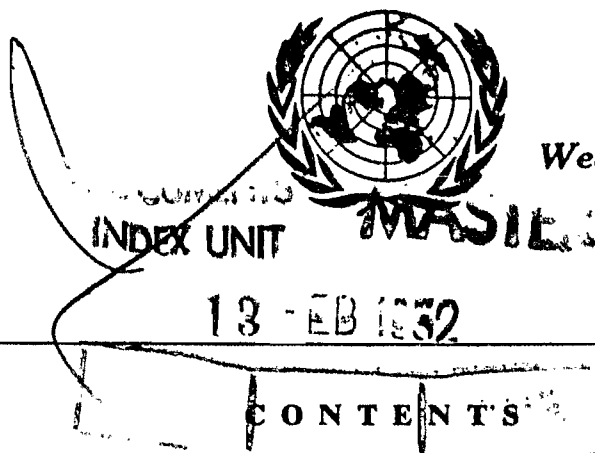


Wednesday, 9 January 1952, at 10.30 a.m.

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

[Item 31]*

GENERAL DEBATE (*concluded*)

1. The CHAIRMAN called upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to make his statement.

2. M. VAN HEUVEN GOEDHART (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked the many delegations which had paid a tribute to his work and that of his Office; he hoped, in the course of his statement, to refute the criticisms made by the USSR delegation (374th, 377th and 379th meetings).

3. The refugee problem was still, unfortunately, not a static but a dynamic one, and it could not be solved finally until world peace was established. The eighteen governments which had financed the work of the International Refugee Organization were no longer able to do so, and IRO was closing down; but many refugees remained and new refugees were joining their number. It was in order to help the most needy in both those groups that he was seeking to establish an emergency fund.

4. Of the three possible methods for solving refugee problems—repatriation, resettlement and assimilation

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

—the emphasis had been on the first during the UNRRA period, on resettlement during the IRO period, and at the current stage it would have to be on assimilation, although he would never neglect the other two.

5. He was fully aware that voluntary repatriation was in fact the most desirable solution, implying as it did that the refugees would no longer have cause to fear persecution in their own countries. He would never place obstacles in the way of refugees desiring repatriation, nor had information on countries to which they were intending to migrate been withheld from them. But the High Commissioner's Office had of course no mandate to carry on repatriation operations. If the refugee problem was still a living one, it was due to the world situation as a whole.

6. The representative of France had asked (375th meeting) for a definition of the role and the task of the High Commissioner's Office. Mr. van Heuven Goedhart stressed, first, that his Office was not a government of refugees, it was not an organization with jurisdiction of its own, and it was not a promoter of minorities. On the contrary, it existed in order to be of service to refugees and governments—not, as the Soviet representative had suggested, to one government, but to all governments alike. It had never been subjected to pressure from any governments. It took instructions only from the United Nations General Assembly and Economic and Social Council. International protection of refugees was complementary to national protection; it could never be a substitute for it. The function of his Office was essentially an indirect one. It would only undertake direct functions in the field of the activities entrusted to it at the request of the governments concerned. He could best define the functions of his Office by saying that they were to encourage, to assist, to promote, to co-ordinate and to co-operate. His Office would co-ordinate the work of the voluntary agencies and promote and supervise the implementation of international conventions and agreements designed to improve the status of refugees.

7. He stated that amongst other things his Office would be called upon to deal with problems that would remain after the closure of IRO which, contrary to the assertions of the Soviet Union delegation, and despite a small percentage of failures inevitable in any venture of that magnitude, had a very praiseworthy record due in no small measure to the ability of its two directors-general. The USSR delegation might persist in asserting that the refugee problem was being kept alive artificially for political motives; but the fact was that IRO, whilst adhering to the legitimate principle that every man had the right to live in his own country, had, on a purely humanitarian basis, come to the aid of those who, rather than live under certain political régimes, freely chose to leave their country of origin, and had in fact found new homes for over a million refugees. He paid a particular tribute to the work which IRO had done for the institutional cases. That work was in no small measure due to the insistence of Mr. Rochefort, representative of France in the councils of IRO.

8. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stressed the great part played by governments, both of Member States and non-member States, in helping refugees. Switzerland had done great work; so had Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, despite serious refugee problems of their own, and Italy, with its difficulties of over-population and unemployment. He would make particular mention of Turkey, which was faced with the problem of settling the 250,000 Bulgarians of Turkish origin recently expelled from Bulgaria. In reply to a point made by the representative of France, he said he fully recognized the different conditions of assimilation of refugees in various countries, and regretted only that in view of the limited scope of his report it had been impossible to go into all the nuances which might be desirable.

9. In view of the diversity and the continuing nature of the refugee problem a group of investigators under Mr. Jacques Vernant of the French *Centre d'Etudes de politique étrangère* had been appointed to make a survey of the situation, independently of the High Commissioner's Office.¹ It should be stressed first, that the results of that survey were provisional; and secondly that, though for practical reasons that survey had been distributed through the medium of the United Nations, all printing costs had been covered by the Rockefeller Foundation.

10. The High Commissioner's Office must, in order to come to the aid of those refugees who still remained and who were constantly being joined by fresh groups, possess a definite programme, and it must be efficiently organized. For that purpose branch offices had to be set up in various parts of the world. To explain his insistence on that matter before the Third Committee he would point out that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had, in its report (A/1853, para. 299), thrown doubt on the matter, recommending that a far more conservative policy should be pursued, and that the number and scale of such offices should be reduced. He recalled

that the Chairman of the Fifth Committee had stated² that it was difficult for the Fifth Committee to consider the budget of his Office without the decisions of the Third Committee.

11. It was the High Commissioner's considered opinion that the branch offices he was proposing to set up were vital to the work of his Office. The international protection of refugees was a task which could not be carried out entirely by correspondence from headquarters. The staffs of branch offices would of course be cut to the minimum compatible with efficiency, and wherever possible his policy in the staffing of these offices would be flexible. He expressed the hope that negotiations to establish a branch office in France, a country with a long tradition of hospitality to refugees, would soon be possible.

12. In connexion with the proposal that he should be authorized to appeal for funds to assist needy groups of refugees, he thought it would be useful to put the whole problem in its proper context.

13. The International Refugee Organization had been responsible under its constitution (General Assembly resolution 62 (I), annex) not only for the resettlement and protection of refugees but also for their care and maintenance. In 1940, IRO had set the time limit for the ending of care and maintenance as 1 July 1950. At that date, theoretically at least, that responsibility had been handed over to the governments in whose territory the refugees were situated. To carry out that plan, the Director-General of IRO had made a series of agreements with the governments of member States by which they accepted the responsibility in return for the reimbursement of a portion of the contribution which they had made for the final year of operations.

14. In non-member countries in Europe the arrangements had been somewhat different. In Germany and Austria, the occupation authorities had changed the policy whereby contributions to the care and maintenance of refugees had been a charge on the occupation budget; after 1 July 1950 the care of those refugees who had been in the countries at that date had become a direct charge accepted by the governments concerned.

15. In non-member countries outside Europe, IRO had made the best possible local arrangements through its branch offices; sometimes through refugee service committees established under the auspices of the United Nations and sometimes directly, small sums had been given to provide terminal grants for a period of approximately six months for the refugees who were in dire need.

16. Although IRO had theoretically terminated its care and maintenance programme, it had found that in certain areas it was unable to make any satisfactory arrangements for limited numbers of refugees. It was estimated that during the last year of its operations, IRO had disbursed a sum of \$US600,000 to provide for the survival of approximately 3,000 refugees in the Far East, the Philippines, Greece, Lebanon, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. That sum was the estimated

¹ See *The Refugee in the Post-War World* (A/AC.36/6) (Geneva, December 1951).

² See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Fifth Committee, 311th meeting.*

total for the direct assistance provided either in camps or in financial grants to refugees, but did not include the sums given by IRO to the voluntary agencies working for refugees.

17. In addition, IRO had, during the last year of its operations, made arrangements with the voluntary agencies to carry out residual programmes on behalf of refugees who could not be resettled. The very close association between IRO and the voluntary agencies had been one of the most remarkable features of the international effort for refugees during the past years.

18. Those voluntary agencies, however, which had done such magnificent work for refugees, had not been set up for that purpose and all of them had other tasks which made heavy demands on their resources.

19. A letter recently received from the President of the Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies Working for Refugees, Mr. Elfan Rees, had very clearly outlined the situation. In that letter, Mr. Rees had stated that a number of observers representing member agencies of the Standing Conference had been much concerned at the exaggerated opinion some delegations in the Third Committee seemed to hold regarding the possibilities of voluntary agency service to refugees after the termination of IRO. True, those agencies had accepted responsibility for certain of the residual problems facing IRO. In particular, in a dozen countries they had assumed charge of the aged displaced persons for their lifetime. They could not have done that without financial assistance from IRO amounting actually to \$US500 per person. To the extent that those old people outlived their \$US500 the constituent agencies would have to seek the additional funds necessary to continue their maintenance. There were other instances in Germany, Austria, Italy and in other countries where they had accepted responsibilities of that nature because of the encouragement of some kind of financial support from IRO.

20. Mr. Rees had further stated that the only role of voluntary agencies in service to refugees was one supplementary to official action. There were certain basic needs of refugees that the agencies could not meet because of the increasing limitation of their resources and the non-official nature of their constitutions; and there were cases in which they could not, for those reasons, accept the legacy of IRO. The support for such agencies was limited and derived from appeals, not to the broad contributing public, but rather to charitable persons in the supporting groups. The agencies were as anxious as the United Nations to see the refugee problem solved so that they could return to their proper tasks. They recognized, however, that that time had not yet arrived and that they had to continue the work. Any failure on the part of the United Nations to recognize that the refugee problem was a continuing one would have a most adverse effect on the response to their future appeals.

21. Mr. Rees had pointed out, in his letter, that the issue before the Third Committee was not that of official action or voluntary action; they were inextricably linked. It was rather a matter of a choice between taking action or allowing the refugees to die of starvation.

Agencies members of the Standing Conference were receiving appeals from Shanghai, Turkey, the Near East, Greece and Trieste to which they could not respond as in the past when IRO, was in operation, because of the absence of any kind of official financial support. If the United Nations agreed to the raising of an assistance fund and if, in spite of the fact that the world seemed emotionally exhausted with regard to the refugee problem, the High Commissioner succeeded in raising the fund, ultimate tragedy could be avoided in those and other places. The appeal for such a fund, by recognizing the continuing need, would in itself stimulate a response to the agencies' own appeals. The existence of such a fund would encourage the agencies to maintain their staff, with all their hard-earned experience. With help from such a fund some of the agencies could assume the responsibilities in Shanghai, in Trieste or in Greece urged upon the Standing Conference. Without such help and encouragement, it was to be feared that the voluntary agencies' capacity to continue to play their part in future service to refugees would become more limited as time went on.

22. The High Commissioner had quoted Mr. Rees's letter at length because it so adequately and correctly summed up the position of the voluntary refugee agencies.

23. The International Refugee Organization had, in the whole of its operations, contributed approximately \$US40 million to the work of the voluntary agencies in their operations on behalf of the refugees within its mandate. In addition to that direct support from IRO, the voluntary agencies had also received in Germany and Austria logistic support amounting to approximately \$US2 million a year through the occupation budgets. With that money the voluntary agencies had been able to play a most useful part both in the operations of resettlement and in the arrangements for supplementary care to the refugees who had not been resettled.

24. With the termination of IRO all support from international sources to voluntary agencies had come to an end. At a time when the latter were deprived of the major part of the resources which they could devote to work on behalf of the refugees concerned, they were called upon to assume the additional burden resulting from the cessation of the direct care and financial assistance provided by IRO.

25. Both the High Commissioner's Office and the voluntary agencies themselves realized that they could not expect the same support from international sources as had been given during the period of operation of IRO. The refugee problem was not by any means so great as it had been when IRO began its work, and the international financing of the resettlement of refugees had virtually come to an end. Thus, the operation of the voluntary agencies on behalf of refugees would not be so costly. Nevertheless, much of their work was vital, to the refugees' survival. Provision had to be made for direct care of financial assistance in an estimated amount of \$US600,000. Further sums would be necessary to help the voluntary agencies to continue their vital work. In Germany, Austria and Italy, ins-

stead of the sum of approximately \$US3 million a year with which the voluntary agencies had been subsidized through the occupation budgets and grants from IRO, approximately \$US1 million would probably enable them to meet the most urgent needs of the indigent.

26. The situation in Germany has been well summarized in paragraph 5 of the communication from the General Council of IRO (A/1948), which pointed out that there were 80,000 refugees who could not be considered to be firmly established. That report also summarized very adequately the situation in Austria, where the residual groups of IRO refugees totalled about 24,000 and the *Volksdeutsche* within the mandate of his Office totalled some 300,000, and in Italy where the residual group totalled 24,000, including Trieste, where there were about 7,000 refugees, some of them in very bad physical condition. In all those countries the work of the voluntary agencies was vital, despite the fact that a minimum was provided by the public assistance of the national authorities.

27. The Third Committee should recall the technical nature of the IRO definition of the term "hard core".³ It applied to persons in need of institutional care who were registered with the organization and receiving care and maintenance before 1 July 1950. Many needy cases requiring institutional care registered with IRO had not received it, as they had had the misfortune to come within the sphere of IRO operations only after that date. The most tragic illustration was the situation in Trieste, where the report of Dr. Marc Daniels, which would shortly be circulated to the governments concerned, showed that there were approximately 380 active cases of tuberculosis among the refugee population. The report showed that there was little chance of the segregation and hospitalization of those cases in Trieste; unless something was done soon, the situation would grow worse and it would inevitably cost more money to remedy it. A similar situation might well develop in other places. The British element of the Allied commission in Austria had already expressed its concern to the High Commissioner's representative regarding the dangers of tuberculosis in some of the camps in that country. Many of those camps had originally been temporary buildings erected between 1945 and 1947 and were in a bad state of repair. In such situations, although the minimum necessary for survival was provided by the public relief authorities, the voluntary agencies had been supplying services and supplementary care. Supplementary diet for sick persons and fresh milk for infants could often help to give protection against disease. Those were the kinds of services which the voluntary agencies could provide if they received support.

28. Outside Germany, Austria and Italy, IRO had given support estimated at \$US800,000 a year to carry on the work on behalf of refugees. That work covered Greece, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, the Middle East and the Far East. In those areas national relief programmes were not in themselves sufficient to meet the needs of refugees within the High Commissioner's terms of reference. Recent authoritative information

from Shanghai showed that arrangements could be made for the evacuation of 217 camp inmates, 100 hospitalized chronics, paralytics, insane, blind or tubercular patients, 2,000 destitute and 500 persons who had visas but who, for lack of means, could not leave. According to that information there was panic, and an increasing number of attempts at suicide: human lives were at stake. Neither IRO nor the voluntary agencies nor the High Commissioner's Office had funds to meet that tragic situation. All that he was asking was to be allowed to appeal for funds in order to be able to do something to help. If the appeal succeeded, it was certain that one or other of the voluntary agencies would accept some responsibilities in that area.

29. Furthermore, the terms of reference of the High Commissioner's Office were not limited to the refugees who had received direct care and maintenance from IRO. Since the cessation of IRO's work of care and maintenance, new refugees had arrived for whom provision was not always available. It was difficult to estimate their needs. Provision was made for them in some countries, but not in others. One of the tragedies of the existing situation was that the countries called upon to give first asylum to refugees were for the greater part those which had their own ethnic refugee problems in addition to the residual problems of IRO. Thus, it was only reasonable to ask that the voluntary agencies should receive some assistance to meet the needs of the new refugees. In his opinion, \$US500,000 would be a reasonable estimate of the amount needed.

30. The total sum required was approximately \$US3 million; that should be the target for the appeals which he wished to be authorized to make.

31. He desired to avoid giving the impression that he intended to turn his Office into a successor of the International Refugee Organization. A simple calculation would show that if the residual group of IRO refugees mentioned in the communication from the General Council of IRO (A/1948) were to be maintained by a fund limited to \$US3 million, each refugee would receive a very small sum. That calculation alone should show clearly enough that he did not in any way contemplate a substitute for the direct responsibility of national governments for refugees within their territory.

32. The governments of the eighteen States which had been members of IRO had decided that they were unable to continue to bear the enormous burden they had shouldered so generously; certainly, the major responsibility for the care and maintenance of the refugees had to be borne by the governments in whose territories they happened to reside; but the assumption underlying the decision to terminate IRO had always been that the problem had been solved.

33. As IRO itself had pointed out, the nature of the problem with which it had been dealing had changed during the period of the organization's existence. Originally called upon to deal with the displaced persons, IRO had found itself faced with a continuing refugee problem. It had repeatedly reported that fact to the General Assembly, first in 1949, when it had recommended that some future international action on behalf

³ See document E/2005, para. 62.

of refugees was necessary. It had been generally agreed that the nature of that action should be different from that carried out by IRO itself. The successive prolongations of IRO had increased the hope that a solution could be achieved; but both the Director-General and the General Council of IRO had stated very clearly the problems which remained. Their extent had been indicated very precisely in the communication from the General Council (A/1948). The facts could not be ignored, but in asking the General Assembly to face those facts, he was not in any way suggesting that an international relief operation should take the place of the responsibility of governments for the care and maintenance of refugees.

34. He agreed with the Yugoslav representative (377th meeting) that some kind of international control over the proposed assistance fund was necessary. He had already prepared draft rules for that purpose which could be discussed in the appropriate place. Assistance could not be continued indefinitely, however; permanent solutions had to be found. The more closely governments co-operated with his Office in establishing long-term programmes for the assimilation of the refugees, the sooner the need for the assistance fund would end.

35. He agreed with the French representative (375th meeting) that the criteria for the admission of immigrants had become more generous in recent years; but the programme of the migration committee recently set up at the Brussels conference covered only 115,000 migrants, a quota which might easily be filled by one country alone, for example, by Italy. The Australian representative had rightly drawn attention (376th meeting) to the fact that the countries of resettlement themselves faced serious problems with regard to capital investment and that that might well slow down immigration. He could only hope that he would be permitted to plead the cause of the refugees to the new migration agency. The refugees deserved a fair share of any opportunities for migration provided by the international community. Furthermore, his Office could furnish a link between the United Nations and the new agency.

36. In conclusion, the High Commissioner assured the Third Committee that his Office was not engaged in recruiting spies, subversive persons, slave labour or cannon-fodder, but was simply trying to help those who were physically and legally without protection. The refugees could not count upon the protection of their own governments; it behoved the United Nations to protect them and thus secure for them the enjoyment of basic human rights.

37. He read three paragraphs of a prayer for refugees which had been composed by the Bishop of Chichester in England.

38. Mr. STEINIG (Secretary of the Committee) read a letter from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Third Committee asking her to expedite the Committee's work as much as pos-

sible, in order to meet the target-date set for the conclusion of the General Assembly.

39. The CHAIRMAN stated that it had been estimated that the Third Committee would require at least thirty more meetings to dispose of the remaining items on its agenda.

40. Mr. PAVLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked whether the Sixth Committee could deal with the legal aspect of the draft protocol relating to the status of stateless persons, in order to facilitate the Third Committee's work on that item.

41. AZMI Bey (Egypt) asked for an explanation of the fact that the volume *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, which the High Commissioner had described as a work compiled by a private group of researchers and financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, had been published by the United Nations under an official document symbol. His delegation took strong exception to the references in that volume to the position of refugees in Egypt.

42. Mr. STEINIG (Secretary of the Committee) stated that the fact that the United Nations published a document under a symbol number did not necessarily imply that the Secretary-General concurred with or was responsible for the contents of the document. The purpose of the symbol was merely to ensure distribution through official channels and reference to a document. The volume referred to by the representative of Egypt had been distributed to the members of the Committee for their convenience and information in connexion with the two items (30 and 31) of the General Assembly agenda under discussion.

43. Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon) thought that the status of the volume concerned should be clarified; the report of the group set up by the High Commissioner was described as preliminary, and it was therefore essential to specify the extent to which the statements relating to certain countries might be amended.

44. In accordance with a proposal made by the representative of BELGIUM, the CHAIRMAN stated that consideration of the question that had been raised by the publication of the report *The Refugee in the Post-War World* should be postponed until votes had been taken on the draft resolutions submitted on the question of refugees. He proposed to put those texts to the vote in the order in which they had been submitted.

45. Mr. PAVLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), supported by Mr. KUSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), proposed that the Byelorussian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201) should be voted on first, since its adoption would preclude the necessity of any further votes.

46. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the proposal to give priority to the Byelorussian draft resolution.

The proposal was adopted by 14 votes to 10, with 17 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.