

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION  
COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

Historical Survey of Efforts of the United  
Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine to secure the  
implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly

resolution 194 (III)

THE QUESTION OF REINTEGRATION BY REPATRIATION OR RESETTLEMENT  
(Working paper prepared by the Secretariat)

## CONTENTS

|  | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Introductory Note  | 4           |
| <u>Part One</u>  |             |
| I. <u>Resolution 194 (III)</u> of the General Assembly of 11 December 1948                     | 5           |
| A. Position of the interested,   | 5           |
| B. Attitude of the Commission  | 7           |
| II. Work of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine - 1949                                   | 8           |
| A. Lausanne Conference, April-September 1949   | 8           |
| (i) The Gaza scheme submitted, by Israel and. Arab counter-proposals                           | 8           |
| (ii) Preliminary measures undertaken by the Commission   | 8           |
| (iii) <u>Israel proposals of 29 July 1949</u> and Arab reply of 2 August 1949                  | 9           |
| (iv) Proposal of Israel of 5 August and Memorandum of Arab States of 15 August 1949            | 10          |
| (v) <u>Memorandum</u> submitted by the Commission on 15 August 1949 and replies of the parties | 11          |
| (vi) Note of the Commission of 12 September and the reply of Israel                            | 14          |
| B. Recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission  | 15          |
| III. Work of the Conciliation Commission during 1950   | 17          |
| A. <u>Resolution 302 (IV)</u> of the General Assembly of 8 December 1949                       | 17          |
| B. Geneva meetings - January to July 1950  | 18          |
| C. Arab attitude towards resettlement  | 18          |
| D. Israel's position regarding previous offer of repatriation                                  | 18          |
| E. Views of the Commission   | 19          |
| F. <u>Resolution 394 (V)</u> of 14 December 1950   | 20          |
| IV. Work of the Conciliation Commission during 1953  | 21          |
| A. Establishment of the Refugee Office   | 21          |
| (i) <u>Terms of reference</u>  | 21          |
| (ii) Report of the Refugee Office  | 22          |
| B. Paris Conference (10 September-19 November 1951)  | 25          |
| (i) Proposal of the Commission on the question of repatriation                                 | 25          |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| (ii) Positions of the interested parties  | 25 |
| C. <a href="#">Tenth Report</a> of the Commission   | 25 |
| <a href="#">Part Two</a>  |    |
| V. Work of the Commission since 1952  | 28 |
| A. Release of Blocked Accounts and Safe Deposits  | 28 |
| B. The Programme of Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property   | 29 |
| VI. The Refugee Question since 1951   | 29 |
| A. Rehabilitation Programme of UNRWA (1951-1959)  | 29 |
| B. Proposals of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session   | 56 |
| (i) Recommendations of the Secretary-General  | 56 |
| (ii) Position adopted by the Arab States regarding the Secretary-General's proposals  | 58 |
| (iii) Position adopted by Israel regarding the Secretary-General's proposals  | 40 |
| C. The UNRWA report submitted to the General Assembly at its fifteenth session  | 40 |
| VII. Summary of views on the related, questions of repatriation and resettlement expressed, during the discussions of-the Palestine refugee problem | 42 |
| A. Position of the Arab States  | 42 |
| B. Position of Israel   | 49 |
| C. Position of certain other delegations  | 54 |

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Historical Survey of Efforts of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly

resolution 194 (III)

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(Working paper prepared, "by the Secretariat)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

1. In order to facilitate the work of the Conciliation Commission in connexion with directives of the General Assembly to make further efforts to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of its [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), the Secretariat was directed to prepare working papers on repatriation and compensation. Repatriation and compensation have always been closely interrelated, both in the wording of paragraph 11 and in the history of the problem, with the question of "resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation" or, in the words of numerous resolutions since 1950, "the reintegration of refugees either by repatriation or resettlement". Hence the working papers submitted also survey positions and attitudes on these questions as an integral part of the solution of the refugee problem. The papers taken together thus contribute to a historical survey of action taken by the Commission in connexion with paragraph 11 and of the positions taken by the Governments of Israel and the Arab States as well as other interested delegations, UNRWA and the Secretary-General.
2. The present paper may be divided into two parts. Sections I to IV constitute the historical summary of steps taken by the Commission between 1949 and 1951 to carry out that part of its mandate, as contained in paragraph 11, which relates to repatriation and resettlement, together with the respective positions held by the Governments of the Arab States and Israel. Sections V to VII contain a summary of the work of the Commission since 1952 and of the refugee question since 1951, including a description of the rehabilitation programme of UNRWA and the proposals submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session, together with the positions adopted by the Arab States and Israel with regard to these proposals. They also contain a summary analysis of the current positions and views of Israel, the Arab States and various delegations, as reflected in the available records. Both parts set forth views of the Commission and the Governments concerned on the associate and reintegration.

Part One

I. [Resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of the General Assembly of 11 December 1948

3. The General Assembly, at its third, session on 11 December 1948, adopted [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) under which it established the Conciliation Commission and charged it with the general task of facilitating a peaceful settlement between the parties to the Palestine dispute. In paragraph 11, in connexion with the refugees, the General Assembly resolved that:

"... the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should "be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible;"

It also instructed the Conciliation Commission:

"to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment

of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations;".

A. Position of the interested parties

4. Following the adoption of the General Assembly resolution, the Commission made a series of official visits between 12 and 25 February 1949 to the Governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Israel. The Commission's primary object in these preliminary talks was to canvass the parties concerned on their views as to the ways in which contact could be established and negotiations begun with a view to arriving at a final settlement.

5. The preliminary talks with the interested Governments convinced the Commission that it would be useful to hold further talks in order to clarify the views of the Arab Governments with regard to the refugee problem.

6. The Commission therefore invited these Governments to meet with it in Beirut beginning on 21 March 1949 for the purpose of exchanging views on the refugee problem with the Commission. In the course of these conversations the Arab delegations insisted on:

(a) the necessity, both for humanitarian and. political reasons, of giving absolute priority to the refugee question over and above all other questions pending between the Arab States and the State of Israel;

(b) the necessity that any solution of the problem must be contingent upon the acceptance by the Government of Israel of the principle established in paragraph 11 of the General Assembly resolution 194 (III) that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date ..."

7. In the Commission's interview with Mr. Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of Israel, on 7 April 1949, the refugee question was examined in detail. The Commission explained that the Arab States formally took the view that the refugee question must be considered as the most urgent problem, constituting an imperative task of the Commission. They had, however, relinquished their insistence that settlement of the refugee problem must precede the consideration of other outstanding matters. The Commission asked if the Government of Israel accepted the principle established by the General Assembly resolution, permitting the return to their homes of those refugees who expressed the desire to do so. The Commission stressed the importance which the acceptance of this principle and its implementation by such steps as were then possible would have in creating an atmosphere favourable to the success of the exchange of views.

8. Mr. Ben-Gurion, without replying to this question, called attention in particular to the passage in paragraph 11 of the General Assembly resolution 194 (III) which states that refugees who wish to return to their homes should "live at peace with their neighbours." In Mr. Ben-Gurion's view, this passage made the possibility of return of the refugees to their homes contingent, so to speak, on the establishment of peace; so long as Arab States refused to make peace with the State of Israel, it was evident that Israel could not fully rely upon the declarations that Arab refugees might make concerning their intention to live at peace with their neighbours. Mr. Ben-Gurion did not exclude the possibility of accepting for repatriation a limited number of Arab refugees, but he made it clear that the Government of Israel considered that a real solution of the refugee problem lay in the settlement of the refugees in Arab States. On other hand, Mr. Ben-Gurion fully recognized the humanitarian aspect of the problem, and on several occasions declared that when the time came, the Government of Israel would "be ready to take part in the efforts necessary for its solution and that it would do this in a sincere spirit of co-operation. Mr. Ben-Gurion told the Commission, however, that the Government of Israel considered the refugee problem as one of those which should be examined and solved during the general negotiations for the establishment of peace in Palestine.

B. Attitude of the Commission

9. As regards the principle of the return of the refugees, the Commission admitted the validity of the Arab position, "but considered it necessary to make certain observations regarding the practical application of this principle. The Commission was of the opinion that even if this principle were to be accepted, it would be necessary to take into account the possibility that not all the refugees would decide to return to their homes. The Commission believed, therefore, that the Arab States should agree in principle to the resettlement of those refugees who did not desire to return to their homes. The Commission considered that the refugees should be fully informed of the conditions under which they would return; in particular, of the obligations they might incur as well as of the rights that would be guaranteed to them.

10. The Commission was fully aware of the difficulties inherent in the permanent rehabilitation of a group of persons which, although not particularly large in itself, nevertheless seemed so in proportion to the total population of the countries among which it would be distributed. The Commission considered that in the long run the final solution of the problem would be found within the framework of the economic and social rehabilitation of all the countries of the Middle East. The urgent need of an immediate solution to relieve the tragic, material and moral situation of the Arab refugees indicated that some measures should be evolved which could be applied in the shortest possible time, such as a programme of public works undertaken by Israel and the Arab States which would make possible the return of refugees and the immediate settlement of those who did not wish to return. The Commission indicated to the parties its willingness to recommend favourable action by the competent organs of the United Nations if Israel and the Arab States were to apply to the United Nations for technical and financial aid in undertaking such a programme.

II. Work of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine

A. Lausanne Conference, April-September 1949

11. During the Lausanne Conference, beginning on 27 April 1949, the refugee question was the subject of discussion at numerous lengthy meetings held by the Commission with the delegations of Israel and the Arab States. During the first phase of the Lausanne meetings, two specific proposals concerning repatriation of the refugees were submitted to the Commission by the delegation of Israel and by the Arab delegations.

(i) The Gaza scheme submitted by Israel and Arab counter-proposals

12. The delegation of Israel declared that if the Gaza area were incorporated in the State of Israel, its Government would be prepared to accept as citizens of Israel the entire Arab population of the area, both inhabitants and refugees, on the understanding that resettlement of the refugees in Israel territory would be subject to such international aid as would be available for refugee resettlement in general. It was not, however, in a position to submit to the Commission proposals concerning the number of refugees it would accept in the event that the Gaza area were not incorporated in Israel.

13. For their part, the Arab delegations submitted to the Commission a proposal directed towards the immediate return to their homes of the refugees coming from the territories under Israel authority which formed part of the Arab zone on the map attached to the Protocol of 12 May: that is, Western Galilee, the area of Lydda, Ramle and Beersheba, Jaffa, Jerusalem and the coastline north of Gaza.

14. The Commission transmitted these proposals to the Arab delegations and to the delegation of Israel respectively without comment. Neither the Arab delegations nor the delegation of Israel accepted any of the proposals.

(ii) Preliminary measures undertaken by the Commission

15. In its second progress report, the Commission reported that neither repatriation to Israel nor resettlement in Arab territories could be carried out satisfactorily without a considerable amount of preparatory work of a technical -- nature. It would be necessary, first, to establish the most exact figures possible as to the number of actual refugees who had fled from Israel-controlled territory; some sort of consultations would, then be required, in order to ascertain which refugees would, prefer to be repatriated, to Israel and which would wish to be resettled, in an Arab country; finally, both repatriation to Israel and resettlement in Arab territory must be preceded, by considerable preparatory work of an economic, social and financial character.

16. These considerations had led the Commission to contemplate the creation of a "technical committee" to which this preparatory work would, be entrusted. It would function under the immediate supervision of the Commission and would submit the results of its work to the Commission.

17. The Technical Committee on Refugees was, in fact, constituted and sent out to Palestine in June of 1949 and reported back to the Commission in August of that year. The Commission had instructed it, *inter alia*, to "study the question and practicable methods for the payment of compensation to refugees not choosing to return to their homes and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible". The Committee reported to the Commission that after full discussion with the interested Governments, certain organizations and individuals, it suggested the establishment under the Conciliation Commission of a mixed Arab-Israeli working group on property compensation, supervised by a United Nations or neutral expert. The group, which would be authorized to set up sub-committees, would work on (a) the supervision of conservation of existing properties, including orange groves; (b) the determination of ownership of property; and (c) the evaluation of property damages including orange groves.

18. In view of the failure of the parties to set up a mixed, working group even on the subsidiary question of the preservation of orange groves, the Commission concluded that it would, be premature to attempt the more ambitious scheme.

19. The Technical Committee, having completed its work, was dissolved, and its members placed at the disposal of the Economic Survey Mission which the Commission had decided to entrust with further work in the technical field in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 194 (III).

(III) Israel proposals of 29 July 1949 and Arab reply of 2 August 1949

20. During the second phase of the Lausanne meetings, the delegation of Israel stated on 29 July that, in response to the views of the Commission and in order to facilitate the task of conciliation, the Government of Israel agreed on the following points: the problem of refugees should be placed as the first item on the agenda of joint discussions of a general peace settlement; on the initiation of such discussions, the Israel delegation would be prepared to convey to the Commission and to the Arab delegations the total figure of refugees which the Government of Israel would be ready to repatriate. In the view of the Government of Israel, such repatriation must form part of a comprehensive plan for the settlement of the entire refugee problem; and this repatriation would be put into effect only as an integral part of a general and final peace settlement. The Israel delegation also expressed the wish that these negotiations should be carried out directly with the Arab delegations.

21. On 2 August, the Arab delegations stated to the Commission that, understanding that the Israel delegation would advance concrete proposals within the framework of a final solution of the refugee problem and that these proposals would be considered as a first step towards stabilization of the situation in Palestine, and considering such a course to be in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the Protocol of 12 May 1949, they agreed to discuss the Israel proposals. They stated that this acceptance in no way prejudged acceptance of any particular plan.

(iv) Proposal of Israel of 3 August and Memorandum of Arab States of 15 August 1949

22. Following the reply by the Arab delegations, the delegation of Israel submitted its proposals to the Commission at a meeting on 5 August. After a few general remarks, the Israel representative stated that his Government was prepared to make its contribution to the solution of the refugee problem. This contribution would be limited by considerations affecting the security and the economy of the State. Thus, the refugees would be settled in areas where they would not come in contact with possible enemies of Israel. Moreover, the Government of Israel reserved the right to resettle the repatriated refugees in specific places, in order to ensure that their reinstallation would fit into the general plan of the economic development of Israel. Subject to these conditions, the Government of Israel would be prepared to accept the return to Israel in its present limits of 100,000 refugees, in addition to the total Arab population existing at the end of hostilities (including those who had already returned since then), thus increasing the total number of that population to a maximum of 250,000. This repatriation would form part of a general plan for resettlement of refugees which would be established by a special organ to be created for the purpose by the United Nations

23. The Commission, considering the Israel delegation's proposal as unsatisfactory, limited itself to communicating that proposal unofficially to the Arab delegations for their information.

24. On 15 August, the Arab delegations transmitted to the Commission, also unofficially, their view that the Israel proposal was contrary to resolution 194 (III), as well as to the Protocol of 12 May 1949. They considered that under the terms of the Protocol, the Israel proposal could bear only upon the territories allocated to Israel according to the map attached to that document. The Arab delegations protested the contention of the Israel delegation that the settlement of Arabs in Israel territory must be subordinated to economic and strategic considerations. They recalled, moreover, the memorandum addressed by them to the Commission on 21 May, requesting the repatriation of all refugees originating in territory allocated to the Arabs or to be internationalized, according to the map attached to the Protocol of 12 May 1949. If the Israel proposal were to be interpreted as applying exclusively to refugees originating in areas allocated to Israel on the above-mentioned map, the Arab delegations would not object to its adoption as a basis for discussion of the disposition of those particular refugees. Finally, the Arab delegations favoured compensation in kind for the refugees who might not return to their homes; this indemnification might take the form of territorial compensation within the terms of the Protocol of 12 May.

(v) Memorandum submitted by the Commission on 15 August 1949 and replies of the parties

25. On 15 August 1949, the Commission, desiring to lead the parties to clarify their positions, submitted to them a

memorandum setting forth a certain number of questions, notably regarding refugees and the territorial question, the answers to which would define in a clear and precise manner the position of the delegations with regard to the aims established by the General Assembly, and would consequently enable the Commission to determine the line to be followed in its future work.

26. The Commission's memorandum, *inter alia*, inquired, whether the various delegations were prepared to sign a declaration according to which:

(a) The solution of the refugee problem should be sought in the repatriation of refugees to Israel-controlled territory, and in the resettlement of those not repatriated in Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not under Israel control. It was to be understood that the repatriated refugees would become *ipso facto* citizens of Israel and that no discrimination would be practised against them either with regard to the civil or the political rights which they would exercise and to the obligations imposed upon them by the law of the land. It was also to be understood that repatriation in Israel as well as resettlement in the Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not under Israel control would take place subject to technical and financial aid given to each party by the international community;

(b) In case an economic mission should be charged by the United Nations with the establishment of major work projects in the Middle East with a view to facilitating the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the Arab refugees, as well as with the study of the conditions under which that programme could take place, all the parties would undertake to facilitate the task of the Economic Mission and to take all possible measures to aid in the implementation of such solution as the Mission might propose;

(c) All the parties would specify that the above-mentioned conditions concerning the Arab refugees would not prejudice the rights which the parties reserve in connexion with the final settlement of the territorial question in Palestine; and

(d) The funds for emergency aid extended to the refugees must be renewed until technical and financial aid should have been allotted by the international community.

27. The Commission also asked the delegations whether, without committing their Governments for the present or for the future, and taking account of the fact that no exact and detailed statistics existed with regard to the refugees, they were prepared to present a provisional estimate of the approximate number of refugees which their Governments would be ready to accept.

28. On 29 August 1949, the Commission received the Arab reply to its memorandum of 15 August. In their communication the Arab delegations began by recalling the observations contained in the memorandum which they had communicated to the Commission unofficially on 15 August. They proceeded to state that, keeping the above observations in mind, and noting that the solution of the refugee problem should be in accordance with the principles of humanity, right and justice on which General Assembly resolution 194 (III) was based, the Arab delegations would be ready to study the implementation of that part of the declaration proposed by the Commission according to which the solution of the refugee problem should be sought in the repatriation of refugees to Israel controlled territory and in the resettlement of those not repatriated in Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not under Israel control.

29. They also drew the Commission's attention to the necessity of establishing international guarantees -- to be determined at a later date -- assuring to the refugees to be repatriated in areas under Israel control just treatment, without discrimination on grounds of race or religion.

30. In connexion with the possible establishment of an Economic Mission for the Middle East, the Arab delegations stated that they would recommend that their Governments facilitate the work of that Mission and take all steps which they might judge appropriate and possible to assist in the implementation of such solutions as the Mission might propose.

31. The delegations of Jordan and Syria stated that their Governments would be able to receive, in line with the recommendations of the Economic Mission, such refugees as might not return to their homes. The Egyptian delegation declared that Egypt, being densely populated and unable to extend substantially the area of its arable land, would find it difficult to contemplate the resettlement of any number of refugees on its existing territory. When its eastern frontiers had been readjusted, however, the Egyptian delegation would be prepared to study the question in the light of the prevailing situation and within the framework of international technical and financial aid. The Lebanese delegation declared that Lebanon was in the same position as Egypt, since it was one of the most densely populated areas in the world.

32. Finally, the Arab delegations collectively urged that the United Nations should continue to supply the funds necessary for emergency aid to refugees.

33. On 31 August 1949, the Israel delegation, replying to the Commission's memorandum of 15 August stated that it was prepared to sign a declaration along the general lines suggested by the Commission with regard to refugees, subject to precision on the following points: that the solution of the refugee problem was to be sought primarily in resettlement in Arab territories; that, though the Economic Mission would be facilitated in its task and its proposals would be given full consideration, the Government of Israel could not bind itself in advance to implement the solutions proposed, that the understanding with regard to non-discrimination against refugees should apply to the Arab States as well; and that international financial assistance, to which repatriation of Palestine refugees to Israel would be subject, should also extend to the resettlement of Jewish refugees from Arab-controlled areas of Palestine.

34. The Israel delegation, moreover, reiterated its previous offer with regard to the number of refugees which the Government of Israel would be ready to accept and pointed out that its willingness to facilitate the task of the Economic Mission would have to remain within the limits of this offer.

(vi) Note of the Commission of 12 September and the reply of Israel

35. In reply to the Arab and Israel notes dated 29 and 31 August 1949 respectively, the Commission informed all the delegations, on 12 September, that it did not consider that it would be useful at that moment to formulate more detailed suggestions with regard to the refugee question, notably concerning the number of persons who should return to Israel and the number who should be resettled in the Arab States, in view of the fact that the refugee question in general would be examined by the Economic Survey Mission. The Commission preferred to await the conclusions and recommendations which would be submitted to it by the Mission, before formulating its own suggestions regarding the general solution of the refugee problem.

36. During its session in New York in the fall of 1949, the Commission on 27 October received the reply of the Government of Israel to its Note of 12 September. In this reply Mr. Eban stated that:

"The attitude of the Government of Israel on the issue of the return of refugees to Israel remains unaltered. The Government of Israel holds that apart from the re-admission of the wives and minor children of Arabs already resident in Israel, the question of Israel's contribution to the resettlement of the refugees can only arise in the context of

a general peace settlement and as part of a comprehensive and final solution of the whole refugee problem. As regard the provisions of the General Assembly [resolution of 11 December 1948](#), bearing on this issue, the Government of Israel must point out that before the adoption of that resolution its representative had repeatedly made it clear to the Political Committee that the question of the return of the refugees could not possibly be decided by reference to individual rights or intentions, since this was a problem affecting national existence, and in its solution the security interests of the State of Israel must be a paramount consideration. The Government of Israel, in the fulfilment of its duty to preserve the security, welfare and, indeed, the very existence of the State, must retain full responsibility for deciding at which point the return of refugees would prejudice the prospect of Arabs and Jews living in peace with each other, and at which point such return would raise insurmountable practical difficulties at any time. It may be added that recent developments in the Middle East have aggravated our fear that any measure of Arab repatriation is liable to prove gravely prejudicial to Israel's security ..."

B. Recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission

37. On 25 August 1949, the Commission decided, pursuant to paragraph 12 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), to establish immediately an Economic Survey Mission as a subsidiary body under the Commission's authority. The Mission was charged with examining the economic situation in the countries affected by the hostilities in Palestine and with making recommendations to the Commission for an integrated programme having the following purposes: to enable the Governments concerned to further such measures and development programmes as are required to overcome the economic dislocations created by the hostilities; to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 11 of the General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), in order to reintegrate the refugees into the economic life of the area on a self-sustaining basis within a minimum period of time; and to promote economic conditions conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in the area.

38. In its first Interim Report, dated 6 November 1949, the Economic Survey Mission under the chairmanship of Mr. Gordon Clapp, made the following recommendations *inter alia* :

- (1) The emergency relief for refugees made possible by voluntary contributions from Member Governments of the United Nations should be continued through the winter months, and until 1 April 1950, under the present United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees system;
- (2) A programme of public works, calculated to improve the productivity of the area, and such continuing relief as would be needed should be organized as an integrated operation, in co-operation with the Governments of the countries where the refugees were located. This programme should be planned and arrangements negotiated with the appropriate Near East Governments to begin on 1 April 1950;
- (3) An agency should be established to organize and, on or after 1 April 1950, direct the programmes of relief and public works herein recommended.

39. The Mission gave four reasons for proposing its programme of relief and public works: (1) it would halt the demoralizing process of pauperization which was the outcome of a prolonged dole; (2) the opportunity to work would increase the practical alternatives available to the refugees and thus encourage a more realistic view of the kind of future they wanted and could achieve; (3) a works programme that was properly planned would add to the productive economy of the countries where the refugees were located; and (4) the chance to earn a living would reduce the need for relief and bring its cost within the ability of the Near Eastern countries to meet without United Nations assistance.

40. The Interim Report went on to analyse the numbers and location of the refugees and their effect on local resources of the Arab States. It described the dilemma of the refugees in the following terms:

"Why do not the refugees return to their homes and solve their own problem? That is what the great majority of them want to do. They believe, as a matter of right and justice, they should be permitted to return to their homes, their farms and villages, and the coastal cities of Haifa and Jaffa whence many of them came.

"They are encouraged to believe this remedy open to them because the General Assembly of the United Nations said so in its [resolution of 11 December 1948](#). For purely psychological reasons, easily understandable, the refugees set great store by the assurance contained in this resolution. Most men in their position, given a choice between working in a foreign land or returning to their homes and to conditions understood and experienced from youth, would strain towards their homes, even were they told that, in their absence, conditions had so changed that they would never be happy there again. They would be reluctant to believe it. They would suspect a trap to hold them in exile until it was too late for them to return. Even if they were told their houses had been destroyed, they would still claim that the land remained. This seems a final argument to farm people.

"But the repatriation of Arab refugees requires political decisions outside the competence of the Economic Survey Mission.

"Why do not the refugees go somewhere else? Why not resettle them in less congested lands?

"There are several reasons. The refugees do not take kindly to moving again -- unless it be a return to their homes, a prospect they cling to because of the General Assembly's resolution. Moreover, the Arab Governments have made it clear to the Mission that they feel bound to respect the wish of the refugees. Resettlement of the refugees outside of Palestine is a political issue posed against the issues of repatriation, compensation of the refugees and a final territorial settlement. Finally, less congested lands are not available for the settlement of additional population until much money has been spent and work done to make the land suitable for cultivation or for industrial development.

"In these circumstances, the only immediate constructive step in sight is to give the refugees an opportunity to work where they now are."

III. Work of the Conciliation Commission during 1950

A. Resolution 302 (IV) of the General Assembly of 8 December 1949

41. On the recommendation of the Economic Survey Mission, the General Assembly created, by its [resolution 302 \(IV\)](#) of 8 December 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to deal with the relief, resettlement and rehabilitation aspects of the refugee question, and to carry out a specific programme as approved by this resolution (see section VI, A, below).

42. The Conciliation Commission remained the organ responsible for assisting the parties in the search for a final



settlement of all questions outstanding between them, and specifically with the problem of the return of the refugees to their homes and the problem of compensation under the terms of paragraph 11 of the [resolution of 11 December 1948](#), which was reaffirmed by the [resolution of 8 December 1949](#).

B. [Geneva Meetings - January to July 1950](#)

43. During the Commission's Geneva meetings in 1950, the question of repatriation as such did not come under discussion, since the Commission's efforts were devoted to the formulation and discussion of its procedural proposals for Mixed Committees, designed to provide a framework for negotiation of all questions outstanding between the parties.

44. It should be noted in this connexion that the Arab Governments stated on several occasions that their acceptance of the Commission's proposals was subject to a double condition: the Government of Israel first should accept the provisions of the General Assembly [resolution of 11 December 1948](#) calling for the return of the refugees to their homes and payment of compensation, and second, should undertake to implement these provisions. Although the Commission stressed the inappropriateness of laying down prerequisite conditions for the initiation of a procedure conforming to the Assembly resolution, the Arab position remained unchanged.

C. [Arab attitude towards resettlement](#)

45. After a tour of the Arab capitals in the summer of 1950, the Commission was forced to conclude that there were no grounds on which it could pursue its efforts to set up Mixed Committees. It did, however, receive the impression during the course of these visits that the Arab Governments were "inclining more and more to the view that the refugee problem cannot be fully solved by the return of the refugees to their homes; and that consequently the settlement -- either temporary or permanent -- of a considerable number of refugees in the Arab countries must also be contemplated, in order to achieve a complete and final solution of the problem".

D. [Israel's position regarding previous offer of repatriation](#)

46. In a [memorandum dated 29 March 1950](#) the Israel Government indicated that its previous offer to repatriate a certain number of refugees could not be prolonged indefinitely. The memorandum stated that:

"... the refugee question only exists at all as a result of the war launched by the Arab States. It would therefore have appeared reasonable for the States which created this tragic problem to have assumed primary responsibility for its solution, especially in view of their kinship with the Arab victims of their aggression. Nevertheless the Israel Government, in order to facilitate the commencement of peace talks, informed the Commission on 5 August 1949 that the Israel Government was prepared to consider the repatriation, in the context of a peace settlement and as part of a general solution of the refugee problem, of the highest number of Arab refugees which then appeared, compatible with conditions of economic feasibility and national security. It was Israel's hope that if each government in the Middle East were to accept these criteria for its contribution towards the resettlement of refugees, a rapid and equitable settlement would be achieved.

"... the Commission was unable to elicit from the Arab States any commitment of this character or any offer to cooperate with Israel and the United Nations in a regional effort directed to the resettlement of refugees. On the contrary the Arab States rejected the Israel offer, while offering no contribution or sacrifice on their own behalf. The hand stretched out by Israel was not grasped; it could not be held out indefinitely."

47. Furthermore, in a [meeting](#) of the Commission in New York on 30 October 1950, Mr. Palmer, United States representative on the Commission, informed the Commission that in the course of an informal conversation, the representative of Israel had informed him that, in view of the fact that Israel was now unable to agree to take back even as many refugees as it had previously offered to accept, the Israeli representative felt it would be inadvisable to allow the refugees to continue to believe that some of them would be repatriated. The retention of such a hope might prevent them from co-operating in schemes for resettlement.

48. The representative of the United States reported that he had then emphasized the advantages which Israel would gain from making a declaration regarding its attitude on the principle of repatriation. He said that it did not appear, however, that Israel was prepared at that time to make such a statement.

E. [Views of the Commission](#)

49. In October 1950, the Commission, in its Supplementary Report to the Secretary-General, made the following statement:

"Two years have now elapsed, since the termination of hostilities in Palestine. The Commission considers it indispensable to stress the urgent need of measures for the speedy liquidation of the Palestine crisis, in view of present world conditions and of the tragic plight of vast numbers of Arab refugees, on whose behalf every effort must be made without delay.

"Of all the problems raised by this crisis, the refugee question is the one demanding the most urgent solution. The Arab States have insisted, in accordance with the principle laid down by the General Assembly [resolution of 11 December 1948](#), on the return of the refugees to their homes, as well as on the acceptance of this principle by the Government of Israel and the payment of compensation. Israel, on the other hand, has repeatedly affirmed that it cannot agree to the mass return of the refugees to their homes, which the Arab States require as a prior condition to the discussion of other questions at issue.

"The Commission has always been guided by the recommendation made by the General Assembly in its [resolution of 11 December 1948](#) that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so. At the same time, the Commission believes that, having the interests of the refugees themselves in mind, attention should also be devoted in the future to the resettlement in the Arab countries of non-returning refugees, to their economic rehabilitation and to the payment of compensation, as also recommended by the above resolution. The Commission considers that the refugees should be afforded every opportunity to realize that the conditions which they would find on returning to their homes would differ greatly from those to which they were accustomed. As has been indicated in its previous report, the Commission believes that the refugees who decide not to return to their homes should receive, and be made aware of the fact that they will receive, just compensation for the loss of their property, as provided for by the General Assembly [resolution of 11 December 1948](#) ..."

F. [Resolution 394 \(V\)](#) of 14 December 1950

50. The General Assembly, on 14 December 1950 adopted [resolution 394 \(V\)](#), which recalled [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948, and noted with concern that "repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation have not been effected". The Assembly recognized that "in the interest of the peace and

stability of the Middle East the refugee question should be dealt with as a matter of urgency" and directed the Conciliation Commission to establish an office under its direction which would, *inter alia*, "make such arrangements as it may consider necessary for the assessment and payment of compensation in pursuance of paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#)".

51. The wording of this resolution clearly indicated the Assembly's wish for a transition from principles to practical arrangements and for a primary concentration on the refugee problem. Indeed, the only specific instruction given to the Conciliation Commission under the resolution was to establish and direct a refugee office. The remainder of the resolution was addressed more to the parties concerned than to the Commission. With regard to the refugee office, again the shift of emphasis from general discussions to specific measures was unmistakable. While the [resolution of 11 December 1948](#) instructed the Commission to "facilitate" the repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation and compensation of refugees, the [1950 resolution](#) instructed it to make, through its refugee office, "arrangements" and to seek such measures "as may be practicable" towards that end.

IV. [Work of the Conciliation Commission during 1951](#)

A. [Establishment of the Refugee Office](#)

(i) [Terms of reference](#)

52. Upon its return to the Middle East early in 1951, the Commission's main preoccupation was to complete the organization of the Refugee Office which it had been instructed to establish by the General Assembly's [resolution of 14 December 1950](#). This resolution, *inter alia*, directed the Commission "to establish an office which, under the direction of the Commission shall:

- (a) Make such arrangements as it may consider necessary for the assessment and payment of compensation in pursuance of paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#);
- (b) Work out such arrangements as may be practicable for the implementation of the other objectives of paragraph 11 of the said resolution;
- (c) Continue consultations with the parties concerned regarding measures for the protection of the rights, property and interests of the refugees".

53. In reporting to the Secretary-General on the work in connexion with the setting-up of the Refugee Office, the Commission stated the belief that the General Assembly [resolution of 14 December 1950](#) marked a new phase in the Commission's work, a phase in which it must progress from general discussions to the seeking, and in certain cases, the putting into operation, of practical measures towards a liquidation of the refugee problem.

54. The Arab Governments and the Government of Israel expressed their readiness to co-operate with the Commission and its Refugee Office.

(ii) [Report of the Refugee Office](#)

55. At the request of the Commission, in accordance with the General Assembly [resolution of 14 December 1950](#), the Refugee Office prepared an estimate of the value of the property abandoned by Arab refugees.

56. The Office estimated that the extent of the land abandoned by Arab refugees was 16,524 square kilometres, of which 4,574 square kilometres were cultivable. The demilitarized areas and the Jerusalem no-man's-land were not included in this estimate. The term "land" denoted immovable property; buildings and trees were regarded as an integral part of the soil on which they stood and valued together with it. The Office estimated the total value of this abandoned land at 100 million Palestine pounds.

57. In approaching the problem of making a global valuation of Arab refugee movable property, the Commission's Refugee Office came to the conclusion that it was unable to make a valuation or all such property, since some categories of movable property did not lend themselves to a global evaluation and since the Office had no means of knowing what property the refugees took with them and what they left behind. It therefore confined itself to an attempt to estimate the approximate value of the movable property which belonged to the refugees before their exodus.

58. The Commission made three estimates, arrived at by entirely different methods, which approximated each other so closely, that the Commission considered that the approximate global value of the movable property belonging to the refugees before their exodus was in the neighbourhood of 20 million Palestine pounds.

59. The Office's evaluation of abandoned Arab property was based on the territorial situation as defined by the Armistice Agreements and on the geographical situation of the refugees at the time the estimate was made. The question of the estimated value of the proportion of movable property which the refugees were able to take with them and of the value of those categories of movable property which did not lend themselves to global evaluation remained subjects for further examination between the parties concerned. With these reservations, the Commission held that the sum representing the value of abandoned Arab property, both movable and immovable, constituted a debt by the Government of Israel to the refugees.

B. [Paris Conference](#) (10 September - 19 November 1951)

(i) [Proposal of the Commission on the question of repatriation](#)

60. At the end of July 1951, the members of the Commission met in special session in Geneva in order to consider the future activities of the Commission. In view of the fact that all its efforts during the preceding three years to conciliate the points of view of the two sides within its terms of reference had failed, the Commission believed that it should attempt to make constructive use of the clarifications it had obtained of the parties' views by assuming the mediatory functions specifically given to it by the General Assembly in [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948. Accordingly the Commission invited the Governments of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria to send representatives to a conference to be held in Paris beginning on 10 September, stating that it was ready to make a new effort to lend assistance to the parties in seeking solutions of questions outstanding between them. In the course of the discussions, the Commission stated, it would be prepared to exercise its mediatory functions by suggesting specific solutions to specific problems for consideration by the parties. In accepting the Commission's invitation, the Arab Governments emphasized that while they were in favour of the Commission's assuming mediatory functions, all proposals that it put forward should implement the resolutions of the United Nations concerning the Palestine problem. The Government of Israel also accepted the invitation, while suggesting that the Commission obtain in advance assurances from all concerned that they accepted as the objective of the conference the final



settlement of all outstanding questions. Israel again insisted on the need for direct negotiations with the Arab States and questioned the usefulness of a procedure in which the Commission would submit its own proposals. While noting the observations made by the parties, the Commission considered that their acceptance of the Commission's invitation constituted acceptance of its proposed method of procedure.

61. During the Paris Conference the Commission submitted five proposals including one having a bearing on the question of repatriation. This proposal was as follows:

"That the Government of Israel agree to the repatriation of a specified number of Arab refugees in categories which can be integrated into the economy of the State of Israel and who wish to return and live in peace with their neighbours."

62. In submitting its proposal on repatriation, the Commission was aware that the first difficulty confronting anyone seeking a solution of the refugee problem was that of co-ordinating the wishes of the refugees themselves with the practical possibilities of any proposed solution: those two aspects of the question were interdependent and mutually affected each other. The concrete conditions of repatriation and resettlement would undoubtedly influence the wishes of the refugees, and the expression of those wishes would in turn determine the extent of any repatriation plan.

63. When in 1948 the General Assembly first had resolved that the refugees should be permitted to return to their homes, the land and houses which those people had abandoned in their flight were considered to be still, for the most part, intact and unoccupied. The operation involved in their return did not, therefore, present any very great difficulties; all that would have been necessary was for those refugees who wished to do so to undertake the journey to return and resume their interrupted lives, perhaps with a little financial assistance from the international community. It was this kind of movement and return that the Conciliation Commission had been instructed to facilitate.

64. For reasons that were beyond the Commission's task of facilitation, this movement did not come to pass. The respective attitudes of the parties on this matter -- attitudes which produced a complete deadlock as regards the refugee question -- were well known. The Arab States insisted upon a prior solution of the refugee question, at least in principle, before agreeing to discuss other outstanding issues. In their opinion, a solution of the refugee problem could be reached only as a result of unconditional acceptance by Israel of the right of refugees to be repatriated. Israel, on the other hand, had maintained that no solution of the refugee question involving repatriation could be envisaged outside the framework of an over-all settlement. As regards the right of the refugees to return, Israel refused to accept a principle that might involve it in a repatriation operation of unknown extent.

65. The Commission was unable to conciliate these two points of view. The physical conditions, moreover, had changed considerably since 1948. The areas from which the refugees had come were no longer vacant, and any movement of return would have had to be carefully worked out and executed with the active co-operation of the Government of Israel. Therefore, it was indispensable that Israel should have definite, concrete figures on which to work so that it could integrate plans for repatriation into its own economy. On the other hand, it was equally necessary that the refugees who opted to return should do so in the full knowledge of the actual conditions under which they would be repatriated. The Commission believed that the fulfilment of those two requirements was paramount in any settlement of the refugee question.

66. In presenting to the parties its proposal on repatriation, the Commission believed that consideration must be given to the refugees' choice and the expressed intention of those choosing to return to live at peace with their neighbours; and to the possibilities of the integration of the returning refugees into the national life of Israel. The Commission proposed therefore to pursue with Israel the consideration of methods for the determination of the number of refugees that could be repatriated with those criteria in mind.

67. The Commission was aware that, in submitting a practicable proposal for the repatriation of refugees, any such concrete proposal might be interpreted as departing from the strict letter of paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948. On the other hand, the Commission's proposal could only be successful if both parties, having the best interests of the refugees in mind, were willing to depart from their original positions in order to make possible practical and realistic arrangements towards the solution of the refugee problem.

(ii) Positions of the interested parties

68. With regard to the repatriation of refugees, the delegation of Israel stated that major considerations of security and of political and economic stability made the return of Arab refugees impossible. Moreover, the gulf between the Israelis and the Arabs who fled Palestine was wider now than it had been in 1948. The integration of the refugees into the national life of Israel was incompatible with present realities. Responsibility for their rehabilitation lay with the Arab States, not with Israel. As for Israel, it had made a positive contribution towards solving the problems of population movements arising out of the Palestine conflict by welcoming some 200,000 Jews from Middle Eastern countries.

69. The delegations of the Arab States maintained that there could be no limitations on the return of the refugees. In making its proposal, the Commission had not only contravened paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), which set no limit on the right of the refugees to return, but had also sanctioned a flagrant injustice and had disregarded a right confirmed by the Declaration of Human Rights. This proposal further incited Israel to continue its mass immigration policy, thus intensifying the causes of disturbances in the Middle East. As long as Israel refused to allow the return of the refugees, there could be no peace in the Middle East. The Commission should forthwith take practical measures to bring about the return of the refugees and, as a first step, should ascertain which of them wished to return. In their view the criteria proposed by the Commission did not offer a practical basis for the solution of the problem.

C. Tenth Report of the Commission

70. In its [tenth progress report](#) covering the period from 23 January to 19 November 1951, the Commission stated that it had proposed that the Governments of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and the Government of Israel should, *inter alia*, affirm their intention, and undertake, to settle all differences solely by resort to pacific procedures. Agreements should be reached, among other things, involving repatriation of a specified number of Arab refugees to Israel and compensation for property abandoned by refugees not repatriated. After careful consideration of the positions taken by the parties, the Commission had been forced to conclude that it had been unsuccessful in its endeavours to persuade them to discuss its proposals in a fair and realistic spirit. It had therefore regretfully decided to terminate the conference.

71. In the conclusions to its [report](#), the Conciliation Commission expressed the opinion that, during the preceding year, and indeed during the three years of its existence, it had been unable to make substantial progress in the task given to it by the General Assembly, although it had successively employed all the procedures which were at its disposal under the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Despite that lack of progress, the Commission recognized that both sides had expressed their desire to co-operate with the United Nations towards the achievement of stability in Palestine. It believed, however, that neither side was ready to seek that aim through full implementation of the General Assembly

resolutions. The Commission considered that further efforts towards settling the Palestine question could usefully be based on the principles underlying the comprehensive pattern of proposals submitted at the Paris Conference.

#### Part Two

#### V. Work of the Commission since 1952

72. As a result of its consideration of the Commission's report, the General Assembly on 26 January 1952 adopted [resolution 512 \(VI\)](#), in which it recalled its previous resolutions on the Palestine problem and considered that the Governments concerned had the primary responsibility for reaching a settlement of their outstanding differences. It urged those Governments to seek agreement and to that end to make full use of United Nations facilities, and it considered that the Commission should continue its efforts to secure the implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly on Palestine and accordingly should be available to the parties to assist them in reaching agreement on outstanding questions.

75. Following the adoption of that resolution, while remaining at the disposal of the Governments concerned for any assistance it could render, the Commission concluded that in the existing circumstances it could best lend its assistance to the parties by seeking the release of Arab refugee bank accounts and safe deposits blocked in Israel and by combining all available data for identification and valuation of Arab refugee property.

##### A. Release of Blocked Accounts and Safe Deposits

74. In 1952 an agreement was reached between the Conciliation Commission and the Government of Israel for the complete release of Arab refugee accounts and safe deposit items blocked in banks in Israel. After technical difficulties had been overcome, the release operation commenced in the summer of 1955. As of 30 June 1961, a total of £2,790,045 of the accounts had been released. With regard to the question of the transfer of safe deposit and safe custody items, procedures for such a transfer to Jordan and Lebanon were worked out in 1955 and the operation has proceeded satisfactorily with those two countries. Arrangements agreed upon in 1956 with the former Government of Syria and on a preliminary basis with the former Government of Egypt remain unimplemented.

##### B. The Programme of Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property

75. Under the direction of Land Experts the Commission's Office for Identification and Valuation of Arab Refugee Property has virtually completed the work of identification as far as it can be carried out on the basis of the information contained in documents now available to the Commission. The bulk of the work was done in Jerusalem from which city it was possible to obtain access to the various necessary records. About 450,000 record forms of properties owned by Arab individuals have been prepared.

76. As regards valuation, this work has been largely carried out by a specialized staff in New York, and was accelerated following the [sixteenth progress report](#) of the Commission in 1958. Analyses have been made of the sale prices realized for rural land and urban property. The result of these analyses will be applied to the valuation of individual Arab land holdings. Further details of the identification and valuation programme will be found in the working paper on the question of compensation ([A/AC.25/W.81/Rev.2](#)).

#### VI. The Refugee Question since 1951

##### A. Rehabilitation Programme of UNRWA (1951-1959)

77. As recommended by the Economic Survey Mission, the General Assembly, in [resolution 302 \(IV\)](#) of 8 December 1949, provided for the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to succeed the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees. The resolution recognized that, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), continued assistance for the relief of the refugees was necessary to prevent conditions of starvation and distress among them and to further conditions of peace and stability, and that constructive measures should be undertaken at an early date with a view to the termination of international assistance for relief. The Agency was accordingly established "(a) to carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programmes as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission; and (b) to consult with the interested Near Eastern Governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects is no longer available". It was the view of the Assembly that approximately \$33.7 million would be required for direct relief and works programmes for the year 1950, of which \$20.2 million was required for direct relief and \$13.5 million for works programmes, while approximately \$21.2 million would be required for works programmes in the first six months of 1951, and that direct relief should be terminated not later than the end of 1950 unless otherwise determined by the Assembly at its fifth session.

78. In an interim report to the General Assembly at its fifth session, the Director of UNRWA stated that the Agency had been unable to approach the high targets for the numbers of refugees employed that had been anticipated by the Economic Survey Mission, and that so far most of its works projects had to be classed as short-term, in part because the Agency had not been able to get started as early as hoped and because the time taken to interest refugees and Governments in a works programme was longer than anticipated. He added that the motives of the new Agency were not completely understood and little active response towards the starting of works projects had been evidenced outside Jordan until after a meeting in June of that year of the Council of the League of Arab States, which had approved of co-operation by its members with the Agency in its programme, provided the projects undertaken did not interfere with the right of the refugee to avail himself of the terms of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) regarding repatriation or compensation. In conjunction with its Advisory Commission, the Agency proposed that the works programme be continued but gradually transformed into a programme specifically directed toward improvement of the refugees' living conditions, current and future. As for the huge task of rehabilitation, it was proposed that the United Nations authorize contributions to a fund that would be available for projects of refugee reintegration, for surveys and for technical assistance connected therewith which Near Eastern Governments might propose.

79. In response to the above suggestions, the General Assembly adopted with the support of the Arab host Governments and Israel resolution 393 (V) of 2 December 1950, according to which it considered that, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), the reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East, either by repatriation or resettlement, was essential in preparation for the time when international assistance was no longer available, and for the realization of conditions of peace and stability in the area. The Agency was instructed to establish a Reintegration Fund, which would be utilized for projects requested by any Government in the Near East and approved by the Agency for the permanent re-establishment of the refugees and their removal from relief.

80. The establishment of the Reintegration Fund represented a practical approach by the international community towards the refugee problem. It was designed to circumvent the frustration brought about by the attitude of both sides which had

been so evident during the negotiations in Lausanne and Paris. The reference to paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) was of political value, as the Arab States maintained that none of the measures which the United Nations undertook could interfere with, reduce or abolish the automatic right of Arab refugees to return to their homes, if they so desired.

81. With the adoption of the UNRWA proposal to establish the Reintegration Fund, formal changes in the type and scale of work had to take place. Emphasis was shifted from public works projects to economic projects which would furnish the basis of a real integration of the refugees in the economic structure of the Middle Eastern countries. Taking into account the economic realities of the Middle East, the Director of UNRWA submitted a three-year plan of assistance to Near East Governments for the relief and reintegration of Palestine refugees to the General Assembly at its sixth session in 1951.

82. Although the proposal was submitted on the condition that the refugees' rights to repatriation and compensation must not be prejudiced, yet it was clear from the general objectives that the main purpose was to facilitate their permanent integration and settlement in the Middle East.

83. At its sixth session, the General Assembly adopted [resolution 513 \(VI\)](#) on 26 January 1952, under which it endorsed the programme recommended by UNRWA without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) or to the provisions of paragraph 4 of [resolution 393 \(V\)](#) relative to reintegration either by repatriation or resettlement. The programme envisaged the expenditure of \$50 million for relief and \$300 million for reintegration over and above local contributions, to be carried out over a period of approximately three years starting on 1 July 1951. The adoption of [resolution 513 \(VI\)](#) gave many representatives the hope that perhaps through economic integration the problem of Arab refugees would be solved. The sponsors of the adopted resolution accepted the phrase "without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#)" in order to facilitate the execution of the plan. If the Arab refugees were integrated and became an important part of the economies of Arab States, paragraph 11 and all other repatriation provisions would become less objectionable to Israel. UNRWA was expected to conclude broad agreements concerning its programme with the Middle East Governments for varying amounts, up to a total of \$200 million, according to the economic opportunities in the countries concerned.

84. The three-year programme, which was unanimously approved by the General Assembly, constituted the basis of UNRWA's activities during 1952 to 1954. At the beginning the prospects of success seemed almost sure. The Arab States, eager to see the realization of wide-spread projects to develop their countries and raise the standard of living of their population, gave full support and co-operation to UNRWA. By June 1953, UNRWA had already concluded four programme agreements with three of the host Governments -- Jordan, Syria and Egypt -- envisaging the expenditure of \$111 million. Two of the programmes, the Yarmuk-Jordan Valley irrigation scheme and the Sinai Desert irrigation scheme would offer, when completed, opportunities for becoming self-supporting to between 150,000 and 200,000 refugees. It was stressed, however, that even under the most favourable assumptions it would be several years before the full benefit of the projects could be achieved. In addition, the Agency had concluded an agreement with Libya which agreed to admit some 6,000 refugees. Later on, however, frustration crept in slowly and the Arab States previous sympathy and co-operation gave way to suspicion and hesitation. Financial contributions dwindled and technical obstacles and local problems proved to be difficult to overcome. In fact, the implementation of these schemes did not proceed beyond the preliminary survey-study stages. Negotiations had been concluded with Lebanon and Iraq but no agreement had been reached.

85. In his report to the General Assembly at its ninth session in 1954, the Director of UNRWA noted the following among the most serious obstacles to the rehabilitation goal:

(a) Absence of a solution along the lines of the Assembly's resolution regarding repatriation and compensation.

(b) The inadequacies of the physical resources made available for development. Aside from the Yarmuk-Jordan Valley and Sinai Desert projects, there appeared to be no practical possibility for major rehabilitation projects in the area in which the largest number of refugees lived.

(c) The reluctance of the Arab refugees as a group to co-operate in projects aiming at their rehabilitation, which many feared would deprive them of something. They maintained their longing to return to their own homeland. Moreover, no settlement could take place without the consent of the host Governments concerned, some of which had not been prepared to undertake the development of some promising rehabilitation projects.

86. The General Assembly recognized the need of a longer time for the planning and execution of rehabilitation projects and for the economic reintegration of the refugees. In [resolution 818 \(IX\)](#) of 4 December 1954, the General Assembly decided, without prejudice to the rights of the refugees to repatriation or compensation, to extend the mandate of UNRWA for five years ending 30 June 1960, and thus enable the Agency to continue its efforts to achieve the rehabilitation and reintegration of the refugees.

87. The increasing tension in the Middle East during 1955 and 1956 and the deterioration in Arab-Israel relations did much to frustrate UNRWA rehabilitation projects. On 14 November 1955, the Director of UNRWA stated that the Agency's task of rehabilitation had been rendered difficult for human, political and economic reasons deriving basically from the unhealthy situation prevailing in the Middle East since the conflict of 1948. Both the refugees and the Governments of the countries in which they lived held the United Nations largely responsible for the plight of the refugees and were bitterly critical. A large majority of the refugees, despite repeated United Nations statements to the contrary, considered participation in a rehabilitation project as tantamount to the renunciation of rights guaranteed to them by the General Assembly.

88. Following the outbreak of hostilities in the area in the fall of 1956, the Director drew attention to the fact that the situation of the Arab refugees was one of the causes of the difficulties and tensions prevailing at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Progress in the rehabilitation programme had been slow. The Yarmuk-Jordan Valley and Sinai projects which had been under study for some time and which were considered technically feasible were held up because of political and other factors. With regard to the smaller-scale self-support projects, despite opposition by some Government leaders and many political agitators, there were nevertheless refugees who welcomed opportunities for rehabilitation, which the Director believed should be opened up for them as much as possible. However, he was convinced that progress would continue to be slow until the whole political atmosphere in the area changed.

89. In 1957, the Director reported that the financial difficulties of the Agency had adversely affected its rehabilitation programme, forcing the termination of the individual grants programmes, the stoppage of teachers' training schools and, among other things, the ending of all new project activities. "Although the great mass of refugees remain opposed to large-scale resettlement projects", stated the Director, "because they link them with the abandonment of the hope of repatriation, there has been an increasing realization, on the part of refugees and host governments alike, that certain other types of self-support projects are in their own long term interests. Of particular attraction to them were UNRWA's individual grants programmes in Jordan and Syria. Under these programmes, several thousands of refugees have sought and obtained assistance from the Agency in establishing themselves in new and productive lives. Although the results have not been spectacular, they have been solid achievements in terms of individuals re-equipped to face life on their own. It has

therefore been exceptionally distressing that lack of funds has forced the Agency to bring this work to an abrupt end at the precise time when many hundreds of families were making applications which we have been compelled to turn down." With regard to the works projects and general development, the Director stated that in view of the lack of adequate contributions to the rehabilitation fund as well as the absence of any indications from a host Government that it was prepared to undertake any projects for general economic development such as the Assembly had authorized in [resolution 1018 \(XI\)](#) of 27 February 1957, the Agency had been unable to embark on any works projects or to participate in any general economic development projects such as had been envisaged.

90. When the Director reported to the Assembly in 1958, he stated that the Agency's financial position had improved sufficiently to permit it to plan to take up again in a modest way some of the rehabilitation activities which had been stopped, which he considered a most opportune development in view of changes in refugee attitude.

91. In reporting to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session in 1959, the Director noted that the mandate of UNRWA was due to expire on 30 June 1960 and that the Secretary-General had made recommendations with regard to arrangements which should be made to assist Palestine refugees after that date (see section B below). In evaluating UNRWA's performance, he recalled the task which had been assigned to UNRWA by the General Assembly, namely:

- (a) The temporary task of providing subsistence, medical care, shelter and education for the refugees; and
- (b) The continuing long-term task which aims at assisting the refugees to become self-supporting.

He noted that during the previous year, as throughout its history, its activities had been limited almost entirely to the "temporary task" of providing relief, primarily because that was the most urgent and obvious fact. The execution of the "long-term task" of assisting refugees to become self-supporting required certain conditions which so far had not prevailed, the most important being a political climate both among the refugees and in the host countries which could render possible the implementation of "projects capable of supporting substantial numbers of refugees" such as the Assembly had repeatedly called for since its sixth session. He could not foresee any shift in emphasis on the primary of basic relief services unless and until significant changes took place which would offer the refugee a permanent home and suitable employment and which would give him the feeling that a wrong had been set right. In the light of its financial limitations as well as the prevailing situation, the Agency had been obliged for practical purposes to modify its attitude towards self-support programmes. The current approach was directed at assisting a relatively small number of selected refugees to support themselves. The emphasis was on education and vocational training, which offered the refugee youth the best assurances of future employment.

92. [Resolution 1456 \(XIV\)](#), adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1959, after noting with deep regret that no substantial progress had been made in the programme for the reintegration of refugees either by repatriation or resettlement, extended the mandate of UNRWA for a period of three years, with a review to be made at the end of two years, and directed the Agency to continue its programme of relief for the refugees and, in so far as was financially possible to expand its programme of self-support and vocational training. The Assembly also requested the Conciliation Commission for Palestine to make further efforts to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of the General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#).

B. [Proposals of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session](#)

95. On 15 June 1959; in accordance with his undertaking in that respect prior to the adoption of General Assembly [resolution 1315 \(XIII\)](#) of 12 December 1958, the Secretary-General submitted a report containing proposals for the continuation of United Nations assistance to Palestine refugees. After a careful examination of the problem of the Palestine refugees in its various aspects, he recommended the continuation of UNRWA pending, as expressed by the General Assembly, the "reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East, either by repatriation or resettlement".

(i) [Recommendations of the Secretary-General](#)

94. The Secretary-General stated that he based his recommendation on an examination of three predominant factors in the refugee problem -- psychological, political and economic.

95. He emphasized that the report was limited to the question of United Nations assistance to the refugees; it contained no proposals for a solution of the Palestine problem as a whole, nor of the refugee problem as such. However, he stated that development along the lines discussed in the report might facilitate steps towards a resolution of such problems with justice and equity for all concerned.

96. After an economic analysis dealing with the area as a whole, the Secretary-General concluded that the reintegration of the Palestine refugees into productive life, although it had to be considered as a fairly long process, was perfectly within reach provided that the area could be developed through sufficient capital formation. Viewed in that perspective, the unemployed population represented by the refugees should be regarded not as a liability but, more justly, as an asset for the future. Consequently, irrespective of humanitarian reasons, continued assistance to the refugees was strongly indicated as a sound part of any programme of economic development for the area, and accordingly he strongly and unreservedly recommended the continuance of the United Nations activities in support of the refugees for all the time and to all the extent necessary, pending the reintegration of the refugee population into the productive life of the area, for which there were economic reasons to hope in connexion with its general development. This would require the prior, or at least concurrent, resolution of political and psychological problems.

97. As to the question of where integration should be sought, the report quoted paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) and stated that the stand thus taken by the General Assembly would involve integration of refugees into the productive life of Israel as well as of the Arab countries in accordance with the choice of the refugees themselves.

98. The report pointed out that the economic development which had been presented as necessary to an integration of the refugees required that various political difficulties hampering progress in the desirable direction should be overcome. One of them was the Palestine problem in its various aspects; another one the problem of inter-Arab relationships; a third one the problem of an Arab economic co-operation so framed as to render possible the exploitation of the natural resources of the area to the full benefit of all the countries in the area.

99. The report also pointed out that although the refugee problem might, usefully, in the first instance, be studied in economic and political terms, it was basically a human problem. No reintegration would be satisfactory, or even possible, were it to be brought about by forcing people into their new positions against their will. It must be freely accepted if it were to yield lasting results in the form of economic and political stability. However, it should be noted that a *de facto* economic integration would not prejudice any rights established by the resolution. It was to be hoped that in the course of the lengthy process which must be anticipated in the economic sphere, ways would be found to bring about a mutually satisfactory adjustment of stands and reactions on all sides which would resolve those psychological difficulties by the time integration of most of the refugees became an economic possibility.

100. The Secretary-General concluded that the perspective was not a discouraging one, provided that the world was willing to assist the region in its economic development and provided, further, that, step by step and as economic conditions permitted, progress regarding the political and psychological obstacles was sought in a constructive spirit and with a sense of justice and realism.

(ii) Position adopted by the Arab States regarding the Secretary-General's proposals

101. On 6 October 1959, the Arab States of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Republic and Yemen transmitted a report adopted unanimously by them, regarding the proposals Submitted by the Secretary-General for the continuation of United Nations assistance to Palestine refugees.

102. After having analysed the Secretary-General's report, the ten Arab States noted in conclusion the following points:

"(1) The general feeling that serious attempts are being made in order to carry the Palestine problem in general, and the refugee problem in particular, into a new phase contrary to the United Nations resolutions concerning Palestine and especially the refugee problem. These attempts will be strongly opposed by the Arab States because they consider that they constitute a new factor of anxiety and instability in the area, as well as an adverse effect on the relations of the Arabs with States advocating such dangerous attempts.

"(2) The increasing danger of Jewish immigration into Palestine. This is the principal factor which has been the source of danger and anxiety in Palestine for the past thirty years. In addition to its danger to peace and security in the Middle East, it constitutes a major obstacle in the way of the implementation of the United Nations resolution on the repatriation of the refugees. The Arab States, therefore, consider every material or political assistance facilitating immigration as an unfriendly act which disrupts stability and tranquillity in the Middle East, besides obstructing the implementation of United Nations resolutions.

"(5) The reaffirmation by the Secretary-General, on many occasions, of the United Nations resolutions on the repatriation of the refugees should be recorded with satisfaction. They are in conformity with the consistent stand of the Arab States in the United Nations.

"(4) The affirmation of the responsibility of the United Nations in the refugee problem and the continuation of this responsibility until the United Nations resolution is implemented.

"(5) The affirmation that the continuation of UNRWA up to the present and in the future, as well as the cost of its expenses sustained by the international community, are due to Israel's disregard for the United Nations resolutions, and the fact that the international Organization has not yet taken the necessary measures for the implementation of the resolution. There is no doubt that given the will the United Nations has the necessary means for that purpose.

"(6) The continuation by the Agency to carry out all its responsibilities without transferring any of them to the host Arab States in view of the explanation referred to in this report.

"(7) Measures by the United Nations to ensure the protection of refugee property in Israel, and the establishment of an office to safeguard and administer these properties, prevent their usurpation, and collect their income is the best means to provide the necessary funds for supporting the refugees without need to beg in their behalf and solicit contributions for this purpose. Furthermore, the handing over of the funds which Israel receives in the form of subsidies and donations to an international body for the benefit of the Palestine refugees will provide a source of assistance to the refugees.

"(8) The readiness of the host Arab States to co-operate with UNRWA in every manner to facilitate the carrying out of its humanitarian mission.

"(9) Endorsement of the Secretary-General's recommendation for the continuation of the Agency apart from the economic reasons mentioned in the report to justify the integration of the refugees outside their homeland.

"(10) The approach of the Secretary-General to the political and psychological aspects of the refugee problem and their effect on this problem, is in accordance with the United Nations resolution and it should be within the framework set forth in the present report.

"(11) The economic part of the report should not be taken into account because it prescribes a basis for resettlement and refers to matters falling outside the subject under consideration.

"(12) The affirmation of the stand of the Arab States and of the Arab people of Palestine on the right of the Arab refugees to return to their homeland, their determined insistence on this return, their rejection of every project which might, even indirectly, aim at the settlement of refugees outside their country, and their demand to return to their homes."

(iii) Position adopted by Israel regarding the Secretary-General's proposals

103. Referring to the Secretary-General's proposals, the representative of Israel, in his statement made on 50 November 1959 before the Special Political Committee, stated that: "Whatever Israel can constructively contribute, it will contribute -- but the basic solution lies in the Arab lands and not in Israel. This has been the accepted international thinking for many years, and now has behind it also the authority and prestige of the Secretary-General himself. I do not need to analyse his report in detail. Fellow delegates have read it for themselves, and any doubts they may entertain about its main emphasis will have been dispelled by the way his conclusions have come under Arab attack ... Thus, both the Secretary-General and the Director approach the problem on the basis of economic integration in the region as a whole, and not on the basis of a mass repatriation."

C. The UNRWA report submitted to the General Assembly at its fifteenth session

104. In the Introduction to his report submitted to the General Assembly at its fifteenth session in 1960, the Director declared that the rehabilitation function of UNRWA, which was intended to render a substantial number of refugees self-supporting and thereby achieve a diminution of the burden of UNRWA's relief function, had failed to achieve any appreciable results. Since 1952 the number of registered refugees had risen by approximately 238,000 to a current total of 1,120,889 -- an average net increase of some 30,000 yearly. Opportunities for living normal independent lives had been non-existent for the majority. In their minds, he emphasized, the promise which had been made in paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) continued to be the one acceptable long-term solution to their problem. The refugees were embittered because the promise remained unfulfilled.

105. The Director pointed out that in 1948 the population of Palestine was about 30 per cent urban and 70 per cent rural. Over two-thirds of the urban refugee population had become self-supporting in other Arab countries because they possessed



skills useful in those countries. The remaining 75 to 80 per cent were farmers, unskilled workers, children, the aged and sick. The employable elements of this group had failed to find jobs because they had moved into areas already saturated with farmers and unskilled labourers. Nor could any large number of jobs be created in the host countries -- except at an uneconomic level of investment with a massive infusion of outside capital -- because of the limited local resources and scope for employment. The fact had to be faced that for the majority of the refugees -- two-thirds of the total or more -- the areas where they were presently located held out almost no prospect of their absorption into satisfactory, self-supporting employment. It followed that those refugees would have to move across an international frontier in one direction or another. In these circumstances maturing youths would need special vocational training to fit them for whatever opportunities became available. Because the sons of farmers from Palestine now lack the training which a farm boy normally obtains by working with his father, even those young men who had an opportunity to return to their former homes and take up the work of their fathers would need specialized training. There were now almost one-half million refugees whose age was sixteen years or under. In addition 35,000 were now being born per year. UNRWA was offering full vocational training to 300 youths per year. The inadequacy of this rate was apparent. The danger for the future inherent in the build-up of an increasingly large body of unskilled and therefore unemployed, restless and frustrated youth needed no emphasis.

106. The Director declared that UNRWA by itself could not solve the refugee problem. He also cautioned against facile assumptions that it rested with the host Governments to solve the refugee problem. To the Director it appeared certain that the problem would continue well beyond the three-year extended mandate of the Agency and that some responsibility for international assistance would continue for a decade or longer. Any general solution to the complex Palestine problem, of which the refugee problem was a part, would be brought about largely by forces outside UNRWA, forces which would govern and shape the future of the Middle East. Ten years of UNRWA history bore out the fact that major development projects designed with the specific purpose of resettling refugees were unacceptable to refugees, and host Governments alike. Major development projects, in the Director's opinion, should proceed independently of UNRWA and without direct reference to the resettlement of refugees.

107. In outlining a three-year programme for the Agency, the Director pointed out that to salvage the talents of maturing refugee youths he was recommending a general programme to improve elementary and secondary education and a major expansion of vocational training so as to raise by June 1963 the number of trainees to between 2,000 and 2,500 per year. Regardless of how or when the refugee problem was solved, the necessity to train refugee youth for jobs in an era of technological progress would exist. Such training in no way prejudiced the ultimate rights of refugees under [resolution 194 \(III\)](#).

108. [Resolution 1604 \(XV\)](#), adopted by the General Assembly on 21 April 1961, noted, as in [resolution 1456 \(XIV\)](#), that no substantial progress had been made in the programme for the reintegration of refugees either by repatriation or resettlement, and again requested the Conciliation Commission to make further efforts to secure the implementation of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) and report thereon not later than 15 October 1961.

VII. Summary of views on the related questions of repatriation and resettlement expressed during the discussion of the Palestine refugee problem

A. Position of the Arab States

109. Ever since the adoption of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) on 11 December 1948, the Arab delegations have been unanimous in requesting, as a first step towards the solution of the refugee problem, the acceptance by the Government of Israel of the principle of repatriation set forth in paragraph 11 of that resolution.

110. As early as 1949, when numerous discussions were held in Beirut and in Lausanne with the interested parties, under the auspices of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, the Arab delegations had stated that they were not yet able to discuss with the Commission the question of the resettlement of the Palestine refugees. The reluctance of the Arab States to accept any other solution but repatriation has been expressed at practically every session of the General Assembly since 1949 and has been at the root of their opposition to plans of reintegration, resettlement or even rehabilitation which were not predicated upon the basic plan of repatriation.

111. The Arab delegations underscored also at every session the lack of progress in the implementation of paragraph 11. During the ninth session, for instance, the Arab representatives stated that not a single refugee had been repatriated and none of them had received compensation to which they were entitled. They added that the passage of time had not shaken Israel's resistance to repatriation and insisted that repatriation was the crux of the problem; relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration were only aspects of it.

112. As early as the seventh session of the General Assembly, the representatives of the Arab States expressed their fear lest the three-year works programme, aimed at making possible the reintegration of refugees through self-sustaining employment, might be prejudicial to the refugees' right to repatriation, and they deplored anew the fact that paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) had not been implemented. At the sixth meeting of the Ad Hoc Political Committee, the representative of Iraq stated that UNRWA's job was a thankless one primarily because the refugees felt that the Agency was liquidating their right to repatriation.

113. For successive years, the Arab States continued to express concern over the aims of the rehabilitation programme of UNRWA, even though Arab States signed programme agreements with UNRWA. The latent Arab opposition to resolution 513 (VI), which aimed at making a great number of refugees self-supporting, stemmed from their belief that that resolution did not envisage a final solution to the refugee problem in terms of repatriation and that the reintegration of refugees in the host countries was practically impossible, the only permanent solution being repatriation in accordance with General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). They also invariably recorded their opposition to Jewish immigration into Palestine because immigration decreased the possibilities of repatriation for the Arab refugees.

114. However, at the ninth session of the General Assembly, the representative of Iraq suggested that repatriation of refugees could take place in stages, first in Jerusalem and in the areas of Palestine which were allotted to the Arabs under the partition scheme of 1947, and then inside Israel.

115. At the tenth session the representatives of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen insisted that the refugees be given the opportunity to choose between repatriation and compensation. Only then would the implementation of other resolutions concerning the reintegration of refugees into the economic life of the Near East become feasible. During the same session some Arab States' representatives put forward the idea of a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the refugees concerning repatriation. Suggestions for resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees as the only acceptable solution to the problem continued to be viewed by the Arab States as unrealistic, since the refugees' desire for repatriation remained unabated. No Arab State could, co-operate with UNRWA regarding resettlement or rehabilitation until a political



settlement had been attempted.

116. At the twelfth session of the General Assembly in 1957, the representatives of the Arab States continued to assert that the only just and lasting solution of the problem of Palestine refugees lay in repatriation and compensation as provided for in General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). The keynote of the Arab position was sounded by the representative of Saudi Arabia, who stated that a settlement called for a new and firm approach. He accordingly proposed a plan based on the following principles: first, repatriation of the Palestine refugees; second, prohibition of Jewish immigration into Palestine; third, outlawing of Zionism as an aggressive movement which was preventing the establishment of friendly relations between nations; fourth, prohibition of Zionist fund-raising campaigns which supported and encouraged violations of international agreements; and, fifth, establishment of a United Nations agency to help the Jews of Israel to return to their former homelands.

117. The representative of Egypt also reasserted that the only just and lasting solution of the refugee problem lay in repatriation, as the General Assembly had declared in [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948. Repatriation was the absolute right of all refugees.

118. Another Arab representative, asking whether "it would be possible to resettle the refugees in neighbouring countries", answered in the following terms: "First of all, I do not know whether those countries where resettlement is envisaged can actually receive the refugees and integrate them into their political, economic and social life. Secondly, this would be to accept an accomplished fact, for it would imply at least a tacit acceptance of all that has taken place and this would include the supposition that the Palestine problem is, at long last, solved -- and this is far from being the case. Finally, this solution, as some have suggested it, is no more than an effort to justify Jewish immigration into Palestine by another immigration of Palestine refugees into the Arab countries. This idea is profoundly shocking to us. This would be an exchange or transfer of population, such as has been carried out under other circumstances". He then referred to General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), paragraph 11, concerning repatriation and said "it is still in force". "The vast majority of the refugees yearn for repatriation."

119. Another representative stated: "We maintain that the reintegration of the Palestinian refugees into the economic life of the Middle East cannot be achieved by any means other than their repatriation". He added that "we cannot accept the contention that their repatriation is no longer feasible or practical, that room is no longer available for their resettlement in their fatherland". His belief was that "no other way is better for the rehabilitation of the Palestine refugees than to assure them the right of repatriation, which could be done by exerting pressure on the Israelis and by bringing the moral authority of the United Nations into action for the realization of this sublime purpose".

120. The representative of Iraq stated that his delegation "wholeheartedly associates itself with the delegations of Saudi Arabia and Jordan in the suggestions which they have put forward for establishing international control of Zionist immigration to Israel". He then put forward the following suggestions: "First, drastically to scale down United States aid and loans to Tel Aviv; ... Secondly, to amend or rescind existing taxation exemption of Zionist funds raised in the United States; ... Thirdly, to supervise and restrict expenditure of United States aid, loans and donations for peaceful purposes only; fourthly, an investigation by some Congressional or Federal body into Zionist activities in the United States".

121. At the thirteenth session in 1958, substantially identical views on repatriation were voiced by the Arab States. The representative of Saudi Arabia was once more the keynoter of the Arab position. Regarding the fundamental principles of the solution and the measures and sanctions to implement it, he insisted that the following points be taken into account:

"Firstly, the *de facto* situation created by Israel is entirely unacceptable as a basis for the solution of the Palestine problem in general, or the refugee question in particular ...

"Secondly, the rights of the refugees to their homes and homeland are not related to, or in any way dependent upon, the consent and refusal of Israel ... The crux of the whole question is repatriation. Israel will not accept repatriation; there will be no solution ...

"Thirdly, resettlement, reintegration, rehabilitation or any similar projects, no matter what their connotation may be, are not a solution by themselves: I mean they are not a solution to the problem in its substance. They should be planned or implemented not as aims, but merely as a means to meet the legitimate aspirations of the refugees and to the extent of giving effect to their inherent right to their homeland. This is not the policy that we propose; this has been the policy of the United Nations ever since 1948; that these projects are only of provisional character ...

"Fourthly, the relief programme of the refugees is no solution to the problem; neither is it a substitute, no matter how long it is continued. It is a humanitarian measure, having no political implications.

"Fifthly, works projects and self-support programmes ... are not a solution ..."

122. The representative of Saudi Arabia then added that "we shall resist any attempt which, directly or indirectly, reduces or minimizes in any degree, in any colour, in any manner, the right of refugees to repatriation".

123. Turning to the solution of the problem, he declared: "Here I would say that we need not look for a solution - the solution is there - it is repatriation and nothing but repatriation. It is the only solution which does not dishonour, but certainly does honour the Charter. It is the only solution which does not defeat but rather endorses the resolution of the United Nations ..."

124. He then submitted the following proposal for the implementation of the solution of repatriation:

"First, Zionism, being by concept, policy and practice an aggressive and expansionist movement, should be outlawed ...

"Secondly, Jewish mass immigration being the spearhead of Zionism ... should be prohibited ...

"Thirdly, economic assistance to Israel, technical or financial, should be discontinued, as well as fund-raising campaigns, whether as loans or contributions ..."

125. The representative of Lebanon was in full agreement with the views of Saudi Arabia concerning the solution of the refugee problem, first and above all, by repatriation and indicated that "the only solution to this problem rests in the satisfaction of the wishes of the refugees through the total implementation of all the pertinent resolutions adopted by the Assembly".

126. The representative of the United Arab Republic, while insisting that "efforts should be exerted to ensure the repatriation of the refugees and compensation for lost possessions", urged however the execution of projects of individual assistance. He explained that reintegration "did not mean resettlement alone, but repatriation as well". He stated his preference for individual assistance which had been accepted by the refugees, rather than large-scale works projects which had to be abandoned because of their high cost and because they could not be integrated with the general economic development plans of the host countries.

127. At the fourteenth session in 1959, the opposition of the Arab States to reintegration as resettlement outside Israel and within the economic framework of the host countries was unabated.

128. During the general debate the representative of Saudi Arabia stated:

"... every plan of integration or resettlement outside their homes in their cities and villages is categorically rejected in principle and detail."

During the consideration of the question before the Special Political Committee, the representative of Iraq stated:

"First of all we do not accept the integration of refugees into the economic life of any country other than their own, because this is contrary to their clear and unmistakable desire."

The representative of Libya stated:

"Several attempts have been made to integrate the Palestine refugees in the neighbouring Arab countries. These attempts were doomed to failure for the sole reason that it is quite unimaginable for us to settle the fate of a nation solely on the basis of economic considerations."

129. The representative of Saudi Arabia suggested the following three-year plan for the solution of the Palestine refugees:

"The plan consists of three stages that take care of one million refugees. The basic idea is to bring the refugees, within a span of three years, into productive life. It is a plan based on a real economic reintegration, and has all the chances of success."

"The first stage deals with the reintegration of 400,000 refugees by the end of 1960. They will be reintegrated in Western Galilee, Jaffa, Lydda, Ramle, the Triangle, the central and the southern zone of Palestine. These are areas that have been entirely allotted to the Arabs under the [1947 resolution](#). Without going into the justice or injustice of that resolution, these areas have been reserved to the Arabs, and there should be no difficulty in reintegrating the refugees in the economy of that area. The region is abundant with productive land and admits various economic projects for the absorption of the refugees."

"The second stage for 1961 deals with 100,000 refugees. This is the second year in which economic reintegration would take place in the Jerusalem area, which was delimited as an international *corpus separatum* by the United Nations, with sovereignty belonging to none. Here again the United Nations Agency can start projects for the integration of the refugees into the economy of the area."

"The third stage for 1961 deals with the remainder of the refugees -- that is 500,000 refugees. This group of refugees would be reintegrated in the area now controlled by Israel. In this region, projects for reintegration are feasible. Arab ownership here is preponderant, the Jewish ownership not exceeding 6.1 per cent of the whole area."

130. The representative of the United Arab Republic, speaking of the choice between repatriation and compensation, declared:

"Yet it must be clear, however, that the choice could only be offered when repatriation faces the refugees as a reality, when the possibility of repatriation does not exist, the choice equally does not exist. To choose, you must have two alternatives to implement. If the choice of repatriation cannot be implemented, then you are forcing the refugees to choose compensation."

131. At the fifteenth session in 1960 and 1961 representatives of Arab States reiterated their insistence on repatriation as the only acceptable solution and continued strongly to oppose the idea of absorption of the refugees by the neighbouring countries.

132. In the course of his full presentation of the Arab case the representative of Saudi Arabia stated "that change of conditions in Palestine does not change their [the refugees] national aspirations and that no power on earth can bend their determination to go back to their homes and to live in their homeland". "Should the refugees rise to arms, it will be the responsibility of the United Nations, caused by the inaction of the United Nations". He declared "Repatriation is a right which stands even without the United Nations recognition. The right of a people to their homeland is not deniable ... The people of Palestine are the twentieth century victims of the denial of the right of self-determination".

133. At a later stage in the debate, speaking of the expressed desire of the Israel Government to negotiate all problems with the Arab States, the representative of Saudi Arabia stated: "The right [of repatriation] has been fully recognized by the United Nations. This is a matter which does not depend upon the negotiations of Governments because repatriation is not subject to negotiation". "The question of negotiation is simply a slogan intended to mislead the world, just to tell the world 'These people are not repatriated because the Arab States refuse negotiation'."

134. The representative of the United Arab Republic said that the General Assembly had passed over in silence every year the aspiration of the refugees for implementation of the premise made in paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). "Instead emphasis was concentrated on their [the refugees] resettlement in Arab countries through major projects and showed a complete lack of initiative on repatriation. The result of this policy has led to the existence of a state of non-confidence on the part of the refugees in the policy of projects presented by the Agency, which they considered as an escape from the execution of the repatriation policy."

135. The representative of Afghanistan stated: "I take it for granted that these homeless people can be integrated - if you wish - into the economic life of a neighbouring Arab country, but before we decide this issue, we must determine first whether they want to turn their backs on their fields and homes and settle down for good in a neighbouring land. These people are Arabs but they are not Egyptians, they are not Lebanese. They are not Syrians. They are Palestinians and that is precisely what they want to remain."

136. The representative of Jordan stated that "the first step in solving the refugee problem would be to stop any further immigration into Israel". Subsequent steps he mentioned were that "all Jews in Israel who desire to leave Israel should be given the full freedom and opportunity to do so", that "all Arabs expelled from Israel after the armistice should be allowed to return forthwith" and that "lands taken away under various pretexts from Arabs living now in Israel should be returned to them at once".

#### B. Position of Israel

137. On the question of repatriation of the Palestine refugees, the position of Israel was made clear practically from the beginning. As early as July 1949, Israel submitted to the Conciliation Commission an official memorandum stating that "the clock cannot be put 'back ... the individual return of Arab refugees to their former places of residence is an impossible thing'".

138. As the problem kept recurring in the successive General Assembly sessions, Israel based its opposition to repatriation "en masse" of the Arab refugees in the *de facto* integration of thousands of refugees within the life of the Arab communities, though it considered that this integration was not reflected in the "inflated" numbers of those receiving relief. It also endorsed unreservedly the three-year relief and reintegration programme under General Assembly resolution

513 (VI) and pointed out that since 1949 the emphasis of United Nations resolutions had shifted from repatriation to the integration of the refugees into the economic life of the Middle East as a whole.

139. Starting from the seventh session of the General Assembly, the emphasis of the arguments of the Israel representatives was that the only just, merciful and practical solution of the refugee problem lay in their resettlement in the Arab countries, and that it would be irresponsible for the United Nations to perpetuate hopes of repatriation even in the name of existing resolutions.

140. At the following session, the representative of Israel reiterated his Government's opposition to mass repatriation, which would, he claimed, establish an irredentist minority in Israel. At the eighth session, he recalled the acceptance by the United Nations in 1950 of the principle of resettlement of the refugees and their integration into the economic life of the Middle East by means of a reintegration fund for the permanent re-establishment of the refugees and their removal from relief. The claims of Israel's national security as an argument against massive repatriation started to be more explicitly stated at the ninth session of the General Assembly, when Israel reasserted that it considered the basic solution to be the permanent integration of the refugees among their own kin in the Arab countries. Repatriation could only result in internal subversion, adding to the danger Israel already encountered from hostile neighbours. Israel was convinced that peace could not be obtained by the repatriation of refugees and the creation in Israel of the large Arab *irrendenta* bent on destroying the State of Israel.

141. The point of view of Israel concerning repatriation during the eleventh session of the General Assembly was that the only practicable solution of the refugee problem was resettlement not repatriation. By keeping alive the refugees' illusions about creating an Arab Palestine at the expense of Israel, the refugees had been instigated to resist resettlement.

Moreover it was a fact that some progress had already taken place with respect to reintegration of the refugees in Arab lands, for instance in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. This indicated a trend which might be intensified, the more so because Israel could not solve the problem through repatriation on account of vital demographic, security and social reasons.

142. Israel expanded on its views concerning repatriation during the twelfth session. The representative of Israel, in the course of the seventieth meeting of the Special Political Committee argued that "resettlement in Israel would not be 'repatriation' but alienation from Arab society and transference to the only State in the area in which Arab loyalties do not predominate". He reminded the Committee that Israel "cannot in conscience entertain a solution which would involve its own disruption". He also pointed to the fact of "the acceptance of 500,000 of the refugees into citizenship in Jordan", and he concluded from this fact: "It surely cannot be suggested that citizens of Jordan are potentially also citizens of Israel, that they have acquired a new citizenship and still retain a right of repatriation to Israel. This idea is full of political and juridical confusion". He stated also that "it is by integration in host countries of kindred culture and national sentiment that other refugee problems of our generation have been solved".

143. As to the argument based on Israel's security, the representative of Israel said that "believing as we do that the resettlement of Arab refugees in Israel would hold great peril both for Israel and for the refugees themselves, we cannot in conscience encourage them to opt for frustration, tragedy and conflict".

144. Touching on the freedom of choice for the refugees, the representative of Israel expressed the following view on justifying Israel opposition to repatriation:

"We fear that there can be little doubt that they would so opt. The emphatic indoctrination to which they have been subjected for nine years, the incitement by Arab political leaders and newspapers against any solution except one of settlement in Israel for the purpose of Israel's destruction, rules out any prospect that a genuine freedom of choice is available."

145. At the thirteenth session of the General Assembly in 1958, the representative of Israel, analysing the reason why the refugee problem had so long endured, while world-wide analogous problems had been solved, felt that Arab obstruction against integration was the cause of this paradoxical situation. He stated, that "it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the integration of Arab refugees into the life of the Arab world is an objectively feasible process which has, however, been resisted for political reasons". Elaborating further, he declared: "Most of the recent literature describes resistance to integration by two methods: political opposition to integration and careful scrutiny of UNRWA's activities to ensure that they do not develop into permanent solutions. The policy of obstruction, however, also has a third heading -- I refer to the rejection of economic development proposals which seem to hold the promise of a refugee solution". Asking himself "what is the solution to this problem?", he stated that "any discussion of the solution revolves around two themes: resettlement and what is called 'repatriation'. Repatriation would mean that hundreds of thousands of people would be introduced into a State whose existence they oppose, whose flag they despise, and whose destruction they are resolved to seek ... The basic solution lay in the integration of the refugees in the countries where they had dwelt for ten years and in which they were living among their kinsmen". Moreover, the economic potentialities in the Middle East, "the labour opportunities of the region", show that "there are broad opportunities in the Arab world for refugees to build new lives".

146. He indicated that "in the context of such a solution by integration in the Arab lands, and the parallel fulfilment of Israel's compensation undertaking, we do not exclude an extension of the uniting of families scheme under which many former Arab residents have already come back to Israel territory".

147. At the fourteenth session the representative of Israel outlined the position of his delegation regarding repatriation as follows:

"UNRWA at one time had nearly fifty thousand refugees in its care, within the borders of Israel. These were progressively absorbed. In 1952 the Israel Government entered into a special agreement with the Agency to relieve it of all further responsibility for the 19,000 refugees still left in Israel. In addition, by legalising the status of a number of refugees who drifted back to their homes in the early period, and by developing a scheme for the reunion of broken families, over thirty thousand more were repatriated from beyond our borders. All these Arabs were integrated into the economic life of Israel, and became citizens. If the Arab countries had been willing to allow even a proportionate integration of their Arab refugees brethren on their own soil, the whole problem would have melted away by now."

He further stated:

"In its statement in reply on 12 November, my delegation showed that paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) did not grant such absolute right -- neither in the intrinsic text of the paragraph, nor when it is taken in the context of the resolution as a whole, nor in the light of the surrounding circumstances. My delegation then stated that 'in considering whether to permit any refugees to return, the Government of Israel must obviously have regard to the situation as a whole, including such factors as the state of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the attitude towards Israel of the refugees themselves, security considerations, and basic social and economic problems'. We believe this to be an integral part of the prerogatives of every independent State, which the United Nations has not purported to abolish, and could not abolish, if it wished."

148. At the fifteenth session the representative of Israel in the course of restating his Government's case declared in an analysis of paragraph 11 that that paragraph did not create any absolute rights. A settlement of the refugee issues could not be separated from a settlement of other issues. "In considering whether to permit any refugees to return, the Government of Israel must have regard to the situation as a whole, including such factors as the state of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the attitude towards Israel of the refugees themselves, security considerations and basic social and economic problems." He asked "How is the refugees' wish to be made manifest?" "A refugee would be branded

as a traitor if he put on record that he did not want to return, and he would equally be branded as a traitor if he put on record that he was willing to return as a good Israeli." "Can we throw our borders open to an influx of refugees who have been taught to link their return with the destruction of Israel?" "However, in the context of a solution by integration in Arab lands, we do not exclude further extension of the family reunion scheme."

149. The representative of Israel also argued that the economic integration of the refugees in the region was the fundamental and long-established United Nations position. There was no other realistic outcome short of war which would destroy the State of Israel and resettle the refugees among the ruins. In saying that the future of the Arab refugees lay in the Arab world, his delegation was saying nothing contrary to any single United Nations resolution on the problem. "For Arab spokesmen to talk of repatriating people to Israel territory whether Israel agrees or not, whether the Arab States make peace with Israel or not, is just plain nonsense."

150. The representative of Israel argued that there were not and never had been a million persons falling into the category of Palestinian refugees as defined by the United Nations. After an analysis of data he said that according to one estimate the actual number of families which were displaced from what is now Israel territory, and who have not been absorbed, would not greatly exceed 100,000 families. The fundamental question was whether that total could be absorbed in a region which contained about 45 million Arabs. The process of absorption, which was already going on, pointed the way to a permanent long-range solution of the problem. Israel itself had absorbed over a million refugees, approximately half of them Jews from Arab countries. World experience indicated that in post-war refugee situations resettlement was an answer and repatriation was not an answer.

#### C. Position of certain other delegations

151. After the General Assembly had adopted [resolution 513 \(VI\)](#), on 26 January 1952, providing for a programme for the relief and rehabilitation of Palestine refugees, certain Powers, among them France, expressed the hope that resettlement and reintegration of the refugees could be advanced through UNRWA's work programme. These hopes were also voiced at the seventh session of the General Assembly in 1952. The delegation of Australia suggested greater efforts by the Governments concerned to co-operate with UNRWA in implementing its three-year works programme. Australia felt that the fact of the existence of Israel and the unlikelihood of repatriation of all refugees made it imperative to press on for resettlement. At the same session, the representatives of Belgium and of the Netherlands also supported the works programme as a means of forming the refugees into self-supporting communities, and of reintegration.

152. Although other delegations invariably referred to repatriation as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) in the succeeding sessions of the Assembly and recognized repatriation as an inherent right of the Palestine refugees, the solution through reintegration, resettlement and rehabilitation came to be viewed as a practical alternative which, however, should in no way prejudice the rights of the refugees under paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). At the eighth session, the United States delegation pointed out that UNRWA's operations did not prejudice those rights. The representatives of France, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada stressed that rehabilitation rather than relief was the chief aim of the United Nations. The delegation of the Netherlands stated that the, only true solution was to find employment for the greatest number of refugees. The representative of Australia recalled that General Assembly [resolution 302 \(IV\)](#) had envisaged repatriation as only one of the possible solutions, the other being resettlement outside Palestine.

153. This trend was also apparent at the ninth session, when a number of delegations emphasized the essential objectives of UNRWA. The representative of the United States stated that objective as being rehabilitation, that is, enabling the refugees to become self-supporting members of society. He suggested that efforts be continued to find new homes and work for refugees choosing to settle in Arab countries, without prejudice to their rights to repatriation and compensation. He insisted, for instance, that the Sinai and the Jordan-Yarmuk projects begin without delay. The representatives of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom concurred.

154. At the tenth session, the representative of Iran suggested that refugees could be repatriated in yearly quotas and stages. He said that if Israel accepted this principle, the other Governments could then be expected to plan for the rehabilitation of refugees not repatriated. Certain other representatives, including those of Australia, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Panama, also thought that Israel could accept a certain number of refugees, perhaps in stages. Others pointed out that it would be unrealistic to ask Israel to repatriate all the refugees.

155. More detailed suggestions were put forward by other Powers during the eleventh session. Peru, for example, proposed, as a means of contributing to the solution of the over-all problem, that, first, UNRWA should pay greater attention to the possibility of resettling refugees on the territory of States that were prepared to accept them. Secondly, the Agency should be authorised to negotiate directly with Governments on behalf of the United Nations with a view to the resettlement of refugees. New Zealand felt that the continuing aim of UNRWA was the reintegration of the refugees into the Near East community. The host Governments should encourage the refugees to accept UNRWA's self-support projects without prejudice to the ultimate choice of repatriation or compensation. The representative of the United States declared that its Government had always supported substantial rehabilitation programmes. The delegation of the United Kingdom urged that priority should be given to schemes designed to provide permanent employment for refugees and to educational and vocational programmes likely to contribute to permanent resettlement. The representative of Canada said that his Government welcomed the suggestion that UNRWA should contribute to plans for the general economic development of the Near East area.

156. At the twelfth session in 1957 some delegations of Powers not directly interested in the issue began noting that the situation in respect to the repatriation of the Palestine refugees seemed to have reached an " impasse ", and asked for an "attempt at a fresh solution". The representative of Peru said that "the claim to repatriation prevents acceptance of any other possible solution". He added the following opinion: "We feel that circumstances make it imperative to put the problem, as a whole, before the parties concerned ... Such a procedure can be carried out directly between the parties concerned or by means of a third Power."

157. The representative of Australia felt that "we have reached a situation where inflexibility is met with equal inflexibility". The representative of the Philippines suggested that mass repatriation might not appear to be the panacea the refugees expected. On the other hand integration was not likely to prove a panacea either, but it was by far the more practical alternative and the one, in his view, which could lead to a lasting solution. He could only hope that the practical necessities of the situation would modify the inflexible demand for repatriation and compensation. For its part, and as a beginning, Israel could renew its offer of compensation and consider the principle of repatriation to the extent possible, but in more precisely defined terms which could serve as a basis for negotiation. He added: "In the meantime, the United Nations ... could make the 200 million dollar integration fund ... available to UNRWA to enable the Agency to map out projects of a more ambitious character".

158. The representative of New Zealand, referring to the statement of the Director of UNRWA that the refugees were increasingly favourable to certain modest self-support programmes, felt that "that trend should be encouraged". He suggested that "the Governments of host countries might use their influence to persuade the refugees that it was in their own interest to take part in broader programmes as well". He felt moreover that "Israel might reconsider its attitude towards

repatriation and compensation. Israel, by offering to admit a further number of refugees, would dispose other Middle Eastern countries to do likewise."

159. The representative of India declared that "so far as my delegation is concerned ... we are in favour of integration, but only after ascertainment of the wishes of the refugees".

160. Among the proposals and suggestions of other Powers concerning repatriation at the thirteenth session in 1958, the United States representative stated that "the growing appreciation of the desirability of self-support and rehabilitation ... is a significant indication that the refugees are realizing that the continuation of the present system is not in their interests". He added that the continuation of UNRWA beyond its present mandate was not, in the eyes of the United States, the proper way to handle the refugee problem. Some better system would have to be found that would greatly accelerate the rate at which refugees were made self-supporting.

161. The representative of Ireland stated that "my delegation remains firmly of the opinion that the principle of compensation, ... not by Israel alone, but by this Organization ... is the key to the problem ... The refugees have the right to look for rehabilitation, not as charity but as a measure of justice". The representative of Australia was of the opinion that "a settlement in the Middle East would release resources and energies, now being devoted to less fruitful purposes, for economic and social development with the prospect of a better life for all the people of the Middle East".

162. The representative of New Zealand called for a "reconciliation" of the parties concerned. Referring to [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), he stated the object of that resolution was not, as has been suggested, to help the refugees "restore their national society in its ancient dwelling house". Such terms suggested "aims which are unattainable by peaceful means".

He added the following opinion: "We have always felt that Israel would have much to gain were it to accept the central principle of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) by offering to receive back a significant number of refugees".

163. The representative of the United Kingdom was of the opinion "that self-support projects and vocational training will not solve the problem of Palestine refugees ... The solution ... will probably, be found to lie in a combination of repatriation, compensation and resettlement".

164. At the fourteenth session of the General Assembly in 1959, proposals and suggestions on the question of repatriation were again advanced by other Powers in the terms set out in the following paragraphs.

165. Referring to the General Assembly resolutions adopted, on the question, the representative of India stated:

"The central theme of all these resolutions, apart from details, has been to recall [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948 and [resolution 302 \(IV\)](#) of 8 December 1949, and subsequent resolutions connected therewith, and to emphasize that the resolutions and recommendations adopted were -- and this is an important clause -- without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) or to the provisions of [resolution 393 \(V\)](#). These resolutions have also made it clear that the continuation of the United Nations agency for relief of Palestine refugees was necessary because repatriation or compensation of the refugees as provided for in paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) had not been effected, and that the situation of the refugees continued to be a matter of great concern.

"The essence of these resolutions is that the United Nations has steadfastly stood by the principles laid down in paragraph 11 of its [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), and it has recognized the continued United Nations responsibility for the relief of the refugees until repatriation or compensation is provided for in terms of that paragraph.

"The plain meaning of the text of that resolution and subsequent resolutions adopted by the United Nations, to which I have made reference, seems to us that it was clearly the intention of the United Nations that the refugees should be given the choice of either returning or not returning to their homes, with compensation for the loss of or damage to property, and that whatever choice they made should be respected. There were no qualifications placed on either the exercise of the choice or the acceptance of it except, of course, that it should be freely and voluntarily made -- which is an inherent aspect of any free choice -- and that those wishing to return to their homes should be willing to live at peace with their neighbours."

166. Referring to [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), the representative of Indonesia declared that:

"In clear terms, the resolution states that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest possible date, and that compensation should be paid to those not choosing to return for loss of or damage to their property.

"It is the considered opinion of my delegation that the United Nations resolution on this matter is not only still valid -- it has been reiterated every year -- but it seems even more acute and pressing that it be implemented under the circumstances of today. The Assembly should concentrate its efforts of finding means of implementing this decision concerning repatriation or compensation contained in its earlier resolutions."

167. Referring to [resolution 393 \(V\)](#), the representative of Ceylon stated:

"The only way out of the impasse was to find a compromise without reviving old disputes as to which side was to blame.

In its [resolution 393 \(V\)](#) the General Assembly had already expressed the view that the problem could be solved by the reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East, either by repatriation or resettlement.

It was said that the choice between those two solutions lay with the refugees. At all events the significant fact was that the General Assembly had accepted an alternative solution as well as repatriation. Hence there was room for discussion and negotiation. The Israel Government had expressed its willingness to negotiate, while the Arab States demanded that Israel should first agree to implement fully the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. His delegation refused to believe that any wise and peace-loving statesmen would insist adamantly on one solution only."

168. The representative of the United States of America declared that:

"In 1955, the then Secretary of State, Mr. Dulles, had proposed that the refugees should be enabled to resume a normal existence through repatriation or resettlement, and had pledged United States support for some form of international loan to facilitate the payment of compensation by Israel and United States participation in the carrying out of development projects. Those proposals had been reaffirmed by President Eisenhower in 1957. The interest of the Government and people of the United States in the care and the future of the Palestine refugees remained undiminished.

"The United States delegation welcomed the constructive approach of Ceylon and India and would give sympathetic consideration to any suggestion, whether related to the Palestine Conciliation Commission, a new commission or any other possibility, which would help to solve the problem. It also welcomed the Indian delegation's reminder that the General Assembly consistently held fast to the principle of repatriation or compensation. As one of the major contributors to the relief of the Palestine refugees so far, the United States was in favour of a fuller examination of the various proposals that had already been made and of the indications of growing willingness to make new attempts



to solve some of the questions which divided the Near East."

169. The representative of New Zealand stated that:

"In this debate, as in previous years, much attention has been devoted to the precise meaning and scope of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). In that connexion, I should like to repeat a statement made by the New Zealand representative in this Committee last year:

' [Resolution 194](#) is the key declaration of principle in relation to the refugees. It should not be repudiated and it should not be diminished in scope. It was not completely exclusive in its terms. It envisaged a [choice](#) - [repatriation](#) for those who sought to return in peace to their homes, [compensation](#) for those who decided to do otherwise. This choice was implicit in subsequent resolutions where reference was made to repatriation or resettlement.'

"Both this year and last year my delegation has listened most carefully to the comments made by the representative of Israel in regard to the scope and interpretation of paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). Although we do not disregard the general security problem, the manifest impossibility of wholesale repatriation, or the substantial practical obstacles to assimilation after eleven years absence, we do not regard these objections as disposing of this central provision. We continue to believe that the acceptance of the principle of a free choice is a key to the negotiation of what is practicable and reasonable, having regard to the wishes and the circumstances of the refugees concerned.

"I repeat, however, that in my delegation's opinion the refugees should not be deprived of their option, however great the practical limitations may be.

"We believe, therefore, that Israel has much to gain from accepting the central principle of the refugees' freedom of choice. It seems to us that this would at least open the way to a consideration of practical responsibilities, and I would request that a permanent solution must be sought both through respect for the Assembly's decisions and through co-operation between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States. It is not within the power of one side alone to solve the problem justly. We do believe, however, that there is a step which Israel could take: to accept this central principle of freedom of choice."

170. The representative of Australia stated that:

"The conception of the individual refugee has been at the base of many of the Assembly's resolutions on this question. It is the central point, perhaps, of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), which provides that each refugee would make his own choice under conditions prescribed in the resolution.

"It is, I regret to say, unrealistic to think that circumstances exist at this moment in which that choice could be made or implemented."

171. The representative of Italy stated that:

"To use the words of the representative of the United States, the representative of India has given us a timely reminder that the General Assembly has consistently held to the principle that the Palestine refugees should be given a choice between repatriation and compensation. In this frame, any constructive suggestion which might help to bring the problem towards a solution would be welcomed."

172. The representative of Sweden declared that:

"My delegation is not in a position to evaluate the concrete possibilities that may exist for such a development. I would only say that we find it difficult to regard as a realistic solution the idea that a million refugees who can hardly be said to nourish friendly feelings towards Israel should be repatriated to that country."

175. The representative of Ireland, stated that:

"My delegation can well understand and sympathizes with the position of the Arab States when they call for the implementation of paragraph 11 of Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#), to the effect that the refugees wishing to return and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so and that those who do not wish to do so should receive compensation.

"We can well understand, also, the position of those in Israel who fear that a return of the refugees *en masse*, carrying with them so much resentment, would endanger the existence of Israel as a State.

"The first stage might be a definite offer to a limited number of refugees, perhaps picked by lot, of the choice indicated in that resolution. Those who chose to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so; the remainder of this group -- those who chose not to do so -- would receive compensation, which ought in our view to be assessed in a more generous manner than is envisaged in that resolution."

174. The representative of the USSR referring to paragraph 11 of [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) stated that:

"This solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees also corresponds to the opinion of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, which has reaffirmed repeatedly the right of the refugees to repatriation or compensation."

175. The representative of Peru stated that:

"The whole debate about repatriation or compensation should prove easy to solve if, instead of mutual recriminations, the parties will take a constructive position. My delegation, like many others, considers that the world climate is now favourable for Israel and the Arab States to explore every avenue leading towards conciliation."

176. Referring to the Irish proposals the representative of Belgium declared that:

"One delegation, that of Ireland, proposed that a first step would be the repatriation of a small number of refugees as a test. This idea at least has the advantage that it is both positive and cautious in its outlook. But I believe that, first of all, new psychological conditions should be created."

177. Recalling the statement made by his Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Assembly's general debate, the representative of Pakistan said that:

"Although over a decade has passed, the victims of international injustice in Palestine who took refuge elsewhere are still denied the repatriation which has been guaranteed to them by successive resolutions of the General Assembly."

178. The representative of Bulgaria stated that:

"My delegation is ready to support all measures aimed at ensuring repatriation or a just compensation for the refugees, in accordance with the resolutions adopted thus far by the United Nations."

179. The representative of Guinea stated that:

"My delegation hoped that the United Nations will bring to the people of Palestine hope and justice by supporting the



legitimate demands of the refugees with regard to their repatriation and compensation."

180. At the fifteenth session comments and suggestions on the question of repatriation by delegations not directly concerned echoed in frequently similar terms those made at previous sessions.

181. A number of Latin American representatives in particular expressed the hope that the countries concerned would seek out paths of agreement leading to a peaceful and just solution of the problem.

182. The representative of the United States stated that his Government shared the deep disappointment of other Members that the parties directly concerned had apparently not indicated, since the fourteenth session, their willingness to approach the refugee problem with adequate flexibility and with due adherence to principles often confirmed by the General Assembly.

183. The representative of Greece, as well as that of Bulgaria and of Guinea, declared that refugees should be given a chance to make a choice as to the final settlement. "One cannot deny them", he said, "the right to return to their native land if they so desired." He saw encouraging prospects in the plan for the development of the refugees through vocational training - while making clear that the education of the refugees in no way prejudiced their ultimate rights under [resolution 194 \(III\)](#). Other countries, including China, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, endorsed strongly the educational and vocational training programme of UNRWA.

184. The representative of Pakistan commented that so far Israel had "persistently defied the United Nations resolution and refused to repatriate the refugees, whereas Israel had kept its doors wide open for the Jewish immigrant". It must be brought home to Israel that the right of the refugees to return to their homes does not depend on the goodwill of Israel; so long as the United Nations is unable to force this administration, Israel -- which is its own creation -- to implement the resolution of the General Assembly, the Middle East must remain in turmoil and the refugee problem must continue to be a threat to the peace not only in the Middle East, but in the whole world."

185. The Soviet delegation deemed it essential that the demands of the General Assembly regarding the return of those political refugees to their homes, the return of property and other goods belonging to them, and the payment of compensation should not be ignored by the Government of Israel. It could not tolerate a situation where that Government and the Governments of the Western Powers which stood behind it persisted in ignoring the decisions of the General Assembly.

186. The representative of Ireland recalling his delegation's suggestion at the fourteenth session for breaking the deadlock, again called for the repatriation of a limited number of refugees who would be encouraged to keep in touch with their former comrades in the refugee camps. In this way one of the negative factors referred to by Israel -- the supposed ignorance among the refugees of what repatriation would really involve -- would be gradually removed. After the first pilot group, a larger group would then be offered the same choice and so on. Later, in explaining his vote, the representative of Ireland expressed the hope that the Conciliation Commission might be able to examine the possibility of working out an agreement between the parties on the lines of the foregoing proposal. The Irish delegation, he said, would like to see consideration given to a resolution whose operative paragraphs might run as follows: "One, urges the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948; two, calls upon the Government of Israel to declare its willingness to carry out at least a pilot repatriation scheme in the immediate future and to state the maximum number of refugees it will be prepared to admit under such a scheme without any other condition than that those refugees should undertake to live at peace with their neighbours; three, calls for compensation in the case of all refugees not returning to their homes, to be paid not only in respect of property left in Israel, but also in respect of disturbances and time spent unproductively in refugee camps; four, requests the Director of the UNRWA to report on the number of refugees requiring such compensation and to make recommendations as to the amount of compensation equitably payable; five, calls upon Members of the United Nations, on receipt of this report, to be prepared to make voluntary contributions to a compensation fund for Palestine refugees; six, calls upon the Government of Israel, on receipt of the said report, to state the amount it would be prepared, to contribute to such compensation fund."

187. The representative of New Zealand believed that few suggestions within the field of political practicability and of established principle had more potential promise than the Irish proposal. "If the principle of free choice were implemented" he said, "in respect of even a small sample of refugees, it would be possible to gauge much better the physical dimensions of the problem, to test the log-jam in mutual confidence, and to assess the weight of the security objections."

188. The representative of Cyprus suggested that as a positive first move forward out of stagnation that Israel open the door for the return of a limited number of refugees. Such a step would put the conduct of the refugees within the State of Israel to the test, and the whole question of repatriation would be seen in the light of its practical application.

189. The representative of India stated that "the question of offer of choice of repatriation needs to be settled urgently. All the refugees may or may not elect to go back ... But these are matters which will arise for consideration only when the offer of choice is made." "It is important in this context that a more active role should be played by the Conciliation Commission for Palestine."

190. The representative of the Netherlands stated, "My Government has always held that the problem cannot be solved by a *restitutio in integrum*. It would be unrealistic to wait for world history in a unique whim to reverse its course. My Government has always advocated self-support and resettlement as the best course under the circumstances."

191. The representative of France, referring to the UNRWA educational programme and the welcome given in his country to hundreds of thousands of refugees after the war, commented that "the integration of refugees into the national economy, regardless of the actual difficulties with which these countries are confronted, is - in the last analysis - much more of a paying proposition than the maintenance of young human reserves in a vacuum, as it were, which sap the resources of Governments and limit their development."

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