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Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)

CONTENTS

**AGENDA ITEM 76: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN
THE NEAR EAST**

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/43/13 and Add.1, A/43/408, A/43/581, A/43/582, A/43/652-657, A/43/702)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the documents for agenda item 76 and to documents A/43/273, A/43/393 and A/43/709 containing letters on the item and welcomed Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

2. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), introducing the report contained in document A/43/13 and Add.1, said that the period it covered - from 1 July 1987 to 30 June 1988 - had been a critical one in the history of the Palestine refugees and thus of UNRWA. Moreover, in the past five months programmes had been further affected by developments in the region. Educational services had faced serious difficulties in both the occupied territories and Lebanon. In Lebanon, however, UNRWA had managed to repair and to reopen all its schools. In Gaza, pupils had managed to complete the 1987 school year and, despite frequent disruptions, the new school year was in progress. The vocational training centre had also been operating since October. The situation in the West Bank was more uncertain, as schools remained closed by order of the occupation authorities. UNRWA hoped that they would be allowed to open by mid-November as anticipated.

3. In health, exceptional challenges had been met through emergency arrangements to extend the duration and scope of services. The relief service programme, which had been shrinking steadily, had had to be strengthened again to reach out to the growing numbers of refugees whose situation had been adversely affected by an increasingly difficult economic and social environment.

4. In Lebanon, a programme to repair shelters in refugee camps in Beirut which had been affected by the "camps war" had begun approximately two months previously after prolonged and difficult negotiations. Rapid progress was being made in the Burj el-Barajneh camp, while only a few shelters had been repaired in Shatila, owing to the greater destruction in that camp. Programmes in Lebanon were continuing, although UNRWA sometimes encountered serious obstacles, particularly with regard to security. It was difficult to assist only one group of people when the entire population was so gravely affected by events. UNRWA therefore welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon and the expanded involvement of the United Nations system in that country.

5. The Agency remained gravely preoccupied with maintaining its activities in the territories occupied by Israel. The uprising had led to an increase in the number of casualties among the refugees and to widespread suffering among them. Interference with the Agency's activities and violations of its premises had undermined its efforts to work quickly and effectively. The uprising had brought out the common interests and requirements of the two occupied territories. The

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(Mr. Giacomelli)

special situation of the territories and the urgent and dramatic needs of the refugee population there, who represented some 40 per cent of the total number of refugees receiving Agency assistance, placed them at the core of UNRWA concerns.

6. The Agency was carrying out emergency operations in three out of five of its fields of activity. The administrative implications were many, including the need for separate budgeting and planning exercises. When dramatic emergencies arose, drawing world attention, the immediate response of donor Governments was often generous. Problems arose when such emergencies became chronic, however. The Agency was expected to continue to provide services which had begun as temporary operations, whereas there was no steady funding to do so. The Agency was therefore considering setting aside resources which might become available through unforeseen circumstances affecting untied funds, such as favourable exchange rate movements, to meet the recurrent costs resulting from emergency activities. Through careful planning, stringent budgetary measures and increased support from donors, the Agency had managed to achieve a degree of financial stability over the past three years. However, the uprising in the occupied Territories, the changing requirements of the refugees and the uncertain timing and size of contributions were reviving its concerns. A 5-per-cent increase in the annual budget was necessary just to meet the needs of a growing refugee population while maintaining programme delivery at its current level. Additional resources were needed to respond to emergencies and to maintain and repair installations. The gradual dispersion throughout the region of Palestine refugees who did not find accommodation with the camps might also increase the costs of programme delivery.

7. It was with alarm that he drew attention to the increase in the number of Agency staff arrested and detained without charge or trial over the past year. Details on that matter were provided in the report and in other documents submitted to the General Assembly. As the Agency's fortieth anniversary approached, the ongoing sufferings of hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees were a dramatic reminder of the need for a just and durable political solution to the question of Palestine. While some countries would like UNRWA to do more and others believed it should limit its activities, it was worth bearing in mind that the Agency's mandate was couched in general terms which had allowed it to respond flexibly to the changing needs of the refugees. In the absence of any indication to the contrary from the General Assembly, he intended to continue that pragmatic approach.

8. The favourable developments in international relations and in the role of the United Nations had yet to influence UNRWA's area of operations. He was confident, however, that the moment would soon come when the United Nations would be called upon to address the region's problems. With its unique experience, the Agency stood ready to play a part in the international community's response to the growing expectations of the peoples of the Middle East.

9. Mr. JOHANSEN (Norway), speaking in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and introducing the report contained in document A/43/702, recalled that the Working Group had been established in 1970 under General Assembly resolution 2656 (XXV) and consisted of the following nine Member

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(Mr. Johansen, Norway)

States: France, Ghana, Japan, Lebanon, Norway, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. By its resolution 42/69 B, the General Assembly had requested the Working Group to continue its efforts, in co-operation with the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General, for the financing of the Agency for a further period of one year.

10. The Working Group's report was divided into four chapters: I. Introduction; II. Activities of the Working Group during 1988; III. Financial situation of UNRWA; and IV. Concluding remarks. In its concluding remarks, the Working Group noted that the Agency's operational reserve had been built up to \$25 million by the beginning of 1988 but agreed that that amount did not provide an adequate cushion against any delay that might occur in the payment of pledges. It also noted with concern the further postponement of the construction of much-needed facilities. In noting the possible projected shortfall in income for 1988, the Working Group expressed concern to hear that some countries had not been able to maintain the level of their contributions in 1988 and the hope that that development would prove to be only temporary.

11. The Working Group shared the Commissioner-General's concern about future funding for the Agency. In its report, it noted that the Commissioner-General envisaged an annual growth of 5 per cent in expenditures over the next few years simply in order to maintain the regular programmes at current levels. That would require a corresponding increase in the contributions and continued strict control over expenditure, if cuts in services were to be avoided. The Working Group noted further that the Agency would also require additional funding for its special operations in Lebanon and the occupied territories, if they were to be continued beyond 1988. In conclusion, the Working Group reiterated its appeal for additional funding, the details of which were set out in paragraph 20 of the report.

12. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the problem of Palestinian refugees was a consequence of Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people, perpetrated with the support of British imperialism, and with State and individual terrorism as its main instrument. Since 1948, the uprooting of the Palestinian people had continued unabated, with the result that the number of refugees currently exceeded 2.2 million.

13. In defiance of United Nations resolutions and in disregard of the obligations of occupying Powers under the Fourth Geneva Convention, many leaders of the Likud party and of others expected to form part of the future Israeli Government had been advocating the expulsion of 1.5 million Palestinians from the occupied territories, the deportation of 32 Palestinians in 1988 being a case in point. That new policy known as the "policy of transfer" went hand in hand with a process of annexation.

14. The heroic intifada of the Palestinian people had just entered its twelfth month. According to the figures in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/43/13), the number of victims of Israeli repression had reached a total of 8,180. As of 30 October 1988, 411 persons, including 60 women, 50 children and 25 babes-in-arms, had been killed, 45,000 others had been wounded, 6 of them seriously, and 600 pregnant women had had miscarriages.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

15. The staggering number of casualties and the mass arrests of 30,000 Palestinians, 5,400 of whom, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, had been placed in administrative detention, as well as the state of siege to which entire areas were subjected, were all manifestations of State terrorism and the policy of extermination directed against the Palestinian people.

16. The intifada was the highest form of resistance against occupation and the fight for independence. It was the revolt of the Palestinian people against the tragic situation imposed on them, and it was the obligation of the international community to respond to their call by bringing pressure to bear on Israel, as the occupying Power, to accede to their legitimate demands.

17. Since 1967, Israel had continually violated the Fourth Geneva Convention, as made clear by the reports of the ICRC and numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. After the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, the Secretary-General, at the request of the Security Council (resolution 605), had drawn up recommendations for ensuring the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation. Although 10 months had elapsed since the submission of the Secretary-General's report, Israel did not appear ready to comply with its recommendations. On the contrary, the repression by the occupying forces had become more brutal, forcing the Palestine Liberation Organization - Unified National Leadership to make a further appeal to the international community to secure protection for the defenceless masses of Palestinians for a period not exceeding several months, in preparation for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

18. In order to settle the problem of Palestinian refugees, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 194 (III), among others, calling for Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their homes. However, the Zionist leaders of Israel had consistently refused to comply with that resolution, preferring to embark on the opposite course, the objective of which was the destruction of Palestinian camps and the forced integration of refugees in Arab country. That process, which Israel attempted to justify on the basis of the Zionist myth, was tantamount to the negation of the existence of the Palestinian people and their inalienable internationally recognized rights, namely, the right to return to their homes and property, to self-determination without external interference and to establish an independent State on Palestinian soil under the leadership of the PLO, their sole legitimate representative.

19. The Palestine Liberation Organization wished to reiterate its readiness to accept a peaceful settlement based on United Nations resolutions relevant to the question of Palestine and the conflict in the Middle East. The establishment of a just and comprehensive peace called for the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, including the PLO on an equal footing. The United Nations must intensify its efforts to remove the obstacles raised by the United States of America and Israel. The PLO would continue to co-operate fully with the United Nations to bring about a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

The Palestinian people would continue their struggle to attain their inalienable national rights until that objective was achieved.

20. With regard to the reports and documents submitted to the Committee and the statements made by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and the Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, he welcomed the measures taken to reconstruct the camps of Shatila and Burj el-Barajneh in Beirut and the reopening of the UNRWA facilities. It was essential that water-supply installations in all parts of the Shatila camp should be completed soon, while the repair work was continuing. The PLO was working with all parties concerned to find a permanent solution to the problems of security in the refugee camp.

21. On 31 July 1988, Jordan had severed legal and administrative relations with the West Bank. In August 1988, the PLO's Central Council had taken note of that measure and decided to assume the responsibilities resulting therefrom. One major implication of the Jordanian decision was to make the West Bank and Gaza a single occupied Palestinian territory. The nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council, to be held on 12 November 1988 in Algeria, would consider that significant change and take the appropriate decisions. In that connection, the PLO would be looking for closer co-operation with UNRWA.

22. Hundreds of Palestinians continued to be uprooted by force and relocated far from their normal place of residence. The Palestine Liberation Organization wished to reiterate its categorical opposition to that process, the objective of which was to erase the Palestinian refugee camps.

23. The PLO condemned all Israeli efforts to obstruct UNRWA's work. In view of the brutality shown by the occupying forces and the indescribable suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people, it was essential that UNRWA should maintain its services in occupied Palestine and Lebanon. It should also continue to issue individual cards to Palestinians who were eligible to receive them, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/120 I.

24. The Palestine Liberation Organization condemned Israel's persistent refusal to co-operate with the Secretary-General to enable him to carry out the functional feasibility study for the establishment of the University of Jerusalem Al-Quds and to compensate UNRWA for the damage caused to its facilities and property by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

25. It was, moreover, regrettable that the words "occupying Power" had not been used in the reports of the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General to designate Israel, because it was proper United Nations terminology.

26. The Palestine Liberation Organization maintained that the only solution to the refugee problem lay in the return of the Palestinians to their homes, in accordance with resolution 194 (1948). In the mean time, it would continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General, the Commissioner-General and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA in order to ensure a stable financial situation for the

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(Mr. Mansour, Observer, PLO)

Agency. While believing that those who had created the refugee problem should bear the responsibility for their action, it also took the view that those who were helping to prolong the misery and suffering of the Palestine people were doubly responsible. Nevertheless, it expressed its gratitude to all friendly countries which had made generous contributions to the UNRWA budget and appealed to all parties concerned to tackle the financial problem of UNRWA, whose services should be maintained and improved until the refugee problem was finally solved.

27. Mr. SALAH (Jordan) said that the Commissioner-General's report (A/43/13 and Add.1) reminded the international community of the tragedy of the Palestine refugees, a situation which the United Nations had created 40 years before. While the General Assembly, in resolution 194 (1948), had tried to bring the question of Palestine refugees to an end with their return to their homes, it was none the less a fact that the problem had only grown worse over the years, as Israel had rejected that resolution. The General Assembly had also sought a new formula for solving the problem by adopting resolution 302 (1949), establishing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. At that time it had been thought that the Agency was nothing but a body whose *raison d'être* would quickly cease to exist because the Palestine refugee problem would soon be settled.

28. He paid a tribute to the Commissioner-General and his colleagues for their untiring efforts to carry out their humanitarian mission, the scope of which should be broadened owing to steady deterioration in the plight of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon. Palestinians living in Lebanon were in a particularly tragic situation because the Palestinian camps were the target of Israel's repeated acts of aggression. The popular uprising in the West Bank and Gaza, which had been continuing for 11 months had brought about an Israeli campaign of repression, as a result of which hundreds of people had been killed and thousands wounded or arrested. The security measures and economic sanctions had placed the Palestinians in an untenable situation. The Agency's performance was all the more remarkable because it had managed to strengthen its presence in the occupied territories and to provide more substantial aid to the besieged Palestine people. The question of Palestine was not a question of refugees; it was a political problem requiring a political solution. Furthermore, that had been the conclusion of the Commissioner-General (A/43/13, para. 10) and of the Secretary-General (S/19443). Representatives should once again study the important conclusions and recommendations in that report, particularly those referring to the unanimous wish of the Palestinians to ensure that action taken to relieve the suffering of the civilian population was not replaced by an emergency settlement of the underlying political problem, the legitimate concern of the international community regarding the situation in the occupied territories and Israeli violations of the provisions in the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which the Security Council and General Assembly had time and time again confirmed as applying to the occupied territories.

29. The Agency played a particularly important role because it had had long experience of the region's problems, enjoyed the confidence of the refugees and was best placed for dealing with the Israeli authorities. It was therefore essential to strengthen its presence in the occupied territories, to the extent that its

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(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

presence helped to reassure the Palestine people, to some degree, and to temper the brutality of the Israeli occupying forces. In that connection, Jordan appealed to all States parties to the fourth Geneva Convention having diplomatic relations with Israel to prevail upon that country to abide strictly by the provisions of the Convention, and demanded respect by Israel for all the Agency's privileges and immunities. All those factors should induce the international community to fulfil its obligations vis-à-vis the international Agency, by making contributions commensurate with the importance of its mission.

30. While welcoming the contributions in cash and kind from governmental and non-governmental sources, his delegation shared the Working Group's concern that the income for 1988 might not be sufficient to cover the cost of maintaining services, a target which implied a 5-per-cent increase per year in expenditure and hence a corresponding increase in contributions, as also the cost of maintaining strict control over expenditures, if deficits were to be averted, and the need to cut down the Agency's services one day or another. If that were to happen, it would mean that the international community had failed in its obligations. The Agency's services were essential services which the Palestine refugees could not do without so long as Israel refused to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (1948).

31. In recent years, the Commissioner-General had tried, without success, to stem the Agency's financial crisis. His failure was due to several factors, especially the severe cuts in contributions paid by certain donors and the fact that the Agency's services were in steadily greater demand. The reason for that situation was the pressing needs created by the exceptional circumstances in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon which obliged the Agency to continue its emergency programmes in those areas.

32. By participating in the development of human resources in the occupied territories, the Agency made a major contribution towards attaining a peaceful, fair and durable settlement in the Middle East. Any material or moral support provided to the Agency was therefore, in the final analysis, a contribution to the achievement of that objective. Jordan was therefore in favour of renewing the mandate of the Agency which, even if peace were to be restored in the region, could be converted for the time being into a training organization whose economic and social input would give impetus to the peace process.

33. So far as the Commissioner-General's report was concerned, he had the following comments to make. The exceptional services rendered to Palestine refugees were greatly appreciated. Accordingly, it was to be hoped that the situation would not have a negative impact on the Agency's operations in other regions. The Agency should formulate a plan for responding to the needs referred to by the Secretary-General in his report (S/19443) and strengthen its presence in the West Bank and Gaza in order to protect the inhabitants, so far as possible, from repressive Israeli practices. The Agency should also redefine the absolute poverty line in the light of recent events and provide services, even though limited, to non-refugees. The establishment of a new programme planning and

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

evaluation office in UNRWA was a wise measure. It was regrettable that it had not been possible to transfer the Agency's headquarters back to Lebanon.

34. The medium-term plan (1989-1991) was based on an assumption of zero growth in operational expenditure, which might mean an added burden for the Governments of the host countries and Agency staff. Moreover, the fact that the Agency had had to cut down its construction projects substantially owing to enormous financial difficulties in recent years was a serious problem the implications of which should be looked into as a matter of urgency.

35. Jordan deeply regretted the death of certain Agency staff members and offered its sincere condolences to the families of the deceased. It also congratulated the two staff members recently released by their captors in Lebanon. Once again it reiterated its condemnation of the measures taken by Israel to impede the Agency's smooth operation, such as the order forbidding Agency ambulances to enter the camps, the detention and ill-treatment of staff members, the cutting of telephone lines between Vienna headquarters and the Gaza regional office since March 1988, and the occupation of certain Agency premises.

36. Mr. BEDOUI (Egypt) said that over the past 11 months, the hideous nature of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had been revealed. Given the events of the previous years, it had been obvious that the nightmarish occupation and suffering endured by the Palestinian people would sooner or later cause an explosion; that had indeed happened.

37. As the Commissioner-General had pointed out in his report (A/43/13 and Add.1), the situation in the occupied territories had greatly deteriorated. The Israeli authorities were endeavouring to break the courageous resistance of the Palestinian people by every means, engaging in repugnant practices which called for an energetic response from the international community.

38. His delegation would have liked to stick to the technical aspects of relief operations in the occupied territories, but it felt that attention must be drawn to the tragic situation in the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon, the attacks on their inhabitants and the attempts to prevent UNRWA from carrying out its task properly.

39. The situation in the occupied territories was even more disturbing. His delegation supported the Agency's efforts to follow developments, to inform the international community, represented by the General Assembly and the Security Council, of the repressive measures to which the occupying authorities were resorting and to count the casualties caused by the occupation forces' brutal intervention. The role played by UNRWA was especially useful since Israel was refusing to allow fact-finding missions in the occupied territories and was preventing representatives of the international press from going there. In that connection, co-operation between UNRWA and the International Committee of the Red Cross should be increased so as to focus international attention on all the Israeli practices which were contrary to the provisions of the international conventions and of the Charter of the United Nations.

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(Mr. Badoui, Egypt)

40. In 1987, UNRWA had made considerable efforts to continue to provide quality services to refugees in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza. His delegation wished to pay tribute, in that connection, to the Commissioner-General, who had helped UNRWA complete its restructuring and deal with its financial problems. He also thanked the officials and local staff who had continued with their work, even though some of their colleagues had been victims of acts of aggression perpetrated against the Palestinian people. Given the mounting financial costs to the Agency for the execution not only of assistance programmes but also of emergency relief programmes, the international community, particularly its wealthier members, must increase their contributions. In that connection, he noted with disquiet that certain donors were reducing their contributions even though the Commissioner-General expected that the Agency would encounter financial difficulties after 1988.

41. Present developments indicated that the current uprising in the occupied territories would not end until the Palestinian people recovered its national rights. While appreciating the efforts UNRWA was making to ease the suffering of the refugees, his delegation felt, as did the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, that, as part of its efforts to develop the economy of the occupied territories, the Agency might try to co-ordinate economic and social initiatives so as to satisfy the priority needs of the Palestinian people. It also supported, as a first step, harmonization of the efforts of the principal development agencies operating in the region.

42. Egypt was convinced that Israel's continued occupation of territories that did not belong to it could only lead to further suffering and it urged the international community to guarantee a minimum level of protection to the Palestine refugees, pending a political solution that would enable the Palestinian people to recover its legitimate rights. Such a solution would require Israel to abandon its policy of oppression and to realize that it would not be able to suppress the uprising and continue to occupy the Palestinian territories by force. Furthermore, Israel must declare itself ready to participate in negotiations in the context of an international conference, with a view to concluding agreements that would provide guarantees to all parties involved, ensure Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination.

43. Mr. XU (China) said that during the past year major changes had taken place in the situation concerning the Palestine refugees, particularly those in the West Bank and in Gaza. Since they could no longer endure the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people had launched an all-out struggle for the restoration of their national rights. The Israeli Government, in disregard of the norms of international law, had resorted to suppression, causing heavy casualties among the Palestinians. The living conditions of the Palestinian residents, particularly the refugees, had further deteriorated. Under very difficult circumstances UNRWA had continued to provide emergency assistance and relief to the refugees and, thanks to its efforts, the suffering of the Palestinians had been eased. However, the functioning of the Agency had run into more difficulties. The Israeli authorities had refused to allow UNRWA relief material into the occupied territories. More

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(Mr. Yu, China)

violations of the privileges and immunities of the Agency had been recorded; some Agency officials had been arrested and the schools under its administration had been ordered to close.

44. His delegation expressed its deep sympathy for the Palestine refugees and its admiration for UNRWA's dedicated staff. It deplored the actions of the Israeli Government and called on the Israeli authorities to put an immediate end to their illegal practices and to allow UNRWA to carry out its functions. The development of the situation in the occupied territories had demonstrated clearly that the question of the Palestine refugees could not be resolved until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were restored and a comprehensive and just settlement of the Middle East question was achieved. The convening of an international conference on the Middle East was an appropriate way to achieve such a settlement and his delegation would continue its efforts to persuade the Israeli Government to agree to such a conference.

45. China was deeply concerned about the present financial difficulties of the Agency. It believed that it would be possible to raise funds by a variety of means and hoped that all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations would increase their contributions to UNRWA. His Government would continue to support the work of the Agency and to provide assistance to the Palestinian people through bilateral channels.

46. Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) said that UNRWA was an indirect result of the establishment of the Israeli entity, which had been preceded by massacres and terrorist acts designed to frighten the Arab inhabitants and reduce some of them to the status of refugees. The short-term mission which the Agency had been called upon to carry out in 1949 had lasted all too long and might be extended indefinitely. The Agency's responsibilities continued to increase, particularly since the Zionist violations and acts of aggression had never ceased.

47. His delegation paid tribute to the efforts of the Agency to secure the necessary financing for activities carried out for the Palestinian refugees, inter alia, in the field of education and the training of young people, and wished to remind all those who supported Israel that thanks to such activities the Palestinians had not stooped to extremism, which was the last resort of desperate people.

48. The ferocious nature of Zionist repression, which the international community had been able only to catch glimpses of in past years because of Israeli censorship, had become clearly visible during the past 11 months because of the heroic uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The Palestinian people was thus paying the price in blood because it was determined to oppose repression and terror and gain its rights. In that connection, it was necessary to consult the report of the Commissioner-General (A/43/13 and Add.1) to gain an idea of the heavy tribute paid by the Palestinian people.

49. Because of that situation, the humanitarian services of the Agency were increasingly in demand. The Agency itself had not been spared by the Zionist

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(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

authorities, which, raising considerations of security, impeded operations and prevented it from providing services to the refugees. Thus, telephone connections between Agency headquarters in Vienna and its field office in Gaza had been inoperative since 16 March 1988 and the Israeli authorities had refused to allow entry through the Port of Ashdod of foodstuffs and medical supplies, forcing the Agency to divert them to Lebanon.

50. The international community must call Israel to account and hold it responsible for the consequences of its actions. No effort should be spared to alleviate the suffering of the victims of Zionist terrorism. Attention should be drawn to the consequences of equivocation regarding support for the Agency's operations, whose objective was to alleviate the bitterness felt by the refugees with regard to those who had caused their misfortune. The apathy of the international community, which had not kept its promise to restore the rights of the Palestinian refugees and ensure their return, further strengthened that feeling.

51. The report of the Commissioner-General showed, through figures, the untiring efforts made by the Agency. The fact that the total number of Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA had reached more than 2 million persons demonstrated the importance of the role played by the Agency and constituted an overwhelming judgement against the oppressors and their agents and a warning for the international community against the danger of letting the Palestinian problem continue. The uprising of the Palestinian people was, in that regard, an eloquent response to the Zionist challenge, which exposed to the world the Israeli crimes.

52. The attachment of Arabs to their land was a main component of their cultural, spiritual and moral heritage. Those who imagined that they could prevail upon the Arabs to leave their land as if it were a mere tourist operation would do well not to underestimate the deep attachment of the Arabs to the land of their ancestors, including Palestine. Those who in the General Assembly had rushed to give Arab land to non-Arabs and thus appease the Zionists, deluding themselves that that was a mere excursion which would ultimately be resolved as a territorial fait accompli, had committed a historic error which must be redressed in order to restore normalcy to the region.

53. Mr. AYUB (Pakistan) said that, in its report (A/43/702), the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA had pointed out that owing to the generosity of its traditional donors UNRWA had been able to maintain its regular recurrent programme of services. However, the construction programme was again underfunded, which had led to a further deterioration of the Agency's schools and other buildings. In view of the urgency of that matter, his delegation supported the Working Group's conclusion that special additional contributions should be made for construction projects without affecting contributions to the regular fund. The Working Group expressed its concern that income in 1988 might be insufficient to cover the cost of maintaining services. Pakistan would continue to do everything that it could to finance the activities of UNRWA even though it was not currently in a position to increase its contribution.

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(Mr. Ayub, Pakistan)

54. In spite of the deterioration of the situation in Lebanon and the occupied territories, the Agency had carried out its duties in an exemplary manner and its contribution to relief operations as well as to the essential sectors of health, education and vocational training were praiseworthy. Pakistan noted with regret that a large number of Agency staff had been arrested or detained without charges. According to a report in The New York Times, 37 staff remained in custody in Gaza and 10 in the West Bank. Pakistan also regretted the fact that during the past year 4 area staff had been killed, bringing to 33 the total number of staff killed in Lebanon since 1982.

55. The report of the Commissioner-General provided a grim chronology of events and the forebodings expressed by him in his previous report had been borne out by events in 1988. The lack of movement in resolving the problems of the Palestinian people had led to an uprising which was still continuing. The repressive measures of the Israeli authorities had caused the death of more than 200 Palestinians and there were nearly 8,000 injured persons. The prolonged closure of UNRWA schools for Palestinian children in the occupied territories gave rise to concern about the future of those young people. The Commissioner-General had stated himself that security considerations had in part justified the closure of educational institutions, but a major consequence was that a generation of Palestinian children were unable to exercise their basic right to education.

56. Because of the uprising, the Agency had been called on to provide general assistance to the refugee population in the occupied territories. Under the current circumstances, the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were in need of greater support in order to be able to cope with the difficulties created through repressive measures such as curfews, demolition of shelters and other forms of collective punishment. By providing the barest of essential services, since its establishment the Agency had played an invaluable role in a grim situation. UNRWA should not only continue its humanitarian assistance programmes for the Palestine refugees, but should also provide humanitarian assistance to non-refugees and, in co-ordination with other international organizations and voluntary agencies, assist in monitoring violations of basic civil and human rights in the occupied territories. Mention should also be made of the role played by UNICEF through its expanded programme of immunization, which had made it possible to reduce the incidence of communicable diseases.

57. Israel, which was the root cause of the sufferings of the Palestinian people, had arrogated to itself the right to terrorize the Palestinians wherever they were. The extension of the conflict to Lebanon had brought further suffering to the people of Lebanon as well as the Palestinians residing there. Israel should know that a people which was determined to be free could never be subjugated. The international community must not tolerate the flagrant violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. In order to find a just solution to the problems of the Middle East, it was necessary to ensure the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of its own State. Until a just, equitable and permanent solution was found, the international community had the

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A/SPC/43/SR.22

English

Page 14

(Mr. Ayub, Pakistan)

duty to fulfil its responsibility to the Palestinian people and meet the latter's essential needs. In that context, his delegation supported the important role which UNRWA had played in providing essential services to the Palestinians.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.