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Report of the Secretary-General

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 40/168 A of 16 December 1985. In that resolution, the Assembly dealt with various aspects of the situation in the Middle East and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council periodically on the development of the situation and to submit to the Assembly at its forty-first session a comprehensive report covering the developments in the Middle East in all their aspects. The report is based mainly on information available in United Nations documents, to which references are made whenever appropriate.

## II. STATUS OF THE CEASE-FIRE AND UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING ACTIVITIES

2. The status of the cease-fire in the Middle East and the activities of the United Nations peace-keeping operations in the area up to October 1985 were dealt with in the report of the Secretary-General of 22 October 1985 (A/40/779-S/17581 and Corr.1, paras. 2-10). There continue to be three United Nations peace-keeping operations in the area: two peace-keeping forces, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and one observer mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

### (a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

3. UNDOF, with some 1,300 troops provided by Austria, Canada, Finland and Poland, is deployed between the Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights in accordance with the disengagement agreement concluded between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic in May 1974. A group of UNTSO observers is detailed to the Force and assists it in the performance of its tasks. The main functions of the Force are to supervise the cease-fire between the Israeli and Syrian forces and to man the area of separation established by the disengagement agreement. The mandate of UNDOF has been extended twice by the Security Council during the reporting period, the last time on 29 May 1986 for a further period of six months until 30 November 1986 (resolution 584 (1986)).

4. The activities of the Force since October 1985 are described in two reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, dated 13 November 1985 and 14 May 1986 (S/17628 and S/18061). As reported by the Secretary-General, the situation in the Israel-Syria sector has remained generally quiet; UNDOF has continued to perform its functions effectively with the co-operation of the parties, and there have been no serious incidents.

### (b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

5. UNIFIL, which is deployed in southern Lebanon, was established by the Security Council on 19 March 1978, following the first Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Its terms of reference were - and still are - to confirm the withdrawal of the Israeli forces as called for by the Security Council, to restore international peace and

security and to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area.

6. The mandate of the Force has since been extended as necessary, the last time on 18 July 1986 for a further period of six months until 19 January 1987 (resolution 586 (1986)). The authorized strength of UNIFIL is 7,000, but because of its reduced activities, it has currently some 5,800 troops, provided by Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, Norway and Sweden. A group of UNTSO observers assists the Force in the performance of its tasks.

7. The activities of UNIFIL and the situation in its area of operation in southern Lebanon from October 1985 until September 1986 are described in the Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council on 16 December 1985 (S/17684), 9 April 1986 (S/17965), 17 June 1986 (S/18164), 10 July 1986 (S/18164/Add.1 and Corr.1) and 18 September 1986 (S/18348). In the last of these reports, the Secretary-General outlined the increasingly difficult situation confronting UNIFIL and considered it essential that urgent measures be taken to enable the Force to fulfil its mandate, to improve the security of its personnel and also to resolve its financial difficulties. The Secretary-General believed that the solution lay in complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory and the deployment of UNIFIL to the international frontier so that it could play the role originally assigned to it of restoring international peace and security. After recalling the efforts that he and his staff had undertaken, the Secretary-General expressed the view that the only hope of progress now lay in a determined effort by the Security Council itself. He accordingly recommended that the members of the Council, both collectively and individually, should take urgent action to unblock the present impasse and make substantial progress towards implementation of resolution 425 (1978), which would also be the best way of improving the security of the personnel of UNIFIL. If such progress was not achieved soon, he believed that the Council might be compelled to give serious consideration to withdrawal of the Force, despite the very damaging consequences that could result.

8. After considering this report, the Security Council adopted resolution 587 (1986) of 23 September 1986, in which it took note of the preliminary security measures decided on by the Secretary-General and requested him to take any further measures needed to enhance the security of the men of UNIFIL, urged all the parties concerned to co-operate unreservedly with the Force in the fulfilment of its mandate, again called for an end in southern Lebanon to any military presence not accepted by the Lebanese authorities, requested the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements for a deployment of the Force to the southern border of Lebanon, and solemnly called on all the parties concerned to co-operate in the achievement of that objective. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to report to it within 21 days on the application of the resolution. The report of the Secretary-General was submitted on 13 October 1986 (S/18396).

(c) United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

9. As indicated in the preceding sections, observers of UNTSO have continued to assist UNDOF and UNIFIL in the performance of their tasks. In addition, UNTSO conducts two observation operations of its own, the Observer Group in Beirut and the Observer Group in Egypt.

10. The Observer Group in Beirut was set up by the Security Council in August 1982 following the first incursion of Israeli troops into West Beirut. Its task was to monitor the situation in and around Beirut with particular emphasis on developments involving Israeli forces and Palestinians. Since the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Beirut area in September 1983, the activities of the Observer Group have been reduced and its total strength brought down from 50 to 18.

11. When the mandate of the second United Nations Emergency Force lapsed in July 1979, the then Secretary-General stated that, since the withdrawal of the Force was without prejudice to the continued presence of the UNTSO observers in the area, it was his intention to ensure the further functioning of UNTSO in accordance with existing decisions of the Security Council. On this basis, a number of UNTSO observers have remained in Egypt with the agreement of the Egyptian Government. The Observer Group in Egypt has a total strength of about 50 observers. It maintains, in addition to liaison offices in Cairo and Ismailia, six observation posts in the Sinai.

12. Since the fortieth session, a number of communications have been received by the Secretary-General on various aspects of the situation. Those communications, which have been circulated as official documents of the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, were sent by Israel (A/41/65-S/17698, A/41/203-S/17901, A/41/204-S/17902, A/41/259-S/17963 and A/41/333-S/18056) and Lebanon (A/41/169-S/17839, A/41/170-S/17840, A/41/174-S/17860, A/41/642-S/18362, A/41/646-S/18363, A/41/647-S/18364 and A/41/725-S/18414). In addition, a letter addressed by the Secretary-General to the Permanent Representative of Israel in reply to the latter's communication (A/41/259-S/17963) was circulated (A/41/286-S/17998).

### III. SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

13. The action taken by the United Nations prior to October 1985 on the situation in the occupied territories was outlined in the Secretary-General's report of 22 October 1985 (A/40/779-S/17581 and Corr.1, paras. 12-18).

14. The General Assembly, at its fortieth session, after considering the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/40/702), which is composed of Senegal, Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia, adopted resolutions 40/161 A to G on 16 December 1985. By these resolutions, the General Assembly, inter alia, called upon Israel to release all Arabs arbitrarily detained and/or imprisoned as a result of their struggle for self-determination and for the liberation of their territories, and demanded that the Government of Israel rescind its action against Ziyad Abu Eain and others and release them immediately (resolution 40/161 A); reaffirmed that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, was applicable to the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, and demanded that Israel acknowledge and comply with its provisions (resolution 40/161 B); demanded that Israel desist forthwith from taking any action which would result in changing the legal status, geographical nature or demographic composition

of the occupied territories (resolution 40/161 C); demanded that Israel desist forthwith from certain policies and practices mentioned in the resolution and renewed the mandate of the Special Committee (resolution 40/161 D); demanded that the Government of Israel rescind the expulsion of the Mayor of Halhul, the Sharia Judge of Hebron and other Palestinians expelled in 1985 and that it facilitate their immediate return (resolution 40/161 E); determined that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel that purported to alter the character and legal status of the Syrian Golan Heights were null and void and constituted a violation of international law (resolution 40/161 F); and condemned Israeli policies and practices against Palestinian students and faculty in educational institutions in the occupied Palestinian territories, and demanded that Israel rescind all actions and measures taken against those institutions, ensure their freedom and refrain from hindering their effective operation (resolution 40/161 G).

15. On 20 February 1986, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolutions 1986/1 A and B concerning the question of the violation of human rights in the occupied territories. In those resolutions the Commission condemned Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories along lines similar to those of General Assembly resolution 40/161 D. On the same date, the Commission adopted resolution 1986/2, by which it declared once more that Israel's decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without legal validity.

16. The Security Council considered the situation in the occupied Arab territories during eight meetings between 21 and 30 January 1986 (see S/PV.2643-2650). On 30 January, the Council voted on a draft resolution submitted by five members (S/17769/Rev.1), by which it would have, inter alia, deplored the provocative acts that had violated the sanctity of the sanctuary of the Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem; determined that certain measures taken by Israel in, or affecting the population of, the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a violation of the relevant Geneva convention; and called upon Israel to observe scrupulously the norms of international law governing military occupation. The draft was not adopted owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

17. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories held periodic meetings in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 40/161 D. During the period between the meetings, the Special Committee was kept informed of developments taking place in the occupied territories; the information was gathered from a variety of sources, including oral testimony and written communications. The Special Committee reviewed this information and assessed the human rights situation in the occupied territories with a view to deciding whether any action was required. The report of the Special Committee under resolution 40/161 D has been circulated as document A/41/680.

18. During its fortieth session, the General Assembly also adopted resolution 40/167 of 16 December 1985 concerning Israel's decision to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea; resolution 40/169 of 17 December 1985

concerning economic development projects in the occupied Palestinian territories; resolution 40/170 of 17 December 1985 concerning assistance to the Palestinian people; resolution 40/201 of 17 December 1985 concerning living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories; and decision 40/432 of 17 December 1985 concerning Israeli economic practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. The reports requested of the Secretary-General in resolutions 40/169 and 40/170 have been circulated as documents A/41/342-E/1986/88 and A/41/319-E/1986/72 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2, respectively. The Secretary-General has also submitted a note concerning the implementation of decision 40/432 (A/41/410-E/1986/97).

19. Since the fortieth session, a number of communications have been addressed to the President of the Security Council or the Secretary-General on various aspects of the situation in the occupied territories. Those communications, which have been circulated as official documents of the General Assembly and the Security Council, were sent by Israel (A/41/91-S/17739), Jordan (A/41/82-S/17727, A/41/94-S/17749, A/41/161-S/17823, A/41/426-S/18177, A/41/427-S/18178, A/41/635-S/18361 and A/41/716-S/18405), Morocco (A/41/109-S/17757, A/41/113-S/17760 and A/41/117-S/17765), the Syrian Arab Republic (A/41/184 and S/17889) and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/41/140-S/17800 and A/41/229-S/17935). Communications were also received from the Palestine Liberation Organization and circulated at the request of Iraq (A/41/620-S/18349), Oman (A/41/691 and A/41/700) and the United Arab Emirates (A/41/85-S/17729 and S/17803).

#### IV. PALESTINE REFUGEE PROBLEM

20. The Palestine refugee problem and the efforts of the United Nations to assist the refugees up to October 1985 were dealt with in the report of the Secretary-General of 22 October 1985 (A/40/779-S/17581 and Corr.1, paras. 19-22).

21. Following its consideration, at its fortieth session, of the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for the period 1 July 1984 to 30 June 1985, 1/ the General Assembly adopted 11 resolutions on 16 December 1985. In resolution 40/155 A, the Assembly noted with deep regret that repatriation or compensation of the refugees as provided for in paragraph 11 of Assembly resolution 194 (III) had not been effected, that no substantial progress had been made in the programme endorsed by the Assembly in paragraph 2 of its resolution 513 (VI) for the reintegration of refugees either by repatriation or resettlement and that, therefore, the situation of the refugees continued to be a matter of serious concern; expressed its thanks to the Commissioner-General and to all the staff of UNRWA, recognizing that the Agency was doing all it could within the limits of available resources; expressed its deep appreciation to the former Commissioner-General, Mr. Olof Rydbeck, for his many years of effective service to the Agency and his dedication to the welfare of the refugees; reiterated its request that the headquarters of UNRWA should be relocated to its former site within its area of operations as soon as practicable; noted with regret that the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine had been unable to find a

means of achieving progress in the implementation of paragraph 11 of Assembly resolution 194 (III), and requested the Commission to exert continued efforts towards the implementation of that paragraph and to report to the Assembly as appropriate, but not later than 1 September 1986; directed attention to the continuing seriousness of the financial position of UNRWA, as outlined in the report of the Commissioner-General; noted with concern that, despite the commendable and successful efforts of the Commissioner-General to collect additional contributions, that increased level of income to UNRWA was still insufficient to cover essential budget requirements in 1985; and called upon all Governments, as a matter of urgency, to make the most generous efforts possible to meet the anticipated needs of UNRWA.

22. The other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly dealt with the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (resolution 40/165 B), assistance to persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities (resolution 40/165 C), offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for Palestine refugees (resolution 40/165 D), Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip (resolution 40/165 E), resumption of the ration distribution to Palestine refugees (resolution 40/165 F), population and refugees displaced since 1967 (resolution 40/165 G), revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties (resolution 40/165 H), protection of Palestine refugees (resolution 40/165 I), Palestine refugees in the West Bank (resolution 40/165 J) and the University of Jerusalem "Al Quds" for Palestine refugees (resolution 40/165 K).

23. The situation of the Palestine refugees and the activities of UNRWA since the adoption of those resolutions are described in the annual report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period 1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986. 2/ The reports of the Secretary-General called for under resolutions 40/165 D, E, F, G, H, I, J and K have been circulated as documents A/41/563, A/41/564, A/41/565, A/41/566, A/41/567, A/41/568 and A/41/457, respectively. The report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine called for under resolution 40/165 A and report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA called for under resolution 40/165 B have been circulated as documents A/41/555 and A/41/702, respectively.

#### V. QUESTION OF PALESTINE

24. The action taken by the United Nations on the question of Palestine up to October 1985 was outlined in the report of the Secretary-General of 22 October 1985 (A/40/779-S/17581 and Corr.1, paras. 23-26).

25. At its fortieth session, on 12 December 1985, the General Assembly adopted four resolutions under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine". In resolution 40/96 A, the Assembly, inter alia, endorsed the recommendations contained in paragraphs 163 to 172 of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; 3/ requested the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine as well as the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Achievement of

Palestinian Rights; 4/ and authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the implementation of its recommendations. In resolution 40/96 B, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the Division for Palestinian Rights continued to discharge the tasks detailed in previous resolutions. In resolution 40/96 C, the Assembly requested the Department of Public Information, in co-operation with the Committee, to continue its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1986-1987. In resolution 40/96 D, the Assembly reaffirmed its endorsement of the call for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in conformity with the provisions of its resolution 38/58 C, and requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the Conference.

26. The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People appears in document A/41/35. 5/ The report requested of the Secretary-General in resolution 40/96 D concerning the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East has been circulated as document A/41/215-S/17916.

27. Since the fortieth session, a number of communications have been addressed to the President of the Security Council or the Secretary-General on various aspects of the question of Palestine and have been circulated as official documents of the General Assembly or the Security Council. Two communications were sent by the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/41/399-S/18133 and Corr.1, A/41/413-S/18159). Communications were also received from the Palestine Liberation Organization and circulated at the request of Democratic Yemen (A/41/394-S/18128), Iraq (A/41/603-S/18338), Oman (S/17976, A/41/269-S/17977, A/41/721-S/18411), Tunisia (A/41/475) and the United Arab Emirates (S/18153).

## VI. SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT

28. An outline of developments relating to the search for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem from November 1967 until October 1985 may be found in the Secretary-General's reports of 18 May 1973 (S/10929), 17 October 1978 (A/33/311-S/12896), 24 October 1979 (A/34/584-S/13578), 24 October 1980 (A/35/563-S/14234), 11 November 1981 (A/36/655-S/14746), 12 October 1982 (A/37/525-S/15451), 30 September 1983 (A/38/458-S/16015), 26 October 1984 (A/39/600-S/16792) and 22 October 1985 (A/40/779-S/17581 and Corr.1).

29. At its fortieth session, on 16 December 1985, the General Assembly adopted three resolutions concerning the situation in the Middle East. In resolution 40/168 A, the Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed its conviction that the question of Palestine was the core of the conflict in the Middle East and that no comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region would be achieved without the full exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable national rights; reaffirmed that a just and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the Middle East could not be achieved without the participation on an equal footing of all the parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization; declared



that peace in the Middle East was indivisible and must be based on a comprehensive, just and lasting solution under the auspices of the United Nations; considered the Arab Peace Plan adopted unanimously at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference, held at Fez, Morocco, and reiterated by the Extraordinary Summit Conference of the Arab States, held at Casablanca, Morocco, as an important contribution towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people through the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace; condemned Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories and demanded the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of Israel from all the territories occupied since 1967; rejected all agreements and arrangements which violated the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and contradicted the principles of a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem; determined that Israel's decision to annex Jerusalem and to declare it as its "capital" as well as the measures to alter its physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and status were null and void and demanded that they be rescinded immediately; condemned Israel's aggression, policies and practices against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and outside those territories; strongly condemned Israel's annexationist policies and practices in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights; considered that the agreements on strategic co-operation between the United States of America and Israel, signed on 30 November 1981, and the continued supply of modern arms and matériel to Israel, augmented by substantial economic aid, had encouraged Israel to pursue its aggressive and expansionist policies and practices, had had adverse effects on efforts for the establishment of peace in the Middle East and threatened the security of the region; called upon all States to put an end to the flow to Israel of any military, economic, financial and technological aid, as well as of human resources, aimed at encouraging it to pursue its aggressive policies against the Arab countries and the Palestinian people; strongly condemned the collaboration between Israel and South Africa; and reaffirmed its call for the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East as specified in paragraph 5 of the Geneva Declaration on Palestine 6/ and endorsed by the General Assembly. The other parts of General Assembly resolution 40/168 deal with Israeli policies in the Syrian Golan Heights and the other occupied territories (resolution 40/168 B) and the transfer by some States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem (resolution 40/168 C).

30. The above resolutions have been brought to the attention of Member States, and a report of the Secretary-General including the relevant comments received from Member States has been circulated as document A/41/453 and Add.1.

31. The Secretary-General has also submitted a report (A/41/215-S/17916) on the consultations he has held with the Security Council on the question of the convening of an international peace conference, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 40/96 D. Following the issue of his report, the Secretary-General has pursued his contacts with the parties to the Middle East conflict and with others concerned regarding the search for a peaceful settlement of that conflict, including the question of an international peace conference. These contacts have revealed that the difficulties regarding the convening of the proposed conference, as reported in the Secretary-General's report of 13 September 1984 (A/39/130/Add.1-S/16409/Add.1), have remained essentially the same.

32. Since the fortieth session of the General Assembly, a number of communications have been addressed to the President of the Security Council or the Secretary-General on various aspects of the situation in the Middle East. In addition to those referred to in the preceding sections of this report (see paras. 12, 19 and 27), communications were received from India (A/41/341-S/18065), Iraq (S/17980), Israel (A/41/74-S/17711, A/41/84-S/17728 and Corr.1, A/41/115-S/17761, A/41/183, A/41/188-S/17898, A/41/212-S/17913, A/41/289-S/18001, A/41/290-S/18002, A/41/302-S/18020, A/41/386-S/18118, A/41/398-S/18131, A/41/458-S/18220, A/41/476-S/18229, A/41/626-S/18352, A/41/724-S/18413 and A/41/736-S/18417), Mexico (A/41/435), Morocco (A/41/326-S/18049), the Netherlands, on behalf of the twelve States members of the European Community (A/41/441-S/18197), Oman (A/41/704-S/18398), the Syrian Arab Republic (A/41/61-S/17694, A/41/86-S/17731, A/41/220-S/17923 and A/41/500-S/18260) and Zimbabwe (A/41/703-S/18395).

## VII. OBSERVATIONS

33. The attainment of a just and lasting peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict in the Middle East continues to be elusive. As indicated in paragraph 31 above, it has not yet proved possible to reach agreement on the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East as recommended by the General Assembly. During the period under review, there were bilateral contacts between leaders of various of the interested parties but, as I have stated in my report on the work of the Organization, 7/ there is at present an alarming absence of a generally accepted and active negotiating process.

34. Meanwhile, the situation in the region continues to be highly volatile. In the absence of resolution of the conflict, there persists a general sense of insecurity which, combined with heavy military expenditures, has hindered economic development and social progress. The plight of the Palestinian people, most of whom now live under occupation or in exile, remains a matter of acute international concern. There is continued tension, and violent incidents frequently occur in varying form and degree in Israeli occupied territories and beyond. The United Nations endeavours to provide a measure of relief to the local populations affected by the conflict, especially the Palestinian refugees, and through its peace-keeping operations exerts its best efforts, sometimes in difficult circumstances, to help maintain quiet in sensitive areas such as the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. However, these are essentially temporary arrangements intended to facilitate the search for a peaceful settlement. As I have repeatedly stated, the situation will remain unstable so long as such a settlement is not reached. There is a grave danger that if the present deadlock in the peace process is allowed to persist, major hostilities will break out again in the area as has happened several times in the past. In this connection, it may be recalled that the Egypt-Israel war of October 1973 nearly led to a direct confrontation between the two major nuclear Powers. That confrontation was averted at the time by speedy action of the Security Council and the dispatch of a United Nations peace-keeping force to the area, but, with the development of ever more sophisticated and destructive weapons, the next crisis may be more difficult to control.

35. It is therefore vitally important that the international community should not lose sight of the dangers inherent in this state of affairs. It should pursue and intensify its efforts in the search for a negotiated settlement of the Middle East conflict. I continue to believe that, given the complexity of this conflict and its many interrelated aspects, a just and lasting peace can best be achieved through a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the conflict and involving all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. I note that there is a wide measure of agreement within the international community that such a settlement should be based on the following three considerations: withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territories occupied since June 1967; acknowledgment of and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all the States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and finally a satisfactory solution of the Palestinian problem based on the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination. In this context, the question of Jerusalem also remains of primary importance.

36. At present, the positions of the parties directly concerned are still far apart. The major Powers, whose support is essential for the establishment of any lasting peace in the region, are also divided. It is urgently necessary to find a negotiating procedure acceptable to all concerned, which would enable them to discuss all the issues involved and work out an agreed settlement. Meanwhile, it is of great importance that the parties should avoid any actions that could increase tension and suspicion between them and thus make the search for an agreed negotiating process even more difficult. In this connection I am particularly concerned about the consequences that would flow from the establishment by Israel of additional settlements in the occupied territories. This is a matter of deep concern and, more than any other single factor, contributes to doubts in the minds of many about Israel's readiness to negotiate a peace settlement that would require its withdrawal from the territories. At the same time peace efforts would be enhanced if there was a lessening of violent incidents, which all too frequently involve innocent lives and of which there have been some particularly terrible examples during the period under review.

37. From the contacts I have had during the past year, it is clear that there is still no consensus on the convening of an international peace conference in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the General Assembly. However, the idea of an international peace conference appears to be gaining wider support and a number of procedural proposals have been made in bilateral contacts involving parties in the region and others who are interested in a settlement of this long-standing conflict. Important disagreements nevertheless remain on the scope of the conference, on its timing and especially on the question of participation. The latter question, more specifically how the interests and rights of the Palestinian people should be represented, has so far proved impossible to resolve in a manner acceptable to all the potential participants in the proposed conference. Agreement on that issue would do more than anything else to unblock the present deadlock in the negotiating process.

38. I am encouraged that many of the current proposals relating to an international peace conference envisage a central role for the Security Council.

I have on several occasions suggested that the machinery of the Council could be used to further the search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. The Council has a universally recognized responsibility for this complex and potentially explosive problem. It has, under the Charter of the United Nations, the authority to take decisive measures as required and its procedures enable it to consider this problem with the participation of all the parties concerned, but its effectiveness depends to a large extent on the agreement and co-operation of the major Powers. I hope therefore that these Powers will again find it possible to co-operate within the framework of the Security Council to help rekindle the peace process and promote the search for a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. Naturally, other avenues of the United Nations could also be explored to provide the possibilities that the search for a lasting peace would require.

39. Few international issues are as complex and potentially dangerous, or involve as directly the relevance and credibility of the United Nations, as the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. The persistence of that conflict nearly four decades after it was brought before our Organization underscores the need to bring about a comprehensive settlement. It is therefore essential that every possible effort be made by the international community and individual Member States to achieve such a settlement as a matter of urgency.

#### Notes

- 1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/40/13 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1).
- 2/ Ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/41/13 and Add.1).
- 3/ Ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/40/35).
- 4/ Report of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, 29 August-7 September 1983 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.21), chap. I, sect. B.
- 5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/41/35).
- 6/ Report of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, 29 August-7 September 1983 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.21), chap. I, sect. A.
- 7/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 1 (A/41/1).

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