UNITED NATIONS

Distr.
RESTRICTED

A/AC.25/Com.Gen/SR.39
30 August 1949

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE
GENERAL COMMITTEE
SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN
THE GENERAL COMMITTEE AND THE
DELEGATION OF ISRAEL
held in Lausanne on Tuesday,
30 August 1949, at 12:30 p.m.

Present:	Mr. de la Tour du Pin	(France)	- Chairman
	Mr. Yenisey	(Trukey)	
	Mr. Rockwell	(U.S.A.)	
	Dr. Azcárate		- Principal Secretary
	Mr. Sasson		- Representative of Israel

The CHAIRMAN explained that the Committee had been instructed by the Commission to communicate two matters to the Israeli delegation. First, with reference to the repatriation of members of separated families, the Commission had received a letter dated 29 August from the head of the Egyptian delegation, giving the names of two officers appointed by the Egyptian Government to deal with administrative arrangements connected with the repatriation operation. The other Arab delegations, with the exception of Syria, had the preceding day informed the General Committee that their Governments had authorised their representatives on the Mixed Armistice Commissions to receive the list of names proposed for repatriation The delegations had voiced some criticism of the procedure established, but the Committee felt that at this stage even a faulty procedure was better than none. Accordingly, the Chairman expressed his personal hope that the first lists would be handed without delay to the various Arab representatives on the Mixed Armistice Commissions, who would receive and transmit them to their Governments. The Arab delegations had, moreover, offered to receive similar lists in Lausanne; if the offer were accepted, they would undertake to obtain replies from their Governments within five days. The Chairman hoped that rapid progress could now be achieved along the lines of these procedures.

Mr. SASSON recalled that his Government had originally been criticised by the Commission for suggesting the use of the Mixed Armistice Commissions, which were military organs, as a channel for this operation; it now appeared that the Arab States had determined to use the same channel. He wished to advise the Commission that his Government would submit no lists of names to any Arab members of the Mixed Armistice Commissions until the Arab Governments had officially signified to the Israeli Government that those members were authorised and qualified to receive the lists. The letter from the Egyptian delegation was acceptable as such official information, but similar letters would be required from the other Arab Governments. In any case, Mr. Sasson would communicate the substance of the Chairman's remarks to his Government. The CHAIRMAN wished to draw the attention of the Israeli delegation, as he had done with the Arab delegations the preceding day, to the fact that questions of procedure and politics should not be allowed to intervene, to prevent or delay the execution of the present programme. It was the unqualified opinion of the French delegation on the Commission that the urgency of the problem was such as to make any procedure acceptable which made possible concrete results.

In the second place, the Chairman recalled that beginning with their memorandum of 18 May , the Arab delegations had not ceased to manifest their deep concern with regard to the condition of their abandoned orange groves. The report of the United Nations expert , established with the assistance of Israeli authorities, had stated that approximately 25% of the groves could still be saved if immediate measures of conservation were taken. Any further delay would probably result in total loss of the groves. The expert's findings tallied, moreover, with information supplied to the General Committee by the Israeli delegation itself.

The General Committee had drawn the attention of the Commission to the question, and it was the Commission's hope that it would be possible for Israel to accept the establishment of a mixed working group composed of one Israeli member and one Arab member, under a neutral chairman, to study the possibility of applying such measures of conservation. The Commission had approved draft terms of reference for such a group which the Committee now requested the Israeli delegation to transmit to its Government. The plan would eventually be communicated to the Arab delegations. The Chairman pointed out that the functions of the mixed working group would not overlap with those of the Economic Survey Group, since the former body would be concerned only with a limited technical operation, while the activities of the latter would be on a governmental level and on a much broader scale.

Mr. SASSON agreed to submit the Commission's proposal to his Government and to inform the Committee when a reply was received. He wished to stress certain points, however. Although his Government agreed to the importance of promoting direct contacts with the Arabs, it should be recalled that Israel and the Arab States wore still in a state of war. As long as that condition existed, the property in question would necessarily remain under the control of the custodian appointed for the purpose. It was to the interests of Israel to preserve that property, and his Government did not feel that a mixed working group of the type suggested could do more for the preservation of the property than the custodian was at present doing. He pointed out, moreover, that there was an internationally recognised principle involved; as long as the state of war continued, his Government could not allow Arabs to return to Israel to work their groves.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that it was a question simply of the entry into Israel of one Arab member of the mixed working group, not of a movement of refugees.

Mr. ROCKWELL thought it should be remembered that the Commission was here endeavouring to take a step toward peace, and that any such step, however small, was worth the effort involved.