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Chairman: Mr. Mihail HASEGANU (Romania).

AGENDA ITEM 32

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/5513, A/SPC/89, A/SPC/90, A/SPC/91, A/SPC/L.98, A/SPC/L.99) (continued)

1. Mr. DOUMBOUYA (Guinea) observed that a nation of more than 1.2 million people had been driven from its country, was dragging out a miserable existence in exile and had seen its property confiscated. For fifteen years the United Nations had been dealing with that distressing problem, for which the great Powers and the United Nations were entirely responsible and had apparently been unable to find a solution. On behalf of his delegation he would like to pay Mr. Davis, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the just tribute to which five years of devoted service to the cause of humanity entitled him. The fact that no delegation had expressed reservations with regard to UNRWA's report (A/5513) was the surest testimony to its objectivity. Real progress had been made in improving the living conditions of the refugees, thanks to UNRWA's sustained efforts in providing housing, health services and education. In view of the great services which it had rendered, UNRWA should be maintained and an appeal should be addressed to all Member States to pay their contributions. It was also to be hoped that the man chosen to replace Mr. Davis would be a man of ability and integrity who would follow the path marked out by his predecessor. Yet none of the achievements of UNRWA should be regarded as anything but temporary solutions, for the life of a whole nation could not continue to be dependent on charity. In terms of both morality and justice, the refugees were still convinced that the loss of their homes and their homeland constituted a grave injustice which would continue to be a source of danger in that area so long as it was not redressed. The refugees were determined to return at all costs. If their repatriation was not to be carried out by force, a solution should be sought in a calm and orderly atmosphere under the auspices of the United Nations. In other words, repatriation and compensation of the refugees for property lost, damaged or confiscated could be carried out only by the application of General Assembly resolution 194 (III); it was re-

grettable that a decision of such importance had remained a dead letter for fifteen years.

2. With regard to the United Nations Palestine Conciliation Commission, he noted that the Arab States concerned had expressed the most unequivocal reservations with regard to paragraphs 2 and 3 of its report (A/5545), asserting that their Governments had never taken part in quiet talks with the United States. His delegation thought it would be difficult if not impossible for such talks, supposing that they had taken place, to lead to any positive results for the simple reason that the party primarily concerned, namely the refugees, had not been associated with them. In his view the report of the Conciliation Commission was indeed a record of default, and the Special Political Committee should take note of that fact. Nor could it be otherwise considering the composition of the Commission, whose three members were allies of the United Kingdom, the former Mandatory Power. The membership of the Commission should be enlarged to include representatives of all the spiritual families within the United Nations and the majority should consist of non-aligned States. If it was not to be enlarged, its members should be replaced in such a way as to reflect faithfully the present membership of the General Assembly.

3. Mr. Shukairy, speaking on behalf of the Palestine Arab delegation, had described the Palestine problem eloquently and had depicted the sufferings of the refugees and their state of mind, concluding by stating that they wanted at all costs to return to their homes. Any action aimed at solving the problem would be doomed to failure if it ignored the will of the refugees, and it was the duty of the United Nations to take their will into account. Summarizing the views of his delegation, he said that there were certain prerequisites for the honest application of resolution 194 (III), which offered the only possible solution: first, the views of the refugees, just expressed by their spokesman and, moreover, in conformity with the contents of the Commissioner-General's report, should be taken into account; secondly, the composition of the Conciliation Commission should be revised to adapt it to the present conditions of international life; thirdly, an administrator should be appointed to supervise the homes and property of the refugees until such time as they were restored to their legitimate owners, in accordance with the General Assembly's decision. If those prerequisites were met, resolution 194 (III) could be applied and the just and final solution could be found for which the United Nations had been seeking in vain for fifteen years. For all those reasons, his delegation would support any positive effort which took into account those suggestions for the satisfactory solution of the Palestinian question.

4. Mr. BACH BAOUAD (Tunisia) said that UNRWA had remarkable accomplishments to its credit in the

various fields of assistance to the refugees. The honesty and faith with which the Commissioner-General had discharged his delicate task, and the many efforts he had made to improve the lot of the refugees were indeed praiseworthy. At the same time, Mr. Davis had tried to understand the origin of the refugee problem and, after mature reflection, had concluded that it was but one aspect of a vast complex of problems which had arisen as a result of the very establishment of the State of Israel and its presence in the Middle East. He should be thanked for expressing that fundamental truth and making an appeal to the conscience of the world.

5. In point of fact the refugee problem was merely the outcome of the dismemberment of Palestine. It was the result of a conspiracy by a colonial Power to help Zionism attain its goals. At the outset the well-known Zionist leader Weizmann had said that the Jewish State was a goal which could be attained only by stages, the first stage being to place Palestine under the protection of the United Kingdom. That theory had found a favourable response among the British leaders, and in 1917 Lord Balfour had stated that His Majesty's Government viewed with favour the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The international situation at the end of the First World War had been propitious, and in 1920 the Palestine Mandate had been entrusted to the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the Covenant of the League of Nations had recognized the personality of the Palestinian people and recommended that the Mandatory Power should assist it in achieving its independence. That mission was to remain a dead letter.

6. In the interval between the two wars a large number of Jews had entered Palestine illegally, with the result that the Arabs, who had constituted 93 per cent of the population in 1917, were only 65 per cent in 1947. The large Jewish element, introduced, as it were, inside a Trojan horse, and aided by international complicity, had then undertaken the conquest of the Territory by force and by terror. Even the Partition decision of 1947 (resolution 181 (II)) had been unable to stop the expansion of the Jews, who had gone so far as to annex zones which had not been assigned to them. The complacency, if not the complicity, of the Mandatory Power had been a decisive factor, and the Zionist minority, which by reason of its heterogeneous origin and its culture was alien to Palestine, had succeeded in expelling an entire people from its own land.

7. The Palestine problem was the outcome of pre-meditated aggression against a people who had preferred exile to the shame of foreign domination. The Zionists had imposed their rule by force and had unleashed the most savage repression to drive out those who were not of their race and their religion. President Bourguiba had stated in 1962 that while it was true that the Tunisians had been moved by the persecution of the Jews during the war, it was equally true that the Jews had committed a grave injustice in Palestine, that the case of Israel represented a new form of colonization and that the persecutions had been only a pretext for expelling the Arabs.

8. The refugee problem was the consequence of establishing a foreign colony on racist and religious bases. In a number of respects the situation was comparable to the situation in South Africa. The United Nations, which had condemned apartheid, must take

swift and radical measures to end the sufferings of an entire people. In 1948 it had taken the responsibility for partition and it must now make good that grievous mistake by finding a solution that was in conformity with the Charter and above all with the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

9. The Palestinian people had delegated its authentic representatives to plead the legitimacy of its national cause, and the Chairman of the Palestinian delegation, Mr. Shukairy, had outlined the essential components of a fair solution. It was in vain that the representative of the State of Israel had tried to cast doubts on the representative nature of that delegation, for many representatives remembered that they had started by taking a place at the petitioners' table. Furthermore, the Israel representative and the friends of Zionism had tried to argue that the Palestinian problem could only be solved through direct negotiations between Israel and certain States. They acted as though the people of Palestine did not exist, whereas it was the party most concerned, the only true interlocuter.

10. The progress report of the Conciliation Commission (A/5545) had caused great surprise to the Tunisian delegation. Paragraphs 2 and 3 referred to consultations conducted by one of the States members of that Commission with certain Arab States. Yet the representatives of those States had been unanimous in denying categorically that those discussions had taken place. There were thus serious doubts as to the effectiveness of the methods used by the Conciliation Commission. An attempt was being made to persuade the Organization that the question was in process of settlement and that its debates might hamper the quiet talks mentioned in the report. No positive results could come from such side-tracking. In a letter of 12 November 1963 (A/SPC/91) the representatives of four Arab States had declared that the statements in the report were incorrect and that the report, in its present form, was so detrimental to the rights of the refugees that their Governments deemed it necessary to call the attention of States Members of the United Nations to the serious situation which the Conciliation Commission had brought about.

11. The Conciliation Commission, set up in 1948, had been given precise terms of reference, the basic objectives of which were set out in resolution 194 (III). He read out operative paragraph 11 of that resolution, which specified in particular that the role of the Commission was to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations. At all events the rights of the refugees as there recognized were inalienable; there was no question of their having to be interpreted, let alone being made the subject of bargaining. It was not the task of the Conciliation Commission to make contact with the Arab States but to bring the State of Israel to abide by the resolutions of the United Nations. It was quite inadmissible that that State, which owed its existence to the Organization, should refuse to respect its decisions. Even worse, it pretended not to recognize the basic problem of the refugees and spoke of peace. So long as there was no change in the situation and Israel continued to evade the issue, there would remain a serious threat to peace and stability in that sector of the Middle East.

12. The representative of Algeria had said (405th meeting) that the Conciliation Commission no longer met the needs of the new situation resulting from the fact that, since 1948, a large number of African and Asian countries had been admitted to the Organization. Indeed the spirit which had guided the selection of the Commission was today out of date.

13. The United Nations must make every effort to enable the Agency to carry on with its relief work. Steps must be taken to bring Israel to listen to the voice of reason, for its contempt was an insult to the Organization and to morality. It was essential to find some way of implementing resolution 194 (III), particularly paragraph 11, since the problem would remain acute until the refugees were able to return to their homes and receive compensation.

14. Mr. BHADKAMKAR (India) noted that in the fifteen years during which the United Nations had been examining the question of the Palestine refugees, the same reasons for concern had been brought up throughout the discussions. On the one hand resolution 194 (III), the first which had sought a solution to the problem, had not been implemented. On the other, the number of refugees had steadily grown over the years and, according to the report of the Commissioner-General, now exceeded 1.2 million. That figure demonstrated the unparalleled tragedy of a whole nation uprooted and quite simply thrown out of its homeland. According to some the tragedy was all the greater for being the direct result of a decision by the Organization itself. In that connexion he recalled that when the United Nations took the fateful decision to partition Palestine and to create the State of Israel, the Indian delegation had submitted certain proposals providing for the establishment of a Federated State with autonomous Arab and Jewish regions in Palestine. That solution would have made it possible to preserve the peace and stability of the Middle East and avoid the problem of the Palestine refugees.

15. He congratulated the Commissioner-General on his excellent work in analysing the problems confronting UNRWA and expressed appreciation for the devotion, constructive spirit and competence which he and his colleagues had displayed. He sincerely regretted that Mr. Davis had been compelled for personal reasons to resign.

16. The Indian delegation had read the Commissioner-General's report with great interest and had listened to the highly instructive statement which the Commissioner-General had made on 4 November (398th meeting). In paragraph 40 of the report Mr. Davis noted that the problem of the Palestine refugees remained as intractable as ever, that no significant effect had been given to the provisions of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), and that the feelings of the peoples directly concerned did not seem to have grown any less intense. He had further observed that in the Middle East the Palestine question was still an obstacle to progress in almost every sector and seriously complicated the relationship of that region with the rest of the world. It was true that there were political overtones to the problem, but for the present the task was to find a solution to an essentially human problem, on the basis of the guide-lines laid down in numerous resolutions of the United Nations, in particular resolution 194 (III).

17. India had also faced a refugee problem and perhaps on an even larger scale. The fact that India had been unable to contribute in larger measure to UNRWA

was mainly because it had had to face heavy expenditure for the resettlement and rehabilitation of its own refugees. Nevertheless, the Government of India had decided to maintain its 1964 contribution to UNRWA at the 1963 level.

18. It had to be remembered that the genesis of the problem of the Palestine refugees was connected with a decision taken by the Organization itself. Consequently the Organization must continue to take a close interest in the question. It was for that reason that in 1962 the Indian delegation had supported the proposal to extend UNRWA's mandate until June 1965 (resolution 1856 (XVII)).

19. In his report the Commissioner-General had observed that there had been no improvement in the plight or state of mind of the Palestine refugees. In view of the forcefulness with which the refugees, who were the party principally concerned, continued to claim the right to return to their homes, the Indian delegation could not accept the view that merely because a number of the Arab refugees had already been absorbed into the economy of the host countries, the only question to be resolved by the Organization was how that natural process could best be completed in the next few years. That was not the main objective of resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11 of which—quoted constantly by the Palestine refugees—provided for repatriation or compensation.

20. The Indian delegation would support any proposal which would enable the Palestine refugees themselves to choose, free of any influence, between repatriation or compensation. Resolution 194 (III) expressly specified that only those refugees who were willing to live in peace with their neighbours could be repatriated. Those refugees would have to return to their homeland in the full knowledge of the changed economic and political situation there. The Indian delegation could not countenance the imposition of conditions not envisaged in the General Assembly resolution.

21. The Conciliation Commission's latest report had aroused some controversy, but it was to be hoped that that would not have the effect of impairing the Commission's effectiveness. His delegation would support any resolution which would urge the Commission to make renewed efforts to fulfil its mandate.

22. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA noted that payments had slowed down markedly in 1962 and that at the end of that year unpaid pledges had totalled \$12.6 million against only \$1.1 million at the end of 1961. That delay in the payment of pledged contributions would have seriously hampered UNRWA's operations had it not been for the availability of a reasonable amount of working capital. It was to be hoped that the regrettable delay was due only to administrative reasons and did not reflect a declining interest in the Agency and in the plight of the refugees. His delegation would be happy if Governments which did not yet make contributions would do so soon and if others would increase their contributions. For the time being, there was no alternative solution to the continued existence of UNRWA.

23. His delegation was happy to note that the Commissioner-General's report had many positive elements. The fact that visitors from a number of countries had been to see the Agency's vocational and teacher-training centres had contributed, in Mr. Davis' opinion, to a broader understanding of UNRWA's work and needs by Governments and non-governmental

organizations. As a result, a number of countries had responded to the Commissioner-General's appeal for funds for vocational scholarships. It was heartening to note that in 1962 UNRWA had been able, thanks to a fortunate combination of factors, to keep expenditure and commitments within the limits of its income. Unfortunately UNRWA never knew with any certainty what its income would be, so that it was forced to announce its programme late in the year. There again, Governments which had pledged contributions would be doing a great service to UNRWA by not delaying their payments.

24. The Commissioner-General had referred to an important problem, that of the rectification of the relief rolls. By removing from its rolls non-existent persons or those who no longer required relief, UNRWA would be able to furnish more effective aid to those who were genuinely in need of it. It had to be remembered that total expenditure on feeding, shelter, health and welfare for refugees in need had remained at the 1960 level, a very low level for people who were otherwise without means of subsistence.

25. The marked progress made in education was especially heartening. The Agency had been able to allot increased funds to education by holding per caput relief expenditure at the 1960 level. It was to be hoped that the Commissioner-General would succeed in improving the quality of instruction, which he considered to be still inadequate. The expansion and creation of vocational and teacher-training centres was to be welcomed. Education for girls had not lagged behind either; at the elementary level, at least, there were almost as many girl pupils as boys. In addition, UNRWA had almost succeeded in eliminating the margin between general educational opportunities for young refugees and those which existed for the native children in host countries. Another positive development was that UNRWA's capacity for vocational and teacher training for refugees had increased seven times and that the number of scholarships available for university attendance had been nearly doubled. Lastly, UNRWA had succeeded in obtaining extra-budgetary funds amounting to \$6.7 million, a sum greater than the total cost of constructing, expanding and operating the vocational and teacher-training centres up to 30 June 1963.

26. His delegation was gratified to learn that during the year under review the relationship between the Agency and the host Governments had continued to be generally good. It also welcomed the assistance given by those Governments which had done much to help the refugees. The total amount spent by the host Governments on the refugees since 1949 was reported as exceeding \$60 million. It was to be hoped that the

Agency would continue to receive assistance not only from those Governments, but also from all the other United Nations bodies referred to by the Commissioner-General. Thanks were also due to voluntary agencies in numerous countries which were said to have made a total contribution of some \$20 million since 1948.

27. Despite that progress, his delegation deeply regretted the conclusion recorded in paragraph 40 of the Commissioner-General's report. Its views on the problem of the Palestine refugees remained unaltered, and it would vote for the resolution which best met those views.

28. Mr. TARAZI (Syria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply on behalf of the delegations of all the Arab countries, said that he wished to make some comments on the statement made at the 407th meeting by the United States representative. That representative had not found Mr. Shukairy's statement to his liking; and that, of course, was his right. However, the reason why Mr. Shukairy had spoken on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine and not on behalf of a specific Government was that as a result of the failure of the former Mandatory Power in Palestine, the Arab people of that country had been deprived of the right to form a State and consequently to be represented in the United Nations.

29. It was a fact well known in all the Arab countries that Palestine had been usurped and that certain parties were responsible. Mr. Shukairy had stated that fact. He could not be reproached for not having been hypocritical. If he had not used diplomatic phrases, that was because he did not represent a State, but a people. He had merely repeated what could be read in the Press of the whole Arab world and what was truth itself.

30. One could not stand against the truth indefinitely, because the day must come when it stared one in the face. Thus, the falsity of the statements in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine had been exposed in the Special Political Committee.

31. He repeated that all Arabs considered that Palestine had been despoiled and that certain parties were responsible. Since he was speaking in exercise of his right of reply, he felt that the present occasion was not a suitable one for determining where the responsibility lay. His delegation would have an occasion to return to that point during the general debate.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.