to him, a Palestine refugee was merely one who suffered economic privation. Economic hardship, however, was only the result of being a refugee, the result of being deprived of a home and a country. A Palestine refugee was an inhabitant of Palestine who had been evicted from his home and country against his will and barred from return. The Palestine refugees had been deprived of the opportunity to exercise self-determination on their native soil. A double standard appeared to be applied with regard to the meaning of a refugee. On the one hand, Israel and the political movement which it represented repeatedly claimed that Jews all over the world, even wealthy Jews, were refugees, living in a state of exile that would not terminate until they "returned" to Palestine, where they had never lived. Yet Israel considered the Palestine refugee, who had been expelled from his home, to be only a poor man whose suffering would end when his economic plight had been improved.

50. When the representative of Israel claimed that the situation of the refugees was less grim than propaganda had described it, it was not clear whose propaganda he was referring to, that of the Arab States or of UNRWA. He had been disappointed to note that after the previous meeting, when it had been announced that a film produced by UNRWA depicting the plight of the refugees would be shown, the entire Israel delegation had left the room, perhaps in order to avoid being disillusioned by what they would see. According to the representative of Israel, the situation of the refugees was not as grim as it might be, largely because the Arab States, in particular Kuwait, had made it possible for some of the refugees to earn a decent living, but at the same time he had claimed that the plight of the refugees was due to the obstructive attitude of the Governments of the Arab States towards a settlement. The economic situation of the refugees had admittedly been eased as a result of the efforts of the Arab States, but the latter would never coerce the refugees into forgetting that they had a homeland of their own nor would they force the refugees to abandon hope of returning there. As to the attitude of the Arab States towards a solution to the problem, those States were not prepared to pay an excessive price, amounting to a ransom, in order to achieve a solution. It was in fact Israel which was preventing the return of the refugees to their homeland. The new approach to a solution of the problem mentioned by Israel was not in fact new. It had been mentioned during the previous session and again during the current session in the

General Assembly. It amounted to a proposal to create new machinery which would vindicate Israel's obstructive attitude towards a solution of the refugee problem.

51. Mr. COMAY (Israel), replying to the representative of Kuwait, said that his delegation had not stayed to see the documentary film after the previous meeting because it had already seen it and indeed had a copy of the film in the office of the Permanent Mission. He would, however, have left the room at that point in any event, because he disapproved of extraneous matter being injected into the proceedings and believed that the debate should be the basis of the Committee's consideration of the item. He had made that point to the Secretary-General and to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA before the film had been shown.

52. Mr. TOMEH (Syria) objected to the representative of Israel's objections to the showing of the documentary film. Documents of any nature were absolutely essential if an accurate judgement was to be formed of a fact of history. The documentary film in question had not been produced in Hollywood, as the commercial film *Exodus* and a new film depicting the six-days' war had been. The Arabs could not offer any films of that kind, only the documentary film produced by UNRWA.

53. Mr. COMAY (Israel) said that he would not like the showing of films in the Committee to become a practice. When the Commissioner-General of UNRWA submitted a report to the General Assembly that report had to be a comprehensive one since it would be subjected to scrutiny in public in the Committee. On the other hand, a twenty-minute film on a complex subject was necessarily selective and one-sided. The script of the documentary film in question had never been referred to his Government, although Israel was one of the host countries, and no mention had been made in the film either of the activities of UNRWA in Israel or of Israel's co-operation. He had informed the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA that he did not consider it desirable to have the film shown in the Committee room since there would be no opportunity for discussing the impression which the film might make. He asked the Secretariat to give further consideration to the question of whether the showing of such films should become a yearly feature.

54. Mr. BUNCHE (Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs) conformed that the representative of Israel had made known his objections to the showing of the documentary film. The Secretary-General had listened carefully but had not felt that there was any basis for refusing to show the film since it would not form part of the official proceedings and a similar film had been shown in 1967. The Secretary-General would maintain the right of UNRWA to make such presentations concerning its work whenever it might deem it useful to do so.

55. Mr. MENDELEVICH (Union of Soviet Republics) said that he had been surprised by the representative of Israel's objections to the showing of the film, which was a highly impressive documentary film prepared by a United Nations organ. It was useful to see the truth as well as to hear it. He fully agreed with the

explanation given by the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs.

56. Mr. TOMEH (Syria) pointed out that an exhibit concerning the refugee camps had been displayed in the Committee room during the twenty-first session, an exhibit to which Israel had objected. The Fourth Committee had also displayed similar exhibits concerning items under discussion during the previous session. The representative of Israel had said that Israel was a host country, but it was not clear who it was host to: the Arabs, the the Oriental Jews, or the European Jews. Many people were guests in Israel. He suggested that Israel should look into the falsifications put out by the Zionist propaganda machine.

57. Mr. COMAY (Israel) pointed out that his delegation had refrained from raising in the Committee the matter of the showing of the documentary film out of respect for the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. It had instead taken the matter up in the proper quarter. The question had only arisen in the Committee as a result of the remarks made by the representative of Kuwait.

58. The CHAIRMAN said that he had made it clear at the end of the previous meeting that the viewing of the documentary film after the meeting was purely voluntary.

59. With reference to the question concerning the Committee's records which had been raised by the representative of Israel at the previous meeting,

he said that he had been informed by the Director of Interpretation and Meetings Service that the additional cost of producing verbatim records amounted to \$1,700 per meeting. Since priority was given to producing the records of the First Committee there was sometimes a delay in distributing verbatim records for the Special Political Committee. The official records of the Committee were the summary records which were issued in provisional form and were subject to correction by representatives before printing. Verbatim records, on the other hand, were not printed.

60. The officers of the Committee felt that the current practice of asking for the full circulation of verbatim records of particular statements could result in some inequity, especially if certain requests were refused. Since during the previous session verbatim records had been provided of the discussion concerning the item on peace-keeping, he suggested that the Committee should ask the Secretariat to arrange for the full circulation of verbatim records of the discussion relating to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA as soon as it could manage to do so.

61. Mr. COMAY (Israel) agreed with that suggestion provided that the verbatim records were not selective.

It was do decided.

The meeting rost at 6.10 p.m.