



Friday, 4 January 1952, at 10.30 a.m.

Palais de Chaillot, Paris

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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, A/C.3/L.200, A/C.3/L.201) (*continued*)

[Item 31]*

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. BEAUFORT (Netherlands) said that none could be insensible to the claims of refugees on the world's charity and assistance. The United Nations had not shrunk from its responsibilities towards the refugees, and the International Refugee Organization had done splendid work, involving the resettling of more than a million human beings.

2. However, at the time when IRO was closing down, hundreds of thousands of refugees were still urgently requiring assistance, and their numbers were being steadily swelled by a continuous influx of new refugees.

3. The task of the General Assembly was to discuss ways and means by which the conditions of all refugees could be alleviated. More particularly, it had to decide on the proposals and suggestions put forward by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Those proposals contemplated, broadly speaking, the establishment of further branch offices of the High Commissioner's Office in a number of countries; they also invol-

ved a request for authorization to raise funds for assistance in the most needy cases.

4. With regard to the proposal to establish branch offices, he deprecated the fear which a number of representatives appeared to entertain that the proliferation of branch offices would encourage the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to expand for the sake of expansion and to become an unwieldy bureaucratic machine. As Dr. Nansen's experience under the League of Nations had shown, a single headquarters was not enough to do the work of assistance and protection properly; local organizations were required which could work in close touch with governments and with the persons for whom the assistance was intended. Therefore, while supporting the High Commissioner's request for the establishment of branch offices, his delegation would prefer to leave open the question of their exact number and location. The Netherlands Government confidently believed that the United Nations High Commissioner could be relied upon not to go beyond the limits of what was absolutely necessary in the provision of offices and staff.

5. With regard to the question of assistance to refugees and the raising of funds for that purpose, the High Commissioner had rightly pointed out that direct assistance alone was no solution, but that migration also was indispensable. Even migration did not provide the whole answer, since receiving countries were often unable to accept refugees indiscriminately and in such cases the final solution could be found only in one form or another of local assimilation. In that field also the High Commissioner could perform a very useful and important function. Still, the question of immediate financial assistance remained of fundamental importance, and the Netherlands delegation fully endorsed and supported the High Commissioner's request that he should be authorized to make appeals for voluntary contribution. The appeals could properly be addressed

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

to private organizations or government agencies or to both. It should be pointed out that the mere fact of the General Assembly's authorizing the High Commissioner to appeal for funds would not place governments under any kind of obligation to make contributions. Furthermore, such authorization would not create a precedent, for there was the earlier example of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

6. The Third Committee had acted rightly in interrupting its work on the draft international covenant on human rights to turn to the problem of refugees. It should never be forgotten that, however important the legal protection of human rights was, the legal protection of human beings and the alleviation of their sufferings was of still greater importance.

7. Mr. KUSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) considered that the plight of refugees was being perpetuated and legalized by IRO and the High Commissioner's Office in order to provide cheap labour and cannon-fodder to further the imperialist aims of certain States through compulsory resettlement. By the complete disregard of the question of repatriation, which was laid down as a primary aim in the resolution on refugees adopted by the General Assembly at the first and second sessions (resolutions 8 (I), 62 (I) and 136 (II)), the provisions of those resolutions, of repatriation agreements concluded with the Soviet Union and of the agreement reached by the Council of Foreign Ministers in 1947 had been violated. Contrary to those provisions, visits of Soviet repatriation missions and Soviet literature and broadcasts were forbidden in refugee camps in Western Europe, whereas propaganda against repatriation to the Soviet Union and the peoples' democracies was being conducted arbitrarily and unscrupulously.

8. It was alleged that the displaced persons concerned did not wish to return to their countries; that allegation even extended to Soviet children in Western European camps. A very small proportion of the children listed by USSR repatriation missions had been returned to their homes by occupation authorities, and the remainder were being kept in extremely bad conditions, with inadequate diets and insufficient medical care. Moreover, those children were being educated without any knowledge of their own country and language.

9. The USSR, on the contrary, had loyally carried out its obligations under the General Assembly resolutions and the other agreements by repatriating tens of thousands of nationals of other countries after the Second World War. No nationals of the Allied countries remained in the territory of the Soviet Union.

10. The High Commissioner's report (A/2011) showed him to be a successor to IRO in following the policies of the imperialist countries calculated to perpetuate the dependent position of refugees. That purpose was being achieved by sabotaging repatriation: in the three and a half years of its existence, IRO had repatriated only 71,695 displaced persons, but had resettled 1,021,043. It was claimed that those persons had themselves opted for resettlement, but first-hand reports gave reason to doubt the accuracy of that claim.

11. He quoted examples of the ill-treatment of displaced persons who wished to be repatriated from camps

in the British and French Zones of Germany and Austria and of pressure brought to bear on displaced persons to force them to join French military units fighting in Indo-China and Korea. In particular, he asserted that the French representative had given no satisfactory reply concerning the whereabouts of Mr. Zaitzev, a Soviet citizen who had been wounded in Indo-China and had requested repatriation.

12. It had been freely admitted by a former Director-General of IRO that, broadly speaking, only refugees who were fit for work could be resettled. The remainder, consisting of the aged and the sick and children, would therefore constitute the needy groups for which the United Nations High Commissioner would become responsible; since the policy of repatriation had been abandoned, their plight was bound to continue indefinitely.

13. There was ample evidence suggesting that refugees who were able to work and had therefore been resettled were being employed by the receiving countries as cheap labour particularly in the armaments industries. Soviet citizens who had worked as immigrants in the United States of America, Brazil, the United Kingdom and Canada and who had managed to return to the USSR had reported bad treatment and inferior living conditions, low wages and strong discouragement of repatriation.

14. Another task which the imperialist countries had imposed on IRO and on the High Commissioner's Office was the recruitment of spies and diversionists and the training of military units among the refugees to further their own aggressive intentions against the Soviet Union. That was further proved by the passage of the Mutual Security Act in the United States of America.

15. The Byelorussian delegation therefore considered that the High Commissioner's request (373rd meeting) for support for his budget and for authorization to appeal for a three million dollar fund conflicted with the purposes of the Charter, since it was in no way connected with the primary task of repatriation laid down in the original General Assembly resolutions on refugees. If the problem of repatriation were dealt with satisfactorily, the whole refugee problem would be disposed of.

16. He therefore called upon the Committee to vote for his delegation's draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201), which recommended the return of displaced persons and refugees to their countries of origin.

17. Mr. HARRY (Australia) denied the allegations of the Byelorussian representative. Australia had not participated in any scheme to resettle displaced persons against their will; the 180,000 refugees to whom Australia had given a new home had come of their own free will and had freely accepted the conditions. Immigrants were members of unions and had exactly the same wages and other conditions of employment as other workers.

18. The High Commissioner's report might have gone even further into detail in order to emphasize his early achievements. The Australian Government welcomed the drafting of the Convention relating to the

Status of Refugees¹ and was considering signing it, subject to certain reservations stated earlier by the Australian representative in the Conference of Plenipotentiaries. The Rockefeller Foundation's survey² of the problems of refugees coming within the High Commissioner's competence would be very useful.

19. In making policy decisions affecting the main problems facing the High Commissioner, the Third Committee should remember that the refugee question could not be considered apart from its underlying causes: international instability, and intolerance within national frontiers. The General Assembly could not act directly to remove those causes; it could merely persevere in its efforts to promote respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms and the maintenance of international peace and security. The relative priority of basic security and the alleviation of distress could never be easily decided; the two matters had to be dealt with concurrently. Similarly, the problem of the immigration of refugees could only be dealt with as part of the general migration problem, and that of their economic assimilation only as part of the general problem of the economic development of the under-developed countries.

20. The High Commissioner's proposal to raise funds, in co-operation with the voluntary organizations concerned, for giving emergency aid to the most needy groups might be acceptable, provided that the High Commissioner gave detailed figures and information regarding the types of cases involved. The voluntary organizations concerned had acquired much experience

¹ See United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons: *Final Act and Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (Palais des Nations, Geneva, 1951).

² See document A/2011, para. 11.

in collecting funds; their endeavours would doubtless also be intensified. Agreement by the Australian delegation to the launching of such an appeal should not, of course, be regarded as a pledge to contribute to the proposed fund.

21. The High Commissioner's proposals concerning the economic assimilation of refugees and displaced persons by means of economic development plans suggested to the governments concerned were perhaps the most interesting. It would be for governments to work out their own programmes but the High Commissioner might be able to provide a stimulus in some cases.

22. Caution should be exercised in regarding resettlement through immigration as a solution. The receiving country's capacity to absorb immigrants — including refugees and displaced persons — was not merely a technical problem of selection and transport, but depended primarily on the country's capacity for capital expansion. Australia had only been able to absorb thousands of immigrants because of its post-war economic development. Immigrants could eventually contribute to the country's productive capacity, but initially heavy capital commitment was involved. Such factors as the shortage of family housing limited the scope of plans for the settlement of immigrants. There had been no discrimination against refugees, as distinguished from other categories of immigrants, but countries must be free to apply their own tests to prospective immigrants in the light of the country's economic situation. It was therefore impossible to ensure that refugees benefited from migration projects.

23. The Australian delegation might feel it necessary to submit an amendment to paragraph 3 of the operative part of the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.200).

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.