



General Assembly

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PROVISIONAL

A/42/PV.62
12 November 1987

ENGLISH

Forty-second session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 10 November 1987, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)

- Organization of work
- The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security [31] (continued)
 - (a) Report of the Secretary-General
 - (b) Draft resolution
 - (c) Amendments
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 - (e) Report of the Fifth Committee

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on the next item in our programme - namely, item 27, "Zone of peace and co-operation of the South Atlantic" - be closed at 4 p.m. today.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 31 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

- (a) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/42/600)
- (b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/42/L.16)
- (c) AMENDMENTS (A/42/L.19)
- (d) SUB-AMENDMENTS (A/42/L.21)
- (e) REPORT OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE (A/42/723)

Mr. STARACE-JANFOLLA (Italy): The position of my Government on the situation in Afghanistan has been clearly described and is entirely reflected in the statement of the representative of Denmark on behalf of the twelve member States of the European Community. However, the Afghanistan crisis has lasted so long that we feel compelled to reiterate and emphasize once again our firm commitment to a solution, which cannot be deferred.

About eight years ago there was a massive intervention conducted by Soviet armed forces which constituted what can be defined as one of the most serious violations of the Charter of our Organization. As a consequence, a country of noble and glorious traditions lost its independence. The Afghans have gone through a tragedy which can be compared only to the worst miseries of the Second World War: about half of them have died or are displaced; most of them are refugees in

(Mr. Starace-Janfolla, Italy)

the neighbouring countries. Lastly, not only have regional stability and security been threatened but international relations and international peace and security have been deeply and severely affected.

This situation continues today despite the unequivocal condemnation by the international community, the express will of the Assembly and the tireless efforts and negotiations of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative.

During the last year or so, the Soviet Union has indicated its willingness to adopt a new and more open attitude which could pave the way to the achievement of a negotiated settlement leading to the restoration of Afghanistan's independence and non-aligned status. This is a welcome development which is to the credit of the extraordinary endurance of the most courageous resistance and gratifies the international community, which has consistently refused to recognize any attempt to legitimize the occupation of Afghanistan in the name of the real-politik of the fait accompli.

But until Afghanistan is again free, we must remain firm. On the one hand, we have not yet seen the withdrawal of the Red Army; on the contrary, the military operations have escalated and extended into the refugee camps in Pakistan, a friendly country whose contribution, political as well as material, to the cause of Afghanistan deserves to be commended by all. On the other hand, the so-called policy of national reconciliation still seems characterized by the attempt to legitimize the continuation of a régime which the Afghans have condemned in the most explicit way and which is unable to impose itself through either terror or foreign interventions.

In this context, we should like to stress our conviction that only a political solution is possible. For it to be effective and to produce a lasting settlement of the Afghan crisis, it will have to be achieved with the active participation of

(Mr. Starace-Janfolla, Italy)

the resistance and through a genuine reconciliation which will enable the Afghans freely to decide their own future.

In the words of the Secretary-General, this reconciliation will require "bold and decisive steps" (A/42/600, para. 10). But let us not forget that these steps are the responsibility of the Soviet Union, whose credibility in addressing world affairs is dependent on its ability to comply with the resolutions adopted repeatedly by the Assembly and to live up to its commitment to the principles of international law. We recently have noted with great interest significant and positive changes in well-established positions concerning other issues, and particularly disarmament. We hope the same thing will take place in regard to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, my Government believes that the General Assembly has the political and moral duty to maintain its position and to continue strongly to support the Secretary-General's mission of good offices until its successful conclusion. For that to happen, all foreign troops must be rapidly and completely withdrawn. Only then will the Afghan people have recovered what is their due and our Organization enhanced its credibility.

Mr. OSMAN (Somalia): During the general debate at the start of this session, the deep concern of the vast majority of States over the situation in Afghanistan was clearly evident. I am sure that these plenary meetings will serve to emphasize further the world community's condemnation of the continued foreign occupation of Afghanistan. In the view of my delegation, the General Assembly must once again demand, in the strongest terms, an end to a situation which has shattered the peace and stability of Afghanistan, visited untold suffering on its people and threatened regional and international peace and security.

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

Over the past seven years the world community has watched with dismay the tragic consequences of Afghanistan's loss of its independence and of the war that has been waged with great brutality against the heroic Afghan freedom-fighters. We have seen the tremendous loss of life, the serious damage to Afghanistan's economy, the extensive internal dislocation of its population and the mass flow of refugees into Pakistan and Iran. The 5 million refugees, representing almost one third of Afghanistan's population, continue to suffer the hardships, deprivations and sorrows of exile. The refugee presence imposes heavy burdens on the economic and social resources of the host countries. It must be strongly deplored that, in addition to bearing the heaviest refugee burden, Pakistan has been increasingly subjected to acts of threat and military aggression, in violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The military occupation of Afghanistan has caused yet another kind of damage: it has harmed the system of international law established on the basis of the United Nations Charter. That system is seriously undermined when States - in particular the smaller States - cannot depend for their security on principles such as non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of States, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity and the non-use of force in international relations. If there is indeed to be renewed respect for the principle of collective security and for the authority of the United Nations, then positive steps must be taken to end the conflict in Afghanistan and the occupation of that country.

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

In view of the failure in the past of diplomatic initiatives aimed at resolving the problem of Afghanistan, my delegation finds it encouraging that current negotiations at Geneva, set in motion by the United Nations Secretary-General, show signs of some progress. Somalia hopes that progress will continue, on the basis of principles established by the United Nations Charter and relevant resolutions for a just and peaceful resolution of the problem.

In this regard we strongly support the call of the General Assembly, the non-aligned States and the Islamic Conference for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan. We believe that this action is the keystone for a just and lasting peace in that territory. Only when Afghanistan is free from all outside forces and pressures can the process of national reconciliation be successfully implemented. We believe also that withdrawal of all foreign forces within the shortest possible time-frame would be the best evidence of a sincere desire for an end to the bloodshed and suffering in Afghanistan and the region.

The restoration of Afghanistan's political independence should of course be accompanied by firm guarantees for the preservation of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-aligned character. The Afghan people must regain the right to determine their own form of government and to choose their economic, political and social system free from outside pressures of any kind.

Somalia joins in the appeal to all States and national and regional organizations to continue to extend relief assistance to the refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Of course, the best solution to the refugee problem would be the creation of conditions which would allow the refugees to return home voluntarily in safety and with honour.

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation of the continuing efforts made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, to promote a political solution and to address humanitarian concerns. We appeal to all the parties involved in the conflict in Afghanistan to co-operate fully with him in the search for peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the region as a whole.

Mr. VELAZCO SAN JOSE (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): The Secretary-General's report (A/42/600) on the situation in Afghanistan gives us grounds for greater optimism as to the real possibility of finding a rapid solution to this conflict, which has brought untold suffering to the Afghan people as well as taking a high toll in human lives and producing material damage. That is why we think it imperative to continue the negotiations started in Geneva, which demonstrate a real intention to achieve peace and understanding.

The efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative, Mr. Diego Cordovez, are deserving not only of our commendation but also of our encouragement and full co-operation. They reflect the Organization's ability to find solutions to the problems facing the international community.

However, the Geneva negotiations will be able to make little progress unless there is a true will to negotiate for peace and unless interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan is stopped. That interference must cease if we truly wish to find a negotiated solution to the conflict. Those who supply Stinger and Blowpipe missiles, tons of weapons and billions of dollars are merely fanning the flames of war and, through their acts, producing a higher number of victims - already in the thousands - and greater destruction to the Afghan economy, which is already in ruins because of the burning or destruction of 2,000 schools, 350 bridges, 50 cultural centres, 131 hospitals, 224 mosques and other places of worship, 258 centres of production, thousands of kilometres of roads, lines of

(Mr. Velazco San Jose, Cuba)

communication and means of transport; and all of this while efforts are under way to put an end to backwardness, illiteracy, ignorance, disease, poverty and unemployment, all of which are the legacy of the past.

The Afghan people has been subjected to enormous suffering and when peace finally comes it has ahead an enormous task of economic reconstruction that will require the solidarity of the international community.

Within the context of this process we must highlight the efforts being made by the Government of Afghanistan for peace and the concrete steps it has taken in the search for internal conditions to enable the creation of a favourable national climate. We welcome those efforts because we know that they are inspired by the true desire to achieve their peace objectives.

We believe that the General Assembly should also contribute towards bringing about a proper climate for negotiations and peace that will lead to a just and equitable solution to the problem in Afghanistan. We must, within our possibilities, help the Afghan people and the people of the region to find the peace they so desire and to look to the future with the hope of a better tomorrow.

Mr. MOUMIN (Comoros): We of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros follow the events in Afghanistan very closely. Consequently my delegation has listened with sustained attention to all the statements made here and have studied carefully the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/42/600). Therefore, I take this opportunity to reaffirm Comoros' support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative, Mr. Diego Cordovez. We thank him for his commendable efforts, his perseverance and dedication in the search for a peaceful solution to this delicate situation.

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

We are convinced that if all concerned parties show maturity and political will towards the diplomatic process under way, the Secretary-General's noble mission of finding a viable political settlement in Afghanistan will be crowned with success.

We have taken good note of the progress so far made as underlined in paragraph 2 of the report:

"The negotiating process towards the achievement of a comprehensive settlement has reached an advanced stage. Substantial though not sufficiently sustained progress has been made in the past year in the efforts to conclude the international instruments that will comprise the settlement." (A/42/600, para. 2)

We further noted, with deep satisfaction, the passage that states that General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev has expressed his strong support for the United Nations diplomatic process, as well as Mr. Gorbachev's given assurances to our Secretary-General that the main concern of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is that Afghanistan should have a neutral and independent régime, not hostile to the Soviet Union, nor indeed to any of its neighbours. We sincerely hope that these remarks by General Secretary Gorbachev will be followed promptly by the most needed political undertaking which will help to settle the pending issue, which is of course the time-frame of troop withdrawal.

This issue of troop withdrawal is at the core of the problem of the question of Afghanistan and therefore very important to the international community and fundamental to the Comoros.

At this juncture I would state that Comoros' firm, consistent, and unwavering position regarding the situation in Afghanistan is not deliberate hostility towards the USSR, with which my Government enjoys the best relations; our position is due

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

solely to our commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and in particular the principles of respect for the sovereign equality of States, the non-use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the right of peoples to self-determination. Henceforth the Comoros cannot but insist on its demand for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the sister State of Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union must announce without further delay the timetable for the withdrawal of its troops in Afghanistan. It is indeed regrettable that eight years of repeated demands of the international community have not yet produced the desired result. Soviet troops continue their illegal occupation of Afghanistan. My delegation is, however, gratified to note that eight years of military occupation, subjugation and oppression of the people of Afghanistan have passed and yet the heroic struggle of the Afghans has not been quelled by the intensive, merciless, fearsome fire-power of the invader. For eight years they have courageously resisted the war machine of the occupying Power by waging an epic resistance struggle, with unflagging spirit, indomitable faith and determination, which has shamed the invader.

For eight years those unfortunate people have endured untold sufferings. Thousands have been killed, tortured or mutilated, and millions have been forced to flee their beloved country by the brutal and cruel treatment of the invader and to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries, thereby causing hardship to those countries of refuge.

In Pakistan alone there are over 3 million Afghan refugees, constituting the greatest concentration of refugees in the world, placing a heavy burden on the limited resources of the host country and creating a security problem for its citizens.

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

The Secretary-General, in his report, has underlined the necessity to begin more actively to examine ways and means to achieve reunification of the Afghan nation, which will be essential to the prompt and effective implementation of the settlement plan.

Although we agree with him that the time has undoubtedly come for Afghans themselves to take the steps required of them in the peace process, we are of the opinion that the desired unity can be achieved only when a decision is taken on the time-frame and the conditions for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. This factor is important because it will create confidence among Afghans, which is important now and which will be indispensable if the settlement is to be effectively implemented.

Bold and decisive steps of national reconciliation are indeed needed to ensure that the settlement commands the support of all segments of the Afghan people.

In conclusion, my delegation calls upon all parties concerned, in particular the Soviet Union, to redouble their efforts to expedite solutions to the most crucial questions of the time-frame for and the modalities for the withdrawal of troops. Failure or delay in reaching an agreement on these questions will not only prolong the agony of the Afghan people but also increase the danger to peace and stability in the region.

Mr. FONDER (Belgium) (interpretation from French): The representative of Denmark has given the views of the 12 member States of the European Community on the situation in Afghanistan. It goes without saying that the Belgian delegation subscribes fully to his statements.

I should, however, like to emphasize especially Belgium's constant concern over the situation created by the illegal occupation of Afghanistan and its consequences for international peace and security.

(Mr. Fonder, Belgium)

We regret that for yet another year the General Assembly must continue to deal with the problems raised by the Soviet presence and military actions in Afghanistan, which have caused considerable loss of human life and destruction, from which it will take the Afghan nation a long time to recover.

(Mr. Fonder, Belgium)

The plight of Afghan refugees continues to worsen. While in this body and many others we speak a great deal, quite rightly, of many refugee groups, it seems to me that the 5 million Afghans who have had to abandon their homes to find temporary refuge in neighbouring countries, in particular, for whose Government they represent a heavy burden, deserve greater attention from the international community.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan itself continues to be of grave concern to us. The Kabul authorities, as well as the occupation forces, are still denying the Afghan people the right to exercise their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Any real or assumed opposition is repressed with great severity. The scope of these violations justifies continuing consideration of the human rights situation in Afghanistan by the United Nations.

Once again last year, the Assembly, by 122 votes, advocated a political solution, of which, it said, the withdrawal of foreign troops was an absolute prerequisite. Nevertheless, and in spite of the repeated appeals of the overwhelming majority of the Members of the United Nations, the Afghan people is still unable to determine its destiny in full sovereignty, freely and democratically. It is therefore high time that the Soviet Union put an end to its illegal occupation of Afghanistan, by the effective and total withdrawal of its troops, in response to the appeal of the international community and, above all, in compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

The maintenance of international peace and security, guaranteed by the Charter, begins with full respect for the Charter by all States, especially those entrusted with a special responsibility. It is obvious that soft words are not enough; they must be translated into action, so that Afghanistan may regain its independence and the Afghan people its identity.

(Mr. Fonder, Belgium)

Meanwhile, my delegation will vote, as it has on similar draft resolutions in previous years, in favour of draft resolution A/42/L.16. We hope that the General Assembly will demonstrate firmly and by an overwhelming majority that the passage of time will not legitimize the occupation of Afghanistan. We also venture to hope that the Geneva negotiations and the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative will quickly bring an end to the current situation, which is a major source of international instability.

Mr. GHAREKHAN (India): The General Assembly is once again considering the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

Friendship between the peoples of India and Afghanistan is rooted in history, in geography, in culture and in commerce. The people of Afghanistan have inherited an ancient civilization which has made courage and self-respect the hallmarks of Afghan nationalism. The Afghan people must pursue the path of progress suited to their own genius so that they may contribute effectively to the security and prosperity of their people and of the region as a whole.

The Government of India's position on Afghanistan has been made clear on several occasions. Three weeks ago, speaking in Washington, my Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, reiterated India's stand in the following words:

"We agree on the need for an early political settlement in Afghanistan and support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General. I believe that a just solution must ensure a sovereign, independent and non-aligned Afghanistan. Foreign intervention and interference must cease. The Afghan refugees must be allowed to return to their homes in honour, dignity and security. We would welcome any earnest effort in this direction..."

(Mr. Gharekhan, India)

Our concern over Afghanistan, and indeed over the region as a whole, is inextricably linked with our own security interests. We are particularly concerned at the introduction of sophisticated weaponry into the region, which not only fuels an arms race but also results in the diversion of the scarce economic resources of the countries of the region away from development. We believe that the only solution to the problem in Afghanistan and South-West Asia lies in following a policy of restraint and moderation and pursuing a comprehensive approach. The situation there can be resolved only through an overall political settlement based on the principles set out at the conference of Foreign Ministers held in New Delhi in February 1981 and reiterated at the seventh and eighth summit meetings of non-aligned States.

We have read with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/42/600). My delegation is pleased to note that the Secretary-General has pursued with determination his efforts to promote the search for a political solution. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and those of his Personal Representative, Mr. Diego Cordovez, and we support their endeavours.

In the last few weeks my delegation has had the privilege of being consulted in the efforts to arrive at a text of a draft resolution on Afghanistan that would be acceptable to all the parties concerned. My delegation would have liked to see the satisfactory conclusion of those efforts.

The Secretary-General's report referred to the need for "innovative diplomatic approaches" (A/42/600, para. 8). The text of draft resolution A/42/L.16 is on the lines of the resolutions adopted in earlier years and does not reflect the present delicate and dynamic situation regarding the solution of the Afghan question. My delegation, therefore, will abstain on the draft resolution.

Mr. OKUN (United States of America): Almost eight years after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan we must again debate the situation in that tragic nation. In spite of the fact that at eight sessions the General Assembly has overwhelmingly approved draft resolutions criticizing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union continues to attempt to subjugate the Afghan people. Even while this debate is going on the Soviet Union is waging war against the Afghan people.

This policy of military conquest and disregard for the rights of a sovereign people has, however, not succeeded. It has been resisted by the Afghan people, with their fierce attachment to freedom. The Soviet leadership should know better than to challenge the sovereignty and independence of a proud people. Its own brave people courageously resisted the Nazi German attempt to subjugate them during the Second World War. This war of conquest in Afghanistan has lasted for four years and 21 days longer than the Soviet struggle against the Nazis in the Second World War.

The draft resolution outlines a fair and comprehensive solution to a problem that has outraged people everywhere. It calls for the complete withdrawal of foreign troops, reaffirms the right of the Afghan people to choose their own form of government, calls for the restoration of Afghanistan's independence and non-aligned status and speaks of the right of the refugees to return in safety and honour. My Government supports those fundamental principles. It also supports the search for a negotiated political settlement to end the agony the Afghan people have so long endured.

The policy of the United States Government towards the Afghanistan situation is clear and consistent. The United States seeks an early settlement which provides for the prompt withdrawal of the invading and occupying forces and for the restoration to the Afghan people of freedom to choose their own political course.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

The United States firmly believes that a peaceful settlement is possible. The United States strongly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative to find such a solution.

This year the Soviet Union has attempted to persuade the international community that Moscow genuinely wants a negotiated political settlement and that it has decided to withdraw its troops in order to accomplish this. Its campaign has been accompanied by high-sounding initiatives from Kabul calling for "national reconciliation" among the opposing Afghan parties. But let us review the record. Let us compare these assertions of peaceful intent with what has actually occurred over the past year. What does it say? In January this year the Kabul régime announced a cease-fire. It subsequently claimed to have extended the cease-fire until January 1988. What did it do? It stepped up its military efforts, and in the summer this year the Soviet Union and the Kabul régime army mounted the largest offensive engagements of the war against the resistance in Kandahar and Paktia Provinces.

The Soviet Union for its part has repeatedly stated it has made the decision to withdraw. That indeed is a welcome commitment - if it is sincere. Here again, the Soviet Union's deeds do not, however, correspond to the words.

The Soviet military forces continue to construct an elaborate and permanent logistical infrastructure in Afghanistan. Hundreds of Soviet advisers are in Afghanistan to try to prop up the increasingly weakened client régime. Soviet assertions of peaceful intent are further contradicted by Soviet actions on the ground. For several months earlier this year the Soviets sought to intimidate Pakistan through repeated air attacks against Pakistan border villages. At the height of those raids, in March and April, hundreds of Pakistan civilians were killed.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

The Afghan secret police have stepped up their campaign of terrorist bombings inside Pakistan. The campaign has already cost hundreds of lives this year alone. These reckless acts internationalize an already tragic and dangerous conflict.

The Kabul régime seeks to appear flexible and to appear willing to compromise. In January this year it put forward its so-called policy of national reconciliation, purporting to offer the opposition an opportunity to share power. The reality, however, is quite different. Following the pattern used to prevent the emergence of popularly elected Governments in Eastern Europe immediately after the end of the Second World War, the tiny Afghan Communist Party insists on retaining control of the key portfolios of government in order to continue to dominate Afghanistan's political life. All significant opposition figures in Afghanistan have ignored and rejected the offer, and the Afghan resistance has totally rejected it.

The Soviet Union's hand-picked satrap in Kabul, Najibullah, is a former head of the Afghan secret police, and indeed is a creature of the Soviet KGB. The tiny and splintered Afghan Communist movement, which accounts for less than 1 per cent of the Afghan population, is despised by the Afghan people. Lacking popular support, the régime attempts to exert control through terror. The Afghan secret police, known as the KhAD, is modelled after the KGB, and is the most pervasive and systematic violator of human rights in areas under the régime's control. Through surveillance, arrest, imprisonment and torture, the KhAD has instilled an atmosphere of suspicion and fear. Amnesty International recently reported that torture is used systematically by the KhAD.

As opposition to the Kabul régime has grown, and as party fractiousness increases, the Soviet Union has been forced to play a more direct role in propping up its client. Soviet military and civilian advisers sit in almost all ministries

(Mr. Okun, United States)

and make or approve decisions in the name of the régime. So weak is the Soviet client régime that its tenuous control extends only over parts of the major cities.

The Afghan army continues to frustrate Soviet efforts and efforts by the régime to make it an effective military force. It is plagued by desertions and low morale, and the army remains at half its pre-1979 strength, despite the use of press gangs to conscript youths as young as 15 years of age. During the past summer troops of the Afghan army defected to the resistance by the hundreds. Meanwhile, the strength of the resistance grows.

The Kabul régime claims that tens of thousands of refugees have returned to Afghanistan in response to its call for national reconciliation. In fact, wartime devastation and the oppression by the Kabul régime have forced an exodus of Afghans from their homes. Almost 5 million Afghans have fled their country. Millions more are displaced within Afghanistan itself. The net population outflow continues to exceed the number returning.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

As host to the largest refugee population in the world, that is, over 3 million Afghans, Pakistan has earned universal admiration for the truly generous manner in which it has borne this tremendous burden.

As they enjoy widespread support among the Afghan populace, the heroic Mujahidin for eight years have held a great Power at bay in a tenacious defence of an ancient way of life. The might of the numerically and technologically superior Soviet Army has not been able to defeat this genuinely nationalist resistance movement of the Afghan people. Fully three quarters of the Afghan countryside remains under resistance control. Paradoxically, Soviet efforts to subjugate Afghanistan have fostered a new sense of Afghan nationhood, based on a common opposition to the occupation.

If the Soviet Union genuinely desires to do so, it can easily and rapidly find the means to solve this tragic conflict. Under the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General and his Personal Representative for Afghanistan, a framework for settlement has emerged. There is still no agreement, however, on one crucial element of this framework: the short timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Soviet Union thus far adamantly refuses to commit itself to a timetable and a date certain to begin the withdrawal of its troops. Without that commitment from the Soviet Union, the war goes on.

Today I reiterate my Government's repeated assurances to the Soviet Union that the United States is prepared to play a helpful role in bringing about a negotiated settlement. The United States has assured the Secretary-General of its willingness to serve as a guarantor of an appropriate settlement involving the withdrawal of Soviet troops. My Government recognizes the need for a settlement which is just, which is fair and which is satisfactory to all the parties concerned, including the Soviet Union.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

I recall a statement made by the Soviet Union's Foreign Minister to the League of Nations half a century ago. At that time, Maxim Litvinov stated that peace is indivisible. He stated:

"It has now become clear to the whole world that each war is the creation of a preceding war and the generator of new, present or future wars. We must tell ourselves that sooner or later any war will bring misfortune to all countries, whether belligerents or neutrals."

Shortly after he was released from internal exile, Andrei Sakharov, reflecting the growing popular Soviet consciousness of this war, termed his country's intervention in Afghanistan "uncommonly cruel and distressing". He called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops so that the Afghan people can solve their own domestic problems.

In this light, we join with the vast majority of representatives in this Hall today in appealing to the Soviet Union to commit itself to the path of peace and to permit the Afghan people to choose its own destiny, free of outside interference. We ask the Soviet Union to accept a negotiated formula to end this conflict, a formula which would permit it to live in harmony with its small neighbour that would be neutral and non-aligned, and which would not constitute a threat to any other nation.

Later today this Assembly will vote overwhelmingly to request the Soviet Union to match its words with deeds. We shall know the true Soviet intentions when we meet one year from now. If at that time Soviet troops still remain on Afghan soil, the whole world will know that the goal of the Soviet Union is not peace but conquest. If, however, the Soviet Union agrees to the elements of a fair and just settlement, elements which are already on the table, then the whole world will welcome its contribution to the establishment of a free, neutral, non-aligned and peaceful Afghanistan.

Lord GLENARTHUR (United Kingdom): This is the ninth time the General Assembly has had to consider the situation in Afghanistan caused by the large-scale military invasion of the Soviet Union in 1979. That act of force against a small, non-aligned and independent country remains one of the most flagrant breaches of the Charter of the United Nations since its foundation. That is why, although my delegation entirely agrees with the statement of the representative of Denmark earlier in this debate on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community, the United Kingdom has decided to make a national statement.

In the last 12 months we have heard many fine words emanating from Moscow and Kabul. The Soviet Union professes a wish to find an end to the war and to be able to bring its soldiers home. I am sure that all of us here today endorse that wish. But we can reasonably ask for concrete evidence of any action they have taken to follow up those welcome words. So far, I fear, we have seen nothing of real substance. Innocent Afghans remain victims of a brutal military occupation, and within Afghanistan the situation continues to deteriorate. The fighting rages as fiercely as ever. The spring and summer of 1987 have seen a major series of military offensives.

Take those in the Paktia and Kandahar areas, along the border with Pakistan: Soviet forces played a major part in those operations, often serving in the front line; the resistance beat them back in Paktia, and it prevented them from securing the city of Kandahar, although its assailants deliberately destroyed many of the city's beautiful orchards and much of its infrastructure in an attempt to force its inhabitants to flee. Despite efforts by the Afghan régime to pretend otherwise, the city is ruined.

(Lord Glenarthur, United Kingdom)

A report in Izvestia on 17 September this year quoted a Soviet officer as saying, "There is shooting the whole time. No one will give a brass farthing for your life if you take it into your head to go outside unarmed".

And what progress has there been for the Afghan refugees? Artillery bombardment and aerial bombing of the Shomali area in August forced an immediate flood of fresh refugees to flee to Kabul. Whatever the Afghan régime may claim, the outward flow of refugees across the country's borders continues unabated. The scale of the tragedy and the suffering it has caused are immense. I need hardly repeat the grim statistics: one quarter to one third of the Afghan population has fled the country; 5 million refugees; and a million or more displaced persons inside Afghanistan. These are all people who would like nothing more than to return to their homes and to rebuild their shattered lives, but the reasons for their flight still remain. Let us never forget their dreadful suffering, nor let us fail to applaud and support the Afghan people's brave resistance to the Soviet occupation and to the régime which that occupation sustains.

Eight years of relentless military offensives have failed to impose the puppet régime in Kabul on the Afghan people. Perhaps that is why the Soviet Government has pressed the régime to take the various political steps of which it has made so much in this debate. In January the régime announced a series of so-called peace initiatives. These encompassed a cease-fire; so-called national reconciliation; a general amnesty; some guarantees for religious observance; private ownership; and the protection of the cultural heritage. They were followed in the summer by the offer of a coalition government, a law on political parties and a new draft constitution. There has also been an extension of the unilateral cease-fire, which, as events have demonstrated, has been an almost total failure.

(Lord Glenarthur, United Kingdom)

Those proposals may look good on paper, but they have cut no ice whatsoever with the Afghans themselves, who understand them for what they are: an attempt by the Kabul régime to impose by political means that which they have failed to win militarily; an invitation to capitulate.

The régime's strategy is transparent enough. It is trying to widen the base of its domestic and international support, but it is bound to fail because it cannot bring itself to accept that it must give up its grip on power. National reconciliation is what is on offer, but only on terms dictated by Moscow and the present ruling clique in Kabul.

Let us look at these terms. Who could be expected to take seriously, for example, an offer of coalition under which the posts of president, prime minister and the ministers of the interior, defence, foreign affairs and security would be reserved to the régime? And what of the law on political parties? It requires any new parties to support the régime's so-called national reconciliation and accept communist principles and laws. That law does nothing to restore genuine democracy. What it tries to do is give an impression of greater freedom while ensuring that new parties operate under the control of the existing régime. The draft constitution is modelled closely on that of the Soviet Union and on the basic principles announced by the régime in 1980. Can anyone seriously expect people who have fought on against heavy odds since 1979 to accept that?

The key to restoring peace in Afghanistan lies in the readiness of the Soviet Union and the Kabul régime to consider a Government that is not dominated by the Communist Party. Mr. Najib's cynically contrived elevation to the post of President must surely have put paid to any pretence on that score. He has publicly referred to the panic and pessimism of those in Kabul who fear to lose their party positions. At his recent Party Congress he stated unambiguously that "the People's

(Lord Glenarthur, United Kingdom)

Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) should not lose its leading role in all levels of the State sovereignty". He argued that "the Party's decision to keep the presidency for itself is logical". Logical to him it may be, but to those who want to restore peace and repair the damage done since the Soviet invasion it is merely a sham.

The clearest evidence that nothing has really changed lies in the régime's attitude to the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Since the General Assembly last debated Afghanistan, two rounds of negotiations have been held in Geneva. They have concentrated on a crucial outstanding issue: the timetable for troop withdrawal.

The second was convened only two months ago, at the request of the Afghan side, but the régime then blocked any hope of progress. Its position that the time-frame for withdrawal of Soviet troops should be as long as 16 months is far beyond reasonable logistic requirements. It shows how frightened the régime is of being deprived of its Soviet buttress. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the régime's aim is merely to procrastinate and to preserve its hold on power, protected by 110,000 Soviet troops and the arsenal of a super-Power.

The current Soviet leadership claims that it wishes to find a speedy solution to the problems of Afghanistan. We recognize the difficulties. Somersaults do not come easily to leaderships, whatever their political complexion. We know that the Russians are concerned about stability and the security of their borders, but the current impasse can be overcome only if the Soviet Union shows a real - and imaginative - flexibility.

As I and other speakers have made clear, Moscow needs to take a major step forward to show the world that its thinking really is new. It is not enough to

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allow the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit Kabul, welcome as those developments are. The most obvious signal of intent would be Soviet agreement to a short timetable for the complete withdrawal of its troops.

(Lord Glenarthur, United Kingdom)

We hope that the Soviet Union will put its weight behind efforts to achieve genuine reconciliation in Afghanistan, including arrangements leading to an act of self-determination, perhaps on traditional lines, enabling the Afghan people to determine their own future.

I can not end these remarks without paying two tributes: first, to the steadfastness of the Afghan people in their fight against adversity and, second, to the quite remarkable role played by the Government and people of Pakistan in providing assistance to the refugees, in the face of increasing violations of their border and a growing number of terrorist attacks within Pakistan, which caused the deaths of hundreds of innocent lives and which there is every reason to believe were inspired by the Afghan régime.

The magnificent help provided by Pakistan can, however, be no more than a temporary palliative. What is fundamental is the withdrawal of the Soviet forces; only that, to quote the Secretary-General's report, will

"open the way for the formation of a government where the voice of all the Afghans - those now living outside as well as inside Afghanistan - will be heard" (A/42/1, p. 5),

heard not only by Afghans but by all Member States of the United Nations. During this General Assembly session we have all heard a great deal about a new initiative which seeks the establishment of what has been labelled a comprehensive system of international peace and security. My Government does not think that a new system is necessary; rather, the Member States of the United Nations should abide by the existing rules of international behaviour. Nations must and will be judged not by their words alone but by their deeds.

(Lord Glenarthur, United Kingdom)

It goes without saying that there must be genuine reconciliation between Afghans. The Kabul proposals allow neither this nor genuine self-determination. Those proposals will not do.

It is equally self-evident that the Afghan resistance, which has fought so courageously against Soviet occupation since 1979, must be involved in a comprehensive settlement that will allow what Mr. Gorbachev has called "a bleeding wound" to be healed and Afghanistan to rejoin the community of nations.

Imposing a Government on the Afghan people against their wishes is not the way forward. Claiming to be neutral and non-aligned while retaining over 110,000 foreign troops in active military occupation is a contradiction in terms. Claiming there is no alternative way forward is equally absurd.

The British Government will continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative to find a realistic settlement in accordance with the principles of successive General Assembly resolutions. I am confident that these principles will again be overwhelmingly endorsed today.

Mr. BLANC (France) (interpretation from French): For the ninth time since 29 December 1979 the United Nations General Assembly has before it the item "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security".

Almost eight years after the massive intervention by Soviet troops which was the origin of the crisis, the occupation of Afghanistan continues, with its train of brutality and destruction. Year after year the occupiers strive relentlessly to strengthen their ideological, administrative and cultural stranglehold on a people whose exemplary resistance shows clearly how greatly it abhors such domination. It is legitimate in such circumstances that in considering this question once again our Assembly demonstrate the international community's continuing concern and disapproval.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

It is clear that the military occupation of Afghanistan remains, whatever arguments may be invoked here again today to try to justify it, an outright violation of an essential principle of the Charter, for the Charter makes it incumbent upon all Member States to refrain from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

France unequivocally condemns all such acts. As was stated at this rostrum by our Foreign Minister on 23 September, it calls once again upon the Soviet Union to put an end without delay to a conflict that belongs to another age. Certain statements by Soviet leaders led us to hope that it was finally understood in Moscow that the invasion and subsequent occupation of an independent, non-aligned country that was in no way hostile to the USSR was a grave mistake. We cannot but observe that internal resistance to the foreign occupiers and the political authorities they have imposed still has the most widespread popular support and that this resistance is holding up with heroic courage and limited resources against one of the most powerful armies in the world.

This unflagging determination of the Afghan people and the massive condemnation of the aggressor by the international community, confirmed year after year by our Assembly, should convince the Soviet Union that it can no longer count on the passage of time to impose a solution by force. Unfortunately, the good intentions proclaimed by the Soviet leaders, especially as regards withdrawal of the Red Army, have hardly been translated into facts. Thus the occupation forces continue, as in the past, their large-scale offensive in several Afghan provinces, which include lethal confrontations and are accompanied by massive and merciless reprisals against the civilian population. According to the overwhelming

(Mr. Blanc, France)

evidence that, unfortunately, we continue to receive, repression continues in the towns and regions of Afghanistan that remain in the hands of the occupying Power, with the systematic violation of the most basic moral standards and principles.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

It is not surprising, then, that the 4 million to 5 million Afghans - the largest number of refugees in the world today - continue to prefer exile to a return within the context of a pseudo national reconciliation on the conditions of the occupier and the political régime it imposes.

Furthermore, the attacks against the territory of Pakistan, which have left so many innocent victims both among the people of the country and among the refugees, have continued in recent months. These attacks are - let us not hesitate about saying this once again - another threat to the peace and stability of the entire region.

A solution to the question of Afghanistan can be found only in respect for another basic principle of the Charter of our Organization: the right of peoples to self-determination. The Afghan people should be able to choose its future freely. The exercise of this fundamental right presupposes the speedy and complete withdrawal of the occupation forces and the voluntary return of the refugees to their homes.

That is precisely the objective being so patiently sought by the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative, Mr. Diego Cordovez, whose tireless efforts my country supports and encourages.

The announcement, only a few weeks ago, of the resumption of the Geneva talks at the initiative of the Kabul authorities gave rise to great hopes in this respect. Those hopes were once again dashed because of the lack of acceptable proposals on a timetable for withdrawal.

Finally, it is time to think seriously about the direct participation of the Afghan national resistance in any talks on the settlement of the question of Afghanistan.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

Injustice does not decrease with time; it becomes greater. In Afghanistan, seven years after the invasion, the fait accompli has not acquired the force of law. Soviet armed forces must leave that country and the Afghan people must regain their independence.

That is why the French delegation, as it has done in the case of similar draft resolutions in previous years, will support the draft resolution now before the Assembly for its approval.

Mr. MAHBUBANI (Singapore): In chemistry, a blue substance called "litmus" is used to detect the presence of acids. When an acid is present, litmus turns from blue to red. This procedure is called the "litmus test". For the Members of the United Nations and for the international community as a whole, the manner and pace at which the Soviet Union resolves the Afghanistan question will provide the litmus test of the new Soviet foreign policy.

We should acknowledge at the outset that the Soviet Union has expressed its desire to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. As far back as 28 July 1986, Mr. Gorbachev said in his famous Vladivostock speech:

"In conclusion, about Afghanistan. It was declared from the rostrum of the Twenty-seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that we are ready to bring home Soviet troops stationed in Afghanistan at the request of its Government. As you know, the Party now firmly adheres to the principle that words should be followed up by deeds". (A/41/505, p. 13)

We are encouraged by this linkage that Mr. Gorbachev has established between words and deeds. It is a theme he has mentioned several times. As long as two years ago, in an interview with Time magazine, he said:

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

There should be no difference between words and deeds. The deeds should match words".

We did not expect the withdrawal of Soviet forces to take place the day after those statements were made. However, neither did we expect to wait forever. For words to be credible, the deeds must match the words not long after they are uttered.

We are, however, troubled by one qualification in Mr. Gorbachev's statement. He said that the Soviet troops in Afghanistan would only be returned at the request of "its Government". What Afghan Government are we talking about? That is a critical question, because the sole rationale given by the Soviet Union for its presence in Afghanistan is that it entered the country on 24 December 1979 at the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan and in accordance with the 1978 Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Good Neighbourliness concluded between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. The critical question for us is: Who issued the invitation on behalf of the Government of Afghanistan? It could not have been Hafizullah Amin, the then President and Head of Government of Afghanistan, because he was killed by the invading forces on 27 December - three days after the Soviet invasion began. Was the invitation, then, issued by Mr. Babrak Karmal? The fact is that on 24 December 1979 Babrak Karmal was not a member of the Government of Afghanistan and therefore had no authority to act on its behalf. He was then living in exile in Eastern Europe and was brought back to Kabul and installed as President after the Soviet Union had entered Afghanistan. In short, to suggest that the foreign forces entered Afghanistan at the invitation of the Afghan Government is tantamount to suggesting that the cart pulled the horse into Afghanistan.

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

We are, however, encouraged by the positive tone of the report of the Secretary-General, where he says:

"The negotiating process towards the achievement of a comprehensive settlement has reached an advanced stage. Substantial though not sufficiently sustained progress has been made in the past year in the efforts to conclude the international instruments that will comprise the settlement". (A/42/600, para. 2)

More critically, the gap between the two sides on the time-frame of the withdrawal has been narrowed from 45 months to 11 months. When one bears in mind that the foreign forces have been in Afghanistan for almost eight years, this gap of 11 months seems so narrow - narrow enough to suggest that the real obstacle to a quick withdrawal lies elsewhere.

Fundamentally, we believe that the Soviet Union would like to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan on its own terms and conditions. It would like to ensure that it leaves behind a stable Government in Afghanistan, a Government centred on but not composed exclusively of the Kabul régime. Despite the overwhelming strength of the Mujahidin resistance forces, despite the tremendous and, I suppose, natural unpopularity of the Kabul régime because of its association with the foreign forces, the Soviet Union believes that it can stabilize the situation and leave in a dignified fashion, without any trace of humiliation.

While we cannot, in principle, accept the right of a foreign occupying Power to withdraw on its own terms and conditions, we do, however, as political realists, acknowledge that great Powers have to find solutions that do not humiliate them. We therefore applaud the untiring efforts that have been made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr Diego Cordovez, to find such an acceptable solution. For the sake of the long-suffering Afghan people, we hope that they will succeed soon.

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

However, as political realists we are also aware that even great Powers cannot manage to control everything. To cite an analogy: all the bulldozers in the world could not level the Sahara Desert for long. The shifting sands and the forces of nature will naturally recreate the natural balance. Similarly, when Soviet forces leave Afghanistan, the natural political forces of Afghanistan, which have been submerged by foreign occupation, will resurface and create an independent and neutral Afghan State, one that, on the basis of long historical experience going back centuries, will learn to respect the interests of its larger neighbours, including the Soviet Union. We also agree with the Soviet Union that national reconciliation has to be an essential element of any Afghan settlement. National reconciliation, however, like domestic reconciliation in a home torn apart by conflict, can take place only after the foreign forces have left, not before. For example, in a home torn apart by marital discord we cannot expect a husband and wife to make up and solve their problems in the presence of a stranger. To allow the process of national reconciliation to begin in Afghanistan Soviet forces should leave Afghanistan as soon as possible.

One historical example suggests that Soviet prestige might actually be enhanced rather than diminished by its withdrawal from Afghanistan. Over a century ago the British Empire, then at the peak of its power and influence, thought that it could easily extend its sway over Afghanistan after having conquered the mighty sub-continent of India. But a brief and disastrous foray into Afghanistan by British troops taught the British a quick and valuable lesson, namely, that they should leave Afghanistan in peace. The British Empire was not damaged by its quick withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Today the Soviet Union should also pause to consider the contrasting views of its friends and adversaries. Those who do not wish the Soviet Union well would

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like to extend the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, knowing the heavy price the Soviet Union would pay for its continuing occupation, while those who wish the Soviet Union well counsel a quick and speedy withdrawal from Afghanistan. Indeed, we are puzzled that the Soviet Union pays more attention to the views of its adversaries.

The Soviet Union should perhaps also heed the advice of one of its most distinguished citizens, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975, who enjoyed the rare distinction this year of being quoted by both President Reagan and Mr. Shevardnadze in their speeches in this year's general debate. I am referring of course to Mr. Andrei Sakharov, who said in July this year:

"The uncommonly cruel and distressing Afghan war has been going on for over seven years now. The immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan is required, so that the Afghan people can solve their own domestic problems."

Mr. Sakharov reminds us that, even while we pay some attention to the Soviet Union's concerns for a dignified withdrawal, the world has an even greater obligation to the Afghan people who have experienced at first hand the horrors any small country suffers when it is invaded by a super-Power. Over one third of its population has had to flee the country. There are now 5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, making up over half of the world's refugee population. Of those Afghans remaining in the country perhaps 2 million more have had to flee their homes because of the bombing of their villages and other dangers. A super-Power quite naturally has terrible firepower at its command. The Afghans have become its victims. Even when they are spared this terrible firepower the Afghans have to worry about their children dying from little bombs shaped in the form of toys.

Let me quote what the 1986 report of Helsinki Watch, a private human rights organization, said:

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

"The practice of using toys to kill is such an outrageous concept that many have refused to accept it as true. Yet Helsinki Watch has received scores of testimonies about such weapons, from credible witnesses who often have no notion of the significance of what they are reporting."

Given the immense suffering of the Afghan people, we are saddened that efforts have been made in this debate to distract attention away from the central issue. We have been asked, for example, to consider amendments to a draft resolution that focus on "external interference". We believe that this is a political euphemism created to suggest that there is a legitimate reason for the foreign forces to stay on in Afghanistan. We hope that these distracting amendments will be withdrawn. If not, we hope that the Member States will support the sub-amendments contained in A/42/L.21.

We are also aware that some Member States believe that the draft resolution before us in document A/42/L.16 should have been changed this year to reflect new realities. However, there are two compelling reasons why it would have been premature to do so. First, while we have heard new words, these words have not yet been matched by deeds. Secondly, it would be dangerous for the United Nations to send a premature or different signal on the violation of a key United Nations principle in Afghanistan. We fear that any such premature signal might prolong rather than shorten the foreign occupation of Afghanistan.

Indeed, the draft resolution we have before us in document A/42/L.16 has been gently and carefully crafted to provide the Soviet Union a diplomatic way out of Afghanistan. It only includes elements based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, namely: first, it calls for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan; second, it calls for the restoration of Afghan independence; third, it asserts the rights of the Afghan people to determine their

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

own future; and, fourth, it guarantees the right of the refugees to return to their homes. Those who have qualms about voting for a similar draft resolution this year should perhaps note that none of these four elements have yet been implemented. We should also note that the draft resolution provides a renewed mandate for the Secretary-General and his representative to continue their constructive efforts to find a solution to the Afghan question and, therefore, we hope that more nations will vote for the draft resolution this year.

We say that because the clear and consistent stand taken by the United Nations on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has brought us close to a political settlement of the Afghan question and to an early end of the sufferings of the Afghan people. In helping the Afghan people we, the States Members of the United Nations, are only helping ourselves. Each State Member of the Organization, especially the smaller States, has a powerful interest in the outcome of United Nations efforts to free Afghanistan, for if the United Nations fails to reverse the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan it will only help to turn the clock of history backwards.

It appears that even the Soviet Union is becoming aware today that the clock of history can only move forward. In a significant article entitled "Reality and safeguards for a secure world", Mr. Gorbachev said:

"A prerequisite for universal security is unconditional respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the right of peoples to exercise the sovereign choice of the ways and forms of their development, revolutionary or evolutionary." (A/42/574, p. 6)

We would like to suggest that the litmus test of the Soviet Union's commitment to the United Nations Charter and its commitment to the principle of the right of a people to exercise its sovereign choice will be its attitude towards the Afghan

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question. If it finally agrees to implement the resolutions that we have adopted for the past seven years and the draft resolution that we are about to adopt this morning, we can then finally say with confidence that deeds have matched words in Afghanistan. We hope that we will not have to wait too long for that to happen.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): The Assembly has heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 31.

We have before us draft resolution A/42/L.16, amendments thereto in document A/42/L.19, and sub-amendments in document A/42/L.21.

I have been informed that in accordance with rule 80 of the rules of procedure the sponsors of the amendments in document A/42/L.19 have withdrawn them. Consequently no action is required on them.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their votes before the voting. I would remind members that, in accordance with resolution 34/401, explanations of vote should be limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. AL-ASHTAL (Democratic Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): The delegations of Democratic Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic submitted minor amendments to the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan on 6 November for the following reasons.

First, because we noted that the party directly concerned with the situation in Afghanistan showed readiness to give favourable consideration to the resolution of the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan; since it was the first time that such sincere readiness had been evident, we thought there was a possibility of adopting a resolution by consensus.

Secondly, we noted that there seemed to be a rare opportunity to adopt a unanimous resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. Though we have not succeeded in doing that, I think we can safely state that the adoption of such a resolution could have been one of the most significant achievements of the forty-second session of the General Assembly, that its adoption would have represented the beginnings of a peaceful settlement or political solution, and would have given impetus to the negotiations currently under way under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

(Mr. Al-Ashtal, Democratic Yemen)

Unfortunately, however, we did not find a positive response to the amendments we proposed. On the contrary, we found that our amendments were being amended and that our modest efforts to help in the adoption of a resolution by consensus were being obstructed.

We are now discussing for the ninth time the situation in Afghanistan. Eight resolutions have been adopted by this Assembly. This gives us reason to wonder for what reason the General Assembly is debating this question. What is the purpose of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly? We believe that the principal aim of the exercise should not be debate for its own sake, or the adoption of resolutions for its own sake, but to find a formula that would make a peaceful solution to the situation in Afghanistan a goal we can achieve. Had it been so, our amendments would indeed have contributed to the achievement of that goal. We wish to state that the General Assembly has been made to lose a significant opportunity to adopt a unanimous resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. It is our earnest hope that efforts will continue under the auspices of the Secretary-General with a view to reaching a settlement to that problem so that next year we may be able to achieve what we have failed to achieve this year. Since our modest efforts have not succeeded, our position of principle on the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan will not change.

Mr. RAJAIE-KHORASSANI (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/42/L.16 though that resolution falls short of what the international body should really do regarding the occupation of Afghanistan.

A non-aligned member of the United Nations has been the victim of armed aggression and occupation. What worse, do members think, can occur to a country? Yet the international body has not been able to compel the occupation forces to

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leave the occupied land of Afghanistan. Sadly enough, political considerations and rivalries between global power blocs have, as usual, impeded the proper functioning of this international body. Hence the licence of suffering and deprivation for the people of Afghanistan has been prolonged. This shows once again the impotence and structural inefficiency of the international Organization.

The draft resolution has even shied away from explicitly naming the aggressor forces of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. We believe that such condoning attitudes are unnecessary favours to aggressors and indeed very dangerous. We believe that no political considerations should reduce the political pressure against the aggressor forces of occupation. Therefore, direct reference to the Soviet forces of occupation is a necessary but missing element in the draft resolution.

To us, encroachment on the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of Afghanistan has another dimension. From the Islamic point of view Afghanistan is an Islamic territory, and any attack or invasion against it is, as a matter of fact, tantamount to invasion against the entire holy land of Islam and against Islam itself.

(Mr. Rajaie-Khorassani, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

We therefore believe that it is the religious duty of all Muslims to join hands and mobilize all their efforts to assist the people of Afghanistan, in order to force the occupation forces to withdraw from that land. Furthermore, Islam does not permit the intervention and interference of other Powers in Afghanistan either. The United States imperialists should remember that the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan must not and will not permit any other overt or covert infiltration by the United States in Afghanistan. The independence and non-aligned character of Afghanistan is not to be negotiated; it is not negotiable under any pretext. We condemn the aggression against and occupation of Afghanistan by foreign forces and we call upon them to withdraw from that land immediately and unconditionally. We believe that the political destiny of the Afghan people must be determined solely by the Muslim people of Afghanistan themselves, about 5 million of whom have been compelled to live in exile.

We believe that the puppet régime in Afghanistan does not represent the Afghan people. A régime which cannot subsist without the support of hundreds of thousands of foreign troops cannot have any claim to legitimacy, and the presence of such puppet elements at the negotiation table explains the evident futility, so far at least, of such negotiations.

To give further evidence of the unjustified political considerations in the international body, I wish simply to remind the Assembly that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in spite of the colossal difficulties created for it by the imposed war and those behind the imposed war, is acting with great pleasure as host to 2 million of our Afghan brothers. But this fact has not been properly acknowledged or addressed by the so-called champions of support for Afghanistan. Moreover, instead of thanking us, some even audaciously claim that the Afghan refugees have been prevented from going back to their homeland. I wish that those "at home"

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Republic of Iran)

could have conducted themselves so properly as not to force more than one third of the entire Afghan people to leave their motherland and seek shelter in neighbouring countries, no matter how hospitable their neighbours might be.

Mr. BELONOGOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The delegations of Democratic Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, in a sincere desire to contribute to our discussion on Afghanistan in a constructive and non-confrontational way and thereby promote the strengthening of United Nations efforts to ensure the earliest possible attainment of a settlement in Afghanistan, have put forward for consideration by the Assembly some amendments to the Pakistan draft resolution. These amendments would change its present tendentiousness and one-sidedness and make it balanced and, consequently, acceptable to all States Members of the United Nations, including those which to date have abstained or voted against draft resolutions on this subject. In other words, the amendments would virtually ensure its adoption of the draft resolution by consensus at this session.

We regard this as a hopeful initiative which would make it possible for States that really desire the earliest possible settlement of the Afghan problem to take part in the discussion here in a spirit of goodwill and to contribute to the adoption by the Assembly at this session of a resolution that would have the full authority of a document enjoying universal support.

In the final analysis, the United Nations must be the focal point of common efforts on the part of States; this is in fact its major purpose. Guided by this understanding, in our own contacts at this session of the General Assembly with the sponsors of the draft resolution we have shown the maximum goodwill and readiness to find a mutually acceptable solution. However, the Pakistan sub-amendments have stalemated this process. The position adopted shows a total lack of any desire on

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

the part of some delegations to reflect in due and proper form in the draft resolution on Afghanistan, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and this is quite eloquent.

The Soviet delegation, unfortunately, must object to the fact that the efforts based on a constructive, objective approach were blocked by forces which, as we see it, are not interested in the peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem, and by forces which wish to see a continuance of the bloodshed there and are trying to use the United Nations for their own selfish political purposes and for confrontation.

We cannot fail to point out that the countries that unleashed and stubbornly pursue an undeclared war against Afghanistan are at the same time, for political reasons, trying to continue that war here in the United Nations and not allow the relaxation of tensions in and around Afghanistan. They are imposing on members of the world community additional complications in a situation to which a just and comprehensive solution is long overdue. This approach is not one adopted by chance. It reflects the negative view of those forces of the prospects of the settlement, which is completely out of line with their statements here concerning their desire for a peaceful settlement. We object to that approach and see it as yet another attempt to impede positive steps towards a peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem and to secure further legalization from outside of interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

The Soviet delegation is prepared to show flexibility and would have voted in favour of the draft resolution had it been amended as proposed by Democratic Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, since this proved impossible, our delegation has no choice but to vote against the draft resolution proposed by Pakistan. For its part, the Soviet Union will, of course, continue to do its utmost to promote the earliest possible political settlement of the situation in and around Afghanistan.

Mr. MOYA PALENCIA (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): The principle of the non-use of force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State is a fundamental norm laid down in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter and a principle of customary international law which cannot be the subject of unilateral interpretation or circumstantial exception. This norm has always been firmly upheld by Mexico in all forums as a basis for peaceful civilized coexistence, because it is inextricably linked to two related principles which our country helped to introduce into substantive international law: respect for the self-determination of peoples and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

Mexico has repeatedly and unequivocally condemned violations of international law, illegal territorial occupation, acts of aggression, attempts to cause destabilization and overt or covert support for groups seeking to overthrow legally constituted Governments. Since December 1979 we have proclaimed this with regard to the presence of foreign troops in the territory of Afghanistan. In January 1980, in the absence of concrete decisions by the Security Council, the Government of Mexico proposed on the basis of resolution 377 (V), the convening of what became the sixth emergency special session of the United Nations General Assembly to examine the question which today, after eight years, we are again considering. Since that time, we have voted in favour of the resolutions on this subject adopted by the Assembly.

Despite the appeals contained in past resolutions, the foreign troops have not yet withdrawn from Afghan territory; nor has it been possible for the Afghan people freely and fully to exercise its right to determine its own form of government and to choose its own political, social and economic system free from outside intervention or coercion of any kind. We cannot but deplore the suffering of innumerable refugees who have been prevented from returning to their homes in freedom and honour.

(Mr. Moya Palencia, Mexico)

The diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative have succeeded in reducing the differences in positions with regard to the time-frame for the withdrawal of foreign troops, but, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the talks:

"made it abundantly clear that this issue has enormous political and other implications for both interlocutors". (A/42/600, para. 8)

Only in the light of the early, comprehensive solution of the problem will the Afghan people be able freely to exercise its right to determine its future without foreign interference of any kind.

The situation in Afghanistan, like that in other areas of the world where peace is at present threatened, is an example of a regional conflict which must be resolved in conformity with international law and by peaceful means. The United Nations must continue to respond firmly and imaginatively in this as in other cases to establish the bases for balance among the States of the region and to bring about the demilitarization of the area.

In keeping with the principles laid down in the Charter and with Mexico's foreign policy, my delegation firmly supports draft resolution A/42/L.16 and hopes for the early, peaceful settlement of the problem of Afghanistan that preserves the political independence and territorial integrity of the country and enable the Afghan people to exercise freely and fully its right to self-determination.

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana): I am grateful for the opportunity to explain the vote of the Ghana delegation on draft resolution A/42/L.16, on which the General Assembly will soon take a decision. The Government of Ghana believes in the inalienable right of all peoples to choose their own form of government without coercion or outside interference. We also believe in the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

The Ghana delegation has therefore supported the initiatives of the General Assembly, particularly those pertaining to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent political solution of the conflict which has afflicted that country for so long. We believe, further, that in exercising its responsibility the international community should have as its central objective the promotion and encouragement of the speedy resolution of the tragic conflict. This calls for a sense of realism, fairness and balance in the handling of the issue.

We do not believe that the almost ritualistic repetition of resolutions without giving serious thought to how far they may go towards bringing the warring parties to the negotiating table - which is, unfortunately, how the Assembly has acted in the past - will solve the problem.

The situation in Afghanistan has escalated to the present dangerous level because of extensive foreign interference in one form or another. What started as a local issue has been so terribly exploited by the East-West ideological combatants as to make the interests of the Afghans themselves almost irrelevant. To justify their posturing, television screens have constantly and unabashedly displayed large-scale sophisticated weapons and other forms of foreign military assistance being made available to Afghan rebels. Other media reports have excelled in paying profuse and glowing tribute to Afghans killing their own compatriots. Humanitarian problems have been dramatized and exaggerated out of all imaginable proportion for national and political advantage. But the tragedy is that it is the Afghans and their rich cultural heritage that suffer at the end of the day.

Ghana believes that for credible action what is necessary at this point is a balanced resolution which adequately reflects ongoing developments in the Afghanistan situation, particularly in the area of efforts aimed at defusing tension and creating the appropriate political climate for the settlement of the

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

conflict. Any resolution that has the sole purpose of supporting only one side or scoring ideological points would contribute, rather, to the prolongation of conflict in the subregion as a whole.

The fact of the matter is that since the adoption of resolution 41/33, the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan has initiated a number of measures aimed at returning its country to normalcy. These have included the proclamation of the programme for nationwide reconciliation, involving a cease-fire and a general amnesty for a period of one year, from January 1987 to January 1988. A significant number of the people of Afghanistan, taking advantage of the amnesty, are alleged to have returned and to have resumed participation in the reconstruction of their country. Similarly, quite a number of people in prison for various offences have been released.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

Nor is that all. The Secretary-General's mediation efforts have also registered significant successes. We know that there has been a considerable narrowing of positions on crucial issues, including the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. It is a continuing process of delicate negotiations designed to allay fears of the Afghan rebels and thus pave the way for their absorption into the mainstream of Afghan society.

Against that background, the Ghana delegation regrets that the proposed amendments, which had much merit and were deserving of positive support, have just been withdrawn. They sought to introduce a balance into the text by also drawing attention to the issue of continuing foreign interference, which, unless halted will continue to stalemate efforts to solve the problem. The amendments would also have properly and fairly reflected the ongoing developments in Kabul and Geneva and the positive support therefore required from us all for the success of the programme of reconciliation initiated by the Government of Afghanistan.

In that respect, the draft resolution we are about to pronounce on is less than up to date in its breadth of vision. However, we shall vote for it, because it represents the best possible consensus. But we hope that the General Assembly will improve upon it if this problem should still be with us by the forty-third session.

Mr. DOST (Afghanistan): In explaining its vote on draft resolution A/42/L.16, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan wishes to make the following observations.

Over the past eight years the General Assembly has adopted many resolutions concerning the item under discussion. Contrary to the purpose for which the resolutions should have been intended, their main promoters made no secret of their designs to wage a propaganda war against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and

(Mr. Dost, Afghanistan)

its friends. Hence the main party in question - the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan - was never consulted, directly or indirectly, on the form or the substance of the resolutions. They admittedly suffered from a serious lack of political realism and failed to address all the important aspects of the problem. Therefore, the resolutions could not logically be acceptable to, and binding on, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and therefore they remained virtually dead letters and could make no positive contribution towards the search for a peaceful, political solution of the situation.

In line with its overall new approach to the issue, and in an earnest effort to give meaning and purpose to the debate and the ensuing draft resolution, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan decided to participate actively and constructively in the debate and sincerely co-operate with other interested delegations in preparing a draft resolution which would be acceptable to all.

In our opinion, such a draft resolution would have served as a meaningful and important step towards the achievement of a settlement, as it would have enjoyed the unanimous support of all Member States, including the parties directly concerned.

Naturally, a redrafting of the draft resolution in conformity with the views of our delegation, would have made it difficult, if not impossible, for its main original sponsors to accept it. For this reason, and owing to our sincere willingness to avoid rhetorical and polemical confrontations, we refrained from proposing our own amendments and instead accepted the amendments proposed by the Syrian Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Contrary to some assertions, we do not believe that the integrity or the logic of the draft resolution would have suffered in any way by the proposed amendments. In our opinion, those amendments, which were prepared after many days of intense

(Mr. Dost, Afghanistan)

consultations, would have altered neither the form nor the substance of the draft resolution introduced by Pakistan, and instead would have contributed towards its balance and comprehensiveness.

The amendments would also have brought the draft resolution into line with the letter and spirit of the Geneva process, as well as with the facts pertaining to the real situation.

In the course of the last few days the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan has lent its full support to, and co-operated with, the untiring efforts of many non-aligned countries to find mutually acceptable formulations leading to the adoption of a consensus resolution on the subject. In spite of all the flexibility and goodwill demonstrated by our delegation, the endeavours of those non-aligned countries were rendered fruitless by the surprising lack of interest by the Pakistan side, even in entertaining the idea of a consensus text. This sorry fact became ever more evident with the introduction of sub-amendments by Pakistan to the proposed amendments of Syria and Democratic Yemen.

What conclusions can one possibly draw from the two diverse courses of action? One side aimed at turning the one-sided and biased resolution of the past into an effective instrument to further the cause of peace, and the other aimed at totally blocking a consensus and at scoring a propaganda point.

There should remain no doubt in representatives' minds that the forces that fan the flames of war in Afghanistan and do everything to block a settlement are responsible for failure of the endeavours to reach a consensus on the draft resolution. Those forces, which want nothing less than confrontation, try to extend their undeclared war against Afghanistan to the Assembly, in its political dimension. They are putting all kinds of pressure on Member States in order to achieve their selfish ends. Such an attitude cannot but be condemned, in the strongest possible terms.

(Mr. Dost, Afghanistan)

We heartily regret the manner in which the amendments were treated. Had there been a genuine interest in the early achievement of a political settlement, the main sponsors of the draft resolution should have taken the amendments more seriously, making it possible for the Assembly to adopt a unanimous stance on the issues, one which would have served as a basis for the joint efforts of the parties and of the international community at large to do away with a hotbed of tension in this sensitive part of the world.

We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the delegations of some non-aligned countries, particularly those of the Syrian Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, which made sincere efforts to work out a consensus text. We also wish to express our profound thanks to those delegations which supported our reasonable and realistic position, either in their statements or in the course of our consultations.

In the light of what I have said, my delegation has no other choice but categorically to reject draft resolution A/42/L.16. We appeal to all independent and peace-loving delegations to deny their support to this one-sided and unbalanced text.

If adopted, the draft resolution will have no moral or legal validity for the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding our position on the draft resolution, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan will continue to participate at the Geneva talks with the utmost sincerity and perseverance, and will spare no effort to facilitate the achievement of a final agreement on a political settlement of the situation around Afghanistan.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): The Assembly will now begin the voting process and take a decision on draft resolution A/42/L.16.

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/42/723.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Kampuchea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against: Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Mongolia, Poland, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Viet Nam

Abstaining: Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Congo, Cyprus, Finland, India, Iraq, Mali, Nicaragua, Uganda

Draft resolution A/42/L.16 was adopted by 123 votes to 19, with 11 abstentions (resolution 42/15)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their votes. I remind delegations that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. HAJNOCZI (Austria): Austria voted in favour of the resolution just adopted, as it has consistently for resolutions concerning the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

We have been encouraged by the declaration of the Soviet Union that endeavours aiming at a peaceful solution have gained momentum. We welcome this development. Austria shares the view that the General Assembly should not confine itself to mere recording of developments which have already taken place. It should be sensitive to newly emerging situations and, wherever possible, try to give an impetus to any developments which might lead to a solution acceptable to all the parties concerned.

Perhaps this new development has not yet developed to the point where it could have been reflected in the resolution just adopted. If such a positive trend should materialize and gain further momentum, it might indeed be possible for this Assembly to find more common ground on this question. We hope that it will be possible to proceed on this important issue on the basis of consensus in the not-too-distant future. My delegation earnestly hopes that the Assembly will seize such an opportunity whenever it presents itself.

Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland): My delegation participated in the discussion on the item on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security guided by the strong conviction that the evolution of the situation in and around Afghanistan and the goodwill of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan allow of a move towards the speedy political

(Mr. Noworyta, Poland)

solution of the situation relating to Afghanistan, provided that the other side adopts a similar position.

The amendments to the standard and unworkable draft resolution proposed by some non-aligned countries in document A/42/L.19 provided a good basis for a balanced and fair draft resolution capable of ensuring the support of all delegations. Their main virtue was that they balanced the call for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan with a call for strict observance of the principle of non-interference in relation to Afghanistan, which is the key issue in the conflict situation. Even the author of the sub-amendments in document A/42/L.21 had to admit the unexceptionable nature of the principle of non-interference in relation to Afghanistan. But the unco-operative attitude prevailed and the chance to bring closer the political solution of the question related to Afghanistan has been compromised.

We regret that we had no choice but to vote against draft A/42/L.16, and we regret even more that an opportunity has been lost. We still believe that better counsel will prevail in the future with all those concerned and make it possible to bring to a successful conclusion the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative, which deserve our support.

Mr. ALZAMORA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of Peru voted in favour of the draft resolution in keeping with its firm position in favour of non-intervention and self-determination, and because we believe that this resolution contains all the elements necessary to bring about the negotiated political settlement required by the situation in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, my delegation would have liked the draft resolution to include also elements of a solution which we have all recognized in various forms, but which are not incorporated in the text.

(Mr. Alzamora, Peru)

We believe that the United Nations should be a forum for dialogue and negotiation, rather than for rigid and static confrontation between opposing positions, and that we should encourage and promote all elements of change and progress. Only thus shall we be able to promote and encourage realistically the peaceful settlement of conflicts in keeping with the norms and principles of the Charter and, in particular, the principle of non-intervention, to which Peru reiterates its firm commitment.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): We have thus concluded our consideration of item 31.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.