

# REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION

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## SECTION I

### Previous Constitutional History

On 15 December 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to create an International Refugee Organization as its agency to deal with all aspects of the displaced persons and refugee problem, replacing the several other agencies then charged with the responsibility for various parts of it.

At the same time, an Agreement on Interim Measures was also adopted, under which a Preparatory Commission for the IRO was to be established, pending the entry into force of the Constitution, to take necessary and practical measures for bringing the Organization itself into effective operation as soon as possible.

On 31 December 1946, the requisite eight governments had signed the Constitution to bring the Preparatory Commission into being. Accordingly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened the first session of the Preparatory Commission, which met at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 11 to 21 February 1947.

At this first part of its first session, the Preparatory Commission elected His Excellency M. Henri Ponsot, Ambassador of France, as Chairman. Mr. Arthur J. Altmeyer, Chairman of the United States Social Security Board and the United States representative to the Social Commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, was elected Executive Secretary. Representatives of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), who had been in constant consultation during the drafting of the IRO Constitution, met with the Commission to aid in the drafting of directives for the orderly transfer of their refugee responsibilities, personnel and assets to the new Organization. Preliminary directives were drawn to implement the constitutional functions of IRO, the promotion of repatriation and resettlement, the determination of eligibility, establishment of agreements between IRO

and the governments and Occupation Authorities and the provision of funds and personnel to carry out the work of the Preparatory Commission.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in response to a request from the Preparatory Commission, agreed to hold at the disposal of the Organization a sum not exceeding in all U.S. \$250,000, against which the United Nations paid the salaries and other necessary administrative expenses of the Organization on the understanding that these costs would later be reimbursed by the Organization. These arrangements extended during a period of approximately four months prior to the assumption of operational activities by the Organization ; the Secretary-General of the United Nations also agreed to make available to the Organization accommodation for its Headquarters at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

The Preparatory Commission met for the second part of its first session from 1 to 20 May 1947. Although the number of signatures to the Constitution of the IRO had by that time increased to fourteen, only five of these signatures represented final acceptance of the Constitution by Member Governments, and the Commission recognized the unlikelihood that fifteen formal acceptances of the Constitution by States whose contributions to Part I of the Operational Budget would amount to 75 per cent thereof, necessary to bring the Organization into being, would be obtained by 30 June 1947, the date upon which both UNRRA and the IGCR were to terminate their activities on behalf of refugees and displaced persons. In order to avoid any breach in the continuity of operations, and in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 6 of the Agreement on Interim Measures, the Commission decided to assume, on 1 July 1947, operational responsibility for the refugees and displaced persons eligible for assistance under the terms of the Constitution. The Commission further decided to request Governments Members of the Preparatory Commission to make available, in advance, a portion of their contributions which would be due for the first financial year of the Organization itself, and to request UNRRA and IGCR to consider transferring to the Preparatory Commission any surplus funds they might have available on 30 June 1947. Staffs of these two organizations engaged in refugee and displaced persons work in the field on that date were transferred to PCIRO, pending final organization.

In view of the unexpectedly heavy responsibility which the Executive Secretary would have to bear as a result of the decision to commence active operations, the Preparatory Commission appointed an Advisory Committee to meet from time to time between meetings of the Prepara-

tory Commission to advise the Executive Secretary on his plans for the organization of the IRO and his appointments of senior members of the staff. The terms of reference of the Advisory Committee were subsequently widened to enable it to recommend action to the Preparatory Commission on all outstanding matters concerning the bringing into effective operation of the IRO.

At the third part of its first session, held in July 1947, the Preparatory Commission received with regret the resignation of Mr. Arthur J. Altmeyer and elected as Executive Secretary in his stead Mr. William Hallam Tuck. At the same time, Sir Arthur Rucker, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E., was appointed Deputy Executive Secretary.

The Preparatory Commission convened for the fourth part of its first session in October 1947 and again for the fifth part of its first session in January 1948, by which time it felt able, in view of the degree of reorganization which had been achieved by the Executive Secretary, to give its approval in principle to the personnel establishment which had been set up.

At the sixth part of its first session, in May 1948, the Preparatory Commission took certain final steps towards the coming into existence of the IRO itself. By that time, twenty-one governments had signed the Constitution, fourteen of them having either signed without reservation as to subsequent approval or having formally accepted the Constitution subsequent to signature ; thus it was necessary for only one more government to complete the formalities of accepting the Constitution to bring it into force. The Commission therefore took preliminary steps to arrange for the convening of the General Council on 13 September 1948.

## SECTION II

### **Transfer from UNRRA and IGCR**

In assuming, on 1 July 1947, operational responsibility for the refugees and displaced persons eligible for assistance under the terms of the Constitution of the IRO, the Preparatory Commission also took over in large part such assets and personnel of the UNRRA Displaced Persons Operation and of the IGCR as were considered appropriate. Shortly after that date, in accordance with plans made by the Executive Secretary, the personnel of the Headquarters of the IGCR who were to