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President: Mr. George F. DAVIDSON (Canada).

Present:

Representatives of the following States: Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Greece, Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Sudan, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

Observers for the following Member States: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Cuba, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Spain.

Observers for the following non-member States: Federal Republic of Germany, Holy See, Switzerland.

Representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

AGENDA ITEM 14

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/3138 and Add.1; E/L.804)

1. Mr. LINDT (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing his report for the period May 1957 to May 1958 (E/3138 and Add.1), said that he would confine his remarks to the international protection of refugees and to the specific problems facing the Office of the High Commissioner.

2. He emphasized the importance of the international protection of refugees in an epoch when there was a tendency to regulate and bureaucratize life to a greater extent than ever before. The Office had intensified its efforts in the field of international protection, and he was glad to report that an agreement relating to refugee seamen had been adopted. It had been ratified by the French Government, and the forty-first (maritime) session of the International Labour Conference, 1958, had recommended its ratification. The conference had also adopted a convention on seafarers' identity cards.

3. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe had adopted a resolution on the subject of facilitating refugees' travel, and a special committee had adopted a draft agreement on the simplification of frontier formalities in the case of refugees.

4. Turning to specific problems, he said that the Office was trying first to solve the problems of new refugees as rapidly as possible through repatriation, integration or emigration. When a refugee left a camp, he had more need of the legal protection exercised by the Office in a non-political, humanitarian and social spirit than when he was in camp. The Office's second objective was to attack the residual problems of earlier refugee influxes.

5. He wished to refute the impression that the refugee problem was insoluble, and reminded representatives of what he had said at the Council's twenty-fourth session (988th meeting) regarding Hungarian refugees. At that time, there had been 8,600 such refugees in camps in Yugoslavia. Today there were none, although 675 Hungarian refugees had chosen to become integrated in the Yugoslav economy.

6. He paid a tribute to all countries and organizations which had helped to achieve that result, especially the Yugoslav Government, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the United States Escapee Program, and various voluntary agencies. The Yugoslav Government had, however, been left with a deficit on its expenditure in favour of refugees; he hoped that that would be remedied.

7. Austria had received 180,000 Hungarian refugees. At present, there were only 17,500 such refugees left in Austria, of whom 7,000 were in camps. Of the total number now remaining, between 8,000 and 9,000 wished to emigrate, some wished to remain in Austria, and some might wish to be repatriated. His Office had worked out a programme of a total amount of \$3.5 million for the refugees in Austria. Jointly with the Director of ICEM he had issued an appeal to countries which might be willing to accept Hungarian refugees who wished to emigrate.

8. Sweden had taken from Austria 178 Hungarian refugees suffering from tuberculosis, together with members of their families, and the United States Government had recently decided to authorize the issue of 3,000 visas to Hungarian refugees in Austria and 300 to such refugees in Italy. There were indications that other countries would take similar action.

9. The problem of the refugee was not completely solved once he had emigrated to a country of final resettlement. He needed international protection until he had acquired a new nationality, and problems arose regarding unaccompanied children and also the repatriation of refugees to their country of origin from the overseas countries to which they had emigrated. Where a refugee had difficulty in paying for return to his country of origin, the High Commissioner's Office intervened through diplomatic channels.

10. He was fully aware of the difficulties created for refugees in countries suffering from a recession, but efforts had been made to ensure that they were granted the same social privileges as nationals.

11. Turning to the question of refugees of European origin in the Far East, he said that ICEM and his Office, which were acting jointly in the matter, estimated that about 10,000 still wished to emigrate, 5,000 having already received the assurance that they would be granted visas. Funds to cover transportation expenses were, however, lacking. ICEM and his Office had worked out a plan to cover the years 1958 to 1960, for which \$5 million would be required for transporting 10,000 refugees to countries ready to receive them. He also drew attention to chapter VI of his report, relating to action taken in connexion with General Assembly resolution 1167 (XII), which concerned the problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong. He had recently informed governments of projects prepared by the Hong Kong authorities for those refugees, who were not, however, within the mandate of his Office.

12. He then described the situation of the refugees of long standing in Europe, and recalled that it had been decided by the General Assembly, in resolution 1166 (XII), that the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) programme should concentrate on those still in camps, without losing sight of the needs of those outside camps. A programme had been worked out, and it was hoped that all camps would be cleared by 1960 — provided the Office received in 1958 pledges to the total sum of \$7.5 million. He wished to bring up to date the statement in his report (para. 17) that of the latter sum, \$6.7 million was still needed. That figure had now been reduced to \$5.9 million. It was especially important to clear the camps, since the children born and living in them were leading unreal lives, and should be given a chance to become normal and useful citizens, but must not be separated from their parents.

13. After summarizing the difficulties involved in clearing the camps, he said that he had been greatly encouraged by the co-operation he had received from the governments concerned.

14. The working party set up by the UNREF Executive Committee at its eighth session (E/3138/Add.1, resolution No. 9) would examine not only the camp clearance problem but that of the refugees living outside camps who might qualify for future international assistance.

15. He had tried not to give too pessimistic a view of the refugee problem, and felt that the residue of problems still existing and any new wave of refugees that might appear would be dealt with speedily and efficiently by his Office, provided it had the co-operation of the international community composed of governments, government organizations, voluntary agencies and individuals. He stressed that the mandate of his Office was of a global nature, and not limited to any one area of the world.

16. Mr. NESBITT (Canada) expressed his government's satisfaction at the decision taken by the General Assembly at its twelfth session (resolution 1165 (XII)) to extend the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for

Refugees by five years; his government firmly believed that the continued existence of such an organization was essential, since many refugee problems dating from before, and from the time of, the Second World War were still unsolved, and new groups of refugees had appeared in recent years. On his government's behalf, he paid a high tribute to the remarkable work performed by the High Commissioner and his devoted staff.

17. As the four-year UNREF programme was drawing to its close and the General Assembly had decided (resolution 1166 (XII), para. 3) that it was not to be extended, countries interested in humanitarian efforts on behalf of refugees must now review the situation; the UNREF Executive Committee had for that reason decided at its eighth session to establish a nine-country working party to take stock of the present situation and of the importance of the numerous refugee problems, and to put forward recommendations to be considered by the Executive Committee at a special session, which was to take place before the thirteenth session of the General Assembly. That being so, his delegation felt that it would be inappropriate at present to enter too deeply into the substance of the questions that would be considered by the Executive Committee at that session. When the working party's recommendations were known, they would be carefully considered by his government, whose views would be expressed in the Executive Committee at the appropriate time.

18. His government was most pleased at the results of the Executive Committee's policy of concentrating attention on refugees still living in camps. The High Commissioner's camp clearance programme should, with the aid of the international community, go far towards solving the camp problem completely and permanently. His country's delegations to Executive Committee sessions had repeatedly urged that refugees living in camps should be given every encouragement to move on as soon as they were offered reasonable resettlement opportunities; in that respect, the voluntary agencies could be of great assistance.

19. The gradual solution of the Hungarian refugee problem was particularly noteworthy; of the approximately 200,000 such refugees that had left their homeland, only about 17,000 still required permanent resettlement opportunities, either in Austria or in countries of second asylum. His own country had made a significant contribution to the solution of the Hungarian refugee problem, having contributed funds amounting to over \$675,000 and having accepted by 1 May 1958 36,800 Hungarian refugees, a number equivalent to 229 Hungarian refugees per 100,000 inhabitants — a larger proportion than anywhere else. In addition, his government had expended millions of dollars on transporting those refugees from Europe to Canada.

20. The Canadian Government was now giving careful attention to the problem of financial assistance for refugees of European origin in the Far East.

21. His delegation was happy to note the Council's decision (resolution 672 (XXV)) to replace the UNREF Executive Committee by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, a body which would have a somewhat larger and more representative

membership; Canada would do everything it could to contribute constructively to the new body's work.

22. Mr. VAN THIEL (Netherlands) stressed the urgency of the refugee problem. As could be seen from the High Commissioner's report, marked progress had been made in the resettlement of "old" refugees, and much had been done in the case of the Hungarian refugees. However, much remained to be done, and his delegation regretted that the UNREF Executive Committee had not yet discussed the programme of projects based upon the increased estimate of \$4.8 million required to close all camps referred to in paragraph 16 of the report. He noted that the matter would be discussed shortly at a special session of the Executive Committee, and hoped that the sum of approximately \$6 million required would be forthcoming in order to solve the problems of refugees still living in camps. The High Commissioner's fund-raising programmes were an excellent means of providing the money so desperately needed.

23. There were still more than 10,000 refugees of European origin on the mainland of China. The World Council of Churches had already obtained visas to various countries for 5,000 of them, but their transport via Hong Kong was being greatly hampered by lack of funds. The High Commissioner's programme — drafted for that purpose in co-operation with ICEM — appeared, however, to be adequate.

24. Referring to the Survey of the Non-Settled Refugee Population in Various Countries (A/AC.79/111), he said that it showed clearly what remained to be done even when the refugee camps were closed, and he mentioned some experience gained in recent years in the Netherlands in connexion with the integration of refugees.

25. Such integration was not only a question of the adaptability of the refugee. Other conditions must be fulfilled. The Netherlands Government had found that social workers could perform a useful function in dealing with the various problems of the refugee, and it had called upon numerous religious, social and cultural organizations in that connexion and had made an effort to co-ordinate their activities. It was most important that refugee households should be approached on an individual basis.

26. The High Commissioner's Office should prepare an overall programme for the day when the camps closed down. The refugees must feel that they were not being left to their own devices, and the programme to be drawn up by the working party set up by the UNREF Executive Committee should concentrate on the difficult cases. His delegation felt that it would be better to establish one general fund to cover them. However, countries should be able to earmark their contributions for specific purposes, since one type of problem might have a special appeal for a particular country. It might be easier in that way to raise funds. The High Commissioner should be left to make the necessary appropriations.

27. The Netherlands Government preferred refugee programmes to be planned on a long-term basis. However, in order to meet an emergency in addition to existing refugee problems, it might be advisable to plan a one-year programme and to make forecasts as to future programmes. That would enable governments to look

somewhat farther ahead, and to budget their contributions according to expected needs.

28. In conclusion, he reminded members that refugees were the product of the shortcomings of nations in the field of human rights. Governments therefore bore a direct and heavy responsibility for their well-being.

29. Mr. PHILLIPS (United States of America) observed that the High Commissioner's statement reflected the contemporary tragedy of refugees rendered homeless through their flight from oppression and tyranny. The steps taken by the international community to assist such refugees were inadequate. Ideally, every bona fide refugee should be enabled to start a new life as a free man in a free society, but in practice there were limits beyond which States were unable to go because of the many other claims upon their resources. Humanitarian obligations should not, however, be neglected because of current economic and political problems. While each government naturally had to decide for itself what was the proper level for its contributions, the time had come for a review by each country of its capabilities in the field of assistance to refugees.

30. The United States intended to continue its aid to the Office of the High Commissioner, and hoped to be able to do so at a level close to that it had maintained in the past.

31. Under General Assembly resolution 1166 (XII), which was based on Council resolution 650 (XXIV), it would be for the new Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to determine the types of operations to be carried out by the High Commissioner and the priorities to be allotted to them. Under present arrangements, the General Assembly, at its thirteenth session, should be in a position to lay down the main guiding lines for the High Commissioner's programme during the next few years.

32. It seemed unlikely that the basic nature of the High Commissioner's work would be changed radically. The task of legal protection for refugees, individually or in groups, would continue to be of the utmost importance, and it was probable that, for the time being, existing programmes would continue largely as hitherto.

33. The High Commissioner would no doubt be encouraged to seek new homes for Hungarian refugees still in countries of first asylum — notably Austria, where there were still some 18,000 Hungarian refugees. The United States had announced that it would grant 3,000 visas to enable such refugees to move from Austria to the United States, plus 300 for Hungarian refugees in Italy. It was to be hoped that other countries would also find it possible to accept significant numbers of Hungarian refugees, and that countries unable to accept refugees in their territories would contribute financially to the programme of permanent solutions for Hungarian refugees wishing to remain in Austria.

34. The High Commissioner's Office would also have to continue the work of clearing long-existing refugee camps; the task of finding permanent solutions for camp-installed refugees became increasingly difficult with the passage of time, and it was essential that governments should respond

adequately to the High Commissioner's appeals for funds for that purpose.

35. In view of the need to provide the High Commissioner with the most effective guidance from the broadest array of sources, the United States Government hoped that the Council would respond to the Executive Committee's recommendation (E/3138/Add.1, resolution no. 10) that the full number of seats authorized by General Assembly resolution 1166 (XII) should be occupied. It felt that China would be an excellent candidate for the twenty-fifth seat on the new executive committee, and hoped that that country would be selected; with that end in view, the United States and Greek delegations had introduced a draft resolution (E/L.804).

36. In conclusion, he wished to endorse, on behalf of his delegation, the statement submitted by the International Conference of Catholic Charities (E/C.2/509).

37. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) recalled that the Executive Committee had begun to make arrangements to complete the work still outstanding by the end of 1960. He thought it would be premature for the Council, at the present stage, to study in detail the problems which the working party set up by the Executive Committee would be called upon to consider.

38. While the present year had been quieter than the previous one, the report showed that the High Commissioner and his staff had not relaxed their efforts for the betterment of refugees and the eventual elimination of the refugee problem. The Hungarian refugee problem had been almost solved in two years through the tremendous international response in the form of financial and other contributions by the governments and peoples of host and receiving countries; his delegation was pleased to note that the High Commissioner was making every endeavour to prevent the creation of a "hard core" of Hungarian refugees in the countries of first asylum.

39. His delegation had often lamented the fact that the plight of the older refugees in Europe had not captured public attention as had the great influx of refugees from Hungary; nevertheless, it applauded the progress achieved in the past year in clearing camps in Austria and Germany. It was to be hoped that the working party to which he had referred would be able to agree on recommendations for a realistic and economical programme to complete the clearance of the remaining camps as soon as possible — without, of course, neglecting the important work of assistance to refugees outside the camps where necessary — and that in the present closing phase of the operation some governments which had not hitherto contributed would find it possible to respond to the appeal made by the Negotiating Committee for Extra-Budgetary Funds to help the operation to a rapid conclusion.

40. Similar observations applied equally to refugees outside Europe, and conspicuously so to two groups in the Far East. His delegation was most anxious that the present possibility of moving European refugees from the Far East to permanent homes should not be missed through lack of funds, and his government had made a contribution to help finance the resettlement of members of that group. His government was more directly concerned with the refugees in Hong Kong; the government

of that territory continued to carry a very heavy burden of assistance to the 700,000 Chinese refugees there, which was costing over \$36 million in the current financial year. His government was most grateful for the solid assistance given by the United States Government in various forms over the years, and wished also to pay a tribute to the generous response of the Holy See to General Assembly resolution 1167 (XII). He hoped that other governments would also recognize that the matter was one of international concern, and would respond accordingly.

41. Mr. DE CURTON (France) observed that the Hungarian refugee problem had been solved quickly and completely in Yugoslavia. France, which had taken part in the operation, wished particularly to congratulate the Yugoslav Government and the High Commissioner's Office on that achievement. In Austria, success had not been so complete. Admittedly there were ten times as many refugees there, but it might well be wondered why there should be a residuum of more than ten per cent of the initial number; useful lessons could be drawn from a comparative study of the situation in the two countries. The French delegation approved of the permanent solutions programme envisaged by the High Commissioner's Office with a view to helping the Austrian Government and authorities, to whose generosity his delegation wished to pay a tribute.

42. Before commenting on the position with regard to earlier categories of refugees, the French delegation would await the findings of the working party set up by the UNREF Executive Committee, which would be meeting shortly. It merely wished to emphasize one point which emerged from the Survey of the Non-Settled Refugee Population in Various Countries carried out under the direction of Professor Idenburg. That survey had shown France to be the chief European country of asylum, harbouring at the moment 275,000 refugees out of the 600,000 it had received since 1917. Of that number, 36,700 must be regarded as non-settled; and the striking fact was that 32.8 per cent of those 36,700 refugees consisted of difficult cases or physically handicapped persons and that in France there were no camps, whereas refugees of the same category living in camps under the authority of the High Commissioner represented 18.6 per cent of the camp population. It was therefore necessary to exercise caution in establishing priorities for the various categories of refugees, and not to adhere too strictly to the principle which might, at certain times, have induced the High Commissioner's Office to devote too much time and money to camp clearance. True, it was one of the main targets, but in many cases the refugees concerned had their ethnic origin in the country of reception and belonged to the badly housed category, not to that of difficult cases. Refugees outside the camps were often worse off than those inside. Hence, care must be taken to avoid committing a grave injustice in that connexion, as the High Commissioner had himself recognized.

43. His delegation had read with pleasure paragraph 9 of the High Commissioner's report, which referred to the recent tendency of overseas countries to apply more liberal immigration criteria to certain handicapped groups of earlier refugees. Such moves should lighten the burden on some countries of first asylum and provide a humane

solution to the tragic problem of those refugee families which had to choose between giving up their emigration plans or leaving behind a member who was ineligible for emigration.

44. The French delegation would vote for the draft resolution submitted by the United States of America and Greece (E/L.804).

45. Mr. CHENG PAONAN (China) said his delegation was pleased to note that throughout the past year the High Commissioner had devoted untiring efforts to the implementation of a permanent solutions programme on behalf of refugees from Hungary, and also that the High Commissioner had paid particular attention to the welfare of unaccompanied children among those refugees.

46. His delegation wished to add its voice to those of many others in urging a speedy solution to the problem of refugees of European origin living in mainland China, where 10,300 of them were still awaiting a chance to leave. The policy of the Chinese Mainland Government of granting exit visas for those refugees might be changed at any time, and it was essential to proceed speedily before that happened.

47. His delegation earnestly hoped that the balance of funds necessary for the implementation of the programme of permanent solutions would be forthcoming from interested governments and non-governmental organizations.

48. His delegation was grateful to the United States and Greek delegations for proposing the inclusion of China in the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. His government and people had a well-established reputation in the field of action on behalf of refugees; Jewish refugees had been granted land some two thousand years ago in what is now Honan province; more recently, refuge had been granted to persons escaping from the communist revolution in Russia, and to Koreans who had preferred to live outside the area of Japanese occupation; in the years preceding the Second World War, some 30,000 Jews who had fled from national-socialist persecution in Europe had been accepted in China.

49. Since the end of the Second World War, his country had successfully resettled its own internally displaced persons, and the number assisted in one way or another had amounted to over 20 million; his government had also contributed financially to the International Refugee Organization and to the UNREF programmes.

50. His government was naturally concerned with the plight of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong and could be of great assistance to the High Commissioner in solving the problem of those refugees. His government did not take its international obligations lightly; it would give the new executive committee the benefit of its long experience in efforts on behalf of refugees, and would participate actively and constructively in United Nations efforts on their behalf.

51. Mr. BRAVO CARO (Mexico) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner and his staff for their untiring devotion to the cause of the refugees. The High Commissioner had very rightly praised those countries which

recognized the right of asylum, a right which Mexico — a favourite haven of political refugees — had always practised. It had received and assimilated 20,000 Spanish refugees and countless Germans, Austrians and Italians and had even defended the right to receive certain Latin American refugees. Nevertheless, in view of the serious population problem in Mexico, the Government was at the moment unable to play a greater part in the international work for refugees than it had already planned to do.

52. The Mexican delegation would vote for the joint draft resolution.

53. Mr. VUKMANOVIĆ (Yugoslavia) observed that, as a result of the efforts made by the High Commissioner, by countries directly and indirectly concerned and by many international organizations, the Hungarian refugee problem had been solved, partially in Austria and completely in Yugoslavia. In describing his country's contribution, he said that Yugoslavia had been guided solely by humanitarian and social principles, which meant that every refugee had been free to decide his own fate without pressure from any quarter. The 675 who had expressed the wish to remain in Yugoslavia had been settled there with guaranteed employment. The 2,773 who had preferred to return to their own country had been repatriated. Finally, 16,409 had emigrated to various European and overseas countries. Yugoslavia had been obliged to make considerable financial sacrifices in order to carry out that humanitarian task. While the contributions received through the High Commissioner and from various governments and international organizations had been of great assistance and were deeply appreciated, they had not covered the expenditure incurred by his government, which was still a creditor to the extent of \$3,651,024, and was entitled to expect reimbursement of that sum as a demonstration of international solidarity.

54. He drew attention to the problem of the Algerian refugees, for whom the assistance provided by the High Commissioner and various international organizations was, in his view, inadequate. He recalled the appeal made by the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Red Cross Committee in pursuance of the resolution adopted by the Nineteenth Conference of Red Cross Societies, to the effect that the assistance needed by hundreds of thousands of human beings could be provided only through efforts on a world scale.

55. Steps should be taken as soon as possible to provide the financial resources needed for the implementation of the High Commissioner's programme. It was also essential to decide on specific methods for solving each case. In his view, every refugee should be completely free to decide whether or not he wished to be repatriated and should receive all the necessary assistance. That condition was of importance not only for the refugee's future but also for the establishment of mutual confidence among countries.

56. His government hoped that the High Commissioner would be able to complete his task before the terminal date fixed. It would continue, as a member of the Executive Committee, to give all possible assistance and

had recently decided to make a financial contribution for the implementation of the programme.

57. Mr. BENSIS (Greece) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner for the devotion and energy with which he had dealt with the refugee problem. His delegation was glad to know that the Hungarian refugee problem had been solved completely in Yugoslavia and to a considerable extent in Austria. It was gratified to note that the High Commissioner's objective was not only to provide assistance for refugees but also to achieve

a final solution of the problem, including closure of the camps. In that connexion, he would mention with particular satisfaction the closure of the camp on the Greek island of Tinos. At the same time, he would urge the High Commissioner not to forget the refugees who were outside the camps and whose fate was often even more wretched.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.