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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 29 November 1990, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. de MARCO

(Malta)

- Question of Palestine [23]

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
- (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 23

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/45/35)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/45/709)

The PRESIDENT: I propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 12 noon tomorrow, Friday, 30 November 1990. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Senegal, in her capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mrs. DIALLO (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (interpretation from French): It is an honour and a privilege for me in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to address the General Assembly once again for the purpose of introducing this most important agenda item, "Question of Palestine".

In my statement to the Assembly a year ago I appealed to the international community on behalf of all children - not only Palestinian children, but also Israeli children - and said that ultimately it was for their sake and the sake of all children that we must not fail in our efforts to achieve peace, so that they might be able finally to enjoy the peaceful and just world that was their right, not simply theirs by virtue of existing conventions.

(Mrs. Diallo, Chairman, Committee
on the Exercise of the Inalienable
Rights of the Palestinian People)

On 30 September 1990, 71 Heads of State or Government, assembled at the World Summit for Children, jointly undertook the noble commitment to "giving every child a better future". Recognizing the dangers faced by children through conflict, foreign occupation, poverty and abuse, they expressed their determination to take political action at the highest level to ensure the well-being of all children.

The annual report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which Ambassador Borg Olivier, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations and Rapporteur of the Committee, will introduce shortly, contains many details on developments during the reporting year. One figure in particular stands out: since the beginning of the intifadah almost three years ago about one quarter of the casualties have been children. By the end of September, 218 children under 16 had been killed by gunfire, beatings or other actions of the Israeli authorities, including more than 30 infants killed by tear-gas. Tens of thousands of children have been injured. Thousands more, some of them no more than five years of age, have been detained, and there have been numerous reports of their mistreatment. Moreover, more than half a million children have suffered major disruption of their education owing to the prolonged closure of educational institutions, from kindergarten to university level, and because of incidents that constantly disrupt classes when schools at last re-open.

These figures are particularly disturbing because they show excessive and unjustified use of force by the Israeli authorities, in particular against children, the most precious resource of any nation; they show clearly that the occupying Power is trying not simply to restore law and order in the occupied territory, as the Israeli authorities claim, but rather to suppress an entire people, including its most vulnerable element.

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Rights of the Palestinian People)

The fact that the occupying Power finds it necessary to shoot, use tear-gas against and detain children in order to guarantee its own security is clear proof that security does not lie in the occupation of territory. On the contrary, as our Committee has repeatedly warned over the years, military occupation will remain a permanent source of instability and violence because it has to be maintained by armed force, thus resulting in dispossession, the denial of fundamental human rights and, at the same time, growing resistance on the part of the Palestinian population. Only a comprehensive settlement based on respect for international legality, recognition of the interests of all the parties concerned, and appropriate international guarantees can provide real and permanent security.

(Mrs. Diallo, Chairman, Committee
on the Exercise of the Inalienable
Rights of the Palestinian People)

Our Committee is extremely concerned that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has reached an impasse, and this makes it all the more dangerous. Since 1947, when the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), innumerable efforts have been made through a variety of mechanisms to reach an equitable solution to the fundamental problem of how the territory of historic Palestine should be shared between its two communities, the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs. Gradually a consensus has emerged on the fundamental elements of such a solution, as spelled out in resolution 44/42 of 6 December 1989, which members will recall was adopted by an unprecedented majority of 151 votes in favour. They include the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied territories; guaranteeing arrangements for the security of all States in the region, including those named in the partition resolution, within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and attainment of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination.

There was some hope then that after so many years of multilateral and bilateral efforts the peace process would finally move forward. The Palestinian peace initiative and the declaration in November 1988 of an independent Palestinian State, and the subsequent diplomatic moves, including various proposals advanced by some of the parties, appeared to have brought us to a turning-point. Israel, however, has shown complete intransigence. It has refused to respond to the Palestinian initiative. It remains adamantly opposed to the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, which continues to be the avenue favoured by the vast majority of Member States.

(Mrs. Diallo, Chairman, Committee
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Rights of the Palestinian People)

As a result, the peace process has been blocked. Unfortunately, the Security Council has thus far been unable to take any steps towards the convening of the peace conference because of the opposition of a permanent member. Years have elapsed in these fruitless efforts, and all the appeals of our Committee and of many others have not had the desired result. The current crisis in the Gulf has greatly raised the level of tension in the region and further complicated efforts to promote a peaceful settlement. We believe, however, that recent developments have made it increasingly clear that the International Peace Conference, with the participation of all parties concerned on an equal footing and resulting in adequate security guarantees for all States in the region, is the most constructive proposal advanced so far and the one that is most likely to lead to positive results. I would like to emphasize that progress towards a solution of the question of Palestine would greatly contribute to a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

For its part, our Committee has spared no effort in promoting the convening of the conference and in bringing together people of good will from all sides - Palestinians, Israelis, Jews and other people from all regions - for a consideration of the relevant issues in a constructive and concrete manner. In the course of the past year the Committee has carried out an intensive programme of meetings in various regions with a view to mobilizing official and public opinion in pursuit of these objectives and to creating a climate which could contribute to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

Regional seminars were held jointly with symposia of non-governmental organizations for the Asian region in Kuala Lumpur, for the Latin America and Caribbean region in Buenos Aires, for the African region in Freetown and for

(Mrs. Diallo, Chairman, Committee
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the North American region in New York. In addition, a European seminar was held in Stockholm and a symposium of European non-governmental organisations and an international meeting of non-governmental organisations were held at the United Nations office in Geneva.

I would like here to thank once again the Governments of Malaysia, Argentina, Sierra Leone and Sweden for providing venues for these important events and for the unstinting support they gave the Committee in its work. The Committee was greatly encouraged by the seriousness of purpose of the participants in the various meetings and the support they demonstrated for United Nations recommendations for achieving a just settlement of the question of Palestine. The Committee intends to carry out its work along the same lines in the coming year.

It is essential now that Israel be made to understand that the interests of peace in the region, as well as its own best interests, require that it change its unbending position. Many Israelis from different segments of the political spectrum have come to recognize this necessity and to accept that Palestinians have national rights which need to be realized if there is to be peace in the region. We once again urge the Israeli Government to join the international consensus before the situation degenerates into uncontrollable violence and intercommunal, even inter-religious, strife.

Unfortunately, recent events provide an ominous warning of what might be lying ahead. Since last May, when a former Israeli soldier firing at random murdered eight Palestinian workers from Gaza, the level of violence has escalated in the most alarming manner. The latest incident, the massacre of over 20 Palestinians at the Haram al-Shareef in Jerusalem, has been condemned by the Security Council and by the international community as a whole.

(Mrs. Diallo, Chairman, Committee
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Rights of the Palestinian People)

Ten years ago, at the seventh emergency special session of the General Assembly, my predecessor as Chairman of the Committee had some prophetic words. He said,

"a fire that is not quenched must spread. A benign cancer that is not treated spreads, and becomes incurable and then fatal".

Many tragic events have taken place since then, causing the loss of many lives. Yet the unprecedented political developments of the past year, and in particular the affirmation of the primacy of international law and the advent of an era of partnership in place of rivalry, have opened up unprecedented possibilities for the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts. Our Committee believes that the majority of the Israeli people want to live in peace and to build a better future for their children, just as the Palestinians do.

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We are persuaded that wisdom and statesmanship will prevail and that a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, will be achieved. We pledge ourselves to continue to work towards that objective to the best of our abilities.

The PRESIDENT: I now call upon the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the Committee's report, A/45/35.

Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: On this day when the international community formally commemorates its solidarity with the Palestinian people it is an honour and a privilege for me in my capacity as Rapporteur to present to the General Assembly the 1990 report (A/45/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

In 1990 the Committee, under the able guidance of its Chairman, Her Excellency Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo, diligently carried out its mandate on the basis of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. The report stresses the Committee's concern over the dangerous stalemate that has developed, notwithstanding the efforts to promote peace, and over the grave deterioration of the situation in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 as a result of the escalating Israeli repression of the intifadah. It stresses the urgency of taking measures for the protection of the Palestinian people and for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/42, and expresses the firm view that the Security Council should show the same resoluteness in dealing with the question of Palestine as it has manifested in the case of the crisis in the Gulf.

(Mr. Borg Olivier, Rapporteur,
Committee on the Exercise of
the Inalienable Rights of the
Palestinian People)

Chapters II and III of the report are procedural and summarize the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information; they also give information on the organization of the work of the Committee.

The action taken by the Committee in 1990 is described in chapter IV of the report. In section A.1, which reviews the situation, the Committee has noted with deep concern that in its efforts to suppress the intifadah Israel had continued to resort to the use of often excessive and indiscriminate force, including shooting at demonstrators, intensive use of tear-gas and the severe beating of detainees. The Committee has monitored the situation in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 on an ongoing basis through the media and the reports of United Nations organs and agencies as well as through information collected by Governments, non-governmental organizations, individual experts and persons from Israel and the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 who participated in meetings held under the auspices of the Committee and other sources. As of 31 October 1990, according to the DataBase Project on Palestinian Human Rights, the total number of Palestinians killed since the beginning of the intifadah by Israeli armed forces, armed settlers, civilians and collaborators was 876 identified cases, of which 25 per cent were children under the age of 16. The Committee has noted with indignation that Israeli forces had indiscriminately used firearms against Palestinians in the precincts of Al Haram Al Shareef in Jerusalem on 8 October 1990, which resulted in the deaths of over 20 Palestinians and the wounding of over 125 others.

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In this section of its report the Committee also takes note of the fact that Israeli occupation authorities continue to resort to a variety of harsh measures and collective punishments in their efforts to suppress the intifadah.

Section A.2 (a) refers to the letters sent by the Chairman of the Committee to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council drawing their attention to specific incidents of particular gravity. Since those letters have been circulated as documents of the General Assembly and the Security Council, they have not been summarized in the report, in an effort to make it more concise. Instead, all documentary references have been provided.

In addition, the Committee has followed closely the activities of the Security Council on matters related to the Committee's mandate and has participated in Council debates, as necessary, as reflected in section A.2 (b).

In its programme of work the Committee once again decided to continue to give the utmost priority to promoting the early convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/42 of 6 December 1989 in all its activities during 1990. Its efforts in this regard are detailed in section A.3. The Committee also decided to stress the urgent need for ensuring the safety and protection of Palestinians under Israeli occupation in accordance with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Committee was greatly encouraged by the overwhelming international support for its objectives and by the intensification of efforts among the international community in favour of a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, as reflected, in particular, in the recommendations adopted by the regional seminars and by symposia and meetings of non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine

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organized under the auspices of the Committee. Those recommendations are annexed to the report of the Committee.

Section A.4 contains a list of international conferences and meetings at which the Committee was represented because of their particular relevance to its work.

Section A.5 contains a list of documents relating to action on the question of Palestine taken by United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations. The documents give an indication of the intensity of international concern regarding the current situation and of support for the Committee's objectives for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Section B describes the activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights, organized in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance, in implementation of the mandates contained in General Assembly resolutions 44/41 A and B. Section B.1 contains an account of the regional seminars held under the Committee's auspices. Four seminars were held in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Europe and North America, respectively.

The Committee was greatly encouraged by the active participation in the seminars of prominent political personalities, parliamentarians, policy-makers and other experts, including Israelis and Palestinians. The Committee expressed satisfaction that the seminars had made a positive contribution to peace efforts by providing a forum for a balanced and constructive discussion of all the issues. It noted that the seminar participants had adopted conclusions and recommendations expressing support for the Committee's objectives for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, particularly through the "two peoples, two States" formula and the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. It

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further noted the request that the Committee continue to ensure that regional seminars provide an opportunity for diverse points of view to be expressed so that a meaningful dialogue could be held among people of good will on all sides.

Section B.2 describes the activities organized by the Committee in its continuing efforts to expand its contacts with non-governmental organizations and to co-operate with them in their contribution to heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine. Five regional symposia for non-governmental organizations were held in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, North America and Europe, and an international meeting of those organizations was also held at Geneva.

The Committee was greatly encouraged by the intensification of activities and programmes of the non-governmental organizations, including the sending of fact-finding missions to the area, the promotion of joint activities between Israelis and Palestinians and the provision of assistance and various other activities aimed at heightening public awareness and promoting a peaceful settlement. The Committee noted with satisfaction the continuing and growing involvement of Israeli organizations and Jewish organizations in North America and Western Europe in these efforts.

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It also noted that the regional symposia and the international meetings of non-governmental organizations had adopted declarations expressing the full support of the non-governmental organizations for the objectives and activities of the United Nations to ensure a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and reaffirming the commitment of the non-governmental organizations to intensify further their efforts in this direction.

Sections B.3 and B.4 contain information on the activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights in the field of information and publications and on the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Chapter V of the report covers the work of the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/41 C, including the publications and audiovisual activities of that Department and journalists' encounters and news missions to the area.

Chapter VI, the last chapter of the report, contains the recommendations of the Committee. These recommendations take into account developments since the last session of the General Assembly. In this chapter the Committee has expressed its disquiet over the prospects for peace in view of Israel's continued intransigence and policy of armed repression of the intifadah and the serious threat of armed confrontation caused by the Gulf crisis. It calls for international attention to remain focused on the need to resolve the question of Palestine in spite of recent developments, and it appeals to the Security Council to take concrete and effective action towards resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine. The Committee also reaffirms the international consensus that the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization on an equal footing is indispensable in any efforts and deliberations aimed at the achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East.

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The Committee recalls its original recommendations, which are once again annexed to the report. It reaffirms the principles for the achievement of a comprehensive peace contained in resolution 44/42 of 6 December 1989. It also expresses deep regret at Israel's rejection of the constructive proposals contained in that resolution and calls on those States that have thus far prevented its implementation to join the international consensus. The Committee calls upon the General Assembly to urge the Security Council, and in particular its permanent members, to consider measures needed to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. It also urges the Council to address the question of Palestine with the same urgency and determination shown in addressing other important matters of concern to the international community. The Committee has also decided to continue to intensify its efforts towards the convening of the International Peace Conference and to give the utmost priority to that goal in its programme of work for next year.

The Committee then once again urges that all necessary measures be taken immediately to protect the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. It calls on the Security Council to establish urgently an effective United Nations presence with a legal mandate to protect the Palestinians. In this regard the Committee endorses the proposed establishment by the Security Council of a United Nations observer force. It also calls on the Security Council to consider again with urgency the matter of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and to take appropriate measures to deal with the situation.

Finally, the Committee reaffirms the duty and responsibility of the United Nations to provide all necessary assistance to ensure the economic development of

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the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, in preparation for the attainment of national sovereignty in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Committee also calls for an increase in international economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people in close co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The report I have just described reflects the sincere commitment of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to finding ways and means to achieve a just and lasting peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict - and to the question of Palestine in particular - in all its aspects, a just settlement that will permit the Palestinian people to realize their aspirations and that respects and guarantees the legitimate needs and interests of all sides.

The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the Observer of Palestine. I now call on him, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3227 (XXIX) of 2 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988.

Mr. AL-KIDWA (Palestine) (interpretation from Arabic): On 29 October 1990, the Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, according to usual procedure, requested entry visas for Mr. Farouk Al-Kaddoumi, Minister of State of the State of Palestine and Head of the Political Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, along with his accompanying delegation, to attend the General Assembly and participate in its deliberations, as is customary, during the General Assembly's debate on the agenda item "The question of Palestine". Up to Monday last, 26 November, the requested entry visas were not granted by the host country, the United States of America. We then turned to the Secretary-General and the United Nations Legal Counsel, who undertook to make

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enquiries with the host country at various levels. Those efforts, in addition to many other moves, resulted in the issuance today, at 8 p.m., Tunis time, by the host country of the requested visas.

We condemn this American attitude, which is a clear breach of the host country's legal commitments under the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement concluded between the United States of America and the United Nations. We condemn it, and view it as evidence of a political attitude hostile to the Palestinian people and aimed at impeding the arrival our Minister of State.

While we condemn it, we should also like to extend our apologies to delegations and members of the General Assembly for this situation, over which we have no control. This is the first time that the representative of Palestine has not begun the political debate under the agenda item "The question of Palestine". Our only consolation is that Mr. Al-Kaddouai will be given the chance to address the General Assembly at the end of its deliberations under this item.

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Palestine)

We asked to speak only to clarify the situation, to make clear to members of the General Assembly what has happened, and to ask that our political statement be deferred to the end of the debate on the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine".

Mr. GARDEZI (Pakistan): What the international community has witnessed over the past three years is basically a contrast between Palestinian moderation and Israeli intransigence. On the Palestinian side there is the peace initiative launched by President Yasser Arafat in 1988, while Israel persists in its efforts to deny the people of Palestine their national rights.

The Political Resolution adopted by the Palestine National Council confirmed the determination of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to reach a comprehensive peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its essence, the Palestinian question. This solution would be worked out within the framework of the United Nations Charter, the principles and provisions of international legitimacy, the rules of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations. This would be done in a manner that would ensure the exercise of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to establish their independent national State on their national territory, as well as create arrangements for security and peace for all the States of the region.

The people of Palestine and the leadership of the PLO have taken a giant stride towards the resolution of the age-old conflict in the Middle East and the creation of conditions in which all the States in the region can live in peace and security. The Proclamation and Political Resolution adopted at Algiers in 1988 contain historic messages that cannot be ignored by any country, including Israel.

Unfortunately, Palestinian moderation has been met with increasing Israeli intransigence and resort to violence. The Israeli reaction to the proposals for peace can be gauged from the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the

(Mr. Gardezi, Pakistan)

Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the statement of the Chairman of the Committee, which contains horrifying details on the growing deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, where hundreds of Palestinians have been killed and tens of thousands wounded, maimed or detained since the beginning of the intifadah. In their attempt to break the will of the Palestinian people and force them to leave their ancestral homeland, the Israeli authorities have imposed collective punishments, economic coercion and curfews; they have demolished houses, closed educational institutions, destroyed crops and trees and resorted to deportation. What we are witnessing in the occupied territories is an example of the Israeli occupying forces declaring war on the defenceless Palestinian people in order to annex and absorb the occupied territories.

However, the struggle of the people of Palestine for dignity and nationhood over the past four decades has demonstrated that a people committed to freedom and independence cannot be subjugated for long. The intifadah is the collective expression by the Palestinian people of their resistance to Israeli colonialism in order to exercise their right to sovereignty and self-determination. By their sacrifices, the people of Palestine have shattered the illusion of the irreversibility of the illegal Israeli occupation. Delay in recognizing this reality will only aggravate instability and insecurity in the region and increase the sufferings and misery of all the people of the region, without extinguishing the flame of liberty, which burns eternally. The Israeli leaders must realize that their policies of expansion and colonization are the main obstacles to an enduring peace in the region.

Israel has shown by its repressive actions its utter contempt for the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. It is time for the international community, in particular the Security Council, to take firm action to

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ensure protection of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. It is time for the United Nations machinery to be used to end the festering conflict in the Middle East, the crux of which lies in the denial of the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and statehood. We agree with the Secretary-General when he notes in his report on the work of the Organisation that

"The Security Council could make an important contribution to the process by renewing its commitment to resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which ... together with the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, can constitute the basis of a just and lasting peace in the area." (A/45/L. p. 10)

The quest for peace in the Middle East has a long history of missed opportunities. Now more than ever before the Security Council, particularly its permanent members, have the opportunity to seize a historic moment. Now is the time to resolve the question of Palestine and to end the suffering of its people by enabling them to assume their rightful place within the comity of nations.

It is time that Israel heeded the universal condemnation of its policy of the use of force. The fundamental grievances behind the Palestinian uprising are political and can be addressed only by means of a political solution, not by military force. We in Pakistan are committed to the just struggle of the Palestinian people and look forward to the day when Palestine can assume its rightful place in the comity of nations.

In a recent message on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, said:

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"On behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan and on my own behalf, I renew our pledge of continued and unequivocal support for and solidarity with our Palestinian brothers in their noble struggle to exercise their inalienable national rights, including their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital".

Mr. PERERA (Sri Lanka): Over the years the question of Palestine has remained the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. My delegation wishes to reiterate its view that the prolonged occupation of Palestinian land by Israel and the continued denial of the Palestinian people's right freely to establish their own State in that territory are totally unacceptable and a flagrant violation of international law.

(Mr. Perera, Sri Lanka)

What is more, such a denial constitutes a major threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. In this context, internationally recognized principles are of fundamental importance for the achievement of peace and stability in the region and also for a comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine. We have repeatedly stated that the Palestinian people has the inherent right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty in Palestine, and pointed out the need for a lasting solution on the basis of security arrangements for all States in the region guaranteeing secure and internationally recognized boundaries. However, the efforts of the international community to find a solution to the problem and to bring lasting peace to the region have been thwarted by Israel's continued intransigence.

The period that elapsed since the last session of the Assembly has been marked by achievements in conflict resolution. Those and other encouraging developments in international relations augur well for the future, if they are pursued in a manner consistent with the same spirit in dealing with the question of Palestine. Any such action genuinely undertaken with regard to the Palestine question would undoubtedly contribute to the peace process in the region.

We urge the Security Council to intensify its efforts to resolve the question of Palestine. In this regard, we refer in particular to the need for the five permanent members of the Security Council, which have acted in a very constructive manner to achieve consensus in conflict resolution in other regions, to take the initiative to resolve this long-standing problem and enable the Security Council to consider all measures required for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

As we have said before, to achieve a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, an essential prerequisite is the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East with the participation of all parties to the

(Mr. Perera, Sri Lanka)

conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The international consensus to bring about a solution to the Palestine question through the convening of the Conference was amply demonstrated by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/42 of 6 December 1989, which received the overwhelming support of Member States. We believe that the comprehensive framework incorporated in that resolution contains the necessary ingredients to finding a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular to the question of Palestine.

We firmly believe that the recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people is imperative for a durable settlement of the question of Palestine and that such recognition cannot be excluded from the achievement of that objective. Any deviation from the respect for equal rights among nations would be contrary to the principles and obligations that we have accepted as Members of the Organization.

We also reiterate our support for the peace initiatives undertaken by the Palestinian leadership in 1988, which have been welcomed widely as a constructive contribution to the achievement of a lasting solution. Those initiatives have confirmed the readiness of the Palestinian leadership - namely the Palestine Liberation Organization - to resolve the issue through peaceful means. Regrettably, Israel has rejected those peace initiatives. That rejection has led to the further deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories. The implementation of the Israeli policy of annexation and the establishment of settlements in the occupied territories, which is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and has been strongly opposed by the international community, continues unabated. Further, violence and repression in the occupied territories have increased in recent months. It was in October 1996 that 20 Palestinians were killed and hundreds wounded in Jerusalem by the Israeli police forces and by armed

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Israeli civilians - an act which was unanimously condemned by the Security Council. Resort to such repressive measures by Israel against a people that has made peace initiatives through its authentic representatives constitutes a serious obstacle to the realization of peace in the region.

The goal of achieving a just and lasting peace on the question of Palestine must be resolutely pursued through the United Nations or under its auspices. In that regard, we express our deep appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and for the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, whose reports are before the Assembly. Any impediment to a peaceful solution would only serve to destabilize the entire Middle East, thus threatening international peace and security.

Mr. LEGWALLA (Botswana): It is with a great sense of relief that mankind has welcomed the advent of the new world order - even with all its disasters, uncertainties and gyrations. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, with its aftermath of nuclear terror and ideological antagonisms that gave birth to the cold war, we can say with some certainty that world peace, real world peace, is a credible possibility in our lifetime.

Eastern Europe is going through the throes of a painful rebirth, while everywhere else the oppressed are reasserting their humanity, for too long the plaything of unremitting tyrannies. Everywhere, oppressed men and women are agitating for a stake in the new world order, whose fruits they have indeed yet to enjoy.

In Palestine, the subject of this debate, the fruits of the new world order have yet to arrive. There, the old order prevails undiminished, uncompromising, determined to persist in its cruel ways as if all the changes that have so

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

dramatically transformed the shape and form of our world are but a mirage in the desert. In the media depressing reports of bloody confrontations in the West Bank or Gaza and elsewhere in the occupied territories compete for prominence with encouraging reports of successful peaceful negotiations somewhere else in the world. In Cambodia, Angola and Mozambique, where painful conflicts have wreaked havoc on human life, negotiations are the order of the day, while in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict massacres and curfews and never-never politics are entrenched as substitutes for civilized dialogue and negotiation.

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Even in South Africa, dialogue and negotiation have replaced never-never politics as the instruments through which the search for a solution to the problem of apartheid is being pursued. And we ask: why not in Israel? Mandela and President De Klerk have come together, despite their very deep and serious differences, to collaborate in the struggle to liberate their country from the clutches of apartheid. Why is a replication of the same spirit - the spirit of compromise and accommodation so symbolic of the statesmanship of Mr. Mandela and President De Klerk - such anathema between Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Chairman Arafat?

The problem of Palestine cannot and will not be solved with weapons of war. If bloodshed caused by weapons of war were capable of bringing peace to the people of Palestine, Palestine would be one of the most peaceful places on Earth. A lot of blood has been shed there entirely in vain, for the area is as distant as it can ever be from the attainment of peace and tranquillity.

What is at issue in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people is the struggle for a birthright between two peoples whose claims to independent homelands in Palestine enjoy equal legitimacy, in our view. We contend that the people of Israel have every right to be where they were in the pre-1967 State of Israel, and this is a right that cannot and must not be negotiated. This indestructible reality - the reality of the existence of a State called Israel - Botswana has long accepted.

And in equal measure the people of Palestine are entitled to a homeland of their own in the West Bank and Gaza, an entitlement that is as non-negotiable as the entitlement of the people of Israel to a homeland of their own within the frontiers of pre-1967 Israel. And Palestinians have now accepted the right of Israel to exist within pre-1967 borders. Reality and realism have dawned on them, and in a noble endeavour to free themselves from the servitude of their tragic

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history they have now expressed their willingness and readiness to negotiate a mutually acceptable territorial dispensation with Israel.

Thus, it is now Israel that rejects the extended hand of accommodation. The response to the hand of accommodation extended by the Palestinian people has been the tightening of Israeli control over the occupied territories and the proliferation of Jewish settlements there. Taken together with repeated spasms of murderous incidents, such as the recent massacre at Al Haram Al Shareef in Jerusalem, these acts of intransigence and defiance on the part of the Israeli authorities cannot augur well for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Botswana continues to support the call in United Nations resolutions for the convening of an international conference on the Middle East designed specifically to pave the way for negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue. Israel has continued to oppose the convening of a conference principally because the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is to attend the conference in its own right. Israel regards the PLO as a "terrorist organization" with which no peace can be negotiated. It advocates direct negotiations, but only with nondescript parties in Palestine whose capacity to deliver at the negotiating table is severely wanting, if not non-existent.

A practical and functional lesson from southern Africa is in order here. Ian Smith of colonial Rhodesia spent 15 years of his illegal tenure of office swearing to the heavens that he would never debase his Western civilization by negotiating an end to the Rhodesian conflict with the so-called terrorists of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Instead, he opted to negotiate with internal leaders who had no influence whatsoever on the prosecution of the war of liberation, which had to stop if peace

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was to prevail in Rhodesia. The war continued, escalated and stopped only when Smith was forced to go to the Lancaster House talks to make peace with the so-called terrorists of the Patriotic Front. And there was peace.

In South Africa, successive leaders of the the white minority, like Ian Smith of Rhodesia, never contemplated sitting at a conference table with the "terrorists" of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) to talk peace. They tried every trick in the book to avoid and evade reality - the reality that only with those who were waging a war of liberation could a peaceful end to the war be negotiated. Today, President De Klerk is negotiating peace with Mr. Mandela and his colleagues, and there will soon be peace in South Africa.

There is peace, freedom and democracy today in Namibia, where the South African colonial leaders never wanted to insult their moral values by negotiating an end to the Namibian conflict with the "terrorists" of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) - that is, until it dawned on them that the only road to peace in Namibia was via negotiations with SWAPO.

Why should Israel be the exception to the rule? What is being asked of the Jewish people and their leaders is to recognize that the time for negotiations with the party they regard as their sworn enemy, the PLO, is long overdue. The Jewish people are not being asked to surrender their existence as a nation to the vagaries of some promise of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. They are being asked and challenged to sit down with their enemy, the PLO, at a conference table to secure their own future through a give-and-take negotiating process. For only such a process, born of justice and equity for all, can secure Israel's existence and ensure its territorial integrity in the violent turbulence of the Middle East.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.