

Geneva, August 25th, 1938.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In accordance with the resolution adopted by the Council on May 14th, 1938, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Assembly:

- (1) The report of the Council Committee appointed to draw up a Plan for International Assistance to Refugees (page 1);
- (2) The replies received from Governments up to August 24th, 1938, to Circular Letter No. 98.1938.XII, dated June 9th, 1938, transmitting the report of the Council Committee to them for their observations (page 3);
- (3) The detailed report he was instructed by the Council to prepare, after consultation with the President of the Governing Body of the Nansen Office and the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, on the basis of the proposals contained in the report of the Council Committee (page 4).

I. REPORT OF THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO DRAW UP A PLAN FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES, ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL ON MAY 14TH, 1938

I

The Committee appointed by the Council on January 28th, 1938, in pursuance of the resolution adopted by the Assembly at its eighteenth ordinary session regarding the preparation of a plan for assistance to refugees, met in Paris on February 14th and 15th, 1938, and at Geneva during the hundred-and-first session of the Council.¹ The Committee heard statements by the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany and the President of the Governing Body of the Nansen International Office for Refugees. It also noted the invitation addressed by the United States Government to a number of Governments in regard to the setting-up of a special committee, composed of representatives of a number of Governments, to deal with certain aspects of the refugee problem. The proposals mentioned hereunder are not intended to prejudice or to conflict with the work of the aforesaid committee.

From the information laid before the Committee, it appears that the number of refugees recognised as such by the League of Nations is approximately 600,000. In the case of the so-called Nansen refugees, emigration could only afford a partial solution, on account of the insufficiency of the capital available and the limited number of outlets. As was suggested in the special report submitted in 1936 by the President of the Nansen Office (document A.27.1936.XII), the real solution of the problem is rather to be found in the absorption of such refugees by their countries of refuge. Such absorption would appear to be already in progress, and, in the nature of things, must proceed in future even more rapidly.

As regards the refugees from Germany, emigration and settlement in oversea countries are proceeding. Of approximately 150,000 refugees who have so far left Germany, close upon 120,000 have already reached the countries in which they are to settle permanently.

Although the problems raised by the existence of two categories of refugees are of a different character, it would appear that both can be solved within a limited time.

II

I. The Committee noted that, under the decisions taken by the Assembly at its eighteenth ordinary session, the Nansen International Office for Refugees and also the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, are to be discontinued as from the end of 1938 but that, for the reasons set out above, the problem of refugees recognised as such by the League

¹ This Committee consists of the representatives of Bolivia, the United Kingdom and France.



of Nations cannot be regarded as solved at the present time. Many States Members of the League which have refugees in their territories consider that co-operation within the framework of the League is still indispensable.

2. The Committee took the view that a single organisation might be set up, for a limited period, to take the place of the two existing organisations.

3. The proposed organisation would be directed by a person designated by the League of Nations, as High Commissioner for Refugees under the protection of the League of Nations. The High Commissioner would be assisted by a small staff comprising neither refugees nor former refugees.

The High Commissioner's duties would be as follows:

(a) To superintend the entry into force and the application of the legal status of refugees, as defined more particularly in the Conventions of October 28th, 1933, and February 10th, 1938;

(b) To facilitate the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance;

(c) To assist the Governments and private organisations in their efforts to promote emigration and permanent settlement.

The League's financial contribution would be allocated to the High Commissioner's administrative expenses, and should not in any case be used for the relief or settlement of refugees. The creation of a single organisation may be expected to lead to economies in administrative expenditure.

4. The High Commissioner would be in continuous contact with the Governments concerned.¹

5. In the performance of his duties, the High Commissioner might also establish contact with Liaison Committees representing the private organisations dealing with refugee questions.

6. With the consent of the Governments concerned, the High Commissioner would be assisted by representatives in the principal countries of refuge.

The High Commissioner would be authorised to submit to such Governments the names of the persons best qualified, in his opinion, to undertake this work. These representatives should be neither refugees nor former refugees.

III

The Committee desires to draw the attention of the Council to the fact that a relatively short time will elapse between the decision which the Assembly is called upon to take in regard to the work of international assistance for refugees and the expiry of the mandate of the two League organisations now dealing with refugees.

The Committee therefore suggests that the Council should instruct the Secretary-General, after consultation with the President of the Governing Body of the Nansen International Office for Refugees and the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, to draw up, for consideration by the Assembly, a detailed plan on the basis of the proposals contained in the present report.

The Committee also recommends that the Assembly, if it approves the foregoing conclusions, should proceed, at its next session, to nominate a High Commissioner, in order to facilitate the transfer of powers.

IV

The Committee has the honour to submit to the Council the following resolution:

The Council,

Having examined the report of the Committee appointed to draw up a plan for international assistance to refugees:

Takes note of the proposals contained in the report which has been submitted to it;
Instructs the Secretary-General:

(1) To transmit this report, for observations, to the Governments of the States Members of the League of Nations and, for information, to the Governments of the United States of America and the United States of Brazil;

(2) To prepare, after consultation with the President of the Governing Body of the Nansen International Office for Refugees and the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, a detailed plan on the basis of the proposals of the present report;

(3) To transmit the present report, together with the detailed plan, to the Assembly, with any observations he may have received from Governments.

¹ An intergovernmental commission, on which all the interested Governments would be represented, might be set up to work in liaison with the High Commissioner.

2. REPLIES FROM GOVERNMENTS

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom Government "are in general agreement with the report of the Committee of the Council appointed to draw up a plan for international assistance to refugees.

" 2. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are of the opinion that the organisation to be set up in execution of this report should be as simple as possible, and that its administrative budget should not exceed the total of the existing budgets of the Nansen Office and the High Commission for Refugees coming from Germany.

" 3. As regards the question of the transfer or disposal of the financial assets of the Nansen Office, it appears that there are two possibilities; these funds could either be transferred intact to the future High Commissioner's organisation, or they could be as far as possible liquidated and the assets and revenue divided *pro rata* among Governments. It appears to His Majesty's Government that the proposal to divide these funds among Governments would be difficult to put into execution, and that it would be undesirable to deprive the High Commissioner of the control of substantial sums which could be used for relief or settlement purposes, provided that a method of administration could be devised which would not be unduly cumbersome and expensive. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom consider that it should be possible for these funds to be transferred intact to the new organisation without creating a necessity for any larger staff than that available to the President of the Nansen Office. It should be possible for the funds to be administered under the High Commissioner's direction by an accountant with the necessary clerical staff. The accounts could, as in similar cases, be examined at appropriate intervals by the Supervisory Commission.

" 4. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom reserve the right to submit further observations on the report of the Council Committee at a later date."

Denmark

The Danish Government states that it has no objection to the problems concerning the different categories of refugees being transferred to a High Commissioner's Office under the auspices of the League of Nations.

Estonia

No observations.

Greece

The Greek Government reserves the right to make its observations on the plan of assistance at a later date, but "deems it necessary to express at present its opinion on one of the points in the report of the Council Committee".

The Greek Government, in so far as it is concerned, cannot share the opinion of the Committee that "the solution of the problem is rather to be found in the absorption of such (Nansen) refugees by their countries of refuge.

"Without in the least under-estimating the beneficent efforts of the Nansen Office, the refugees dependent on that institution who are at present in Greece have been and are a very heavy burden on the country. Their number is entirely disproportionate to the economic resources of the country, especially as Greece has already had to give a home to more than 1,300,000 national refugees. Greece cannot therefore think of definitely absorbing the Nansen refugees.

"As it has stated on several occasions, especially through the medium of its representative on the Refugees Sub-Committee of the 1937 Assembly, the Greek Government firmly hopes that this question, which is daily becoming more serious for it, may, in the near future, be solved by the departure of the largest possible number of Nansen refugees."

India

No observations.

Netherlands

The Netherlands Government points out that in general they approve the proposals contained in the Committee's report. The Netherlands Government "attaches very great importance to the future functions of the High Commissioner mentioned under 3 (c)—namely, to assist the Governments and private organisations in their efforts to promote emigration and permanent settlement".

Switzerland

The Swiss Government points out that it has been "learnt with satisfaction in Switzerland that the continuance of the work of international assistance to refugees seems to be henceforward assured". It considers, however, that it should, "on this occasion, express the hope that the duration of the assistance should not be subject to any limitation incompatible with the task entrusted to the new High Commissioner".

3. REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

INTRODUCTION

The detailed report which the Secretary-General was instructed by the Council to submit to the Assembly, after consultation with the Nansen International Office for Refugees and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, was to be based, according to the Council's resolution, upon the "proposals set out" in the report of the Council Committee adopted on May 14th, 1938.

Those proposals were as follows:

" 1. The Committee noted that, under the decisions taken by the Assembly at its eighteenth ordinary session, the Nansen International Office for Refugees and also the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, are to be discontinued as from the end of 1938 but that, for the reasons set out above, the problem of refugees recognised as such by the League of Nations cannot be regarded as solved at the present time. Many States Members of the League which have refugees in their territories consider that co-operation within the framework of the League is still indispensable.

" 2. The Committee took the view that a single organisation might be set up, for a limited period, to take the place of the two existing organisations.

" 3. The proposed organisation would be directed by a person designated by the League of Nations, as High Commissioner for Refugees under the protection of the League of Nations. The High Commissioner would be assisted by a small staff comprising neither refugees nor former refugees.

" The High Commissioner's duties would be as follows:

" (a) To superintend the entry into force and the application of the legal status of refugees, as defined more particularly in the Conventions of October 28th, 1933, and February 10th, 1938;

" (b) To facilitate the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance;

" (c) To assist the Governments and private organisations in their efforts to promote emigration and permanent settlement.

" The League's financial contribution would be allocated to the High Commissioner's administrative expenses, and should not in any case be used for the relief or settlement of refugees. The creation of a single organisation may be expected to lead to economies in administrative expenditure.

" 4. The High Commissioner would be in continuous contact with the Governments concerned.

" 5. In the performance of his duties, the High Commissioner might also establish contact with Liaison Committees representing the private organisations dealing with refugee questions.

" 6. With the consent of the Governments concerned, the High Commissioner would be assisted by representatives in the principal countries of refuge.

" The High Commissioner would be authorised to submit to such Governments the names of the persons best qualified, in his opinion, to undertake this work. These representatives should be neither refugees nor former refugees."

To bring out the scope and character of the proposed organisation, it will be well to begin by examining the main points of the foregoing proposals one by one.

I. CESSATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NANSEN INTERNATIONAL OFFICE AND OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES COMING FROM GERMANY

The report on the liquidation of the Nansen Office submitted by the President of the Office to the Assembly at its eighteenth ordinary session in 1937 (document A.11.1937.XII), and the report of the Governing Body of the Office to the Assembly (document A.21.1938.XII) show that the activities of the Office are to come to an end by December 31st, 1938, at the latest. Before liquidation is completed, the Nansen Office must have disposed of all funds and other property under its charge for purposes of assistance to refugees, and have freed itself from all legal obligations entered into by reason of such assistance. The Office is invested with the legal capacity required for taking the appropriate steps (Statutes of the Office, Article 15).¹ Basing

¹ "Article 15. — The Nansen International Office for Refugees shall have full powers in respect of all matters relating to its administration and activities. The Nansen International Office for Refugees shall alone be responsible for its own activities."

itself on precedent, the Governing Body, in its capacity as "supreme authority of the Office" (Statutes, Article 7),¹ will doubtless appoint one or more liquidators suitably empowered to act after the dissolution of the Office (December 31st, 1938). These liquidators will submit to the Assembly, for information, a final report on their activities.

The mandate of the present High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany expires at the end of 1938, and the functions of his staff come to an end on the same date.

II. CREATION OF A SINGLE ORGANISATION

The creation of a single organisation for the protection of certain classes of refugees under the ægis of the League of Nations would, in effect, mean placing the following classes of refugees under the care of a single authority:

- (1) Refugees coming from Germany;
- (2) Russian refugees;
- (3) Armenian refugees;
- (4) Saar refugees, etc.

The *refugees coming from Germany*, not including those from what was formerly Austrian territory, number some 35,000. This total only includes those falling within the terms of the provisional Arrangement of July 4th, 1936, and the Convention of February 10th, 1938. They are at present living in various European States. In this connection, it should be pointed out that approximately 120,000 German refugees have already emigrated to oversea countries.

The *Russian refugees* have been estimated to number 300,000. They are living in various countries, particularly Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, Roumania and Yugoslavia. As was emphasised by the Council Committee in its report, the real solution of the problem is rather to be found in the absorption of such refugees by their countries of refuge.

The *Armenian refugees*, numbering approximately 120,000, are at present living in Bulgaria, France, Greece and Syria. They are not capable of absorption by their countries of refuge to the same extent as the Russian refugees. The Greek Government, indeed, has intimated that the absorption of Armenian refugees by Greece cannot be contemplated.

As regards the *refugees from the Saar* (4,000), a grant of 200,000 Swiss francs was, as an exceptional measure, voted to the Nansen Office by the Assembly, with a view to their settlement.

The functions of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany and those of the Nansen Office, which deals with Russian, Armenian and other refugees, differ from each other in one essential particular. Under the mandate conferred on it by the Assembly at its seventeenth ordinary session (1936), the High Commissioner was made responsible for the political and legal protection of refugees coming from Germany. Questions of assistance and settlement were left to private organisations, the High Commissioner's functions being confined to the co-ordination of their efforts in these matters. The Nansen Office, on the other hand, has a Humanitarian Fund which enables it to undertake not only the relief but even the settlement of refugees. As regards relief, the Council's proposals did not contemplate that the new High Commissioner should be required to do more than facilitate the co-ordination of this humanitarian work. In its letter to the Secretariat dated July 29th, 1938,² the United Kingdom Government discusses, among other points, the possibility of transferring the Nansen Office fund to the new High Commissioner's Office and thus providing the latter with a certain sum for use in relief and settlement work. In the view of the United Kingdom Government, this fund might be administered by a method which would not involve costly and complicated machinery requiring the employment of a larger staff than that of the Nansen Office.

In the chapters that follow, the Secretary-General has confined himself to the instructions he received from the Council, which asked him to make a detailed report based on the proposals set out in the report of the Committee of the Council. As stated above, those proposals do not include direct assistance by the future High Commissioner to refugees. The establishment of a single organisation is contemplated for a limited period only. Since, however, the monies administered by the Nansen Office for the benefit of Russian and Armenian refugees are constituted in part by a revolving fund that does not return to its origin for some considerable time, the system of direct assistance to refugees which the Nansen Office has hitherto followed might, if adhered to by the new organisation, confront the Assembly with the same problems as the Nansen Office is now called upon to meet.

¹ "Article 7. — The Governing Body shall be the supreme authority of the Nansen International Office for Refugees and, as a general rule, the competent authority. It may delegate its powers to the Managing Committee, or to the President, or, at the latter's request, to another member of the Governing Body.

"The Governing Body—or, in the event of delegation of its powers, the Managing Committee or President—shall appoint the persons entitled to sign letters or commit the Office."

² See page 3.



III. STRUCTURE OF THE NEW ORGANISATION

Under the Council Committee's report, the proposed organisation would be directed by a High Commissioner, assisted by a *small staff* comprising neither refugees nor former refugees. The expression "small staff", which is in the nature of a general guide, will be reconsidered in connection with the High Commissioner's functions.

IV. FUNCTIONS OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

(a) According to the report of the Council Committee, the new High Commissioner's first duty would be:

"To superintend the entry into force and the application of the legal status of refugees as defined more particularly in the Conventions of October 28th, 1933, and February 10th, 1938."

This function, as defined above, should be so interpreted as to include the semi-consular functions provided for in paragraph 1 of the Arrangement of June 30th, 1928, relating to the general status of refugees, with whom the League was at that time concerned, and also in Article 1 of the Agreement of the same date, dealing with those functions, to which Belgium and France are at present parties. Under the terms of these instruments, the functions in question were conferred upon the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. When the High Commissioner's Office was abolished and the Nansen Office created, they were treated as coming under the legal and political protection of refugees, and were transferred to the "regular organs of the League" (Assembly resolution of September 30th, 1930). In practice, however, and as it had been understood would be the case when the Assembly's resolution was adopted, they have always been performed by the local representatives of the Nansen Office, in virtue of a special annual authorisation from the Secretary-General.

(b) The second function with which the Council contemplated entrusting the new High Commissioner was:

"to facilitate the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance".

In the Council Committee's proposals, it is not contemplated that the new Organisation should afford direct assistance to refugees, as is at present the case with the Nansen Office. The solution recommended by the Committee was that which has been adopted since 1936 in regard to refugees coming from Germany, and which conforms to the principle laid down by the Assembly, that the League of Nations cannot assume direct responsibility for assistance to refugees and their settlement. It may be useful to outline the work done by the Nansen Office in this field during 1937.

The Nansen Office's direct assistance to Russian, Armenian and other refugees is financed out of its own "Humanitarian Fund". This Fund has been largely built up out of the proceeds of the stamps affixed to Nansen passports by the various Governments, the sale of postage stamps in France and Norway, and the repayment of advances, together with sundry other receipts and contributions.

As at June 30th, 1938, the Fund showed a balance of 356,979.20 Swiss francs.

From June 1937 to June 1938, advances and grants totalled 321,341.10 Swiss francs.¹

Furthermore, a sum of 121,703.10 Swiss francs was expended in grants to organisations.

The proceeds of the sale of Nansen stamps amounted to 285,005.90 Swiss francs, and of the sale of postage stamps in France and Norway to 72,788.90 Swiss francs.

The sums received by way of repayment of former advances totalled 52,964.55 Swiss francs.

Direct assistance in the shape of advances and grants, which, as has just been seen, totalled 321,341.10 Swiss francs, would appear to have been on too small a scale for it to be possible to assume responsibility for the final settlement of refugees in a general way. Numerically speaking, its importance is further reduced by the large number of advances and grants made available. The system of a working capital fund whereby the settlement of refugees can be financed through the repayment of former advances would at first sight appear to be excellent, but considering in the first place that sometimes repayment cannot be expected for a long time, and in the second place that the new organisation will only be set up for a limited period, the question whether the new High Commissioner should or should not be entrusted with the provision of direct assistance for certain classes of refugees only must be examined in all its aspects.

One of the objections to the system of direct assistance to refugees is that it is liable to give rise to the idea that the funds are used for purposes other than purely humanitarian assistance. The jealousy between individual refugees and between groups of refugees, and the suspicion with which the activities of refugees in their countries of refuge are viewed by their countries of origin, inevitably surround any organisation dispensing direct assistance with an atmosphere of distrust. Further-

¹ To this figure should be added a sum of 121,703.10 Swiss francs distributed directly to the organisations in France and Roumania (see document A.21.1938.XII, page 18).

more, the management of a working capital fund represents a great deal of work from the point of view both of accountancy and of the minimum guarantees which must be obtained in these matters, and would necessitate the services of a staff at least as numerous as that formerly employed by the Nansen Office.

It was no doubt these reasons which led the Council to contemplate the creation of a High Commissioner's Office which would not be concerned with direct assistance and would only require a small staff. In the last place, the differential treatment of the various classes of refugees would scarcely be conceivable, as the nature and extent of the protection afforded under the ægis of the League should be the same for all. Such being the case, it is presumably the local committees which would have to undertake the provision of direct assistance, under the auspices of their respective Governments. In certain countries, there are organisations responsible for the management of certain funds. Could not these organisations be entrusted with the work of refugee relief? For if, as the Council Committee points out, the solution of the problem of the Russian refugees is to be found in their absorption by their countries of refuge, relief and settlement work should surely be placed under the supervision and direct responsibility of the countries concerned. This method is discussed by the United Kingdom Government in its communication to the Secretariat,¹ where it is suggested that the Nansen Office's Humanitarian Fund might be placed *pro rata* at the disposal of the various Governments. The second solution considered by the United Kingdom Government—that (as stated above) of placing the Fund at the disposal of the future High Commissioner for the relief and settlement of Russian and Armenian refugees—might be thought to go beyond the Council Committee's proposals of May 14th last.

On being obliged to wind up its representation in Germany, the Office made over its assets to two Russian humanitarian organisations, the Russian Red Cross and the Union of Disabled Servicemen, on condition that these two bodies distributed 50% of the proceeds of the realisation of these assets among the other Russian humanitarian organisations. Might not a similar method be followed in other countries?

As regards the Near Eastern Fund, a scheme has already been worked out, the execution of which has been entrusted to the competent local authorities. Another scheme has been adopted in regard to the funds used for the settlement of Armenian refugees in Greece.

Under the Council Committee's proposal with regard to assistance, the High Commissioner's duties would include that of *facilitating* the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance. But who should be responsible for the co-ordination of such work? If what is meant is co-ordination in the several countries concerned, this duty should devolve, it would seem, upon the local committees. If, on the other hand, the work of co-ordination is to embrace all the countries concerned, that would imply the existence of a co-ordinating authority. That authority might be an independent body consisting of representatives of Governments and private organisations. Such a solution would, however, appear to be out of all proportion to the duties of a co-ordinating authority whose aims would be on a relatively small scale. The private organisations with which the future High Commissioner will have to maintain direct contact in whatever way may seem most appropriate might well be asked to act as a co-ordinating, or at least an advisory, body.

(c) The third function with which the Council contemplates entrusting the new High Commissioner is:

“to assist the Governments and private organisations in their efforts to promote emigration and settlement”.

Questions relating to emigration and settlement, like those relating to direct assistance, are not included in the functions of the new Organisation. Under sub-paragraph (c) of the Council Committee's proposals, it would be the duty of the future High Commissioner to *assist* the Governments and private organisations in their efforts to promote emigration and settlement. The Government of the Netherlands has intimated that it attaches very great importance to the duties assigned to the High Commissioner in this respect.

The problem of the settlement of Russian refugees and of a section of the Armenian refugees is not the same as that raised by the settlement of refugees from Germany. In the case of the latter, the problem is rather one of emigration and, such being the case, the maintenance of contact with the organisations dealing with emigration takes on a certain importance. It will be for the future High Commissioner to establish such contact in the manner and through the machinery which he may judge most appropriate. Government action may be either individual or collective. An example of collective action is to be found in the Intergovernmental Committee which met at Evian last July and was attended by the representatives of thirty-two States. It adopted a resolution recommending “full co-operation” with the “services of the League of Nations”. The above-mentioned proposal of the Council Committee would enable the future High Commissioner to co-operate with the Intergovernmental Committee, whose headquarters are in London.

Paragraph II of the same proposal provides, moreover, that “the League's financial contribution would be allocated to the High Commissioner's administrative expenses and should not *in any case* be used for the relief or settlement of refugees. The creation of a single organisation may be expected to lead to economies in administrative expenditure”.

¹ See page 3.

As, under the Council's proposals, the future High Commissioner's functions would not include direct assistance to refugees or their settlement and emigration, the new organisation might be constituted as follows:

- 1 High Commissioner;
- 1 Assistant High Commissioner;
- 2 secretaries;
- 4 shorthand-typists;
- 1 office-keeper.

In regard to this outline of the organisation of the new High Commissioner's Office, it may be explained that:

(a) The Assistant High Commissioner should co-operate with the High Commissioner in all matters of a general character and be capable of representing him in his absence.

(b) The High Commissioner's Office would be divided into two sections, each of which would be directed by one of the Secretaries. One of these sections would deal with matters relating to Russian, Armenian, and other refugees, and the other with refugees from Germany.

As regards the budget, a total credit ¹ of approximately 194,500 Swiss francs might be provided, and allocated as follows:

	Swiss francs
High Commissioner	45,000
Assistant High Commissioner	28,000
Staff	40,000
Travelling expenses	26,500
Rent, office and sundry expenses	30,000
Representatives abroad	25,000
	194,500

A provision of 25,000 francs is made for the High Commissioner's representatives abroad, and this represents a decrease of more than three-quarters as compared with the similar expenditure of the Nansen Office. As far as possible, the new High Commissioner's representatives should be nominated by the Governments concerned, in agreement with the High Commissioner, from among the officials of the competent Government departments. A small allowance might be made to them to cover certain expenses which they would incur when acting as the High Commissioner's representatives.

It is suggested that the Supervisory Commission should approve the insertion of this total credit of 194,500 Swiss francs in the 1939 Budget. Bearing in mind that in the years 1937 and 1938 the average budget of the Nansen Office and of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany was 378,487 Swiss francs, it will be seen that in 1939 it will be possible to make a saving of 183,987 francs in the chapter relating to international assistance to refugees.

As the staff of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany numbers four, and as the proposed staff of the new organisation would number only eight, it will be seen that full effect will be given to the Council Committee's proposal that the staff of the new High Commissioner's Office should be small and include neither refugees nor former refugees. It is understood that the High Commissioner would himself be invited to submit his budget estimates for 1940.

Provision should further be made for the future High Commissioner's travelling expenses and salary in the event of his taking up his duties in October 1938. Provision should therefore be made, for the year 1938, of a credit of approximately 20,000 Swiss francs, to be added to the budget for 1939.

V. CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENTS

The High Commissioner should maintain continuous contact with the Governments, either directly, by means of visits to the various capitals, or through diplomatic agents, or through the High Commissioner's representatives abroad, to whom he might delegate certain duties in the performance of which they might establish contact with the national authorities. The maintenance of such contact is no doubt the most important of the High Commissioner's tasks. The Governments which he will require to approach will be those of the countries of refuge, in regard to such matters as improvements in the legal status of refugees or failure to carry out the Arrangements and Conventions concluded for their benefit. He might further request Governments to consider proposals put forward by other Governments or even by private organisations, with a view to the co-ordination of the work of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of the emigration and final settlement of refugees.

¹ These estimates are based on the assumption that the new organisation's headquarters will not be in Geneva.

But such continuous contact might also be ensured—and even strengthened—by an intergovernmental commission on which all the interested Governments would be represented. A proposal to this effect was put forward in the Council Committee, but received only cursory consideration. An Intergovernmental Committee, having in the meanwhile been summoned to meet at Evian to deal with the problem of refugees from Germany, the Council Committee thought it preferable that the matter should be held over. Reference has already been made to the Intergovernmental Committee's resolution regarding "full co-operation with the services of the League of Nations". Co-operation with the new international body would indeed be of the highest value, as the task it has set itself may rightly be regarded as complementary to the League's work on behalf of refugees from Germany. May it not be doubted whether—in view more particularly of its composition and the fact that it is to deal only with refugees from Germany—this body could take the place of an intergovernmental commission such as was suggested by the Council Committee? It will be for the Assembly to decide this point.

VI. CONTACT WITH THE ORGANISATIONS

In addition to contact with the Governments, contact is also to be maintained with the private organisations. The Council Committee recommends that this should be done through Liaison Committees. The High Commissioner should in all probability be left very wide latitude in this respect. He will have to keep in touch with organisations representing all the different classes of refugees, each of which has its own peculiar characteristics. Methods suiting one class might be unsuitable for others. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that the Committees through which the High Commissioner could establish contact with the organisations would be of an unofficial character. They might set up sub-committees to deal with purely technical matters whenever necessary.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

Though the Council Committee considered that the High Commissioner should only be appointed for a very limited period, that period has not been fixed. The Swiss Government has expressed the view that the duration of the assistance should not be limited in any manner incompatible with the High Commissioner's task. The appointment might be made for four, or at the outside five, years. The High Commissioner would be required to submit an annual progress report to the Assembly. For this purpose he would be given the technical assistance of the Secretariat. He would choose his own staff. His representatives abroad, nominated in the manner described above, would receive their instructions from him. In the event of his appointment by the Nineteenth Assembly, the High Commissioner should enter immediately upon his duties so that the new organisation might be in being by the end of the year. During these three months of preparatory work, the High Commissioner might receive secretarial assistance from the High Commissioner's Office in London and the Nansen Office.

(Communiqué à l'Assemblée, au Conseil et aux Membres de la Société.)

No officiel: A. 27. 1938. XII.
Addendum.

Genève, le 13 septembre 1938.

SOCIETE DES NATIONS

ASSISTANCE INTERNATIONALE AUX REFUGIES

Le Secrétaire général de la Société des Nations a l'honneur de transmettre ci-joint à l'Assemblée la réponse du Gouvernement suédois, en date du 9 septembre 1938, à la lettre-circulaire C.L.98.1938.XII, du 9 juin 1938, lui transmettant pour observations le rapport du Comité du Conseil.

SUEDE.

En principe, le Gouvernement suédois n'a aucune objection contre la proposition du Comité de remplacer les deux organismes en faveur des réfugiés existants dans le cadre de la Société des Nations par une seule organisation sous la direction d'un Haut Commissaire pour les réfugiés placés sous la protection de la Société. En attendant le plan détaillé qui, d'après la résolution du Conseil du 14 mai 1938, doit être soumis à l'Assemblée, le Gouvernement se réserve d'exprimer, éventuellement par ses délégués à l'Assemblée, ses observations sur les fonctions de ladite organisation.

En ce qui concerne la compétence du Haut Commissaire, le Gouvernement suédois désire souligner, déjà par la présente, l'opportunité du contact entre le Haut Commissaire et le Bureau pour les réfugiés organisé à Londres par suite de la Conférence intergouvernementale à Evian, et de la définition de la compétence du Haut Commissaire d'une telle manière que son champ d'activité et celui du Bureau de Londres soient rationnellement séparés l'un de l'autre.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

The Secretary-General of the League of Nations has the honour to communicate herewith to the Assembly the Swedish Government's reply, dated September 9th, 1938, to the circular letter C.L.98.1938.XII of June 9th, 1938, transmitting to it, for observations, the report of the Council Committee.

(Translation.)

SWEDEN.

The Swedish Government has no objection in principle to the Committee's proposal that a single organisation under the direction of a High Commissioner for refugees placed under the protection of the League of Nations, should be set up to take the place of the two existing organisations for refugees within the framework of the League. Pending the appearance of the detailed plan, which, according to the Council resolution of May 14th, 1938, is to be submitted to the Assembly, the Government reserves the right to make known its observation on the functions of the said organisation, possibly through its delegates to the Assembly.

As regards the High Commissioner's powers, the Swedish Government desires at once to stress the desirability of contact between the High Commissioner and the Office for Refugees organised in London after the Intergovernmental Conference at Evian and the desirability also of defining the competence of the High Commissioner in such a way that his sphere of activity and that of the London Bureau may be kept rationally distinct.

