

CANADIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA

Text of Statement to be made by the Canadian Representative, Mr. Paul Beaulieu, in the Special Political Committee on the Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, on October 25, 1966.

The Canadian Delegation has examined the Report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA on the Agency's activities during 1965-1966 with interest and care. In the light of the report, I should like to express the appreciation of my Government for the diligence and efficiency with which the Commissioner-General and his staff have carried out the task set before them. I should also like to commend the clarity and relevance of this annual review.

The report presented by Mr. Michelmore draws to the attention of this Committee several problems and difficulties which face the work of the Agency. I should like to make it clear that, in examining these problems, the Canadian Delegation bases its position on two main considerations. The first is the welfare of the Palestine refugees who after so many years are still suffering from an unsettled past, present poverty, and an uncertain future. The concern of the Canadian Government for the welfare of these refugees has been manifest in its substantial contributions to UNRWA's budget since the inception of the Agency. Nor should I ignore the part played by private organizations in Canada in helping to alleviate the situation of the refugees through their donations to the Agency.

The second consideration is our concern for peace and stability in the Middle East. We are convinced that UNRWA has an important role to play in this respect. This point was effectively made by the Commissioner-General in his recent statement when he described the attitudes of the refugees and

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE  
CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
MEMORANDUM FOR THE  
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY  
SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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the disquiet they felt about rumours concerning a discontinuance or diminution of UNRWA's services. Mr. Chairman, my Delegation also believes that the realization of peaceful conditions and the achievement of progress toward the resolution of the refugee problem will only come about if there is a general recognition of the rights of all members of the United Nations to exist and prosper.

Mr. Chairman, there are many aspects of the Commissioner-General's report which merit careful examination by this Committee. I should like to suggest that two separate but related problems mentioned in the report demand special attention. I am sure all members will agree that the Assembly accomplished a major aim last year by renewing UNRWA's mandate. As the question of the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA is not before the General Assembly this year, I hope, that in our debate we can concentrate on the operations of the Agency, rather than debate at length the origins of the refugee problem. Last year the General Assembly did not, unfortunately, take the opportunity to provide the Commissioner General with concrete instructions on how to deal with any short-fall that might occur in UNRWA's finances. Mr. Michelmore was faced with the possibility that owing to lack of revenue he might be forced to curtail UNRWA's operations without direction from the Assembly. It was only due to the efforts of Mr. Michelmore and the devotion of his staff as well as the generosity of a few countries that this was averted. Reference should also be made to the assistance extended by the host countries and by a few United Nations Specialized Agencies such as the World Health Organization and UNESCO. Although it is, I am sure, our common hope that UNRWA's financial requirements will be met, we cannot ignore the grave financial difficulties facing the Agency and the possibility that it may, despite all efforts, find itself in a situation in which a cut in its programme will be unavoidable. There is, of course, Mr. Chairman, one means whereby contributing countries could assist in meeting this difficulty. As the Committee is aware, during the last few years, UNRWA's budgetary deficits have been offset by withdrawals from the Agency's working capital. This has now fallen below the level required to finance continuing operations at the normal level during the first half of each year pending receipt of contributions. The problem would be considerably eased if governments gave priority to the payment of contributions to UNRWA's budget, so that the agency could get along with reduced working capital.

The second point which my Delegation believes demands special attention is the financial problem itself. In the past the financial burden of supporting UNRWA has been borne in the main by a relatively small number of countries.

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As Mr. Michelmore pointed out in his statement the major problem of financing UNRWA derives from its narrow base of financial support. We would therefore not only urge all current contributors to UNRWA to re-examine their level of contribution but would especially urge those countries which have not yet contributed to consider the possibility of doing so. A widening of the Agency's basis of financial support would appear, ultimately, to be the only constructive solution to its budgetary problem since the maintenance of the Agency's programme at its present level involves rising expenditures which have not been matched by increased revenue.

Mr. Chairman, my Delegation shall be listening with interest to the comments of the other members of the Committee and looks forward to constructive exchanges on these questions in the hope that we shall achieve substantial progress toward assuring the well-being of the Palestine refugees. In the world of today when governments are assuming greater social responsibility within their borders, and outside of them, it is appropriate to keep in mind that a contribution to UNRWA is not only an expression of humanitarian concern: it also represents a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and stability which we all recognize as a collective responsibility.

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