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Statement by Mrs. H. H. Steen, Canadian Representative
on the Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural)
Committee, on Thursday, October 27, 1960

World Refugee Year

Mr. Chairman:

At its 13th Session in 1958, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which brought into being World Refugee Year. That resolution, 1285 (XIII), sparked one of the most far-reaching cooperative efforts in the humanitarian field which the world has ever seen. As originally conceived, World Refugee Year aimed at focussing world attention on the problem of refugees - all refugees and not simply those coming under the mandates of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. It was hoped that by stimulating an interest in refugee problems, it would be possible to encourage not only additional financial contributions from governments, voluntary agencies and the general public, but additional opportunities for permanent refugee solutions through voluntary repatriation, re-settlement or integration on a humanitarian basis.

The Secretary-General's report on World Refugee Year, incomplete as it admittedly is, gives ample evidence that these objectives have in a great measure been achieved. Through their participation in National Committees for World Refugee Year, local Committees and other voluntary organizations concerned with refugee questions, millions of people around the world have become aware of the magnitude of the suffering and needs of refugees. This awareness has spurred them to remarkable heights of ingenuity in devising imaginative plans to help meet these needs. It has, of course, been impossible for the Secretary-General to report in any detail on these private efforts but through our discussions of this report, I am sure that a more vivid picture will emerge.

As a result of the interest in refugees generated during World