

GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

SIXTH SESSION

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Chairman : Mrs. Ana FIGUEROA (Chile).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Dehousse (Belgium), Vice-Chairman, presided.

Refugees and stateless persons (*continued*)

[Item 30]\*

Problems of assistance to refugees: reports of the International Refugee Organization and of the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/1884 (chapter VI), A/1948, A/2011, A/C.3/563) (*continued*)

[Item 31]\*

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. PAVLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for an estimate of the financial implications of his activities, in accordance with rules 152 and 153 of the rules of procedure. In particular, he wished to know how much money had been spent in 1951 and what the estimates of expenses were for 1952.

2. In connexion with paragraph 16 of the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (General Assembly resolution 428 (V), annex), he asked what governments had agreed to receive representatives serving in more than one country and with what governments negotiations were being conducted. The Third Committee could not take any decisions without a full knowledge of the facts.

3. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) replied that the budget he had submitted for 1952 for the administrative expenses of his Office amounted to \$US803,763. In 1951, he had spent the \$US300,000 allocated to him; he had regarded that allocation as provisional, since the International Refugee Organization was still operating in 1951 and there had been no need to provide for administrative expenses of branch offices for the

whole year. Six branch offices had been set up in the latter half of 1951, but that number was inadequate and he was therefore asking for a larger grant for 1952.

4. In reply to the USSR representative's question concerning representatives serving several countries, he stated that the approval of all the countries concerned had to be obtained. For example, Greece had expressed the wish to receive a representative and, since that representative would also cover the countries of the Near East, the governments of those countries would have to be consulted. The same applied to the Benelux countries, which would be served by a representative stationed in Belgium.

5. Mr. HARRY (Australia) asked the High Commissioner to specify the particularly needy groups which were to receive direct assistance from the proposed fund of \$US3 million and to describe the machinery for the administration of such a fund.

6. Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) asked, as a supplementary question, what would be the sources of the proposed fund.

7. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) stated that it was difficult to give exact figures to show how the estimate had been arrived at. In 1951, IRO had given \$US600,000 in direct contributions and the estimated support of voluntary agencies through IRO had amounted to \$US800,000, without counting the needs of refugees in Germany, Austria and Italy, where the problem was still extremely acute. It had been estimated that \$US1 million was the minimum sum needed for limited activities in those countries. Furthermore, \$US500,000 was needed for a special contingency fund for the "new refugees", who had no means of subsistence unless they qualified for resettlement.

8. He thought that \$US3 million was a moderate estimate and pointed out that it would be used only for the most destitute groups. That sum would be administered by the voluntary agencies, which were so acti-

\* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

vely interested in the refugee problem. They might require small sums to cover their administrative expenses, but that could be managed in order to avoid recruiting a numerous staff for the High Commissioner's Office.

9. He hoped to have the authority of the General Assembly to make the necessary appeals and was confident that he would able to raise the necessary money from governments and private organizations.

10. Miss SUDIRDJO (Indonesia) asked where the eleven branch offices would be established and to what extent they were needed.

11. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) stated that an office had been set up in Washington, in view of the facts that the United States of America played such an important part in the solution of refugee problems and that so many voluntary agencies had their headquarters in that country. Separate branch offices had also been opened at Bonn for Germany and in Austria ; that measure was warranted by the high number of refugees in both countries. As already stated, an office was to be established at Brussels to serve the Benelux countries, and the government of Greece had expressed the wish to have a representative at Athens, who would also be accredited to Near Eastern countries.

12. It was hoped that an office would be set up in London which would also cover the Commonwealth countries, and that an agreement would be reached with the French Government concerning the establishment of an office in Paris. Negotiations were in progress with the Italian Government on the matter. It was proposed to have two branch offices in Latin America, where several hundred thousand refugees had been sent ; and it was hoped that a Far Eastern office could be opened at Bangkok, where existing United Nations accommodation would make it possible to operate the office at low cost.

13. Mr. VALENZUELA (Chile) wished to be certain that the High Commissioner's branch offices would function only on a short-term basis and that there would be no danger that permanent minorities would be created, unassimilated in the communities in which they lived. In Chile all immigrants, whether refugees or not, came under the same laws as Chilean citizens and were rapidly merged in the population. They were then free to enter and leave the country at will. The fear that a permanent branch office might tend to establish a minority subject to a separate jurisdiction and differing from the community in composition was reinforced by the statement with regard to the lack of economic and social rights accorded to displaced persons and refugees in Germany (A/2011). It would be important to know, by way of example, what economic and social rights, such as the right to work, were denied to refugees in Germany who were not German citizens.

14. Mrs. ROOSEVELT (United States of America) wondered whether Washington was in fact a better site for a branch office than New York City, where the staff would be able to keep in closer contact with the United Nations and the major international voluntary organizations.

15. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the Chilean representative's questions enabled him to make it quite clear that the branch offices, under the High Commissioner's Statute, could not and would not do anything more than assist governments in solving their refugee problems ; their initiative should be limited to drawing attention to refugee problems in the areas with which they were concerned. No attempt would or could be made to create minorities. Experience had shown that, although progress had been made in many areas, particularly in Latin America, great difficulties remained. It was the task of the regional field offices to discuss those difficulties with the governments concerned and assist in their solution.

16. With regard to the point raised about the refugees in Germany, the Federal Government of Germany preferred to call the German refugees "expellees" ; some eight million persons from German ethnic minorities in other countries had returned to Germany during or after the Second World War. The million and a half refugees from the Eastern Zone comprised a different group. The Statute of the High Commissioner's Office made it clear that his Office was not concerned with the expellees, as they had in general the rights and privileges of citizens of the country in which they were residing. On the other hand, as he had already pointed out to the Economic and Social Council<sup>1</sup>, the problems of the non-German refugees with whom he was concerned could not be solved except in connexion with the related problems raised by the situation of the expellees.

17. Replying to the question raised by the representative of the United States, the High Commissioner said that Washington, rather than New York City, had been chosen as the site of the branch office in the United States of America mainly because the small staff of three had readier access there to the competent government authorities. Should New York eventually prove more convenient, the office could easily be moved.

18. In reply to Mr. DELHAYE (Belgium), Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he was being extremely careful to avoid waste and overlapping. The difficulties involved might be illustrated by the case of the farmers who were lodged in former schoolhouse buildings in Vienna. Owing to the trend away from the land and into the towns in Austria, land was certainly available for their resettlement on farms. He had found that there was a small private agency called *Heimat-Oesterreich* concerned with granting credits to individual refugee farmers, but it had very little money available. An investigation had been started to review the feasibility of setting up in Austria something on the scale of the German Expellee Bank in Germany. If prospects were favourable, the recommendation would be passed on to the appropriate authorities, who could take the necessary action. His own Office did not operate such programmes, but merely suggested them. The Expellee Bank in Germany unfortunately could grant credits only to individuals ; and its funds could not meet the

<sup>1</sup> See document E/AC.7/SR.209.

needs of more than a few of the non-German refugees. The question had arisen whether its terms of reference should not be enlarged, as there were groups which were anxious to work the land if only the requisite machinery could be obtained. Psychologically, it was of the utmost importance to the refugees to be employed in steady work rather than to continue subsisting on money grants.

19. It was to be hoped that such examples made it plain that the High Commissioner's Office was acting purely as a co-ordinating agency in the field of economic rehabilitation and was not engaged in launching programmes of its own.

20. Mr. FRIIS (Denmark) asked whether the representative of IRO had any supplementary information to communicate on developments after the adoption by the General Council of its resolution dated 27 October 1951 (A/1948).

21. Mr. PONSOT (International Refugee Organization) undertook to communicate at a subsequent meeting such information as he could obtain from his headquarters at Geneva.

22. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the list of speakers should be closed at the afternoon meeting on 3 January 1952 and that draft resolutions should be submitted before 12 noon on that date.

23. Mr. PAVLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) felt that more time would be required to study the documentation submitted and the numerous points which the High Commissioner had covered or had

failed to cover. In particular, much more light was needed on the subject of the sum of \$US3 million which the High Commissioner appeared to be requesting. The activities of the High Commissioner's Office, it had emerged, warranted far closer scrutiny than had at first appeared likely. The time limit for the submission of draft resolutions should therefore be the evening of 4 January 1952.

24. Mr. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), replying to the USSR representative, pointed out that the sum of \$US3 million was required for the assistance fund, which was to be collected from voluntary contributions; it therefore in no way affected the United Nations budget, and the United Nations was asked only to approve the launching of an appeal for funds.

25. The CHAIRMAN regretted that if, as the USSR representative suggested, delegations were given until Friday evening, to submit draft resolutions, the Committee's work would be unduly delayed. It was generally agreed that the refugee question should be dealt with by the end of the current week, and discussion of the draft covenant on human rights then resumed.

26. He proposed that the time limit for submission of draft resolutions should be 10 a.m. on Friday, 4 January, and that the list of speakers in the debate on the refugee question should be closed at the end of the afternoon meeting on Thursday, 3 January.

*It was so agreed.*

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.