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

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

AGENDA ITEM 26

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

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. John H. Davis, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, took a place at the Committee table.

1. Mr. PALAR (Indonesia) said that for twelve years Israel, the country clearly indicated by the Director of UNRWA in his report (A/4478) as the cause of all the trouble, had refused to consent to the only possible solution and allow the United Nations to take the action recommended by all the other Member States to rehabilitate a refugee nation numbering more than a million people. The helplessness of the United Nations in the face of Israel's defiance was frightening. Rehabilitation, which had been intended as the Agency's most important function and was to have led to the solution of the problem, was the very function UNRWA was unable to carry out because of opposition from Israel. Relief, originally intended as a short-term function, had consequently absorbed most of the Agency's funds and effort throughout the years of its existence. The Agency had used the limited funds available as effectively as possible and his delegation wished to commend the Director and his staff for their dedication to their task. It shared their feeling of despair and frustration at the prospect that conditions would only grow worse as long as the repatriation resolution of 1948 (194 (III)) was not put into effect.

2. The Agency's vocational training programme should be fully supported. Unfortunately, however, it could at best provide training for less than one tenth of the number of refugees who reached maturity each year. The refugees were convinced that they could lead productive lives if Israel would allow them to go back to their homes or could be persuaded or compelled to compensate them for their lost properties. They knew that the yearly income from those properties amounted to four times the sum made available to UNRWA and that their demands had the support of

the neighbouring Arab States, which were growing rapidly in political influence, in economic and military strength and in population. Furthermore, the United Nations had been telling them every year that repatriation or compensation was their birthright. It was therefore unrealistic to expect that the strength of their demands would decrease; yet Israel appeared to believe that if it persisted in its stubborn policy they would eventually become discouraged and abandon their goals. If the time bomb with which Israel was recklessly playing should explode, a much wider area than the Middle East would be affected. The representatives of the Arab States had expressed their willingness to try to solve the problem by peaceful means and had suggested two steps which might contribute to the attainment of that objective. One was that a general administrator, preferably the Director of UNRWA, should be appointed to manage the property of the refugees. The other was that the membership of the Conciliation Commission should be increased to include countries or groups of countries possessing the persuasive power to speak for the United Nations and convince their fellow Members that the Organization could not continue to sidetrack a resolution which defended the birthright of a whole nation in exile. His delegation, bearing constantly in mind the attainment of a peaceful settlement within the framework of the United Nations, wholeheartedly supported those proposals. All peoples, including the people of Israel, had their rights, but as far as the land of Palestine was concerned the rights of the Arabs were older than those of the Israelis and should have priority.

Mr. Auguste (Haiti) took the Chair.

3. Mr. DOSUMU-JOHNSON (Liberia) said that the time had come when enlightened public opinion should guide the thinking of the Committee towards a positive solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees. His delegation wished to associate itself with the tribute paid to the Director of UNRWA and his able assistants for their work in administering the Agency and to express the hope that the Director's plan for educational expansion and vocational training for 1960-1963 would receive the serious consideration of all Member States. Similarly, it would like to express its appreciation of the generous contributions made to the World Refugee Year fund. The Agency's report indicated ways in which the problem of the refugees could be solved provided that all concerned had the requisite sincerity and goodwill. The crux of the problem lay in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), which might seem innocuous at first glance but the implementation of which would inevitably entail many risks and difficulties. The provisions of that paragraph must be implemented on the basis of law and equity in an atmosphere free from the invective and hatred which had marked the debates on the subject in the past.

4. Unfortunately the political aspect of the problem had been exaggerated and exploited at the expense of its humanitarian aspect. No one could fail to sympathize with the plight of the Palestine refugees; at the same time other peoples who had been subjected to suffering because of their race and religion were also deserving of sympathy and should be permitted to exercise the privilege, if not the right, to establish a State where they could be free from persecution and injustice. A permanent home must be found for the refugees, who could not be left to languish in the camps where they now lived. If the United Nations could not solve that problem it could hardly be expected to solve such global problems as those of disarmament and the maintenance of world peace. Yet in seeking a solution the Committee could not ignore the incontrovertible fact that the State of Israel existed and was consequently entitled to all the rights and privileges emanating from the Charter of the United Nations, which every Member State had the obligation to uphold.

5. If the rehabilitation of the refugees as such had been the only problem the solution would long since have been found, but it was aggravated by fears on both sides which it was the responsibility of the United Nations to allay. Israel feared that acceptance of the 1947 boundary fixed by the United Nations would leave it at the mercy of its neighbours. The Arabs were fearful that Jewish immigration and Israel's superior financial position might lead it to adopt an expansionist policy. If the United Nations participated in an agreement between them he thought there need be no fear on either side, for he had unshakable faith in the Organization as a means of solving all international disputes. Indeed, co-operation between Israel and the Arab world seemed a less remote possibility now than it had seemed at the beginning of the current session. Hostility between them was detrimental to progress and a threat to the independence of both. The prospects for reconciliation were hampered by the fact that they interpreted the provisions of resolution 194 (III) in different ways.

6. If a solution was to be found, the refugee problem must be kept within the Palestine frame of reference, for it would otherwise have dangerous racial and religious implications. His own country's desire to strengthen peace and to alleviate human suffering imposed upon his delegation the responsibility to make its contribution to the search for a satisfactory means of rehabilitating the Palestine refugees, compensating them adequately for their losses and encouraging peaceful coexistence between the African-Asian States and Israel. Friendly relations between the two parties were indispensable to the peace and prosperity of the Middle East and to their economic growth and lasting independence. By cooperating among themselves and with their neighbours the African-Asian States could help to create a climate in which a social revolution of incalculable dimensions could be brought about. He appealed to both sides to make the compromises which would be required if a solution was to be found. He would even suggest that representatives of the African-Asian States, Israel, the United States and a designated European State might hold a conference to discuss problems engendered by the sovereignty of Israel, its frontiers and the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). Asia and Africa had as much

responsibility for the preservation of world peace as had the nuclear Powers, and should do everything they could to promote the building of a new social order in which all peoples, regardless of race, colour or religious beliefs, could lead peaceful and creative lives.

7. Mr. HASAN (Pakistan) said that the Director of UNRWA and his staff were to be congratulated on the way in which they had performed the difficult task entrusted to them. His delegation had been active at the previous session in ensuring the extension of the Agency's life, for Pakistan was deeply concerned at the fate of the refugees, brutally uprooted from the land of their birth and living as exiles in misery and destitution. He shared the view expressed in the report that the United Nations had a continuing responsibility to provide them with assistance until the Palestine problem in its broader context was solved, in other words, until they were permitted to exercise the choice offered them in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) and reaffirmed in successive Assembly resolutions. The Director stressed, as had his predecessors, that the implementation of that resolution continued to be the one long-term solution acceptable to the refugees and that all who had studied the problem emphasized their strong desire to return to their homeland. Similarly, the report recognized that the refugee problem was only part of a broader problem which must be solved largely by forces outside the Agency. Israel, which was presumably one of those forces, had persistently refused to repatriate the refugees while keeping its doors open to Jewish immigrants from all over the world. He had been astonished to hear protestations of charity and humanitarianism from the representative of a country which had brutally violated the fundamental human rights of the refugees and flouted the will of the United Nations. Israel should be made to realize that the refugees' right to return to their homes should not depend on its goodwill. As long as the United Nations was unable to oblige Israel to implement the General Assembly's resolutions the Middle East would remain in turmoil and the refugee problem would continue to be a threat to world peace. The world could not salve its conscience by simply adopting an attitude of compassion towards the refugees. They were not beggars but a proud and dignified people who had prospered and taken care of themselves until the creation of the State of Israel had driven them into exile.

8. The most distressing aspect of the problem was the plight of the young people who were reaching maturity with no hope of being able to lead productive lives. It might be said that the United Nations was responsible for that plight. But the United Nations of 1960 was not the same as the United Nations which had decreed the creation of Israel, and he appealed to the Organization as it existed now to find a solution to the problem as a whole before it was too late. The just solution had first been indicated in resolution 194 (III) and had been reaffirmed at each successive session of the Assembly. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine set up to implement that resolution had failed to persuade Israel to carry out its obligation to repatriate or compensate the refugees. His delegation therefore favoured the proposal to enlarge the membership of the Commission. The proposal to appoint a general administrator to manage the property of the refu-

gees and collect the revenue accruing from it for their benefit was likewise worthy of immediate consideration.

9. At the previous meeting the representative of Israel had referred to a statement by the President of Pakistan concerning the Moslem refugees who had been rehabilitated and absorbed by that country. He wished to point out that there was no parallel between that case and the Arab refugees from Palestine, for the Moslem refugees had come to Pakistan with the intention of settling there whereas the latter wished only to return to their homeland.

10. Mr. PANDE (India) said that the magnitude and the tragic complexity of the Palestine refugee problem was growing year by year. Since the problem had arisen out of a decision taken by the United Nations, the Palestine refugees were justified in looking to the United Nations for support and for a satisfactory and just solution.

11. The Indian delegation associated itself with the tributes paid to the Director and his staff. It commended the proposals in the report (A/4478) for the improvement of elementary and secondary education and for the expansion of vocational training facilities. In view of the limited resources at the Agency's disposal, the programme could not be as effective as was desirable. However, even if there were more funds available, UNRWA could not be expected to solve a problem which was essentially political. The notion that the problem could be settled by more funds or by compensation alone was not realistic.

12. The Director noted in his report that the promise made in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) continued to be the one long-term solution acceptable to the refugees. In debating the problem in 1948, the General Assembly had recognized the right of repatriation and had made it clear that compensation went hand in hand with the offer of a choice of returning home, and was to apply only if the offer was not accepted. Some grudging compensation had occasionally been offered but the chance to return home had so far been denied. The Indian delegation believed that if resolution 194 (III) had been implemented during the early stages of the problem, Israel itself would have benefited and much of the bitterness and animosity that had been created by the prolongation of the refugee problem would not have arisen. At present the problem was an open sore, and a threat to the peace and stability of the whole Middle East.

13. Resolution 194 (III) had also created the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. The Commission's eighteenth report (A/4573) showed that it had been able to make some progress in the identification and valuation of Arab property in Israel and the release of blocked Arab accounts. The Indian delegation was glad that the Commission had received the necessary co-operation from the Government of Israel in that respect.

14. The Indian delegation endorsed the Director's statement that international assistance for the refugees would have to continue for a decade or longer, regardless of any possible political solution. It expressed its appreciation of the generosity of the contributing countries and noted that India was pledged to make another contribution during the current year.

15. The United Nations must give a lead in the refugee problem. It should not be beyond Arab and Israel statesmanship to arrive at a solution in the best interests of over a million exiled people. In the meantime, the question of repatriation needed to be dealt with urgently. The Conciliation Commission should play a more active role in that respect. Whether it was expanded, or reconstituted, or left as it was, the Commission should set to work at once to see that a choice was offered and to ascertain the wishes of the refugees.

16. Mr. ZABARAH (Yemen) said that the most potent fact emerging from the Director's valuable and objective report (A/4478) was the determination of the Palestine Arabs to return one day to their homes. Another important point was the statement in paragraph 8 regarding employment prospects for the refugees within the host countries. That statement by an impartial authority put the whole problem in its true perspective and belied Israel's frequent assertion that the Arab countries were not doing their best to alleviate the distress of the refugees. In describing the efforts of the host countries to help the refugees and all the economic, social and political inconveniences and repercussions of having the refugees within their borders, the Director cautioned against facile assumptions that it rested with the host Governments to solve the refugee problem. No argument regarding the absorptive capacity of the host countries could alter the fact that the refugees were entitled to live in their own homes in dignity and freedom. Any further delay in implementing resolution 194 (III) would be fraught with danger to the world community and to the integrity of the United Nations. The conduct of Israel in opening its doors to thousands of persons of the Jewish faith while denying the Palestine Arabs their right to live in their own homes constituted outrageous religious discrimination.

17. Despite the years that had been wasted the Arab refugees still placed their hopes in the United Nations. It was its duty to ensure that its resolutions were not flouted. The Yemeni delegation agreed with the representative of Saudi Arabia (200th meeting) that the Palestine refugee problem was essentially a colonial issue and of concern to all peace-loving peoples. At its fourteenth session, the General Assembly in its resolution 1456 (XIV) had requested the Conciliation Commission for Palestine to make further efforts to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). Although the Commission had been in existence for thirteen years, the adamant refusal of Israel to co-operate with it had prevented it from achieving any results. The Commission, however, had not made any proposal to overcome the intransigence of Israel and the real reasons for its half-hearted approach might be worth consideration.

18. The General Assembly must take positive action. It was an anomaly that the Palestine Arabs should have to depend on international charity because the failure of the United Nations to act deprived them of the income from their own property. His delegation supported the proposal to appoint a United Nations general administrator of refugee property. Such an appointment would not only uphold the fundamental rights of the Arab refugees but would also reduce the financial obligations of the United Nations. If the

United Nations was to preserve its integrity and serve as an effective instrument of peace, it must not adopt an attitude of indifference towards the implementation of its resolutions. The present policy of inaction involved grave danger.

19. Mr. VEGA GOMEZ (El Salvador) said that the Arab refugee problem constituted a tragic situation of explosive potentialities. Above all, it demanded a realistic approach. A fair and equitable formula for a peaceful solution must be found, for the use of violence to solve the problem was unthinkable. World opinion on the refugee question had found expression in the many resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, all of them reflecting the deep concern of the United Nations; and the decision to establish the Agency had been a most important step towards alleviating the hardships of the refugees. The work of the Agency since its foundation was worthy of the highest praise.

20. The Director's report indicated that economic and educational limitations had had much to do with holding up the solution of the problem. Hence the Director's proposals for an expanded educational programme deserved full support. The Salvadorian delegation recommended the approval of the report as a whole and a vote of thanks to the Director and his staff.

21. The progress achieved by the Conciliation Commission was gratifying. The Commission's work on the identification and valuation of Arab property would be a very useful contribution to the general solution of the problem.

22. El Salvador enjoyed the most friendly relations both with the Arab States and with Israel, and while it was fully aware of the magnitude and complexity of the problem, it continued to hope that with goodwill on both sides it would gradually be possible to arrive at a peaceful and honourable settlement of the dispute. It would support any initiative to that end.

23. Mr. CACERES PINEDA (Honduras) said that the report bore witness to the devotion and efficiency of the Agency's staff and the Director's personal contribution to the success of its work.

24. The Palestine refugee question had political implications but basically it was a human problem. The majority of the refugees had been denied an opportunity to live normal independent lives. However, the report saw signs of hope in the youthful age distribution of the refugees and the fact that 20 per cent of the refugee population had become self-supporting in other Arab countries because they possessed useful skills. It was no doubt that fact which had led the Director to concentrate upon a plan to provide basic education and vocational training for the young refugees, with a view to equipping them to lead useful and productive lives, irrespective of where they might live. The Honduran delegation endorsed that educational approach to the problem.

25. The Director had noted that the host countries could not absorb the refugees into their respective economies at the present moment. However, the document submitted by the Secretary-General to the fourteenth session of the General Assembly (A/4121)^{1/} opened up new prospects in that regard.

^{1/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourteenth Session, Supplement No. 1.

Economic development as advocated by the Secretary-General would demand a considerable outlay of capital, but the relief measures for the refugees also demanded a constant outlay and only prolonged their suffering. It ought to be possible to solve the Palestine refugee problem in the same way as other problems of the same kind, regardless of its special political circumstances. There should be a final political settlement, side by side with economic measures on behalf of the refugees. Many of the resolutions previously adopted by the General Assembly offered great possibilities, given goodwill on both sides. The Arab countries must be realistic and recognize the State of Israel as their neighbour, and at the same time, Israel must acknowledge its obligation to pay compensation for former refugee property. The Honduran delegation was completely impartial, and would vote for any conciliatory resolution aimed at solving the Arab refugee problem.

26. Mr. O'BRIEN (Ireland) said that UNRWA had rightly concentrated on the education and vocational training of young refugees. The inadequacy of the contributions to the Agency was partly due to misconceptions about the refugees. As the report showed, it was not true that for political reasons the refugees rejected all education, rehabilitation or training, or that the problem would cease to exist at once if certain Governments were to change their policy. Many of the refugees were unskilled and even unemployable. The refugees needed education, but world opinion also needed education about the refugees. All means of publicity must be used to bring about public support for UNRWA, especially for its educational plans. The result might be greater contributions, not only from the public, but from Governments.

27. Certain countries whose strong views on the political problem had prevented them from alleviating the human problem, inseparable from it, might show their sympathy for the refugees by contributing to UNRWA's expanded plans for education, if not to its basic relief work. Ireland had doubled its contribution for 1961, and part of the funds collected during World Refugee Year would be handed over to UNRWA.

28. Israel had allowed repatriation to a small extent in order to reunite families but felt that any larger repatriation would threaten its security and that the refugees would not be able to adapt themselves to present conditions in Israel. It therefore advocated massive resettlement in the Arab countries, which both the refugees and the Arab States rejected. He repeated the proposal made by the Irish delegation a year ago at the fourteenth session (159th meeting), and recently supported by the New Zealand delegation (205th meeting), namely that Israel should be urged to allow a limited number of refugees who were willing to live at peace with their neighbours to return to their homes, without prejudice to the general solution of the refugee problem or to other aspects of the Palestine problem. The repatriated refugees should be encouraged to keep in touch with the refugee camps, in order to remove the alleged ignorance of conditions in Israel. If only a few refugees were repatriated, it might be the beginning of a return to mutual confidence between the Arabs and Israel.

29. The Conciliation Commission, which had not been able to do anything more than to collect some useful statistical information, might be enlarged mainly by the addition of small States outside mili-

tary alliances, and might have sub-committees to deal with separate aspects of the problem such as the possibilities of a pilot scheme of repatriation or the publicizing of UNRWA's work. However, suggestions for the equal representation of Western, neutralist and socialist countries could only bring the cold war to Palestine.

30. The basic problem could only be solved through negotiations between Israel and the Arab States, which seemed unlikely in the near future. There must be a long period of preparation and mediation, and the hopeless outlook of the young refugees must be remedied.

31. Mr. ELDEM (Turkey) said that the General Assembly's annual reaffirmation of the refugees' right to return had kept alive their hopes of repatriation, but the lack of political results had enhanced their feeling of bitterness. There could be no real peace in the Middle East until the problem was solved. UNRWA was doing everything possible within its limited means. The refugees' rations were too small, but there had been no serious epidemics, and all the refugees in the camps were now housed in buildings. He supported the Director's plans to expand education and vocational training. Without them many young refugees would be unemployable, even if the political problem were solved at once. He thanked the contributing and host Governments for their help.

32. Turkey belonged to the Advisory Commission of UNRWA and to the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. The General Assembly, by resolution 512 (VI), had indicated that the Governments concerned had the primary responsibility for reaching a settlement of their outstanding differences and requested the Conciliation Commission to be available to the parties to assist them in reaching agreement. Since the parties did not make use of its services under the terms of that resolution, the Commission devoted the greater part of its efforts to the complex task of identification and valuation of Arab refugee property in Israel. The usefulness of that undertaking for the future settlement of the refugee problem was obvious. The Commission was always prepared to welcome any constructive suggestions or proposals. It was entirely a matter for the parties concerned to activate the Commission. He hoped that new efforts would be made to solve the tragic and dangerous problem.

33. Mr. MEYET (Libya) said that the problem had come into being when a million Palestinians had been driven from their homes by aggression, massacre and terror. Masses of foreigners had been led by false slogans to settle in an alien country, and the

refugees had been reduced to living on charity, in enforced idleness. A general administrator should be appointed to take care of the refugee property unlawfully seized by Israel.

34. The refugee problem was not only an international problem, but a moral one. Israel showed no respect for the United Nations, in spite of repeated resolutions condemning its attitude. It was shocking to find Israel, after seizing the property of refugees, now offering economic assistance to the newly independent countries.

35. The refugees could not continue to live on charity. They had lost everything but their determination to return to their homes. One day they would recover their stolen lands. The host Governments had done much for the refugees; some delegations had suggested that they should contribute more, but on the other hand Israel might be asked why it had not repatriated or compensated the refugees.

36. Israel had violated all the Purposes and Principles set out in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter. It had done nothing to prevent acts of aggression against neighbouring countries in which most of the refugees were living, nor had it settled the refugee problem by peaceful means. Israel should be expelled from the United Nations, in accordance with Article 6 of the Charter. The United Nations must take vigorous action to make Israel respect the General Assembly's resolutions and carry out its own obligations.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that he had informed the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine of the remarks addressed to the Commission by the representative of Saudi Arabia on 23 November (206th meeting). The Commission's Chairman noted especially the interest shown in its work and recalled that its eighteenth progress report (A/4573) had been presented in accordance with the terms of Assembly resolution 512 (VI) of 26 January 1952. The report was not on the Committee's agenda, and for that reason the Commission had not intervened in the Committee's discussion, but it was available to the parties and was prepared to answer directly any questions or requests for information which might be addressed to it.

38. He suggested that the Committee resume consideration of item 23 "Increase in the membership of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council" at the conclusion of the general debate on the present item.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.