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

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 request 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.

1. Mr. YOSANO (Japan) said that while his delegation was fully aware of the political difficulties which the problem of the Palestine refugees entailed, it felt that the matter should be approached from the humanitarian rather than the political standpoint. His country had contributed to UNRWA on humanitarian grounds even before its admission to the United Nations, and it was glad to note from the annual report (A/4478) that the Agency was continuing its good work. The Director and his staff were to be commended for their devotion to their task. The functions on which the Agency intended to concentrate its efforts during the new mandate period, particularly that of teaching vocational skills, had been wisely selected. At the same time the co-operation of the host countries was essential, and it was therefore encouraging to note the statement that relations with the host Governments were good and improving. Nevertheless, the problem was becoming more difficult with every passing year, and efforts to solve it, particularly on the part of the nations directly concerned, would have to be redoubled if the refugees were ever to be able to lead normal lives.

2. Dato' MacINTYRE (Federation of Malaya) said that UNRWA's good work was only a temporary solution of the problem. It was already hard to find decent occupations for the refugees, and the problem would become explosive when the half-million refugees under sixteen years of age sought work. The Director's plans, especially those for vocational training, depended on UNRWA's funds. The Federation of Malaya had been contributing, and more countries should do so.

3. UNRWA could only provide palliatives. The extension of its life until 1963 was no cause for satisfaction, since no permanent solution was in sight. The political problem must be solved first, by the

implementation of resolution 194 (III), which offered the only solution acceptable to the refugees. He hoped that the situation would never reach the point where armed conflict would result. His delegation would support any step towards a realistic solution, in keeping with the legitimate rights of the refugees.

4. Mr. AHRENS (Argentina) said that the United Nations must continue to help the refugees, both because of the responsibility it had assumed in 1948 and for humanitarian reasons. However, the political problem had not been solved, and the refugees and their children were living in poverty and frustration. The Argentine delegation had confidence in UNRWA and its Director, but the Agency had not enough funds to solve the refugee problem, which could only be solved by the implementation of resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, calling for repatriation and compensation. Peaceful coexistence in the Palestine region was an essential prerequisite for the satisfactory implementation of that provision. The United Nations should encourage the Arab States and Israel to spare no effort to provide such peaceful coexistence so that the million refugees might once again enjoy a normal life.

5. Mr. MOROZOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that in spite of some useful work by UNRWA, the Palestine refugee problem had not been solved. It was a political problem. By refusing to implement the General Assembly's resolutions, Israel was undermining the authority of the United Nations. The situation went beyond the limits of the agenda item under discussion. The Assembly had adopted numerous decisions on the question of Palestine refugees, but they had not been implemented. Israel would not have dared to ignore the Assembly's resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III), without the support of the Western Powers. Israel had given no sign that it was ready to implement those resolutions, and in 1956, with the United Kingdom and France, it had committed aggression against Egypt, where some of the refugees lived.

6. The eighteenth report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission (A/4573) showed that the Commission had no serious intention of fulfilling its obligations by ensuring the implementation of the resolutions. Paragraph 8 of that report, for instance, was designed to conceal the Commission's inactivity. Nor was the identification and valuation of Arab property in Israel described in paragraph 3 likely to lead in the near future to the return of the property to its owners.

7. The Government of Israel should allow the refugees to return to their homes, give their property back to them and compensate those who did not wish to return. The Western Powers which supported Israel should stop trying to create tension in the Near East. It was intolerable that the Assembly's resolutions should be defied by Israel and the West-

ern Powers, and that the refugees should continue to live in poverty and insecurity.

8. Mr. COMAY (Israel), exercising the right of reply, said he would not deal at length with the contentious statements made by the USSR representative, but he would like to put his delegation on record as repudiating them. He wished, however, to make one observation about the Conciliation Commission which might help to clear up some of the confusion existing in the minds of a number of representatives with regard to the functions of that body. The Conciliation Commission had no powers of implementation but could only try to persuade the parties to the dispute to negotiate. His country was willing to enter into direct negotiations with the Arab States on all outstanding differences between them. If the USSR considered the present situation intolerable it should use its influence with the Arab countries to persuade them to try to settle the refugee problem through the peaceful process of negotiation, in accordance with the spirit of the Charter.

9. Mr. CALERO RODRIGUEZ (Brazil) noted that the Committee was far behind schedule, and suggested that it should be agreed that all delegations would take the floor as soon as they were called upon, thus making it possible to take full advantage of the time allotted for meetings.

10. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) thought that in any case the debate could not be concluded by the time now scheduled since a number of delegations would doubtless want to hear the Conciliation Commission's reply to the questions he had asked on the previous day before making their statements. Over the years the United Nations had adopted no less than thirteen resolutions calling for the repatriation of those refugees who wished to return to their homes. To argue that the Conciliation Commission still had no power to implement those resolutions was to make a mockery of the United Nations Charter. The Organization's authority would be undermined if the objection of one Member was to be allowed to prevent the implementation of resolutions adopted by overwhelming majorities. Repatriation was an inherent right of the refugees, arising not from a decision of the United Nations but from the fact that Palestine was their homeland. The task of the United Nations was simply to defend that right. Its implementation

could not be made subject to negotiation or contingent upon Israel's consent. The idea of negotiation in that connexion was a device intended to mislead world public opinion and could not produce any positive results, for Israel had already made abundantly clear its opposition to the very process which would be the subject of such negotiation, namely repatriation. The Arab States would be traitors to their own cause if they entered into negotiations which they knew in advance would be based on a waiver of Arab rights and acceptance of an invasion of Arab territory.

11. Mr. CALERO RODRIGUEZ (Brazil) said he was not sure whether the progress report of the Conciliation Commission (A/4573) actually came within the scope of agenda item 26 under discussion. Also, the Committee would have to be sure that the Conciliation Commission intended to reply to the Saudi Arabian representative's questions before it accepted a postponement of the conclusion of the general debate.

12. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) replied that since the Conciliation Commission's progress report had been submitted pursuant to resolution 1456 (XIV), paragraph 4, calling upon it to make further efforts to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), there could be no question that the Committee was seized of that report (A/4573) in addition to the report (A/4478) of the Director of UNRWA. Accordingly, it was entitled to address questions either to the Director of the Agency or to the Conciliation Commission concerning their respective reports. The Conciliation Commission as a United Nations body had the obligation to make itself available for questioning by any Member of the Organization. Even if it should choose not to answer the questions submitted in the present instance, however, it should at least signify that negative intention, from which the members of the Committee could draw their own conclusions. Hence before the general debate was concluded the Committee should give the Conciliation Commission time either to answer the questions or to state its intention not to do so.

13. The CHAIRMAN said that in any case those representatives who had entered their names on the speakers' list before the Saudi Arabian representative had submitted his questions should be ready to take the floor as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.