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Chairman: Mr. Jiří NOSEK (Czechoslovakia).

AGENDA ITEM 27

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/2648 and Add.2, A/2686, chapter IV, section V) (*continued*)

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. FAROUHAR (Iran) congratulated the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on his report (A/2648 and Add.2) and his statement (545th meeting), which gave such a clear picture of the plight of the refugees. His delegation's impression on other occasions when the High Commissioner had made his report to the General Assembly had always been that too little had been done and that insufficient support had been provided.

2. The report clearly showed the efforts made to solve certain problems and the progress achieved. The most interesting part of the report was the section on the future programme. It was good that the High Commissioner had now submitted an over-all plan for a definite solution of the problem. In the preceding three years, he and his staff had been able to gauge the extent of their task and to realize that the numbers of refugees involved were much higher than might be assumed from the last reports of the International Refugee Organization. In order to deal immediately with the most urgent tasks, the High Commissioner had set up his Refugee Emergency Fund for the most needy cases and had studied the position of the refugees in various countries of residence in detail. The Ford Foundation's grant of \$2,900,000 had made it possible to institute certain economic and social pilot projects in some of the countries.

3. It was surprising to hear references to the local character of the problem. As the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General had stated before the Third Committee, the refugee question was an international responsibility. The United Nations had acknowledged that fact by setting up the High Commissioner's Office and by entrusting first the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and then IRO with refugee work immediately after the Second World War. Moreover, two United Nations agencies, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refu-

gees in the Near East and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency were dealing with the problems of Palestine and Korean refugees respectively. Before the Second World War also, the League of Nations had taken an active part in refugee work and had set up various bodies for that purpose. Thus, the international community had always been directly concerned with refugees and had never shirked its responsibility for alleviating their tragic plight. The international character of the question was further confirmed by article 1 of the Statute of the High Commissioner's Office (General Assembly resolution 428 (V), annex).

4. The overriding argument for international responsibility was, however, that of human solidarity. When countries were obliged to receive refugees, owing to their geographical position, it was the humanitarian duty of other countries to help them to solve their problems. The High Commissioner had made it clear that many countries of first asylum had given substantial assistance to refugees, but that they were unable to find a satisfactory solution without international assistance. International solidarity therefore made it incumbent on countries which were so placed geographically as to prevent refugees crossing their borders, to help the countries of residence. The High Commissioner was appealing for assistance in implementing a plan for the solution of the problem. If that appeal met with no response, certain countries of first asylum might be obliged, however reluctantly, to reconsider their policies. The Committee, which always had humanitarian considerations at heart, would surely do its utmost to enable the High Commissioner to carry out his plans.

5. Another vital problem calling for rapid action was that of emergency assistance for the most needy cases, the most tragic group among the refugees. The High Commissioner had also appealed on behalf of persons who were difficult to place owing to sickness or advanced age, and the countries which could help would certainly not ignore that appeal.

6. During the war, the Iranian Government had received thousands of refugees and, with the help of its allies and of international agencies, had cared for them until they could be resettled in other countries. When the High Commissioner had visited Iran at the beginning of the year, the Iranian Government had promised him every assistance in solving the problem of the refugees remaining there. A home for aged refugees had been set up with help from the Refugee Emergency Fund and plans had been made to place refugee technicians and doctors in Iran, in order to improve the position of other refugees there.

7. His delegation would support the High Commissioner in all his efforts to find a solution for the problem, both in Iran and in other countries, and would therefore vote for any action which might enable him to carry out his plans.

8. Mrs. HARMAN (Israel) congratulated the High Commissioner on his statement, which bore witness to his energy, his resourcefulness and his devotion to his task. He had brought hope and new dignity where despair had prevailed and self-respect had been lost through hardship, and had approached his mission with the sole object of eliminating human misery and helping the refugees to lead a free and independent life.

9. The High Commissioner had concluded that the swiftest results would be obtained by facilitating integration of the refugees in the areas where they were resident. All the possibilities had been thoroughly investigated and close co-operation was maintained with the voluntary agencies concerned. It was to be presumed that no opportunities for emigration and re-settlement would be neglected, but it seemed obvious that the majority would be most speedily and effectively helped by a practical programme of integration.

10. The first need was to protect the refugees' legal position. The Israel Government had signed and ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (A/Conf.2/108) and had signed the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons (E/Conf.17/5).

11. The subscriptions to the Refugee Emergency Fund had not provided the High Commissioner with the minimum required for the most needy cases and he was also requesting \$12 million by 1958 to enable him to provide a permanent solution. He had submitted a constructive programme for vocational training, housing and other facilities. The sum of seven or eight dollars per refugee per year over a period of five years seemed to be a very modest but necessary supplement, which would stimulate initiative and accelerate practical measures for integration. From the experience of the Israel Government, which had undertaken to integrate some 19,000 refugees previously under the High Commissioner's mandate, the *per capita* expenditure required to ensure stability and minimum conditions for a satisfactory livelihood would inevitably be larger. That commitment and the settlement in the past six years of some 750,000 immigrants, mostly indigent persons and refugees under the terms of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, prevented the Israel Government from making a further financial contribution at that stage.

12. There was an objective justification for the fact that the cost of settling a refugee in his country of residence was greater than the help envisaged in the High Commissioner's proposals, since, in helping such a refugee, the country concerned was not only performing a great humanitarian service but was acquiring a most valuable asset in the shape of a hard-working, self-supporting citizen. Nevertheless, it would not be fair to place the whole burden on the countries of absorption, because the responsibility was international. The Israel delegation would therefore continue to give the High Commissioner's plans its fullest support. It was to be hoped that the Negotiating Committee for Extra-Budgetary Funds would reinforce his appeal for the Refugee Emergency Fund. The fund for permanent solutions would enable Governments, voluntary agencies and individuals to give tangible expression to their acknowledgment of a serious international problem.

13. Her delegation was grateful to the staff of the High Commissioner's Office for their devotion to the task of easing the lot of those who had been buffeted and injured in the interplay of complex world forces.

14. Mrs. TSALDARIS (Greece) underlined the humanitarian aspect of the refugee problem and the urgency of the need to implement the five-year programme proposed by the High Commissioner. She summarized the report and concluded that all aspects of the problem had been clearly set out: the humanitarian aspect, which was of undeniable urgency, the aspect of the execution of a five-year plan with proposals for permanent solutions and the budget estimates and suggestions relating thereto.

15. The High Commissioner had examined in detail the question of financing the programme, and several solutions had been considered and suggested by the Advisory Committee on Refugees, which had concluded that the best method would be for the General Assembly to authorize the Negotiating Committee for Extra-Budgetary Funds to open negotiations with the Governments for contributions to the United Nations Refugee Emergency Fund. That suggestion had been adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 549 (XVIII).

16. During the debate in the Economic and Social Council, some delegations had stated that they were unable to accept such a commitment on behalf of their governments and others that the host countries should be entirely responsible for the refugees on their soil. But note should be taken of the High Commissioner's opinion, expressed in paragraph 227 of his report (A/2648), that none of the countries where there were large numbers of refugees was in a position to take the action necessary for a rapid solution of the problem.

17. Greece was aware of the magnitude of the problem. It was currently giving asylum to about 15,000 refugees; the Government had made a great effort towards giving them assistance to meet their most elementary needs. Some permanent housing had been built by the Government, but in view of the financial situation and the long trials to which the country had been subjected, aggravated by the earthquakes in the Ionian Islands and Thessaly, it could not assume the whole burden of that expenditure alone. Sincere thanks were due to the High Commissioner, who had visited Greece to study the situation and consider possible remedies.

18. She would like to draw the Committee's attention to the six constructive sample projects (A/2648/Add.2). She had noted with special interest the importance given to the moral and educational aspects of the problem. Three projects concerned Romanian refugees of Greek ethnic origin and had been accepted in principle by the Greek Government, which had agreed to exempt them from stamp dues, official fees and the like.

19. In honour of World Children's Day, which was being observed on 4 October, she wished to mention the refugee children's centre in Corfu, which had been established with a donation of \$8,000 from the Ford Foundation and with the co-operation of the International Union for Child Welfare and the Greek Child Welfare Society, which had undertaken the feeding of the children there, all of whom were under school age.

20. The Greek delegation had been deeply appreciative of the fact that the President of the General Assembly had attended the Committee's 545th meeting. It had also listened with satisfaction to the statement by the Secretary-General, who had indicated the importance he would attach to an effort by the United

Nations in the direction of a long-term programme for refugees.

21. She concluded by paying a tribute to the Governments for their contributions and donations, to the generosity of the Ford Foundation and to the valuable collaboration of the organizations she had mentioned.

22. Her delegation wished to support the execution of the High Commissioner's programme.

23. Mr. MONTERO BUSTAMANTE (Uruguay) said that his country had always supported all endeavours to alleviate the lot of refugees and would continue to do so. It had thoroughly considered the financial aspect of the question and would in due course do what it could to assist the High Commissioner. Countries which had remained relatively unharmed by the wars and the succeeding ideological conflicts that had given rise to the refugee problem had an even greater moral duty than others to relieve the refugees' sufferings. It was to be hoped that the Powers with the largest resources would display their customary generosity. The United Nations as a whole was bound to concern itself deeply with a problem that was at once moral, humanitarian and social.

24. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) observed that the existence of refugees was only one symptom of the world's sickness, and the High Commissioner, commendable as his work had been, could not be expected to produce a panacea. He dealt mainly with the European refugees, who had previously been protected by IRO, but his Office might eventually become the basis for a universal organization that would deal with a problem which had become only too familiar in United Nations discussions.

25. The principle of universality should be borne in mind. The expression "the free world" had been used at the 545th meeting; it should not have been. Many parts of the so-called free world were in fact not free, but under colonial administration. Any reference to the many refugees in those territories was always deprecated as an infringement of domestic jurisdiction. But that argument could not be invoked with respect to a humanitarian matter, and certainly not in favour of neglecting the fate of thousands whose only guilt had been to revolt against an alien yoke.

26. The refugees under the jurisdiction of IRO and, subsequently, of the High Commissioner had fled from war or civil war; their problem might eventually be solved. There was, however, a growing category of peacetime refugees who constituted a far more difficult problem. Some were *bona fide* political refugees of the traditional type, opponents of the party in power in their country, who had always claimed the right of asylum, which, particularly in Latin America, had usually been accorded them. Far more of those peacetime refugees, however, might be described as the victims of propaganda. Certain major Powers were doing all they could to bring about the defection of malcontents in countries the policies of whose governments they disliked. Although the problem was not yet an urgent one, a time might come when such malcontents and adventurers might be organized into legions of spies or saboteurs or perhaps merely used as a form of advertisement to encourage fresh defection. There was some doubt whether all such victims of propaganda should be classified as *bona fide* political refugees, and it would be asking too much of the High Commissioner to require him to decide in each case. The voluntary organizations concerned with refugees would find such

decisions even harder, as their activities were not planned and co-ordinated to anything like the same extent as those of the High Commissioner's Office.

27. Another circumstance giving rise to peacetime refugees was the partitioning of countries such as Germany, Korea and Palestine, by armistice agreements and the like. Persons who crossed from one part of the country to another might or might not be *bona fide* political refugees.

28. While those problems might in many cases not be of immediate concern to the High Commissioner, the United Nations should undoubtedly bear them in mind. The Powers concerned might well endeavour gradually to reduce the volume of propaganda likely to bring more refugees into being. He would have more to say on that subject when the Committee discussed freedom of information.

29. In the light of those considerations, he would appreciate an explanation of the way in which decisions of principle were reached by the High Commissioner's Office and of the scope of the expression "permanent solutions". The problem of the IRO refugees might indeed be permanently settled, but he could not see how the expanding problem of the new refugees he had described could be settled permanently.

30. Mr. JOHNSON (United States of America) said that the people of the United States of America were virtually all descendants of immigrants and therefore attentive to refugee problems, and the Government and people of the United States had contributed altogether nearly \$6,000 million for refugee aid.

31. The United States delegation noted with satisfaction that the High Commissioner had continued to co-operate with the organizations listed in chapter I, section 2, of his report (A/2648). It was essential that co-operation between the High Commissioner's Office and the Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration, which had stood the test of moving European refugees from Shanghai, should continue. The United States delegation was happy to note that that committee had assisted in the settlement of 19,711 refugees in 1953 and had made provision for moving another 19,800 in 1954.

32. The High Commissioner's report emphasized the importance of providing legal and political protection for refugees. It was a heavy responsibility, which the High Commissioner had carried out conscientiously. Thanks to his efforts and those of various non-governmental organizations, many refugees had been resettled in new homes. But there was still much to be done. There were still displaced persons victims of the First World War to be aided, as well as the tens of thousands of victims of the Second World War.

33. The United States concurred in the High Commissioner's conviction that it was not enough to provide emergency relief for the most desperate cases. It was essential that permanent solutions should rapidly be found for the other difficult cases, particularly the 88,000 refugees living in camps.

34. The United States delegation endorsed, in principle, the High Commissioner's proposed programme for those refugees.

35. The United States felt that the establishment of two separate programmes and funds might lead to confusion, and therefore proposed that the General Assembly should authorize the High Commissioner to estab-

lish a single combined fund, which would be financed by voluntary contributions from Governments and private sources. The fund would be devoted primarily to the promotion of permanent solutions, but would also include assistance to the most needy cases.

36. The United States felt strongly that United Nations financial assistance should be limited in time. Some problems would doubtless remain and the High Commissioner would continue to provide legal and political protection to refugees, but he should do everything in his power to promote permanent solutions within the next five years. The basic responsibility for refugees would continue to lie with the countries of asylum, and the High Commissioner should obtain their assurance that they would assume full financial responsibility for any refugees still requiring assistance after the five years.

37. Careful consideration should be given to the financing and administration of such a programme. Only sixteen Governments, of which only twelve were Members of the United Nations, and the Holy See had contributed to the Refugee Emergency Fund. Any successful refugee programme had to have a wider range of financial support and be matched by adequate contributions from the countries of asylum. The Assembly should also make provision, if it accepted the

High Commissioner's proposals, for greater governmental participation in the planning and budgeting of the programme. Greater governmental authority could be achieved either by expanding the terms of reference of the High Commissioner's Advisory Committee or by establishing a new executive committee representing the Governments primarily concerned in the financing and administration of the combined programme.

38. If a satisfactory solution were found to those problems, the United States Government would ask Congress for an appropriation covering its contribution to the programme. However, the United States delegation's general support for the programme should not be construed as a commitment to provide funds. The final decision would be influenced by the extent to which other Governments were prepared to make funds available, the extent to which the countries of residence co-operated in the financing and planning of the projects, and the merits of the projects.

39. The United States delegation was anxious that the refugees should find security and the opportunity for a normal life, and that the United Nations should do what it could within the next five years to assist the countries of residence in solving the problem.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.