



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PALESTINE COMMISSION
Lake Success, New York
Friday, 9 January 1948, at 11.00 a.m.

Present:

Members:	Mr. Raul Diaz de Medina	(Bolivia)
	Mr. Karel Lisicky	(Czechoslovakia)
	Mr. Per Federspiel	(Denmark)
	Mr. Roberto de la Guardia	(Panama)
	Mr. Vincente J. Francisco	(Philippines)
Secretariat:	Mr. Trygve Lie	(Secretary-General of the United Nations)
	Mr. Ralph Bunche	(Secretary of the Commission)

1. Opening Address by the Secretary-General

The SECRETARY-GENERAL declared open the first meeting of the United Nations Palestine Commission.

It was with great pleasure and satisfaction that he welcomed the Members of the Commission who had assembled to undertake the momentous task which devolved upon the Commission by virtue of the General Assembly [Resolution](#) on the Palestinian Question. The far-reaching significance of the work upon which the Commission was to embark for the peace and security of the world and for the United Nations required no elaboration. Be reminded Members of the Commission that they were assembled to devise effective and practical ways and means of implementing the solemn decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations. That decision had been taken by more than the necessary two-thirds majority vote of the Members of the General Assembly, and, moreover, enjoyed the support of the majority of the Five Great Powers including the United States and the Soviet Union. The Mandate of the Commission was, therefore, firm and clear. The Commission was to take all necessary measures leading to the establishment in Palestine, not later than 1 October 1948, of an independent Arab State and an independent Jewish State.

The General Assembly [Resolution](#) under which the Commission was to act promised the full authority of the United Nations in the discharge of the responsibilities.

The Commission was entitled to be confident that in the event it should prove necessary, the Security Council would assume its full measure of responsibility in the implementation of the Assembly's [resolution](#). The Commission had the right to assume, as he assumed, that in such a situation the Security Council would not fail to exercise, to the fullest and without exception, every necessary power entrusted to it by the Charter in order to assist the Commission in fulfilling its mission. The Secretary-General stated that he was aware of the unfortunate and deplorable incidents which had been occurring in Palestine recently; he was also aware of the fact that disorders of this kind had been endemic in Palestine for some years past. This, indeed, was in a large measure why the United Nations was seized with the problem.

In this connection the Secretary-General wished particularly to call the attention of the Members of the Commission to the fact that the General Assembly [Resolution](#) appealed "to all Governments and to all Peoples to refrain from taking any action which might hamper or delay the carrying-out of these recommendations" concerning Palestine. He trusted that this appeal, which represented the will of the vast majority of the Members of the United Nations, would not go unheeded.

Included among the host of difficult tasks confronting the Commission were the following:

The establishment of the frontiers of the Arab and Jewish States and the City of Jerusalem in accordance with the general lines of the Assembly's recommendations on partition.

The progressive assumption of responsibility for the administration of Palestine as the Mandatory Power evacuated the country, pending the establishment of the independent states.

The establishment of Provisional Councils of Government in the Arab and Jewish States and the direction of their activities in the transitional period.

The approval of election regulations governing democratic elections to constituent assemblies in each state; and the appointment of the Preparatory Economic Commission which was to pave the way for the Economic Union and the Joint Economic Board, envisaged in the [Resolution](#).

The task before the Commission required delicate negotiation, astute judgement, resolute determination, unflinching courage and irrefragable objectivity.

The Secretary-General assured Members of the Commission that he had exerted every effort to ensure that an experienced and thoroughly competent staff would be available to them. This staff was entirely at the Commission's disposal and could be counted upon to render whatever assistance the Commission might require.

In conclusion the Secretary-General said he recognized the hard road the Commission had to travel, but was fully confident that it would surmount all obstacles. In the interest of peace, security and the United Nations he wished the Commission full success and pledged to that end every resource at his disposal.

2. Approval of the Agenda (document A/AC.21.1)

The provisional agenda was adopted unanimously.

3. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The SECRETARY-GENERAL, before calling for nominations for the Chairman, said that he thought it would be wise to decide first upon the tenure of office of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman.

Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) thanked the Secretary-General for his address and welcome. He was particularly grateful to find that the Commission had the full weight of the United Nations behind its task.

He suggested that the term of office for the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman should extend from the first meeting of the Commission until 1 October 1948. He considered this the most practical date, as by the terms of the General Assembly's [Resolution](#) the Commission would have finished its task by that time, and furthermore would be required to submit its final report to the General Assembly and the Security Council in September 1948.

Mr. FRANCISCO (Philippines) seconded the proposal.

This proposal was adopted unanimously.

The Secretary-General then called for nominations for Chairman.

Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) proposed Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia). In making this nomination he paid tribute to Mr. Lisicky's statesmanship, impartiality and intimate knowledge of the Palestine problems.

Mr. MEDINA (Bolivia) seconded the nomination.

Mr. LISICKY was unanimously elected Chairman.

On taking the chair, Mr. Lisicky thanked his colleagues for electing him Chairman. He said he appreciated their motives in appointing a Member of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine to the chair. This Committee had accomplished the preliminary work on the Palestine question and had been responsible for the solution submitted to the United Nations. There were different appraisals of the work of the Committee, but one feature could not be contested, namely, that it was a conscientious approach and that members of the Committee had shown a high degree of consciousness of their moral responsibilities. Being Chairman of the Commission meant being the first servant of the Commission. The Chairman said he could not discharge his functions without the friendly and unreserved concurrence of his colleagues, which he was sure would be forthcoming. He said he would endeavour to be a loyal interpreter of the views of the members of the Commission.

The Commission was a temporary executive organ of the United Nations, established for the definite purposes set forth in the General Assembly's [Resolution](#). The Commission was not a policy-making body, nor was it free to deviate from the terms of the Assembly's [Resolution](#) or to modify its work in any way. Any political decisions would have to be decided upon by the political body under whose guidance the General Assembly had placed the Commission, namely the Security Council.

He was sure the Commission was ready to give of its best and to the fullest extent of its capacities in the accomplishment of its task.

The CHAIRMAN concluded by expressing his thanks to the Secretary-General for his welcome and address. He congratulated the Commission on the appointment of Dr. Bunche as Principal Secretary and paid high tribute to his intelligence, loyalty and great capacity for work.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL then called for nominations for Vice-Chairman.

Mr. FRANCISCO (Philippines) proposed Mr. Medina (Bolivia) for this office.

Mr. du la GUARDIA (Panama) seconded the proposal of the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. MEDINA (Bolivia) was unanimously elected Vice-Chairman.

Mr. MEDINA (Bolivia) thanked his colleagues for this honour and assured them that he would endeavour to fulfill the confidence they had placed in him.

4. Consideration of Plan of Work of the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Secretary to read a proposed resolution submitted by the Chair, concerning an invitation to interested parties to assist the Commission in its work.

The SECRETARY then read the following text:

“THE UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

“RESOLVES

“That the Secretary-General of the United Nations on behalf of the Commission, promptly extend to the Mandatory Power in Palestine, an invitation to designate such representatives as it may determine, who shall be available to the Commission for such authoritative information and other assistance as the Commission may require in the discharge of its functions under the [Resolution](#) of the General Assembly on the Palestine Question. Similar invitations shall be extended for the same purpose to the Arab Higher Committee and the Jewish Agency.”

This proposal was unanimously adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.00 noon.

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