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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 seat at the Committee table.

1. Mr. TOWNSEND (Peru) said that UNRWA had done excellent work, but that the real problem—the existence of the refugees—had not been solved. The only new development was that the refugees might be ready to take the law into their own hands, which would endanger world peace and the authority of the United Nations. The parties concerned should forget the past and settle the problem through negotiations. The United Nations Conciliation Commission had made no progress, because neither party had been willing to make sacrifices for the sake of agreement. He expressed doubt that an expansion of the Commission would be productive.

2. The United Nations must recognize the existence of Israel, and Israel must face its responsibilities. The United Nations should use its influence to persuade Israel and the Arab States to follow the example of Italy and Austria, which had resumed direct negotiations on a dispute of long standing. No country need give up its legitimate rights.

3. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) said he would like to ask the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, through the Chairman of the Committee, for certain clarifications. Paragraph 1 of the Commission's eighteenth progress report (A/4573) referred to the identification and valuation of refugee property in Israel. He would like to know whether the programme covered the property of all the refugees or only those who did not wish to return to their homes, and whether it included the property of those who belonged to the areas reserved to the Arabs under resolution 181 (II) on the future government of Palestine.

4. Paragraph 7 of the report said that the Secretariat had been requested to prepare working papers on both the questions of compensation and repatria-

tion, and that the paper on repatriation also contained a summary of consideration of the refugee problem since 1952. Why had the Commission chosen the year 1952? Did it consider that its mandate in the matter of repatriation was to study and report or to work out practical arrangements for repatriation? Since the Commission had dealt with the problem since 1948, what was the purpose of such studies?

5. Did paragraph 8 mean that the Commission considered itself bound by the facts and analyses set out in the two working papers? Did it intend to act on them before the General Assembly could consider them? Did it believe that Israel was willing to implement the provisions of resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, regarding repatriation and compensation? Did the "parties concerned" referred to in paragraph 8 of the report include the refugees? Did the Commission consider that repatriation depended on Israel's agreement? In discharging its mandate, did it follow the policies of the Governments represented in it or the terms of reference laid down in resolution 194 (III)?

6. Once the answers to those questions were forthcoming, he would state his delegation's position in regard to the composition and the future of the Commission.

7. Mr. BEELEY (United Kingdom) endorsed the appeal of the Director of UNRWA for more support. The Agency received 93 per cent of its income from the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, and 70 per cent from the United States alone. In 1961 the United Kingdom Government would give \$5.4 million directly, and \$1,275,000 would be contributed through the World Refugee Year Committee, including about \$225,000 from Government sources.

8. Fortunately the Agency's relations with the host Governments were improving, and progress was being made on all the problems referred to in paragraph 3 of resolution 1456 (XIV). Since the mandate of UNRWA had been extended until 1963, the Director had wisely set himself a target which he thought could be attained in that period. He had extended the programme of self-support, vocational training and university scholarships, in accordance with paragraph 6 of that resolution.

9. Paragraph 181 of the Director of the Agency's report (A/4478) showed that a sufficient demand existed in the countries concerned for the work of refugees who could develop their abilities. The Agency's budget was so small that it could help only a small proportion of the refugees in that way, but the Director had made the right decision on the aim which the Agency should set itself, beyond its basic functions of relief and general education, which it had discharged with great efficiency and economy.

10. The Director recognized the constitutional difficulties in obtaining additional appropriations for 1961, but he intended to carry out his programme by drawing on the Agency's working capital and on funds obtained through the World Refugee Year, unless the Assembly specifically indicated that he should do otherwise. The United Kingdom delegation hoped that there would be widespread approval for that act of faith and appealed to Governments which had not yet contributed to reconsider their policy.

11. Mr. MILLET (France) said that the Committee could only hope to help the refugees, not to solve the political problem. UNRWA dealt only with the technical and administrative side of the problem. It had done excellent work, especially in giving the young refugees the hope of a better future. Its most important task was the education of refugee children and the care of those who had grown up in refugee camps and villages. Mr. Davis had encouraged "team-work" within the Agency, and the Agency's relations with the host Governments had improved.

12. The French Government had set aside 100,000 new francs for scholarships in 1961 to young refugees studying in French institutions in Jordan and Lebanon, apart from its regular contribution to UNRWA.

13. The Director had acted wisely in expanding vocational training. Even trained refugees had difficulty in finding employment, but France's post-war experience showed that it was much more profitable to absorb refugees into the national economy than to keep a human reserve, which was a burden on a country's finances and development.

14. The Agency's financial situation was serious. Most of its income came from six countries. Even after the World Refugee Year, which could not be repeated, there would still be too little to pay for the Director's plans for the next three years.

15. Through no fault of its own, the Conciliation Commission for Palestine had made no progress towards securing the implementation of resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11, since neither the Arab States nor Israel had made any proposals to it; it could not work in a vacuum. It had, however, done useful work in preparing the identification and evaluation of refugees' property in Israel, in arranging for the release of refugees' bank accounts blocked in Israel, and in preparing working papers on the questions of compensation and repatriation.

16. The French Government would do everything possible to help solve the Palestine refugee problem, for the sake of world peace. The parties concerned should forget politics and treat the problem as a human problem, to be solved by men of good will.

17. Mr. GHAZI (Afghanistan) joined in the tributes paid to the work of the Director and his staff. He noted with satisfaction that the major financial contributors to the Agency's programmes had given assurances that their contributions would continue. At the same time, he reminded the Committee that the Palestine refugee question was essentially political and could not be treated purely as a humanitarian or economic problem. He had no wish to minimize the importance of the Agency's work or to impugn the good will or selflessness of the aid offered to the refugees by Member States. However, until the underlying causes of the problem were properly recog-

nized, there could be no lasting solution. Afghanistan shared the views expressed (201st meeting) in that connexion by the representative of the United Arab Republic, and also his apprehensions.

18. He urged the Committee to approach the problem with realism and compassion. One million Palestinian Arabs were living in exile. They had been subjected to a gross injustice which could not be remedied by financial assistance, educational facilities or expressions of sympathy. Relief measures would not make up for the loss of their human dignity and their homeland. The persistent proposal that the refugees should be integrated into the economic life of the neighbouring Arab countries appeared to be either cynical or naive. The refugees were Arabs of course, but first and foremost they were Palestinians and wished to remain so. It was time for them to be given the opportunity of returning to their homes, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

19. Mr. DE THIER (Belgium) said that his country had contributed regularly to the Agency's budget. It was convinced of the need for the Agency's work and its usefulness, and had followed its progress with interest.

20. The Director's most recent report (A/4478) confirmed that the problem of the Palestine refugees was growing worse. The vast majority still clung to the hope of eventual repatriation or compensation, and grew more embittered the longer it was delayed. As their numbers increased at the rate of 30,000 a year, the young refugees were growing up without skills of any kind or even normal working habits. The Director had warned the Committee that even if a political settlement was achieved in the very near future, the majority of the refugees would have difficulty in finding employment, and had estimated that international assistance would be necessary for ten years or more after any such settlement. However, he had not given up hope but had taken new steps to improve opportunities for education and vocational training for those young refugees who had not yet lost all ambition. The Belgian delegation congratulated him and his staff on their efforts and on the Agency's frank and valuable report.

21. The budget within which the Agency had to operate was very small for its tremendous task. The Director had estimated that an additional \$4 million would be needed for his expanded educational programme. The Belgian Government had been forced to cut its last contribution to \$20,000, but it planned to restore the figure to \$30,000 for the coming year. However, that contribution would have to be used solely for the purchase of Belgian goods. The increase in Belgium's contribution at the very moment when it had to face heavy responsibilities was a further demonstration of its sympathy with the victims of the Palestine tragedy and the importance it attached to the Agency's work. He hoped that the financial sacrifices of the contributing Governments would be matched by similar efforts in the political field by the Governments concerned. He urged them to re-examine the problem seriously and objectively. He was sure that if they could do so, they would find it possible gradually to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

22. Mr. NORIEGA (Colombia) said that the nations of the world were now so interdependent that it was the duty of all States which were genuinely in favour of peaceful solutions to all international conflicts to make their voices heard on questions such as the one before the Committee, no matter how far removed they might be geographically from the conflict.

23. The Colombian delegation joined in the praise addressed to the Director of the Agency and paid a tribute to all the contributing countries. However,

despite their humanitarian efforts, the political problem subsisted. He urged the host countries and Israel to look to the future instead of to the past and to seek ways of settling their dispute, for the sake of peace in the Middle East and in the world at large. His country would support any constructive proposal to that end.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.