



UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

Statement delivered on 21 September 1951 to the Conciliation Commission by Mr. Maurice Fischer of the Delegation of Israel

I wish again to thank the Commission, in the name of my delegation, for its welcome to us. It has always been the earnest desire of my Government to see permanent peace established between Israel and her Arab neighbours for the sake not only of the Middle East but of the world as a whole. My Government is convinced that peace and stability in the Middle East is a vital necessity for the peace of the world. The Israel delegation has come to this conference for the purpose of negotiating a final peace settlement with the Arab States.

We have already had an opportunity of making known to the Commission the view held strongly and consistently by the Government of Israel, that only by direct negotiations between Israel and her neighbours can there be any real hope of achieving peace. This, indeed, is the conclusion which the Commission itself reached last year and which it duly reported to the General Assembly. If the Arabs had any genuine desire for the settlement of the problems outstanding between us, they would agree to talk these problems over and work out mutually acceptable procedures. They cannot, in reason, claim to want a settlement, and at the same time refuse to discuss it with the other party concerned. If direct and frank talk is made impossible by the Arab delegations' continued refusal to meet us and talk things over, I fear our presence here will be of no great profit.

As first step towards the achievement of peace my delegation, as already indicated, is willing to subscribe to a declaration such as that indicated by the Commission, concerning each country's right to security and freedom from attack, and binding each to refrain from warlike or hostile acts against another and promote the return of permanent peace. We agree entirely with the Commission, if I say use your words, that no constructive progress towards a solution of problems is possible unless all the parties, at the outset of these discussions here, explicitly accept these obligations. We are prepared here and now to extend to each and every one of the Arab States the offer of a pact of non-aggression. We should see in acceptance of this offer a real token of the Arab States' willingness to work towards the essential goal of this conference — the restoration of peace in the Middle East.

The plight of the Arab refugees was the direct result of the hostilities launched by the Arabs themselves against Israel to crush her out of existence at birth, and the real claim of the refugees lies against the Arab Governments which sent their armies to invade Israel in cynical violation of their international obligation. I am, however, authorised to state that the Israel Government is willing to make a contribution to the resettlement of the refugees, but it must naturally insist that such an arrangement be mutual. As the Commission well knows, Israel has taken in some 200,000 Jewish refugees from the Arab States in the past two or three years, a large number of whom were deprived of their property and assets by the Arab Governments concerned. My delegation is willing to embark upon a discussion of this question with the Arab States, with a view to finding a constructive overall solution to the problem of the refugees.

We are also willing to take up the question of blocked accounts, though here too it is understood that any discussion of the matter will include the blocked accounts in Iraq of the Jews who have left that country and found admission to Israel.

The whole emphasis of our efforts rests on the achievement of peace. We suggest that three preliminary steps may well lead us all to this objective. First of all, acceptance by all the parties of a non-aggression agreement along the lines suggested. Secondly, direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab States, in conformity with the conclusion which the Commission itself reached last autumn. Thirdly, before any proposals are considered, an agreement on what are the outstanding problems which should constitute the agenda of this conference, it is impossible to envisage that a conference can succeed if the parties have not even agreed, or been given an opportunity to agree, on what are to be the subjects of discussion and on the procedures to be followed.

If the Arab delegations refuse to commit themselves to a policy of peace, if they are unable to say that it is peace they have come here to seek, then, Sir, if we are to be completely frank and realistic, I feel bound to say that this attitude of the Arabs condemns our efforts to failure in advance. If, on the other hand, they are as anxious as we are to pave the road towards peace, they would find our delegation happy to meet them in a common effort to achieve this high aim, and I feel certain that success would not elude our grasp.