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Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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

AGENDA ITEM 78: QUESTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE RELEVANT ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The CHAIRMAN, noting that no delegation wished to speak on agenda item 78, said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly should include that item in the provisional agenda of its forty-sixth session.

2. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/45/13 and Add.1, A/45/74-S/21068, A/45/382, 429, 463-466, 530, 641, 645, 646; A/SPC/45/L.5)

3. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), introducing the report in document A/45/13 and Add.1, said that it described yet another extremely hard year in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees. Drawing attention to some of the Agency's most pressing concerns, he reported that during the summer of 1990, the Agency had returned its field office in Lebanon to Beirut. That decision reflected its hope for an early return to normality in Lebanon as well as support for recent positive trends. The management and control of Agency programmes remained problematic, however, as security considerations continued to limit severely the mobility of personnel, particularly international staff.

4. In the Israeli-occupied territory, the explosive interplay of pressures, expectations and frustrations was growing. Loss of life, arrest and detention, increasing economic difficulties and social upheaval were occurring against the backdrop of what Palestinians perceived as an intolerable political stalemate. Since 30 June 1990, the end of the reporting period, several new developments had caused grave concern. The killing of an Israeli reserve soldier in September at Bureij Camp, followed by the killing of 21 Palestinians and the wounding of over a hundred by Israeli police on 8 October in Jerusalem, had assumed a special significance for the Palestinians. Those developments had led to a number of consequences besides those reported by the media. For instance, during the 30 days ending 21 October 1990, 183 curfew days had been imposed in the West Bank and 156 in Gaza. During September alone, schools had lost nearly 1,000 teaching days in the West Bank and about 1,300 days in Gaza. Those events were a stark reminder that the underlying causes of the intifadah had not been addressed.

5. The Agency continued to meet with difficulties imposed by Israeli authorities, often in violation of its privileges and immunities, in carrying out both emergency assistance and delivery of regular programmes in the occupied territory. There had been harassment, beating and detention of staff, including ambulance drivers and medical personnel, in the performance of their duties. Israeli authorities continued to restrict the access of staff to camps and agency facilities. They

(Mr. Giacomelli)

had also continued to press UNRWA to provide information on persons treated in its health centres; UNRWA refused, however, to divulge such information to the authorities.

6. During the past year there had been many instances of intrusions into UNRWA health centres, where staff had been mistreated and official records ransacked. Procedural and legalistic obstacles were often imposed, such as newly-established complex bureaucratic procedures for construction activities, which had led to an almost total halt of urgent construction projects. The Agency was always willing to co-ordinate its activities with the authorities, as he had informed senior Israeli officials during his recent visit. UNRWA could not yield to pressure, however, and there were limits imposed by the necessity of preserving its independence and international character.

7. Turning to the Gulf crisis, he said that UNRWA had co-operated with UNDRO and other agencies by providing temporary accommodation, health teams, foodstuffs, office and logistical support in Jordan. The Agency stood ready to help, on a reimbursable basis, so as not to divert resources from the population it was mandated to assist. Indeed, Palestinians had been one of the larger groups to flee the conflict region; thus, more people were pressing the Agency for assistance and services. For example, UNRWA had managed to absorb some 3,000 additional children in its schools, but its capacity to respond to such additional requirements had already reached its limit.

8. The implications of events in the Gulf were as serious for the Palestinians as for any other community in the area. The loss of income in the occupied territory alone had been estimated at between $120 million and $150 million per year. It was also of concern that Palestinians seemed to be encountering difficulties with visas, study and work permits affecting their mobility and earning capacity in other countries traditionally offering them employment and educational opportunities. Although most Palestinians were uprooted refugees, they were part and parcel of the regional reality and should receive their share of resources allocated.

9. Although the Agency would be able to finance the essential elements of its regular programme for 1990, it was already facing a shortfall in funding for the Emergency Measures in Lebanon and the Occupied Territory. In order to maintain that programme till the end of the year, he had been obliged to deploy resources from the General Fund. The Agency faced the task of raising the funds to cover the regular programme, which meant at least a 5 per cent rise over the current year in order to meet the increased number of beneficiaries and higher costs, while seeking additional resources for the emergency programme. It might soon face the option of either eliminating emergency assistance or cutting its regular programme, the financing of which was by no means assured at a time of increasing needs.

10. The prevailing uncertainties in the Middle East deepened his concern about UNRWA financial prospects in the coming year. Opinion makers and political leaders were faced with options of war and reconciliation, the support of old friends or

(Mr. Giacomelli)

the establishment of new alliances, while national and political sympathies shifted. There was a danger that short-term political inclinations would become the sole yardstick for measuring humanitarian support. If financial support fell below a minimum level of emergency assistance and regular programme delivery, it would be tantamount to abandoning the refugees, and they would certainly perceive it as such. Such action could not be condoned on humanitarian grounds and, under present circumstances, would also convey a most negative political message.

11. Mr. BERGH JOHANSEN (Norway), speaking as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, and introducing the Working Group's report (A/45/645), said that in accordance with its mandate in General Assembly resolution 44/47 B, the Working Group had continued its efforts for the financing of UNRWA. To that end, the Agency's comptroller had briefed the Working Group on the current financial situation and on its needs for 1991. That briefing resulted in the concluding remarks contained in section IV of the report.

12. The Working Group was pleased to note that UNRWA expected to be able to deliver the essential parts of its regular programme for the current year. It noted with concern, however, that the construction programme was again seriously underfunded. It was particularly concerned by the difficulties in funding the emergency programme in the occupied territories, and urged Governments to respond generously to the special appeal made recently by the Commissioner-General.

13. The Working Group shared the Commissioner-General's concern about funding prospects for 1991. Expenditure under the regular programme was expected to increase by 5 per cent in order to meet the needs of an increased number of beneficiaries, mainly schoolchildren and to cover unavoidable increases in prices and staff salaries. The principal concern, however, related to the complete absence of funding for emergency-related programmes in 1991. If such programmes were discontinued, there could be serious humanitarian and political consequences.

14. In conclusion, he drew attention to the Working Group's recommendations contained in paragraph 18 of its report.

15. Mr. SALAH (Jordan) said it was regrettable that the difficult financial situation of UNRWA continued to reduce the level of its services to Palestine refugees. As of 11 September 1990, some $US 12 million was still required in order for the Agency to continue emergency programmes at the current level until the end of 1990, while no specific commitment had been received for 1991.

16. The Agency had originally been established as an interim measure in order to address a problem that it was thought would soon be solved. That problem had, however, persisted and taken on ever more alarming proportions, and the Agency had thus been compelled to continue to perform the functions entrusted to it by the General Assembly. While the Agency's services must be commensurate with the needs of the Palestine refugees, which would naturally increase in the course of time until there was a definitive solution to the problem, they could not under any circumstances serve as a solution themselves.

/...

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

17. It was Israel that was directly responsible for the creation, perpetuation and aggravation of the problem by its continued refusal to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III) recognizing the refugees' right to return or to receive compensation. The Palestine refugee problem was a direct result of the situation created in Palestine by the international community, through the United Nations, more than 40 years earlier. The failure of the international community to induce Israel to comply with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the other United Nations resolutions on the achievement of a peaceful, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement that would restore their rights to the Palestinians was a fundamental cause of the persistence of the problem. The international community must therefore continue to meet its moral responsibility to the Palestine refugees until such time as the problem was solved.

18. The problem of the Palestine refugees, as well as being one aspect of a complex political problem, was also a unique and painful humanitarian problem. The services provided to the refugees by UNRWA, however modest, met their basic humanitarian needs, and those services must be viewed as a humanitarian task in which all must share, with a view to mitigating the problem pending a final solution.

19. The Arab host countries were assuming burdens in behalf of the Palestine refugees residing in their territories. The services provided to Palestine refugees by Jordan were many and varied, and Palestine refugees in Jordan, of whom there were more than 929,000, the largest number in any of the Agency's fields, enjoyed the same treatment and had the same rights and duties as Jordanian citizens.

20. During the period under review, the Agency had been operating in exceptionally difficult circumstances in three of its fields, namely the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Because of the continuing intifadah in the occupied Palestinian territory, the services provided by the Agency there had been increasingly overburdened, and the problems encountered as a result of Israeli measures against the Agency itself had increased. Israel had continued to violate the privileges and immunities of UNRWA, and there had been clear attempts gradually to assert control over Agency operations. In the Gaza Strip, there had been some 555 intrusions into Agency premises and, in June 1990 alone, there had been 22 incursions into health centres.

21. More than 23,000 cases of injuries had been recorded by the Agency, of which nearly 18,000 cases had involved refugees, owing to continued use of violence on the part of the Israeli occupation forces. The Israeli authorities also continued to disrupt the educational process by closing schools for long periods of time, imposing curfews, intruding into schools with the use of live ammunition and tear gas, using schools for military purposes and detaining pupils and teachers. For the second successive year, the universities in the occupied Palestinian territory had remained closed throughout the reporting period.

22. From the beginning of the intifadah, it had become clear that the Agency could also provide general assistance to Palestinians in the occupied territory, both

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

refugees and non-refugees, in order to ensure a measure of protection, however modest, against the brutality of the occupation forces. The intervention of Agency officials had, in a number of cases, been instrumental in preventing the arrest of young people or in securing their early release, and they had been able to lower tensions, prevent maltreatment and help evacuate the wounded. While the protection of the Palestinians in the occupied territory was the responsibility of the Security Council, the initiative taken by the Agency within the limits of its powers was a humanitarian act that merited gratitude and encouragement. His delegation would like to express its esteem and admiration for the Agency staff who were providing such services in extremely difficult circumstances and hoped that they would continue to do so as long as there was a need for them.

23. Although there had been improvements in the level of the Agency's services during the reporting period, more should be done to expand and improve those services. The paucity of the Agency's resources had adversely affected its activities in the educational and health fields. In Lebanon, the Agency had had to apply strict controls on referrals to hospitals at a time when Palestine refugees there were clearly in need of expanded health care.

24. It was a matter for concern that the Agency was employing ever stricter standards in determining special hardship cases, and his delegation called upon UNRWA to resume the ration distribution to all refugees without exception. In view of economic conditions in the region in general and particularly in Jordan, where the economic crisis had been aggravated by the return of large numbers of workers from the Gulf region, including a great many Palestine refugees, the Agency should seriously consider the possibility of changing its criteria for assistance to special hardship cases and for supplementary food assistance in order to include a larger number of people.

25. While the efforts being made by the Agency to improve the situation of refugees by means of self-support programmes were much appreciated, such programmes should not be regarded as a substitute for the Agency's services. As long as the Palestine refugee problem remained unsolved, there would continue to be a pressing need for the services UNRWA provided.

26. His delegation appealed to all members of the international community to contribute generously both to the regular budget and to emergency operations. A detailed report from the Commissioner-General on the needs of the Agency would show the wide difference between the support that the Agency required and the support that it actually received. As a host country for Palestine refugees, Jordan was of the view that the Commissioner-General should present in his annual report a review, however brief, of the services provided by the host countries to Palestine refugees so that the international community might be more fully informed of them.

27. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine) reiterated the commitment of the State of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to co-operating fully with UNRWA.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, Palestine)

28. The Palestinian people had been the victim of Zionist aggression, supported by imperialism, since 1948. State and individual Israeli terrorism had brought about a continuous increase in the number of Palestine refugees, which had currently reached 2.5 million.

29. Approaching its fourth year, the intifadah was gaining momentum in confronting the aggression and barbaric crimes committed by the occupying Power. Reports by many international organizations gave ample proof of the brutality employed by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people in the occupied land of the State of Palestine. Paragraphs 8 to 13 and 80 to 120 of the Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13) summarized the wide range of crimes committed by the Israeli security forces, and table 12 of that document provided shocking figures on recent civilian casualties. A total of 1,300 persons, including 300 children, had been killed, 99,150 wounded and 100,000 imprisoned or detained since the beginning of the intifadah. Those crimes and the latest massacre committed on 8 October 1990 in the Haram al-Sharif constituted acts of State terrorism and genocide committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people. The international community was duty-bound to compel Israel to end the occupation, and it must also help the State of Palestine to attain full sovereignty.

30. Instead of complying with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War or with the relevant Security Council resolutions, Israel had increased its brutal repression. As the occupying Power was threatening the safety of the Palestinian people and was attempting to annex occupied Palestine, it was essential to place the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, under United Nations supervision for a limited period. That would make for an atmosphere conducive to bringing about a just peace. The Security Council must take concrete measures in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter to force Israel to abandon its dream of a Greater Israel. The first major step in that direction would be the adoption of a resolution to dispatch a United Nations observer force to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in order to provide the Palestinian people with needed international protection.

31. The massive Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union and elsewhere, which Israel was using as a pretext to transfer the Palestinians out of their country, was a dangerous development. That was consistent with the Zionist myth negating the existence of the Palestinian people and their inalienable national rights, namely, the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes and property; the right to self-determination; and the right to independence and statehood under the leadership of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

32. The State of Palestine had declared its readiness to participate in the peace process in the Middle East and to seek a peaceful settlement on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The International Peace Conference on the Middle East must be convened under United Nations auspices with the participation of the

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, Palestine)

permanent members of the Security Council and all concerned parties, including, on an equal footing, the PLO on behalf of the State of Palestine. It was high time to begin preparatory work for the Conference.

33. The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, must intensify its efforts to combat the policy of the Israeli Government, which was strongly supported by the United States Administration and which remained an obstacle to a just peace.

34. The State of Palestine reiterated its condemnation of the continued obstruction of UNRWA's work by Israel and its call for UNRWA to provide all its services in the occupied land of the State of Palestine and in Lebanon; condemned Israel for refusing to compensate UNRWA for damages to its property and facilities resulting from the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and from the policies and practices of Israel in occupied Palestine; asked UNRWA again to continue issuing identification cards in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/120 I; and reiterated its condemnation of Israel for not co-operating with the Secretary-General in his efforts to complete the functional feasibility study on the proposed University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" as planned (see document A/45/530).

35. The solution to the refugee problem lay in the return of the Palestine refugees to their homes and property. Until that time, it was essential to support all efforts to place UNRWA's financial situation on a stable footing.

36. Mr. FAWZY (Egypt) said that it was the painful situation of the Palestinian people under the nightmare of occupation that had brought about the continued need for UNRWA operations despite the fact that the Agency had been established as a merely temporary expedient in 1948. The constant deterioration of the situation in the region had made the Agency increasingly necessary, and it had assumed responsibility for the welfare of new generations of refugees born in the camps and had come to perform emergency functions in addition to the routine tasks entrusted to it on its establishment. While some had hoped that the situation of the Palestinian people might improve and that Israel might respond to the calls of the international community, reality had shown that events were moving in the opposite direction and bringing increased oppression, violence and bitterness from year to year.

37. Egypt was following with great concern the arbitrary measures being taken by Israel against the Palestinian people, measures on which the report of the Commissioner-General had shed greater light. There had been human rights violations, beatings, the use of tear gas and live ammunition, the demolition of homes and the imposition of collective punishment, all of which were practices universally condemned. Israel was also interfering in the economic life of the occupied territory and bringing economic pressure to bear on its inhabitants, either through direct economic measures or through the detention of the breadwinners in Palestinian families.

(Mr. Fawzy, Egypt)

38. The gravest aspect of the Israeli practices in question was the threat that they posed to the future of the Palestinian people through interference in education. Standards had deteriorated, there had been interference on the part of the occupation authorities in determining the length of the school year, and pupils and teachers had been detained. Despite the difficult circumstances, the Agency was attempting to function as best it could, and Israel must co-operate with it and respect its legal status.

39. The sufferings of the Palestinian people would not divert it from its struggle or destroy its hopes. Through its valiant intifadah, it was fighting for the exercise of its legitimate rights, chief among them its right to exercise self-determination on its own soil. The moral of that noble struggle was that all occupation must end and that the rights of peoples could not be denied.

40. Recent events in Arab Jerusalem had revealed an urgent need for the establishment of new mechanisms to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people. Thought must be given to exploring the capacity of the various organizations operating in the occupied territory to provide information on the situation there, so that a means could be devised of providing the necessary international protection to the Palestinians and preparing an appropriate climate for peaceful negotiations between the parties directly concerned.

41. Consideration of present living conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory did not exclude thought of the future. While his delegation called upon the international community to increase its support to the Agency, it looked forward to a future in which there would no longer be a need for its services, a future in which the Palestinian people would exercise self-determination in its own independent country.

42. Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) recalled that UNRWA had been established in 1948 as a temporary measure so that the international community could bear some of its responsibility for the people of Palestine, deprived of part of its homeland. That situation had failed to change, and the international community was still incapable of ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people.

43. It was particularly painful to see the Palestinian people's tragedy being exploited by reckless invaders from within the Arab world itself. Such actions would only result in the destruction of the Arab world and were disastrous for the Palestinian cause. His Government was confident that the Palestinian people would see the truth, deceptive slogans notwithstanding. The crime of the Iraqi régime's invasion of the sister State of Kuwait, an Arab country that had welcomed large numbers of Palestinians, diverted attention from the Palestinians' rights. One of the first results of the invasion had been to send the Palestinians on a new exodus, the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait having robbed them of their livelihood.

44. The number of refugees registered with UNRWA had risen dramatically over the past 40 years, testimony to a great human tragedy. Meanwhile, the number of refugees continued to increase with the arrival of Eastern European immigrants. The international community must not tolerate that situation any longer.

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(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

45. The Israeli authorities continued to seek to exacerbate their confrontation with the Agency as part of their campaign against the Palestinian people. Such a policy only added to the suffering of the population concerned. The report of the Commissioner-General (A/45/13), although omitting details, referred to the number of persons treated by the medical services of the Agency, many of whom had been victims of arbitrary procedures and crimes committed by the authorities and armed Jews. The frightening figures contained in the report were a dangerous indication of where events were leading. His delegation wondered how the Israeli authorities could be so contemptuous of even the most basic human principles that they could kill 24 children aged less than 5 years.

46. The tone of the Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13) was very moderate out of fear of retaliation by the Israeli authorities against the Agency and its programmes. His delegation called upon the international community to take more resolute steps against such practices and to support the Agency in its great humane mission.

47. Saudi Arabia wished to express its thanks to the Secretary-General for his support of the Agency and its work and had no doubt that he would redouble his efforts to protect UNRWA and expose the dangers that the Israeli practices posed for security and stability in the occupied territories and for the lives of the population there.

48. Mr. TALAT (Iraq), speaking on a point of order, said that the representative of Saudi Arabia must speak only on the agenda item under consideration and not on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

49. Mr. GUVEN (Turkey) said that the item under consideration could not be dissociated from the political context in which UNRWA had carried on its activities for more than four decades. The question of Palestine was the central issue from which the problems facing UNRWA had arisen, and those problems would continue until all of the occupied Arab territories were returned to their rightful owners. UNRWA was not in itself a solution to the problems caused by the situation in the Middle East. It was only an instrument created by the international community to fulfil its collective responsibility to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestine refugees pending a political settlement of the problem. However, that responsibility was not diminished by the Agency's inability to eliminate the root causes of the situation.

50. The Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13) indicated that harsh repressive measures and human rights violations by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories continued to challenge the Agency's ability to fulfil its mandate to assist the Palestine refugees. The difficulties with which UNRWA had to contend included the need for emergency medical assistance for more than 20,000 Palestinian victims of beatings or tear-gas inhalation, property damage, the demolition and sealing of homes, and the disruption of education as a result of frequent school closure orders. The Israeli Government should respond to the calls of the international community by recognizing its responsibilities regarding the protection of Palestine refugees.

(Mr. Guven, Turkey)

51. Equally unacceptable was the Israeli authorities' disregard of the Agency's privileges and immunities, as well as their assertion of control over UNRWA operations. Such an attitude constituted a possible threat to the safety of UNRWA staff. The return flow of increasing numbers of Palestine refugees who had been employed outside Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic - particularly the Gulf States - was placing growing demands on the Agency's health and welfare services. That burden was compounded by the deterioration of the economic situation in the region and by the Gulf crisis.

52. As a member of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, which was chaired by Turkey, he wished to comment on the financial situation of the Agency. It provided educational, health, relief and social services to over 2 million people, despite its modest budget of $224 million. He praised the Commissioner-General and the UNRWA staff for their optimal use of such limited means, and emphasized that the Agency's task should be considered the common responsibility of all the Members of the United Nations. The contributing Governments, which included less than half of the Members of the United Nations, should strive to increase their contributions. Additional contributions in support of the Agency's emergency programmes would also be welcome. He hoped that Governments would study the Working Group's report (A/45/530) in deciding on the amount of their contributions for 1991.

53. Mr. TRAXLER (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that until a global political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict had been reached, UNRWA would continue to play an essential role in addressing the Palestinian problem by providing educational, health, emergency relief and basic welfare services. He commended the Commissioner-General for his efforts and for his impartial report (A/45/13). He noted with regret that the political and economic situation in the region had not improved. In particular, the unsettled conditions in the occupied territories and in Lebanon had aggravated the economic situation and had increased the difficulty of the Agency's work. The tragic events in Jerusalem on 8 October 1990 had shown that the Israeli authorities continued to apply repressive measures and to commit violations of human rights. The statistics cited in the Commissioner-General's report on the use of the Agency's clinics by Palestinians needing emergency medical attention because of such measures demonstrated the Agency's essential role in providing health care and assistance.

54. Property damage, demolition and sealing of shelters and houses, and large-scale incarcerations were other examples of the severe measures applied by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories. Although schools in the West Bank had reopened in July 1989, strikes and selective closure orders by the Israeli authorities had severely disrupted the education process. The problem of trying to provide adequate education to 135,000 young Palestinians in the occupied territories therefore continued to be a major concern of the Agency. His delegation commended the Agency's efforts in that regard, as well as its programme to promote income-generating projects to help refugee families become self-sufficient.

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

55. His delegation was concerned about the infringement by the Israeli authorities of the Agency's rights, privileges, immunities and capacity to discharge its functions effectively. Administrative actions that hampered the Agency's operations, such as increasing red tape and the imposition of time-consuming clearance procedures for activities that fell within the Agency's authority, were unacceptable. Violations of premises, as described in the Commissioner-General's report, must also be strongly condemned.

56. He noted with satisfaction that despite the grave problems in Lebanon, the Agency had carried out its regular functions and provided a considerable degree of emergency assistanco. The safety of UNRWA staff in the face of threats, physical violence and the danger of kidnapping was a matter of concern. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Agency's resources had allowed it to continue to extend emergency assistance, as well as most of its regular programmes, to the entire Palestinian community and not solely to registered refugees.

57. The Agency's narrow funding base was especially affecting its emergency programmes. As a result of the events in the Gulf, UNRWA currently faced additional demands for assistance because of the loss of the remittances formerly sent by Palestinians working in Kuwait to their families living in the Agency's area of operation. While he fully appreciated the valuable services provided by the host Governments for the Palestine refugees, he noted that the great majority of the Agency's total budget was provided by Western countries.

58. The European Community itself was the second largest donor to UNRWA (20 per cent), while the Community, taken together with its member States, was the major donor (43 per cent). In addition, the European Community had decided to increase its yearly contribution to the educational, health and food programmes of UNRWA. That contribution, in addition to the sums provided by individual member States, amounted to approximately $173 million for the 1990-1992 period. Moreover, the European Commission had decided to provide approximately $1.7 million in emergency aid for the Palestinian people in 1990.

59. UNRWA remained a political and humanitarian necessity pending a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. His delegation supported the principle of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices. In the mean time, the European Community and its member States would continue their political and financial support of UNRWA, and encouraged other States Members of the United Nations to join them in that effort.

60. Mr. FIGUEROA (Chile) deplored the increasingly tragic situation in which 2.5 million people were adversely affected by political decisions over which they had no control. The Commissioner-General's report indicated that that situation had necessitated a major increase in the scope of UNRWA programmes to satisfy the increasing needs of the Palestine refugees. However, those new efforts had not been supported by a corresponding budgetary increase.

(Mr. Figueroa, Chile)

61. The report also cited the difficulties caused by, inter alia, the destruction and damage of UNRWA facilities due to the conflict, intentional damage to the property of the population, the imposition of curfews, and the temporary detention of individuals. The prolongation of the conflict in the occupied territories had created an unstable political and social climate that paralysed the economy and weakened the social structure. He deeply deplored the unjust detention and incarceration, without charge, of UNRWA staff in the occupied territories, in violation of Article 105, paragraph 2, of the Charter. Protecting the safety of UNRWA personnel should be a special concern of the occupation authorities.

62. The deterioration of the Agency's budgetary situation owing to decreased contributions from donor countries was disquieting, given the increasing demands on the Agency's resources. In 1990, emergency activities necessitated by increased hostilities in the region had resulted in a large deficit. It was therefore essential for donor countries to maintain their contributions at current levels or, if possible, to increase them.

63. The main programmes of UNRWA had been carried out successfully under particularly difficult conditions. In addition, the Agency had provided emergency assistance during the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. The success of those efforts bore witness to the Agency's outstanding efficiency and commitment.

64. The fate of the Palestinian people and the stability of the nations in the region were closely linked to a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine. That solution should be reached through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). To those ends, he supported the convening of the International Peace Conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and of all parties to the conflict on an equal footing.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

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