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Chairman: Mr. Humberto LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras).

AGENDA ITEM 34

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/6713, A/6723 and Corr.1, A/6723/Add.1 and Corr.1, A/6787 and Corr.1, A/SPC/L.155, A/SPC/L.156 and Add.1, A/SPC/L.157)

1. Mr. GHAFARI (Iran) said that in 1967 more than ever all eyes were turned towards the United Nations to see whether it would be able to solve the human tragedy of the Palestine refugees and put an end to the misery and hardships of nearly 1.5 million innocent persons. The hopes of so many people could not be dashed. After so many fruitless deliberations and studies, it was high time for the Organization to make its promises come true and to translate its plans into reality. That would not only be a humanitarian act, the end of malice and the beginning of charity, but also and above all a logical act. The situation of the Palestine refugees and their continually increasing problems were without parallel in modern times. More than a million people were camped in deserts and lived in precarious conditions, far from their belongings and everything they cherished. A glance back over the years showed that the refugee problem had been created by international rivalry, and later by an international decision. It was quite reasonable, therefore, to expect an international organization such as the United Nations to find a solution of the problem. Unfortunately, for nearly twenty years the search had been unsuccessful, and the situation had been aggravated by the events of June 1967. The influx of new refugees and the disruption of transport and communications had brought UNRWA's activities to a standstill. When the Agency had resumed operations, it had been faced with many new and difficult problems. The Iranian delegation wished to express its gratitude to the Commissioner-General for his devotion to duty, and to congratulate him and his staff on carrying out their humanitarian mission in adverse conditions. It also wished to assure the Commissioner-General of its consistent and wholehearted co-opera-

tion. Iran would honour its pledges, and would continue to give material and moral help to the refugees.

2. The Commissioner-General's report (A/6713) contained a graphic description of the consequences of the June war. When the hostilities had ceased, more than half the refugees registered with UNRWA had found themselves in territory occupied by Israel. Many of them had lost their homes for the second time in their lives. The Commissioner-General had told the Committee at its 584th meeting that heavy storms during the past weeks had seriously damaged the emergency camps. He had also referred to the difficulty of distributing rations to all the refugees, and had given warning of a possible outbreak of epidemics (A/SPC/121, para. 6).

3. Without doubt, no similar situation had existed in modern times. If only for the sake of human dignity, the situation should not be allowed to continue any longer; a just and equitable solution must be found. During the six days of hostilities in June 1967, there had been much sympathy in Iran for the sad plight of the refugees. Immediately after the ceasefire, his Government had stated that it was ready to extend assistance of different types to all the countries with refugee problems. Food aid had been provided to Syria. A special decision had been taken in the case of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where the refugee problem was on a particularly large scale: a camp with complete facilities for about 6,000 persons had been established at Zizia, near Amman. For the current financial year, Iran had pledged a contribution of 450,000 rials to UNRWA. It had also dispatched pharmaceutical products and serums free of charge to the Agency's headquarters at Beirut.

4. He wished to reaffirm that his country was prepared, to the extent of its available resources, to help any country which might request assistance in solving refugee problems. It would continue to do everything in its power, morally as well as materially, to enhance the well-being and welfare of refugees in the Middle East. Other countries with a higher per capita income and a more advanced economy should play a larger part in combating the tragic situation in the stricken areas and meeting the deficit in UNRWA's current budget.

5. His delegation shared the Commissioner-General's view that the refugees should be allowed to return to their previous places of residence, where UNRWA had facilities for giving them more adequate assistance. But it was wrong to think that the refugee problem could be solved by relief alone. The Arab refugees had pride and dignity, and would never be content to live on charity. Every effort should be made to

bring about a fair and lasting solution. Until then, the urgent needs of about 1.5 million human beings should be given paramount consideration. That problem should be dealt with in an imaginative way, and should not be tied entirely to political factors. The resolutions adopted by the United Nations should be given a chance to prove themselves as guidelines for future decisions. It was deeply regrettable that, after two decades of tragic events, the main objectives of the United Nations resolutions had not yet been achieved. Everything depended on the will-power displayed by the international community; until the latter firmly resolved to settle the problem, the results would be negligible.

6. Mr. DHAR (India) said that the recent armed conflict in the Middle East had added new poignancy to the problem of the inhabitants of Palestine who had become homeless nearly two decades previously. The plight of nearly 1.5 million human beings had touched the conscience of many nations; but the international community had not yet been able to tackle the basic issues which had given rise to the problem and which might well again threaten the peace and security of the region.

7. The question of the Palestine refugees could not be considered in isolation from the political history of the region. The partition of Palestine had been brought about by a General Assembly resolution (181 (II)), which had recommended certain measures to safeguard the civil and political rights of the Arab inhabitants. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had confirmed the refugees' right to choose between repatriation and compensation, and that right had been reaffirmed in later resolutions. Many years had passed but, in spite of the General Assembly's exhortations, nothing had been done to implement that resolution. He regretted that lack of progress, and wished to remind the Assembly once again of its moral obligation to implement resolution 194 (III) and thereby redress the wrongs inflicted upon the people of Palestine.

8. A new dimension had been added to the tragedy of Palestine. For the second time in a generation, hundreds of thousands of Arabs had lost their homes. Thousands of others had been forced to leave the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the west bank of the Jordan and the Golan Heights in Syria. The debates on the question at the fifth emergency special session of the General Assembly had reflected a universal concern at the suffering of the displaced persons, and had resulted in the adoption of resolution 2252 (ES-V) calling upon the Government of Israel to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who had fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities. Yet, according to the figures provided in the Commissioner-General's report, only 14,000 out of a total of 200,000 persons had been given permission to go back to the west bank of the Jordan (see A/6713, para. 36). The Organization could not remain indifferent to that state of affairs.

9. His delegation was convinced that, unless the question of the refugees and displaced persons was resolved in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the international community would continue to face grave

problems endangering peace and security in the region. The solution of the refugee problem was not only a humanitarian task; it was the key to political stability in the entire area.

10. His delegation commended the work done by the Commissioner-General in rendering assistance to the refugees, and wished to express its appreciation of the help given by UNRWA and voluntary agencies to alleviate the sufferings of the victims of the recent hostilities. In his report the Commissioner-General had stressed the seriousness of the financial crisis facing the Agency. His delegation shared that concern, and hoped that adequate financial resources would be forthcoming to enable UNRWA to discharge its task. Without substantially larger contributions from the more prosperous countries, UNRWA could hardly be expected to maintain—much less expand—its humanitarian assistance to refugees. His country had already promised to maintain its contributions at the previous level, despite its own urgent requirements and in addition to direct the bilateral assistance it was providing for the benefit of refugees.

11. His delegation had been one of the sponsors of resolution 2252 (ES-V), and it was now co-sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/L.156 and Add. 1, which was designed to ensure that humanitarian assistance and relief would be provided to persons displaced in the recent conflict.

12. Mr. ABDALLA (Sudan) said that the Zionists, having succeeded in driving the Palestine Arabs out of their homes by force, had been encouraged by the United States and other countries, because of the impotence of the United Nations, to seize property and land belonging to Palestine Arabs evicted from it by terror and acts of vandalism. The result was that Zionist representatives were now sitting in United Nations bodies, instead of being prosecuted and punished. Having found violence to be rewarding, and encouraged once more by the United States, the Zionists had struck again and conquered vast portions of Arab territory. They were now trying to obtain recognition of their right to ownership of Palestinian land and property. But they were overlooking the fact that the Palestinians were Arabs, that their land was an integral part of the whole Arab territory and that the Arabs would never let the Palestinians down or allow others to usurp their rights. There could be no peace in the Middle East until all the rights of the Palestinian people had been restored to it in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and subsequent Security Council resolutions. That assessment of the situation had been confirmed by the Secretary-General in the introduction to his annual report (A/6701/Add.1).

13. The activities of UNRWA could not be expected to continue indefinitely, and the Palestinian people could not live on charity for ever. The United Nations should tackle the root causes of the problem and help to bring about the conditions essential to peace, as recommended by the Secretary-General. The root causes were Israel's disregard of its obligations under the Charter and its refusal to comply with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The United Nations must rise to the challenge

and enforce compliance with that resolution. That was the only way to permanent peace in the Middle East and the only solution of the refugee problem. Therefore, as the first step, the Committee should recommend the immediate appointment of a custodian to safeguard the property left behind by the refugees.

14. Through the influence it exercised on information media in Europe and America, the Zionist movement had continuously tried to distort the nature of the relationship between Arabs and Jews, by proclaiming that the Arabs were persecuting Jews in their countries. In fact, the Jews in Arab countries were living in harmony and even friendship with their Arab compatriots. Mr. Anthony Nutting, former Minister of State at the Foreign Office of the United Kingdom, had said that the Arabs were the only people who had never persecuted the Jews. The Israel representative had referred at the 588th meeting to Israel's donations for relief work for the Palestine Arabs, but he had not told the Committee how many dollars' worth of land and property Israel had taken by force from the same Arabs. The Zionists had not created a peaceful State in Israel but a military base for expansion, thus causing untold suffering and misery for Jews and Arabs alike.

15. Mr. KAMIL (Indonesia) said that the tragedy of the Palestine refugees had been described at length, with figures, in the Commissioner-General's report (A/6713). His delegation wished to pay a tribute to the Commissioner-General and the thousands of dedicated workers who had helped to alleviate the hardships of the Palestine refugees. As had happened before, that noble and unselfish work had been hampered by lack of funds and difficult circumstances; but he hoped that for the coming year further donations and contributions would be forthcoming to enable the Commissioner-General and the Agency to maintain their activities at least at the existing level. The report showed that about 200,000 additional refugees were now accommodated in camps in the United Arab Republic, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Security Council resolution 237 (1967) calling on Israel to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who had fled the area since the outbreak of hostilities had been of no avail. Less than 10 per cent of the refugees had been permitted to return home, and Israel was still defying that resolution and the other efforts made by the international community to enable the refugees to return. The Committee should recommend the Security Council to take further measures for the prompt implementation of its resolution.

16. On the other hand, it should be recognized that a number of the new refugees had left of their own accord, because they had been afraid and had thought that they could save their lives by leaving. It was not surprising that some new refugees should have set up resistance movements. The so-called "terrorist" acts had caused concern in many quarters. Violent opposition to the illegal occupation of Arab territory and counter-measures of repression by the Israel authorities marked the beginning of a sombre period for the Middle East. His delegation had drawn attention to that aspect of the problem, because it wished to stress the historical truism

that, where there was illegal occupation, there was bound to be violent opposition. History showed that illegal occupation and colonialism bred heroes, patriots and martyrs who would willingly give up their lives in the conviction that their resistance would hasten the day of liberation and redemption. In the case of Palestine, it was painful and tragic that the conflict between the occupiers and the patriots involved, on the one side, peace-loving people who had no other desire but to live in peace, and, on the other, people who had suffered the worst persecution under the Nazi régime. It was a tragedy that the suffering undergone by one people in Europe should now be the fate of another people in the Middle East.

17. After partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab State, and after watching helplessly while thousands of Palestinians fled their homeland, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 194 (III) recognizing the right of refugees to repatriation or compensation. Machinery had been established to give effect to that resolution. At every session the General Assembly had reaffirmed the validity of that decision.

18. His delegation was convinced that the refugee problem could never be solved until ways had been found to permit the refugees to return and settle down again in the land of their forefathers. The only alternative solution was to compensate the refugees for the losses they had suffered. In short, only the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) would create the conditions necessary for a settlement of the refugee problem.

19. Resolution 194 (III) should not however be endorsed and re-endorsed merely as a matter of routine. The United Nations must find a way of translating its provisions into reality. To that end, his delegation was co-sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/L.157. The custodian provided for in the draft resolution would be responsible for protecting refugee property in Israel and would collect the income from it until some solution had been devised in accordance with the law and human justice.

20. Many plans had been suggested for solving the problem, including the idea of integrating the refugees into neighbouring Arab communities. His delegation had some reservations on that score. The refugees had homes, orchards and land which they had been forced to leave. For years they had been saying over and over again that they wanted to return to their former homes. They were human beings, and could not be moved about like pawns. They were living on charity, but at the same time they were living with the hope that they would one day be able to return to Palestine.

21. His delegation trusted that peace would ultimately prevail in the Middle East. The current mission by the Special Representative to the Middle East gave grounds for hoping that justice would once again prevail in that region.

22. Mr. LUMBI (Zambia) said that his delegation would like to associate itself with those who had expressed their appreciation of the commendable work being done for the Palestine Arab refugees

by the Commissioner-General and his staff and of the remarkable contribution they were making to the resettlement of refugees. But the grave problem now confronting the United Nations was much more than a question of resettlement. Zambia had unhesitatingly condemned Israel for its aggression. By giving effect to its warlike and expansionist designs, Israel had lost the sympathy of all peace-loving countries; and it should not be blinded by its recent military victories, which might only be of short duration. If the Israelis wished to re-establish good relations with their neighbours, they should repatriate the Palestine Arab refugees. But the refugees, in spite of all appeals, were still abandoned to their fate and were living in misery. The use of armed force had never solved anything and, unless a satisfactory solution could be found immediately, there would be no lasting peace in the Middle East. There was no hope for peace, either, unless the conquered lands were handed back to the Arabs. Israel should realize that it was following a dangerous path.

23. Until the problem had been solved, all those who were already supporting UNRWA should continue and possibly increase their voluntary contributions to it. But the Arab people could not go on living indefinitely on international charity. His delegation thought that the Israel representative's reference (588th meeting) to the sums which his Government was alleged to be spending on the welfare of the displaced Arabs was mere propaganda. The Israel representative's contention that many refugees had emigrated of their own free will to the east bank of the Jordan during the past six months was equally unacceptable. It was obvious that the refugees had been forced to leave.

24. Mr. EL KONY (United Arab Republic) said that for the third time in two decades Arab refugees were suffering a new tragedy which had deeply shaken the entire world. The Israel aggression of June 1967 had aroused general indignation. But although Israel's responsibility was great, that of its supporters was still greater, especially when they refused to condemn the scornful attitude of the Israelis towards the principles of the Charter. The world war against nazism had been fought to save future generations from the recurrence of fanaticism, and the toleration and even approval of the Israelis' behaviour were therefore completely inadmissible. Every day provided new evidence of Israel's tyranny over the inhabitants of occupied Arab territories, who were systematically expelled by every means at hand and replaced by Zionists from all parts of the world in the hope of building a "greater Israel".

25. The plight of the Arabs in the occupied territories had been eloquently described by the special correspondent of The Economist in the issue of 9 December 1967. The increase in the number of refugees following Israel's aggression had considerably aggravated the problem. Resolution 2252 (ES-V) adopted by the General Assembly at its fifth emergency special session had given rise to the hope that at least the bulk of the displaced persons would be able to return to their homes, but that had not been so. As the Commissioner-General of UNRWA

had stated in his report (A/6713), the humanitarian arguments for the return of the tens of thousands of displaced persons became all the more compelling as winter approached. However, the refugee camps on the west bank and in the Gaza Strip remained empty. The refugees were not merely victims of the war who had an opportunity of returning home, as the Israel representative had argued in his statement at the 588th meeting, but rather the victims of a meticulously planned racist policy to promote the expansion of international Zionism; that was why they were forbidden to return to their homeland.

26. United Nations resolutions regarding the inalienable right of refugees to go back to the land of their forefathers and to receive compensation for their losses should be implemented. It was the duty of the world community to extend all possible assistance to oppressed peoples in their fight for survival. For five years Mr. Michelmore, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, had been drawing attention to the permanent deficit in the Agency's budget, which threatened to limit its basic activities. The number of refugees was constantly increasing and the limited resources available to the Agency would not suffice to ensure their subsistence. In those circumstances, the Agency might be compelled to cease its activities, and steps should be taken to enable refugees to benefit from the income from property they had abandoned in 1948. It would be wrong to believe that the refugees wished to remain a charge on the international community. More than ever, they wanted to return to their homes and earn their own living.

27. It was particularly ironic that the Israel representative should have attempted to draw a comparison between the living conditions of the people in the Gaza Strip before and after its occupation by Israel, and should have asserted that their situation had greatly improved. It had been the Israel authorities themselves that had compelled those refugees in the past to live in camps and to depend on United Nations assistance. Peace and security were seriously threatened by the situation in the Middle East, a situation which had greatly deteriorated as a result of the latest Israel aggression, leading to a large increase in the number of refugees. It was therefore important that the relevant United Nations resolutions should be implemented as soon as possible.

28. Finally he wished to thank the Member States which had generously contributed to the alleviation of the Arab refugees' sufferings, and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and his colleagues for their untiring efforts and their devotion to their humanitarian cause.

29. Mr. CERNIK (Czechoslovakia) said that the problem of the Palestine refugees had been further aggravated by the recent Israel aggression. The report of the Secretary-General of 15 September 1967 (A/6797), under General Assembly resolution 2252 (ES-V) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967), gave a clear indication of the extremely precarious living conditions of the Arab population in the areas occupied by Israel. That report contained ample evidence that the Israelis were behaving as invaders in those

territories. Israel forces were engaging in pillage and the destruction of entire villages, and had established a reign of terror. They were driving many Arabs from their homes; and in November, they had made a raid on the Karameh refugee camp. A detailed description of that raid was given in the letter dated 8 December 1967 from the representative of Jordan to the Secretary-General.^{1/} The fact that it was driving out the indigenous Arab population and bringing Jewish immigrants into the occupied territories clearly demonstrated that Israel intended to annex the Arab territories it had seized. That expansionist policy was clearly reflected in the various statements of Israel leaders themselves, more plainly still in the steps which the Israel Government had taken to annex the entire City of Jerusalem, in violation of its international status. All those acts were in flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and the principles of international law.

30. Convinced of the legitimacy of the Arab people's struggle and conscious of the humanitarian obligation to alleviate the sufferings of the Arab refugees, the Czechoslovak Government had extended direct assistance to the Arab Governments which had given shelter to refugees. It was prepared to give Arab States all necessary assistance to overcome the difficulties created by Israel aggression. However, it would in no way derogate from the principle that the entire responsibility for the damage caused to Arab Governments and peoples lay with the aggressor, namely, Israel.

31. His Government had always been convinced that the question of the Palestine refugees could not be solved solely by humanitarian assistance. A just solution of that problem must be based on United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III), and on their rigorous implementation. As Mr. Josef Lenart, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, had stated in March 1965, Czechoslovakia believed that the solution of the Palestine question must take account of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestine Arabs and be in accordance with the principles and resolutions of the United Nations. The problem of the Arab refugees was primarily political, and could not be solved without reference to the situation created in the Middle East by Israel's aggression against the United Arab Republic, Jordan and Syria. The consequences of that aggression must be eliminated rapidly. That meant that Israel's forces must, to begin with, be withdrawn from the occupied territories in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967), and that Israel must, as a matter of urgency, make good all the damage caused by its aggression. Finally, Israel must implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Only in that way could the problem of the Arab refugees be solved.

32. Mr. AZNAM (Malaysia) expressed appreciation to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA of the well-documented report (A/6713) which he had submitted to the Committee and noted with regret that the Agency's financial difficulties had not been resolved.

^{1/} Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-second Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1967, document S/8290.

On the contrary, the fact that Israel had attacked the United Arab Republic, Jordan and Syria and had occupied territory belonging to them had served to increase the number of refugees. Those members of the Committee whose home was in the troubled area were well aware of the plight of those refugees. The Commissioner-General had at first estimated that 100,000 persons, of whom 80 per cent were registered with the Agency, had fled to the unoccupied part of Jordan, but he had learned shortly afterwards that the refugees actually numbered between 150,000 and 200,000. The Agency, with its tight budget, thus had to face additional responsibilities. The June war had made the Agency one of the main instruments for the supply of emergency relief to persons displaced by the fighting. His delegation appreciated in that connexion the substantial help coming from other sources—the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other national and international voluntary agencies. The international community could provide valuable assistance by contributing generously to the budget of the Agency, whose role was vital but limited by scarcity of resources.

33. The Security Council, in resolution 237 (1967), had called upon the Government of Israel to ensure the safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the occupied areas and to facilitate the return of displaced persons. Unfortunately, as the Commissioner-General had stated in his report, the Agency's financial situation was still critical. His delegation therefore associated itself with the hope expressed by most of the earlier speakers that Member States would find it possible to make greater contributions to those humanitarian activities and that those who had not contributed would now do so. The Agency's financial difficulties could be greatly reduced by utilizing the camps on the west bank of the Jordan, which now stood empty. His delegation replied in the affirmative to the first three questions put by the Commissioner-General in his statement at the 584th meeting (A/SPC/121, paras. 26-28) and had already expressed its view concerning his fourth question (*ibid.*, para. 29). It considered, moreover, that all the staff of UNRWA had discharged their difficult task brilliantly and deserved sincere appreciation.

34. Besides the financial questions, which were at present engaging the Committee's full attention, it was clear that the most important aspect of the problem was a political one. No long-term solution could be reached until the refugees were allowed to return to their homeland or given equitable compensation where appropriate. The June 1967 war had resolved nothing and might, on the contrary, rekindle animosity and increase the tension. Israel's occupation of further Arab territory might prolong the problem for UNRWA as well as for the United Nations. The Security Council's meetings and the fifth emergency special session of the General Assembly had demonstrated the close link between political motives, the upheaval in the lives of the refugees and the difficulties which the Committee was trying to resolve. He continued to hope that if the Agency managed to obtain additional funds for carrying on

its activities and if good will and a sense of justice prevailed, the United Nations would succeed in solving the problem of the Palestine refugees, which would be greatly to its credit.

35. Mr. ROMANYUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his delegation had consistently stressed the need for a radical solution of the Palestine refugee question, which was a political problem with considerable repercussions on the situation in the Middle East, particularly since Israel's June 1967 aggression against the Arab States. It was pointless to review the background of the question and to enumerate the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council which, if implemented, should lead to a solution. The fact that Israel had refused to implement those resolutions, had committed acts of aggression against the Arab States and was trying to annex their territory could in no wise help to settle the refugee problem. On the contrary, it created several new problems which aggravated the situation and caused a new flow of refugees, who now numbered 1.5 million. Following Israel's aggression, the ranks of the refugees had been swelled by hundreds of thousands of newly displaced persons, who were living in extremely precarious conditions and unable to return to their homes. The morale and the living conditions of the refugees were bound to suffer as a result.

36. A study of its policies showed that the Israel Government had no intention whatever of restoring to the Arabs the territory it had seized. Israel had, in fact, decided to settle and annex that territory, thereby contravening the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. In violation of those resolutions, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of August 12 1949,^{2/} and the principles of international law in respect of occupied countries, Israel was destroying reservoirs, Arab settlements and Moslem holy places. It was practising discrimination in education and driving out the indigenous inhabitants to install Jewish immigrants in their place. All those discriminatory measures against the Arab population not only aggravated the situation of the refugees, but also created additional difficulties for the Arab countries which had fallen victim to aggression, and worsened the political climate in the Middle East.

37. The aggressors opposed every attempt by the Secretary-General, the Arab States, the Government of socialist countries and other peace-loving countries to settle the refugee problem. In the United Nations, the Israel representatives tried to deny their responsibility for the consequences of the aggressive war unleashed by their country. Israel was thus creating new obstacles to the solution of the Palestine refugee problem. In his statement (588th meeting), the United States representative had taken the refugee problem out of its real context and, when referring to Security Council resolution 237 (1967), had confined his remarks to the return of the refugees, completely ignoring the other

aspect, namely, the withdrawal of Israel forces from Arab territory.

38. His own Government was giving the necessary economic assistance to the Arab countries which were victims of the aggression. The granting of such assistance helped considerably towards solving the refugee problem. Nevertheless, in his delegation's view, however useful the work of the voluntary organizations might be, it could not provide a final solution of the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees. If that problem was to be solved, the consequences of the war of aggression unleashed by Israel must be eliminated, the Arab States must recover their territory, and the refugees must return to their lands and be compensated for the losses suffered as a result of Israel's aggressive policy. His delegation was convinced that the States Members of the United Nations would feel compassion for the Palestine refugees and would adopt decisive measures to settle that important political problem.

39. Mr. FARAH (Somalia) said that the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/6713) was one which must of necessity be considered with mixed feelings. On the one hand, there must be great appreciation of the humanitarian work carried out by UNRWA since its inception but, on the other hand, there must be deep regret over the political situation which had necessitated the existence of the Agency. The Commissioner-General's report showed how he had applied his usual competence and compassion in dealing with the results of the latest Israel aggression. It would be a great pity if, with that record of humanitarian service, the United Nations should again fail to put the whole weight of its authority behind a just solution of the problem, the basic elements of which were formulated in General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Year after year, the efforts of the Arab countries to gain support for the implementation of that resolution had been impeded by the opposition of powerful Member States which supported the Zionist State of Israel. To the grave injustice done to the Arab people of Palestine, from the time of the Balfour Declaration to the recognition of the State of Israel, had been added the failure of the United Nations even to attempt to honour its political commitments to the Arab refugees. It was that fact more than anything else which had perpetuated the tension and violence in the Middle East.

40. Israel's recent occupation of additional Arab territory had compounded the problem and further embittered the situation. The weight of world opinion had prevented the Israel authorities from closing the door entirely to those who had been forced to flee, but very few had been able to make use of the facilities for return in the limited period of time allotted for that purpose. The Commissioner-General's report showed that the Zionist policy of systematically despoiling the Arabs was continuing. Furthermore, although the Commissioner-General had said at the 584th meeting that UNRWA's capacity to help to help would be much greater if the refugees returned to their previous camps on the west bank where UNRWA's installations already existed (see A/SPC/

^{2/} United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75 (1950), No. 973.

121, para. 6), that appeal made on purely humanitarian grounds continued to be ignored.

41. The threat to international peace engendered by the Arab-Israel conflict had brought home to everyone the necessity of dealing with the basic problem which had given rise to two wars in eleven years. It had been generally admitted that, in leaving the problem of the Palestine refugees unsolved, the United Nations had failed to shoulder one of its greatest responsibilities. The refugee problem was at the heart of the serious problem of the Middle East. The experience of the past had proved that neither international charity nor any amount of economic aid could ever be an answer to the problem and could never compensate the refugees for the loss of their homes, property and rights.

42. His delegation fully supported the position of the Jordanian representative, who had said (585th meeting) that the unconditional repatriation of all refugees was the just solution, one which had been affirmed by the United Nations for twenty years and for which the people of the area would accept no substitute. The Commissioner-General had asked a number of questions with regard to the financial implications of the work of UNRWA (A/6713, para. 66) and he must, of course, have the fullest support from the Members of the United Nations to enable the vital work of the Agency to continue. Nevertheless, it must be the Committee's task to bring about a situation which would obviate the need for UNRWA.

43. Mrs. GAVRILOVA (Bulgaria) said that Bulgaria was firmly convinced that the question of the return of Palestine refugees to their land could not be settled unless the Israel authorities changed their attitude towards the Arab countries. Israel must abandon its aggressive policy, its megalomaniac ambitions and its expansionist imperialistic designs. The presence of 2 million refugees in several Middle Eastern countries was the result of Israel's policy of aggression carried out with the support of the imperialist circles of certain Western Powers. The Palestine refugee problem could not be studied or solved without taking into account imperialist machinations in the Middle East and Israel's attitude towards its neighbours.

44. It was certainly naïve to deny, as some representatives had done in the Committee, that the Palestine refugee problem was a political issue that had arisen as a result of the invasion and bombing of Arab territory and the subjugation of its inhabitants. World opinion was well aware of the causes and contributing factors of the refugee issue; many representatives in the Committee and the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/6713) had referred to them. Contrary to the assertions of some representatives, the refugee question was essentially political; it was the result of an imperialist scheme and of political and military oppression. The imperialist circles were primarily to blame, as they found it to their advantage to perpetuate the tense situation in the Middle East and were using Israel to carry out their plot of aggression and economic hegemony in the area.

45. If the problem was to be solved, the imperialist Western Powers must cease supporting Israel's aggressive policy, Israel troops must immediately be withdrawn from the territory of the United Arab Republic, Jordan and Syria, General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and decisions on the matter must be fully implemented and the rights of the Arab population must be restored. The United Nations should above all seek a political solution of the problem, which was of the utmost importance not only to the people of the Middle East, but to all nations of the world and the safeguard of world peace. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the question of Palestine refugees—and their number had grown since the latest Israel aggression—had a very important humanitarian aspect. In so far as it was able, her own Government had provided assistance to a value of \$5 million in the form of drugs, foodstuffs and clothing. However, it would be wrong to view the problem only as a humanitarian issue. Her delegation therefore could not support the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.155) submitted by the United States of America, which merely dealt with the financial side of the problem. The draft resolution did not mention the real culprits—the Israel expansionists and their imperialist allies. The Bulgarian delegation would vote against the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.