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**THIRD COMMITTEE, 943rd
MEETING**

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at 3.15 p.m.

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Chairman: Mrs. Georgette CISELET (Belgium).

Organization of work

1. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that when it had completed its consideration of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (agenda item 33) it would take up the question of international encouragement of scientific research into the control of cancerous diseases (agenda item 71). The discussion of the draft International Covenants on Human Rights (agenda item 34) could be expected to start by the end of the week or early the following week. The time limit for the submission of amendments to articles 12 to 17 of the draft Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had been set at 6 p.m. on Friday, 6 November.

AGENDA ITEM 33

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/4104/Rev.1 and Add.1, A/4143, chap. VI, sect. IV)

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

2. Mr. LINDT (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner during the year under review were characterized by three main factors. First, the concentration of efforts and means on clearly defined refugee problems was showing its effect more and more, so that problems could now be viewed with new hope. Secondly, some of the problems could not be finally settled by the Office, for its action could be only of a strictly humanitarian and social character. Thirdly, the World Refugee Year had already had a useful effect, which facilitated the work of the Office of the High Commissioner.

3. At a recent date there had been about 110,000 non-settled refugees in Europe (50,000 fewer than in 1958), of whom 22,000 (18,000 fewer than in 1958) were living in camps in Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece and Italy. The progress achieved was attributable to a broad combination of efforts on the part of Governments, inter-governmental organizations such as the Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), and voluntary agencies.

The refugees had selected voluntary repatriation, immigration or integration, the latter having been facilitated by the developing economy and employment situation in the two countries with the highest numbers of non-settled refugees.

4. The problem of the Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia had been completely solved by the beginning of 1958, although the Yugoslav Government had been left with a deficit of some \$3.6 million spent on housing, transport, care and maintenance for the refugees. In Austria there remained 10,000 Hungarian refugees, or 5,900 fewer than in 1958. Some of the refugees in countries providing asylum had requested repatriation to Hungary, while others still wished to emigrate, particularly to Australia, Canada and the United States of America. He hoped that, on the occasion of the World Refugee Year, Governments would make an extra effort to increase the number of refugees to be admitted under their immigration programmes, which would make it possible for the Hungarian refugee problem to be finally settled.

5. The relief programme for refugees from Algeria in Morocco and Tunisia was financed from a special fund. The international solidarity demonstrated by Governments, by the League of Red Cross Societies and its affiliated Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Lion and Red Sun Societies, and by other non-governmental organizations had made it possible for the Office of the High Commissioner to implement General Assembly resolution 1286 (XIII). There were approximately 180,000 refugees in Morocco and Tunisia who were living, not in camps, but in "gourbis" or in tents. A relief programme of care and maintenance was carried out by the League of Red Cross Societies in close co-operation with the Moroccan and Tunisian Red Crescent Societies. The Office of the High Commissioner was responsible for the co-ordination of activities and to that end had appointed representatives in Morocco and Tunisia. Up to 27 October 1959 approximately \$7.8 million had been contributed from international sources. The Governments of Morocco and Tunisia were making great efforts on behalf of the refugees, particularly in matters of health. He had presented to the Executive Committee a twelve-month operational budget amounting to some \$6 million, of which \$3 million was represented by donations and services and \$3 million by cash contributions. The refugees were mostly in need of food, blankets and clothing.

6. An important development during the year under review had been the dissolution of the United Nations Refugee Fund. From 1955 until 30 June 1959 more than 62,000 refugees had benefited from UNREF aid and 33,000 had been resettled. The total income of UNREF during that period had been more than \$17 million, supplemented by a further \$23 million in supporting contributions from the countries of asylum, or a total in excess of \$40 million for all UNREF projects. In implementation of General Assembly reso-

lution 1166 (XII), it had been decided that as from 1 January 1959 international assistance to refugees would be granted under separate programmes established on an annual basis. For 1960 the Executive Committee had set, on the occasion of the World Refugee Year, a global target of \$12 million, of which the cost of programmes already approved amounted to \$6 million. The main activities for 1959 and 1960 were the Far Eastern programme, the camp clearance programme and the programme for non-settled refugees living outside camps.

7. The Far Eastern programme was a joint operation between the Office of the High Commissioner and ICEM involving the resettlement of between 9,000 and 10,000 refugees. During the first nine months of 1959 some 1,300 had been moved overseas from Hong Kong, leaving approximately 8,500, including a number of older refugees. It was to be hoped that on the occasion of the World Refugee Year the visas and additional funds required by ICEM to move the refugees would be forthcoming so that the Far Eastern programme could be successfully completed.

8. The number of refugees qualifying for the camp clearance programme on 1 July 1959 had been 15,800, not including the 1,300 refugees for whom the fund for special hardship cases had been established. When the programme had started on 1 January 1958 it had been viewed with scepticism. Since then, however, some camps had actually been closed and the counsellors of the voluntary agencies concerned with families living in camps were now able to find concrete solutions for each case. The atmosphere in the camps had changed and the refugees were beginning to hope that one day they would return to a normal life. Every month some of them left the camps and became integrated into the social life of the country of residence. The most serious problem was housing; in some countries, such as Austria, Germany and Greece, they had been provided with low-cost housing and steps were taken to enable them to pay the rent. A new type of housing was being constructed for aged refugees, where they could receive the attention they needed and at the same time preserve their privacy. In order to deal with especially difficult cases the Office of the High Commissioner had secured the services of a mental health adviser, who would study solutions made possible by the development of psychiatry. Some Governments had developed programmes parallel to that of the Office of the High Commissioner. Austria, for instance, was taking steps to settle former refugees who were now naturalized but were still living in camps.

9. The programme for non-settled refugees living outside camps affected some 80,000 persons in Europe and 4,000 in the Near and Middle East. In view of the priority given to the clearance of camps and to the resettlement of refugees of European origin now in the Far East, the means available to finance that programme had been limited. Nevertheless, the programme had benefited 27,000 persons, of whom 20,000 had been firmly settled. The immediate target of the programme had been increased from \$700,000 in 1959 to \$1,550,000 in 1960. Once the two priority programmes had been completed it would be possible to make a more vigorous attack on the problem of non-settled refugees outside camps. The Executive Committee had decided at its second session to examine the problem of international assistance to those refu-

gees during the spring of 1960 (A/4104/Rev.1/Add.1, paras. 118 (b) and 120).

10. With regard to international protection, he drew attention to the principles set forth in paragraphs 18 and 21 of his report (A/4104/Rev.1) and stressed that the Office of the High Commissioner should improve its liaison with Governments and specialize its functions in the field of protection. The budgetary implications of the measures which he proposed to take to give effect to General Assembly resolution 1284 (XIII) were being submitted to the General Assembly in the Secretary-General's report on supplementary estimates for the financial year 1959 (A/4198, part IV). The Office of the High Commissioner endeavoured above all to ensure that the determination of refugee status was not influenced by factors such as the health, age or economic position of the refugees.

11. There had been new ratifications or accessions to various international instruments and it was hoped that on the occasion of the World Refugee Year several countries would accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.^{1/} With regard to the indemnification of refugees persecuted by reason of nationality under the National Socialist régime, the Office was continuing its negotiations with the Government of the German Federal Republic.

12. The Office sought to ensure that refugees should have a free choice among the possible solutions open to them and it sometimes assumed responsibility for the cost of repatriation. In collaboration with the ICEM it endeavoured to promote their resettlement. Some countries, such as Belgium, Norway and Sweden, had agreed to accept handicapped refugees. The World Refugee Year had enabled Governments to increase their efforts for the resettlement of refugees. He outlined the action that was being taken in that field by Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Mexico, the Netherlands and Uruguay, and expressed the hope that some countries would be more willing to accept refugees accompanied by large families and would adopt a more liberal attitude to elderly refugees. The World Refugee Year should also encourage Governments to allow a greater number of refugees to immigrate. Australia had already taken steps in that direction. Other countries should follow its example and remember that the admission of refugees was not merely an act of charity but could contribute appreciably to the growth of the national potential.

13. The special contributions paid, pledged and promised for the World Refugee Year amounted at the moment to nearly \$1 million. In all probability, that sum represented only a fraction of the funds which the Office of the High Commissioner would obtain under the scheme. Fund-raising appeals had been organized by national committees, which had decided in many cases to devote part of the sums collected to assisting refugees who came within the High Commissioner's mandate. With regard to the general financial position of the Office, contributions amounting to \$5.7 million had been paid, pledged or promised during the first ten months of 1959. Of that total approximately \$4 million had been contributed for the current 1959 programme and a little over \$1 million for the relief programme for refugees from Algeria in Morocco.

^{1/}United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, held at Geneva, Switzerland, from 2 to 25 July 1951, Final Act and Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations publication, Sales No.: 1951.IV.4).

and Tunisia. The sum of \$350,000 was required to reach the target of \$4.7 million fixed by the Executive Committee.

14. In resolution 1167 (XII) the General Assembly had authorized him to encourage arrangements for contributions designed to provide assistance to Chinese refugees in Hong Kong. So far he had received only \$10,000. The United Kingdom and the United States Governments, however, had promised contributions totalling \$480,000.

15. The favourable effects of the World Refugee Year were felt in all sections of the Office's activities: protection, voluntary repatriation, integration and emigration. It had created an atmosphere which made possible the realization of projects which otherwise would have been delayed for years.

GENERAL DEBATE

16. Mrs. MANTZOULINOS (Greece) said that in 1958 the refugee situation had improved notably. She paid a tribute to the High Commissioner and his Executive Committee for their efforts. Her delegation had been particularly glad to hear that the prize awarded by the American Association for the United Nations had gone to Mr. Lindt in 1959 and she congratulated him on that well-deserved honour.

17. Since the First World War her country had been constantly sheltering and helping both Greek and foreign refugees; such assistance was a heavy burden for a country undergoing reconstruction and development. The Greek Government was trying to work out a comprehensive solution to the problem and was co-operation in the execution of the High Commissioner's programmes. Since 1956, the Ministry of Social Welfare had been the responsible national body; it worked in close co-operation with the High Commissioner's representative in Greece and with the voluntary organizations concerned.

18. In Greece there were 15,718 refugees—6,690 Greeks and 9,028 foreigners—who came under the High Commissioner's mandate. Of that total—5,590 of whom should be excluded as being candidates for repatriation or emigration or as being assisted by other bodies—it was expected that 8,470 would be resettled in towns and 1,328 in rural areas while 530 refugees would benefit from projects for difficult cases. By the end of 1959, 1,746 persons would be occupying new houses built with the help of the High Commissioner's Office. Many of them were receiving vocational training and were offered employment facilities. In paragraph 12 of annex II to his report (A/4104/Rev.1), the High Commissioner had drawn attention to projects for the establishment of refugees in agriculture. Refugees in Greece had also been assisted through the projects for difficult cases and various homes had been constructed. Generally speaking, the implementation of the various projects had considerably improved the refugee situation. Many buildings had been constructed and, had it not been for the influx of new refugees since 1957, all the camps could have been evacuated by the end of 1959.

19. According to a very conservative estimate, new refugees had arrived in Greece at the rate of 150 families per year, of which some 100 to 120 might fall within the mandate of the High Commissioner. Assistance had already been given to them and the High Commissioner's programme for 1960 envisaged

the settlement of thirty-eight new refugee families and vocational training for fifteen young refugees.

20. The Greek Government gave high priority to the solution of the refugee problem and, in spite of the housing crisis and the efforts needed for the economic and social development of the country, it was doing everything in its power to help them. Nevertheless, while 3,344 of the 10,320 refugees under the High Commissioner's mandate had been resettled or were in process of being resettled, 6,976 others still needed help. Her delegation therefore hoped that the High Commissioner's programmes could be intensified, particularly those which provided permanent solutions. The resettlement of all refugees was part of Greece's four-year plan of economic development.

21. For the World Refugee Year, a Greek national committee had been set up, and also an executive committee presided over by Mrs. Tsaldaris. She thanked all countries participating in the World Refugee Year and particularly those which on that occasion had decided to open their doors to a number of refugees from Europe or Asia. She was particularly grateful to France for having agreed to accept for permanent settlement 110 refugees who had been living in Greek camps.

22. She was glad to announce that on 2 September 1959 Greece had ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

23. Mr. BEAUFORT (Netherlands) emphasized the importance of the work accomplished by the High Commissioner's Office since 1951, in spite of many financial and other difficulties. Much remained to be done, however, and each country was in duty bound to help the High Commissioner to the full extent of its power. It was indeed inadmissible that, fourteen years after the Second World War, there were still "refugees".

24. He was glad that the camp clearance programme had been given priority in accordance with the wishes of the Third Committee. Nevertheless, deplorable as was a prolonged stay in camps, the plight of many refugees living outside camps was even worse. In the addendum to his report (A/4104/Rev.1/Add.1, para. 93), the High Commissioner spoke of "the estimated 90,000 refugees living outside camps, who would still be non-settled on 1 January 1960". Although the immediate target of the High Commissioner's programme had been increased from \$700,000 in 1959 to \$1,550,000 in 1960, that larger total could still cover only a very small part of the needs of those refugees. He should therefore be allowed to broaden the field of his activities so that all refugees, whether they lived in camps or not, could benefit equally from his projects. Such was undoubtedly the desire of the High Commissioner but unfortunately the funds available to him were not sufficient. The ICEM, too, was in serious financial difficulties; he need only refer to the statements made by its Deputy Director, Mr. Epinat (see A/4104/Rev.1/Add.1, para. 66). He hoped that the World Refugee Year would help to swell the coffers both of the High Commissioner's Office and of ICEM. He supported the request Mr. Epinat had made to the participating countries (A/4104/Rev.1/Add.1, para. 69).

25. It was encouraging to see that a large number of countries had decided to participate in the World Refugee Year, many of them with a well-considered campaign. His own country, for its part, had estab-

lished a national committee, the immediate purpose of which was to raise funds. Each country adopted the methods best suited to its own circumstances; and the establishment of a national committee was unnecessary in some countries, such as Sweden, where the collection of funds for refugees had already been organized with striking success by private organizations. Countries unable to make a cash contribution could contribute in kind.

26. It had been decided quite rightly that, unless donors earmarked their gifts for some specific purpose, the funds collected should be used for the benefit of all refugees without distinction, whether they came within the competence of the United Nations or not. But no specific World Refugee Year fund had been created. His delegation, which hoped to sponsor, with others, a draft resolution concerning the report of the High Commissioner as a whole, wondered whether the General Assembly could not authorize the High Commissioner to use his good offices in the transmission of contributions intended for refugees who did not come within the competence of the United Nations. There was already a precedent in General Assembly resolution 1167 (XII) for taking such a course, which would make it possible to provide assistance for a larger number of refugees, without creating any new organs.

27. Mr. REVOL (France) said that his country, which was by tradition a country of asylum and had already accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees from all parts of the world, was making an extensive contribution of a very special kind to the activities which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was conducting on an international scale.

28. The international protection of refugees was an essential if unspectacular task, and called for much understanding and occasionally considerable sacrifice on the part of the Governments and peoples concerned. It had a solid legal foundation, and had a bearing upon the status of refugees both internationally and in individual countries. Of the basic instruments listed in annex I to the High Commissioner's report, his country had long since ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and was about to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.^{2/} His Government had also revised (E/CN.4/L.454/Rev.1) the text of its draft Declaration on the Right of Asylum, so as to take the greatest account of the valuable suggestions made by a number of countries. The instruments he had mentioned were general in character, and should be supplemented by other international agreements on more specific matters and by arrangements, made at the national level, to enable refugees to enjoy the same rights as those possessed by nationals of their country of asylum. The French delegation regretted that difficulties had been encountered at the Conference on the Elimination or Reduction of Future Statelessness, and hoped that they would not prove insurmountable in the long run. In a brief review of the work done in Europe to assist refugees, he drew particular attention to the interim agreements of the Council of Europe on social security,^{3/} and to Recommendation No. 196 of the Organisation for European

Economic Co-operation (OEEC),^{4/} which was designed to ensure for refugees such mobility as would enable them to adapt themselves, without need for anxiety, to conditions of economic instability.

29. His country was making special efforts to provide legal protection for refugees. In France the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees were strictly applied, and were always being supplemented by special measures, such as those mentioned in paragraphs 31 and 35 of annex I to the High Commissioner's report.

30. Turning to the UNREF programme for permanent solutions, he congratulated the High Commissioner on the results which he had achieved with the relatively small resources at his disposal. The French delegation also wished to pay a tribute to the excellent, if little-publicized, work done by the ICEM in assisting emigration. There was no doubt that, with some flexibility in immigration quotas, emigration was one of the most effective ways of solving the refugee problem. He was glad to note that some countries had taken special steps to assist handicapped refugees. His own country was making some contribution in that respect and, within the framework of the World Refugee Year, was admitting several hundred refugees from Greece and China with a view to resettling them on French territory. It had also offered hospitality to Hungarian refugees, and would, generally speaking, make every effort to resettle all refugees who chose France as their country of asylum.

31. Without underestimating the importance of resettling the refugees who lived in camps, or the seriousness of the problem of refugees in the Far East, his delegation would draw attention once again to the 100,000 non-settled refugees, most of them "difficult cases", living outside camps. It was particularly glad to note that, thanks to the World Refugee Year, funds available to the High Commissioner for solving that problem would be more extensive than in the past. It had also noted with satisfaction that the programme for non-settled refugees outside camps had been placed on the list of priorities for 1960, and that the planning target of the programme had been set appreciably higher.

32. It was his country's intention to contribute as generously as possible to the World Refugee Year. In June 1959 a French national committee had been established in Paris under the chairmanship of Mr. Auriol, and an extensive publicity campaign was being conducted to draw the public's attention to the fact that the refugee problem was a world problem. Plans had been made for a 500 million franc lottery, a national refugee day for the raising of funds, and a special issue of surcharged postage stamps. Local authorities had been invited to participate in the general campaign. With the funds thus collected his Government hoped to resettle on French territory, and at the expense of France, 110 refugees evacuated from a camp in Greece and 250 difficult cases from China. It also intended to seek permanent solutions for 35,000 refugees living, in France, outside camps.

33. Lady PETRIE (United Kingdom) observed that the High Commissioner for Refugees had recorded steady,

^{2/}United Nations Conference on the Status of Stateless Persons, Final Act and Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (United Nations publication, Sales No.: 1956.XIV.1).

^{3/}Council of Europe, *European Treaty Series*, Nos. 12 and 13 and annexes.

^{4/}Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, Recommendation of the Council concerning regulations and administrative practices relating to the movement and employment of refugees, Paris, 15 November 1958, resolution C(58)196(Final), scale 1.

if not dramatic, progress during the past year. She hoped that, when the UNREF programme came to an end in December 1960, all refugees now living in camps would have been provided with better accommodation outside camps. Further, the rehousing of refugees was clearly not enough in itself; they should also be helped to integrate themselves into a new community, and responsibility for providing that help rested primarily upon the Government of the host country. Her Majesty's Government continued to attach the greatest importance to the High Commissioner's programme for permanent solutions and, subject to parliamentary approval, intended to contribute £100,000 to that programme in 1960. Her delegation was glad to note that five new countries had contributed to the programme in 1959, and hoped that in the final stages support would be forthcoming from all countries, particularly those which had recently ceased to contribute, so that all the objectives could be attained before the programme came to an end.

34. It was encouraging to see that more than sixty countries had agreed to participate in the World Refugee Year. In the United Kingdom, the campaign organized under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen was already in full swing. The Government was contributing £200,000, and had agreed to admit more than 200 handicapped refugees, including ten from the Far East, the remainder coming from Austria, Germany and Italy, for all of whom the facilities of the National Health Service would be available. The World Refugee Year committee in the United Kingdom had already collected more than £300,000, and hoped to

reach its target of £1.1 million. Voluntary organizations expected to collect the same amount, if not more. She believed that the results achieved in her own country by those campaigning for refugees, and particularly by the non-governmental organizations, would be equalled in other countries, and she expressed gratitude to the Secretary-General's Special Representative for his efforts to that end; there were grounds for hoping that, thanks to the World Refugee Year, there would be a really significant improvement in the refugees' position before the General Assembly's next session.

35. In reply to a question asked by Mrs. LORD (United States of America), Mr. LINDT (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he attached the greatest importance to the indemnification of refugees of certain categories. That question had already been solved for the nationals of countries with which the Federal Republic of Germany had concluded bilateral agreements. For the others, his Office continued to be in close touch with the Federal Government, and had some hope of finding a satisfactory solution.

36. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the list of speakers in the general debate should be closed at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 3 November, and that the time limit for submitting draft resolutions on the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should be 4 p.m. on the same day.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.