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

AGENDA ITEM 26

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

At the 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. PLAJA (Italy) expressed appreciation of the excellent work done by the Director of the Agency and his staff. He felt that the best possible use had been made of the means at the Agency's disposal. However, there were no grounds for complacency. With the refugee population increasing every year, the Agency was barely able to maintain the minimum relief standards it had set itself. The Italian delegation had been particularly impressed by the Director's references (199th meeting) to the problems of the new generation of refugees, who, for lack of training and education, were growing up unfitted to take their place within the framework of modern society. Already the majority of the adult male refugees were virtually unemployable. Unless urgent measures were taken to deal with the situation, even a final political settlement would not save most of the refugees from a life of unemployment and misery regardless of where they might live. Italy heartily endorsed the recommendations in the report for an expanded vocational training programme and for improved elementary and secondary education as the necessary foundation for such training. It earnestly hoped that the proposed expansion could be maintained. Pending the final solution of the problem, it was the duty of all Member States to make every effort to prepare the refugees to take their place and become an asset to the community in which they ultimately settled.

2. According to the Director's report (A/4478), the relations between the Agency and the host Governments were now good and steadily improving. That was a favourable omen for the future and would increase the Agency's effectiveness in its day-to-day operations. Of course, as the Director had emphasized in his statement to the Committee, the core of the problem could not be solved by relief measures

and the provision of educational facilities. The ultimate solution would depend on the forces that shaped the future of the Middle East. The need for a new attempt to secure a political settlement was obvious. He urged the parties directly concerned to make the attempt, bearing in mind all the elements of the situation, including the decisions of the General Assembly, beginning with resolution 194 (III), and the important psychological factors on both sides.

3. The Italian delegation had studied the eighteenth report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/4573) with care, and felt that the Commission could usefully play a more active role. The United States representative had suggested (201st meeting) that interested Member States other than those directly concerned should approach the Conciliation Commission with their proposals for a solution. That would help the Commission to avoid engaging in mere theoretical studies and to take more positive action. He wished to place on record the Italian Government's hope that every possible effort would be made to promote a final settlement. To achieve true stability, the peoples of the Middle East needed peace and tranquillity and also social and economic advancement in accordance with the trends of the modern world.

4. Mr. ITURRALDE CHINEL (Bolivia) said that the Director's progressive and constructive programme deserved the support of all delegations. The presence of the refugee problem on the General Assembly's agenda every year, and the fact that the Agency's mandate had been extended on three separate occasions,^{1/} showed the importance attached to the problem by the United Nations.

5. The refugee problem had two aspects: the substantive question, the elimination of the refugee status by means of repatriation or compensation, which depended upon the parties directly concerned; and the United Nations relief programme for the refugees through the Agency. Thirty-four Members of the United Nations contributed to the Agency, but it was chiefly maintained by the three major contributors, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. The voluntary aid provided by the international community had been instituted as a temporary measure, pending a final agreement on the status of the refugees, and it could not be expected to continue indefinitely. A number of Arab delegations had called the relief measures an act of charity harmful to the dignity of the Palestine refugees. It was true that emergency assistance became unacceptable if it went on for too long. It was essential, therefore, that the parties directly concerned should abandon their belligerent attitudes and concentrate instead on seeking mutual agreement for the sake of peace in the Middle East. All States which had sincerely accepted the

^{1/} By General Assembly resolutions 302 (IV), 394 (V) and 1456 (XIV).

obligations imposed by the Charter were in duty bound to seek peaceful means of settling all disputes and conflicts. The parties directly concerned in the Arab refugee problem should therefore seek an agreement either through the diplomatic channel or through the Conciliation Commission set up for that purpose. The agreement recently arrived at by Austria and Italy constituted a precedent which Israel and the Arab States might well follow. The Bolivian delegation would support any proposal which might reconcile the conflicting parties.

6. The animosities of the past must be discarded. Israel's existence as a sovereign, independent State with a seat in the United Nations was a fact of political life. The refugee problem must therefore be placed in its proper perspective. The refugees must be allowed to decide for themselves whether they wished to return to Israel to live at peace with their neighbours. If so, under resolution 194 (II) they were entitled to return. Those who did not wish to be repatriated must be allowed to settle in the host countries, Israel paying appropriate compensation, again according to resolution 194 (III). Israel was undoubtedly under an obligation to pay such compensation; the problem was thus to a large extent economic. According to the Conciliation Commission, the work of identifying refugee property was almost completed and its evaluation was in progress, while the question of the release of blocked accounts was being dealt with. He was sure that if work was continued along those lines, it would contribute considerably to a satisfactory solution of the problem now poisoning relations between Israel and the Arab countries. Bolivia enjoyed friendly relations with both sides and it would therefore welcome most warmly any indication of a policy of conciliation which would bring their conflict over the refugees to a speedy and final conclusion.

7. Mr. DUNCAN (Panama) observed that the UNRWA report offered striking evidence of the seriousness of the problem and the deplorable condition of the refugees, who were barely able to exist on the funds made available for their support. The Agency had, however, done much with its limited means. Its rehabilitation programme was particularly praiseworthy inasmuch as it would help to make the refugees capable of supporting themselves, thereby restoring a sense of dignity to the refugee community. The problem as a whole, however, was becoming more complex from one year to the next, exceeding all other Middle East problems in its seriousness and constituting a threat to international peace. His delegation had given careful and impartial consideration to the statements made by the parties directly affected and was convinced that if any progress towards a solution was to be made, the parties would have to approach the problem realistically, dispassionately and without prejudice. The events which had led to the existing situation in the Middle East were well known and there was no need to dwell on them. The United Nations was now confronted with irrevocable facts and the situation emerging from those facts must be remedied. He hoped that the time was not far distant when the parties most directly concerned would recognize the advantages which both sides stood to gain from mutual concessions and a greater spirit of understanding. Such an attitude would contribute substantially to the solution of the problem and in so

doing would help to ensure the preservation of peace in the Middle East with all that it signified for both the Arab States and Israel.

8. His delegation would support any draft resolution aimed at encouraging a frank and constructive understanding between the parties most directly concerned with the solution of the refugee problem.

9. Mr. DIMECHKIE (Lebanon) said that the Director of UNRWA had worked devotedly and produced an objective report (A/4478). In 1959 at the fourteenth session the United Nations had not only extended UNRWA's mandate to assure relief operations pending the implementation of resolutions calling for the repatriation and compensation of the refugees, but had called on the Conciliation Commission for Palestine to renew its efforts towards that end. The Assembly should discuss not only the report of the UNRWA, but the implementation of its own resolutions. The refugee problem was not only a human problem affecting the rights of the refugees themselves; it was the core of a dispute involving millions of people and constituting a danger to world peace.

10. All Arabs had seen the establishment of Israel as an act of aggression. More than one million Arabs had been expelled through terrorism and psychological warfare. Since Israel had become independent, its leaders had followed an ideology of racial and religious fanaticism and discrimination. The policy of the ingathering of the exiles, which was still in progress, was an attempt to deprive the Arabs of their rights for ever.

11. Israel's sovereignty was necessarily limited by the terms of resolution 181 (II) of the General Assembly on which its claim to statehood was based. The United Nations had recognized the limits in question in its subsequent resolutions on the question of the refugees and on the frontiers and capital of Israel. Israel could not use its lame sovereignty as an excuse for defying the United Nations authority.

12. Resolution 273 (III), admitting Israel to the United Nations, had been adopted after Israel had agreed, at the talks held at Lausanne under the auspices of the Conciliation Commission to accept the terms of resolution 181 (II) on partition and of resolution 194 (III) on the return of the refugees to their homes. Soon after its admission, Israel had denounced the Protocol of Lausanne signed on 12 May 1942.^{2/} It had deliberately deceived the other Member States. Although it tried to give the impression that it was a small State ready to live in peace with its neighbours, it had carried out several border raids against them, culminating in the tripartite invasion of Egypt. Those raids had been condemned by various organs of the United Nations. Israel was defying resolutions of the Security Council, the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly.

13. The Arab States were determined to defend the rights of the Arabs who had been deprived of their homes and property and would never accept the status of homeless refugees.

14. The Conciliation Commission seemed to have done nothing to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), as required by

^{2/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourth Session, Ad Hoc Political Committee, Annex, vol. II, document A/927, annex B.

resolution 1456 (XIV), operative paragraph 4. The Commission should be reconstituted or expanded.

15. His delegation was glad to read in the report that technical training and education did not prejudice the refugees' ultimate rights, and that it was not for the host Governments to solve the refugee problem. He hoped that the Agency's relations with the host Governments would remain good.

16. The 1961 budget showed no great changes. That meant that the refugees' very low level of subsistence had not changed. The average expenditure for the maintenance of each refugee was less than \$30 a year, which included the Agency's administrative costs. He supported the Director's appeal for contributions.

17. The United Nations should make Israel pay for the use of the property it had unlawfully seized. Neither the Conciliation Commission nor the Government of Israel had done anything to protect the refugees' right to their property. He suggested that Mr. Davis should be appointed Special Commissioner for Arab refugee property.

18. Israel had implemented none of the United Nations resolutions. It had deliberately obstructed their implementation in the early days of the problem, in the hope that they would eventually lapse. Israel's attitude and immigration policy were a danger to the peace of the Middle East.

19. The United Nations could no longer allow Israel to defy its authority. Israel had no right to immunity from the enforcement of United Nations decisions. In 1957 the United Nations had forced it to withdraw from territory beyond the armistice lines by the threat of economic sanctions. The Assembly might follow that precedent or consider the other enforcement measures provided for in the Charter.

20. The creation of the State of Israel was the result of the campaign of false propaganda by the world Zionist movement. In spite of the Arab States' warnings, the United Nations had been deceived into thinking that Israel could be established peacefully and would bring prosperity and happiness to the whole Middle East. The United Nations must now admit its mistake and undo it. Israel and peace in the Middle East were incompatible. Israel was not peace-loving, nor was it able and willing to carry out the obligations of the Charter. Its policy of discrimination violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It had no right to membership of the United Nations or to statehood. Unless the United Nations righted the initial injustice done to the Arabs, the world would be in serious difficulties.

21. Mr. SCHELTEMA (Netherlands) said that his Government maintained its full confidence in UNRWA's operations. The Director's annual report showed that he and his staff had done excellent work under adverse circumstances and in spite of a shortage of funds. He could not have been expected to report that a solution was in sight, for there was no immediate prospect of an improvement in the relationship between the Arab States and Israel by which the refugee problem might be automatically solved. The United Nations therefore had no choice but to continue doing what it could to alleviate the refugees' plight.

22. His Government had always held that it would be unrealistic to expect history to reverse its course and restore the situation existing before the Palestine problem had arisen. Taking present-day realities as its starting-point, therefore, the United Nations should devise ways to relieve the Palestinians of their humiliating refugee status and give them an honourable place in society. His delegation had consistently maintained that in the circumstances self-support and resettlement offered the best possibility for their future. The Director's reflections on the present prospect for employment of the refugees were somewhat discouraging, but his three-year programme of general education and technical and vocational training offered a constructive means of improving matters. While Governments might have some difficulty in endorsing the programme because of the additional financial burden it implied, he hoped that the Assembly would recommend that they give it more than routine consideration. He was pleased to note that part of the extra expenditure could be financed from the anticipated \$4 million World Refugee Year contributions, which incidentally included \$15,000 contributed by the Netherlands Committee for World Refugee Year. He had no doubt that the Director's estimate of the extra income was justified, although it was not quite clear from table 19 in the annex to part I of the report (A/4478) how the figure had been arrived at. As far as contributions in general were concerned, the Agency's financial situation remained precarious, and he hoped that Governments which had so far paid little or nothing would see their way clear to making new or increased contributions. His Government had proposed to Parliament that the Netherlands contribution for 1961 should be \$65,000, which was equal to its contribution in 1960 during World Refugee Year.

23. He was glad to note that relations between the Agency and the host Governments were improving and that despite the political and financial difficulties involved, those Governments were making substantial contributions to the Agency's work. He hoped they would continue to co-operate with the Agency and to provide as many opportunities as possible for employment and settlement of the refugees.

24. Mr. TCHOBANOV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation had consistently maintained that it was impossible to separate the problem of the Palestine refugees from the political aspects of the Palestine problem as a whole, and hence it was in full agreement with the statement in paragraph 11 of the UNRWA report that the general solution must be brought about by forces outside UNRWA. Those forces, in the view of his delegation, were the peoples of the Arab countries and of Israel. It should be recognized that there were two peoples in Palestine, Arabs and Jews, and that it was in the interests of both that they should be given an opportunity to live in peace and harmony. The plight of the refugees was the result of the colonialist Powers' policy of creating antagonism between the two peoples, and the United Nations should do everything in its power to heal the breach. As a first step in that direction, Israel should comply with the provisions of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) offering the refugees a choice between repatriation and compensation.

25. His delegation could not associate itself with the smugness of certain countries in respect of their

contributions to the support of the refugees over the past twelve years. The sum of \$300 million was in itself substantial, but it was small in comparison with the property which the refugees had lost and the income they would have received in the intervening period if they had not been deprived of their property. Nor could it be weighed against the sufferings which the refugees had endured. At best it had served to maintain at the barest subsistence level approximately a million men, women and children whose situation was the direct outcome of the imperialist policies pursued by certain Powers. The Committee should have no illusions as to the effectiveness of the palliatives which had been proposed, such as the problematical Jordan Valley resettlement projects and the vocational training programme under which an infinitesimal percentage of the young people among the refugees would be taught a means of earning their living. His delegation was firmly convinced that it would be in the best interests of both Israel and the Arab countries to proceed as rapidly as possible to implement the provisions of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (II), the most essential of which was that the refugees should be given the choice between repatriation and compensation. It would be a mistake to view the refugee problem primarily from either the humanitarian or the financial standpoint, for it was in essence a political problem and its solution should be sought in that context.

26. Mr. VALENCIA (Ecuador) said it was apparent from the annual report that UNRWA had been carrying out a humanitarian task for which it deserved the highest praise. He paid a tribute to the Director, the countries whose generous financial contributions had enabled the Agency to function, and the host countries, which were making enormous sacrifices for the benefit of the refugees. The Director had submitted a realistic appraisal of the situation, and the programme for the new mandate period outlined in

paragraph 13 covered all that the Agency could be expected to accomplish, once it was recognized that it could not solve the fundamental problem of which the plight of the refugees was but one aspect. His delegation therefore gave the new programme its full support. The statement that relations with the host Governments were improving was cause for satisfaction and showed that those Governments fully appreciated the importance of the Agency's work.

27. As a definitive solution of the refugee problem would have to be brought about largely by forces outside UNRWA, it was essential to avoid recriminations and threats, which could only aggravate the situation still further. He would therefore urge the States directly concerned to approach the problem in a conciliatory spirit and seek new ways of reaching agreement, bearing in mind that the supreme objective of their efforts was the well-being of the refugees themselves. As Members of the United Nations, the States on both sides shared a common obligation to respect the Charter, including the provision set forth in Article 1 for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. It was to be hoped that Israel and the Arab States concerned would soon be able to inform the United Nations that they were ready to begin negotiations with a view to a final settlement of the problem. A statement to that effect would strengthen the confidence of world public opinion that peace could be maintained, for peace was indivisible and any conflict, no matter where it occurred, might signal the outbreak of a world-wide conflagration.

28. His delegation would vote in favour of any draft resolution which appeared likely, on the basis of its intrinsic merits, to improve the situation of the refugees and to help alleviate the tension their presence caused in the Middle East.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.