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PROVIS IONAL VERBAT IM RECORD OF THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEET ING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 2 December 1987, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)
later: Mr. CANETE (Vice-President) (Paraguay)

The situation in the Middle East: Reports of the Secretary-General [39] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 39 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/42/277, A/42/465 and Add.1, A/42/714)

Mr. OSMAN (Somalia): The search for peace in the Middle East rightly continues to be a major concern of the United Nations. Indeed, the deteriorating situation in the region makes it imperative that Member States intensify their efforts to bring an end to this persistent threat to regional and world peace and security.

In its earliest days the question of Palestine was thrown into the lap of this world Organization and this question, as we are all aware, remains as the root cause of Middle East tension and conflict. Today there is wide agreement on the need for a comprehensive settlement of Middle East problems, centred around the legitimate aspirations and rights of the Palestinian people.

Somalia strongly supports the fundamental elements for a just and lasting Middle East peace which have been established in relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Those resolutions are firmly based on the Charter and accepted principles of international law. They confirm that it is inadmissible to acquire territory through force, and they also confirm the right of peoples to self-determination and independence. We join in the call for the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and for recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood in Palestine.

Unfortunately, the path to peace continues to be obstructed by Israel's intransigence, by its contempt for the decisions of the Security Council and by its gross violations of international law. How else can one characterize Israel's

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

decision to annex Jerusalem, its enactment of the so-called "basic law" and its attempts to change the character of the Holy City of Jerusalem? How else can one characterize its equally illegal annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights, or the overt actions aimed at incorporating the West Bank and Gaza into an expansionist Israeli State? And what should one say about the daily humiliations, injustices and brutalities visited on the Arab people under Israeli occupation, or the on-going violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity through military aggression and occupation?

It is these obnoxious policies which generate continuing violence and bloodshed in the Middle East, and there will be no peace unless they are ended and their effects nullified. Above all, there can be no peace in the region while Israel continues with its obsessive efforts to deny the Palestinians not only their legitimate political rights but also their very existence as a people. How ironic it is that those who pursue this genocidal policy are the ones who insist that the world never forget the Nazi holocaust.

The world community must not tolerate this injustice of historic proportions. Somalia believes that an important step towards peace in the Middle East would be for the Security Council to reinforce the provisions of resolution 242 (1967) by affirming clearly, and in no uncertain terms, that the Palestinian people have a legal right to self-determination, including the establishment of an independent State in Palestine.

We also strongly support the call of the United Nations General Assembly - repeated over the past three years - for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. It is gratifying that support for the conference has come from a wide spectrum of international opinion and from the major political and regional groups.

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

They recognize that the conference would provide the legal and political framework for negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement. The chosen and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - would of course have to take part in the conference on an equal footing with the other parties.

My Government welcomes the Palestine Liberation Organization's stated support for the convening of the peace conference. We also welcome its commitment to peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and Palestine - a commitment which is in keeping with the peace plan adopted at the Arab summit meeting in Fez in 1981 and reaffirmed by subsequent Arab summit meetings.

The United Nations Security Council has a role to play in promoting the peace conference and establishing the modalities for its convening. My delegation hopes that the constructive efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve unanimity in the Council on matters of procedure and substance will meet with the necessary co-operation from all parties.

It is evident that the drift of events in the Middle East is not towards understanding and peace. Without new and increased efforts to establish justice and legality, the situation in the area is likely to deteriorate and the familiar pattern of violence and bloodshed is likely to become ever more dangerous to regional and world peace and security. It is surely in the best interests of all the parties concerned to use the framework for peace provided by the United Nations and to seize every opportunity to work for a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is time for an end to the agony and pain of the Palestinians and to endemic violence and conflict. It is time for the Middle East to enjoy the benefits of security and peace.

(Mr. Osman, Somalia)

Somalia gives its unqualified support to the resolutions on the Middle East which are before this General Assembly and which reflect its position on the Middle East and Palestinian issues. Only through the full and practical implementation of these resolutions can a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict be achieved.

Mr. NOGUEIRA-BATISTA (Brazil): I should like to start my remarks by quoting one of the concluding observations of the Secretary-General in his report to this session of the General Assembly:

"Forty years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its initial resolutions concerning the Arab-Israel conflict. Yet despite this long-standing United Nations involvement, and despite the numerous resolutions adopted since 1947 by both the Security Council and the General Assembly, the people of the area have been subjected to endless suffering and to five major wars. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost, and the conflict continues to be explosive, with ramifications not only for the region but for the entire international community. And at the core of this conflict lies the plight of the Palestinian people, most of whom now live under occupation or in exile."

(A/42/714, para. 36)

The Brazilian Government strongly supports the view that a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine should be sought on the basis of the principles of the Charter and of relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The search for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to this question, which remains at the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict, should therefore in our view observe the following guidelines: the complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all Arab territories occupied since 1967; the recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist within internationally recognized borders; the recognition of the

(Mr. Nogueira-Batista, Brazil)

Palestinian people's right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty in their own territory; and the participation of the Palestinian people, through the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), their sole and legitimate representative, in any negotiations regarding their future.

We take note with great interest of the intense political-diplomatic activity within the United Nations and among the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute on ways and means to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Brazilian Government sees with satisfaction the emergence of the idea of convening an international peace conference on the Middle East. In our view such a conference should be held under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all interested parties including the PLO. We are persuaded that such an initiative offers the best chance for a successful, comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the context of the disputes in the Middle East, my country has a particular sense of dismay at the tragedy taking place in Lebanon and the suffering of its people through so many years of war and instability. We see threatened the integrity of a State with which my country has close ties of friendship, due to the presence in Brazil of a large and industrious contingent of Lebanese and their descendants. My delegation regrets that the relevant United Nations resolutions on the Lebanese question have not been fully complied with, resolutions which would undoubtedly provide a proper framework for the initiation of concrete negotiations between the parties involved.

The territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon must be respected. We therefore appeal once more to all foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon, in order to enable that country to begin a process of internal reconciliation and national reconstruction and assume its traditional relevant role in both regional and international forums.

Mr. DOS SANTOS (Mozambique): For more than four decades the situation in the Middle East has been an object of concern to world public opinion. The General Assembly and the Security Council have voiced that concern and continuously keep the issue under consideration. They have adopted many resolutions and recommendations on the subject, yet the situation has not improved. More than ever before, the Middle East remains one of the main sources of threat to international peace and security. The persistence of such tension as a result of the continued Israeli aggressive practices will inevitably lead to an escalation of acts of violence.

The question of Palestine - the core of the Middle East question - remains unresolved. The birthright of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence remains unrealized.

The Palestinian people were forced to leave their homeland and seek refuge all around the Middle East. Those who remained in occupied Palestine are victims of constant repression by the occupying authorities. Even those who seek shelter in other countries are not safe from the aggressive actions of the Israeli authorities: they are pursued, bombed, kidnapped and killed. Israel still continues its bloody attacks against the Palestinian people in the refugee camps in Lebanon, shelling them from the sea and air and causing loss of life, particularly among children and women. The practice of sealing off refugee camps in Lebanon is a well-known fact to us all. The tragic scenes we have viewed on our television screens in Sidon, Tyre and Beirut have not yet been forgotten.

Those actions are not limited to the Middle East. The cowardly and unjustified aggression perpetrated by Israel against Tunisia in 1985 is still fresh in our memories and clearly illustrates how far Israel is prepared to go to fulfil its expansionist and aggressive policies.

(Mr. Dos Santos, Mozambique)

Israel's aggressive policies both inside and outside the occupied Arab territories continue unabated. The illegal settlements practices in occupied territories, expropriation and deportation have been reinforced. Israeli activities in occupied territories, from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan, are especially disturbing. The Judaization of those territories through the installation of Jewish settlers is nothing but an attempt to alter the demographic character of the occupied territories. This policy is not only contrary to the relevant United Nations resolutions but also further complicates the already difficult situation prevailing in the Middle East.

Israel continues to occupy southern Lebanon from where it carries out its aggression and harassment against that country, particularly the surrounding villages and population. We strongly condemn the occupation and annexation of the southern part of that territory and we warmly salute the resistance struggle of the Lebanese people aimed at the maintenance of their independence, unity and territorial integrity. We vehemently reject the unacceptable Israeli claim that its annexation of southern Lebanon was prompted by its own security reasons and needs. One's security is not supposed to be at the expense of another's independence and territorial integrity. We demand that Israel respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and international law.

The ongoing collaboration between Israel and racist South Africa is a matter of great concern to the international community. The co-operation between those régimes, particularly in the military and nuclear fields, poses a great danger to international peace and security. Their international behaviour speaks for itself. Both régimes are equally aggressive and expansionist in nature and practice. They destabilize their neighbours and create instability in their

(Mr. Dos Santos, Mozambique)

respective regions. It is a well known fact that both régimes cannot survive without the support that they enjoy from their allies which, ironically enough, happen to be the same.

It has been reiterated time and again that the question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East conflict. Therefore, peace in the Middle East can be achieved only with the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign, independent State. Peace in the Middle East can be achieved only with Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and strict respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of all the States of the region, as well as their right to live in peace and freedom.

My delegation joins all the delegations which have expressed themselves in favour of the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East, within the framework of the United Nations, as a major contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Such a conference, to be attended by all the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties concerned, should also include the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing.

We understand that differences still exist, especially as regards the scope, date and, above all, participation in the conference. Our opinion is that such differences must be resolved as soon as possible. We are all aware of the complex nature of the issues involved. We do not expect miracles. What is needed is unshakeable political determination.

It is our sincere hope that, once the Assembly at this session reaffirms its position on the question of the Middle East and the ways and means of achieving a peaceful solution, all parties will respond favourably.

(Mr. Dos Santos, Mozambique)

My country fully supports the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to help bring about progress in the peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem. We hope that he will continue his active contacts with the parties concerned to achieve a just and lasting solution.

The Arab-Israeli dispute is not the only source of tension in the Middle East. The war between Iran and Iraq has now entered its eighth year. That war has not only taken thousands of lives on both sides involved but has also brought about untold suffering and destruction of property; it has led to incalculable waste of national resources and wealth, with nefarious consequences for social and economic activities.

(Mr. Dos Santos, Mozambique)

Another alarming aspect of this conflict is the fact that the more it is prolonged the greater are the chances of external interference. Recent developments speak for themselves. It is our sincere hope that both parties to the conflict will respond to the repeated calls that have been made in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations. At the same time, all those not involved in the conflict must refrain from activities that can lead only to the worsening of the situation, with all its consequences for international peace and security. It is our opinion that the unprecedented build-up of foreign military presence in the area will not help ease the conflict. The threat or use of force will not end the crisis. A political solution must be found, and this implies political commitment and negotiations.

To conclude, my delegation would like to avail itself of this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Palestinian people, who in spite of the difficulties endured have not lost hope and courage and have persisted in their struggle under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole, legitimate representative.

Mr. JOSSE (Nepal): It is now 20 years since the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 242 (1967). At that time it was seen as a big step forward along the road to a comprehensive and negotiated settlement of all aspects of the Arab-Israel conflict. It is therefore sobering that since then the people of the Middle East have been subjected to all the attendant horrors, tribulations and suffering of two major wars. Earlier they had already undergone the trauma of two other major confrontations.

In such circumstances it is natural that the international community should experience a sense of frustration and helplessness. In recalling that violence and animus have become part and parcel of daily life in the Middle East, one is seized by a mood of melancholy and despair. A feeling of despondency is generated by the

(Mr. Josse, Nepal)

thought that the fragile status quo may at any time be shattered by another, perhaps even more devastating, Arab-Israel conflict. The uncertainties created by the ongoing Iran-Iraq war, now well into its eighth year, obviously only heighten apprehensions all round. As the relevant reports of the Secretary-General point out so well, the uneasy and tense status quo has been bought at an unacceptably high price by the parties concerned: a slow-down in economic development, disruption of social stability and curtailment of freedom of choice.

Against such a sombre backdrop it is clear that the international community will have to set as a central priority the search for a comprehensive settlement that secures a just and lasting peace that meets the aspirations of all the people of the region.

As far as Nepal is concerned, one such basic aspiration relates to the Palestinian people. It is Nepal's firm conviction that a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement must be premised on recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people, whose sole, legitimate representative is the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to such a homeland in the region.

Similarly, Nepal continues to believe that Israel, a full Member of this world body, has the right to independent, sovereign existence in the region. This aspiration, too, must be recognized by all, including the main parties to the Arab-Israel conflict, if a lasting and just settlement is to be achieved. In Nepal's view, to do otherwise would be tantamount to undermining universally accepted principles of inter-State behaviour and the United Nations, which, as we all know, had a seminal role in Israel's creation.

Nepal believes that all States in the region, including Israel, have the right to live within secure and recognized borders. It is convinced, however, that no structure of durable peace can be built in the Middle East on the sands of illegal occupation. Thus it is of the view that a lasting peace settlement in the

(Mr. Josse, Nepal)

Middle East will continue to elude the international community as long as Israel holds on to territories of other sovereign States and brazenly engages in a human settlements policy there, in clear defiance of the accepted norms of international law. My delegation also wishes to reiterate that Nepal firmly opposes Israel's policy of creating so-called security zones within the territory of its sovereign neighbour. It rejects as unacceptable and spurious any doctrine that claims that Israel's security and sovereignty are more important than the security and sovereignty of Lebanon.

Having outlined the main elements of Nepal's policy and concerns in the Middle East, may I add that our vote on the relevant draft resolutions under the agenda item under review will be guided by these, in addition to our firm support for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to express deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his unremitting endeavours to bring peace to the Middle East. In particular, we note his special efforts to promote the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices. On this occasion we wish to affirm Nepal's continuing support for any peace initiative that is likely to lead to the achievement of a just and lasting peace. This includes bilateral as well as international endeavours, in particular negotiations held under United Nations auspices. Nepal continues to endorse the proposal for an international peace conference with the participation of all the parties directly concerned and the permanent members of the Security Council.

(Mr. Josse, Nepal)

We have taken due note of the Secretary-General's numerous consultations this year, including those with members of the Security Council, on the principles and modalities of such a conference. We would, if called upon, extend our fullest co-operation in similar consultations with the Secretary-General, following our non-permanent membership of the Security Council beginning 1 January 1988.

While being somewhat heartened by the Secretary-General's view that the composition and agenda of such an international conference on the Middle East need not present insurmountable obstacles, we agree that the inability of the Government of Israel, as a whole, to accept the principle of such a conference under United Nations auspices constitutes a serious road-block to prospects for a durable Middle East peace. While also being encouraged by the wide international support for such a conference, we appeal for co-operation and understanding from all concerned in this regard.

In closing, I should like to recall that, for several years now, as a modest contribution to peace in the Middle East, Nepal has participated in the operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) at not inconsiderable physical and financial sacrifice; and, while we do not harbour any illusions that such a peace-keeping operation can be a substitute for a comprehensive and negotiated peace settlement, we maintain that it has a valuable conflict-limiting and conflict-prevention role within its area of operation. We are, therefore, discouraged that financial support for UNIFIL has not been as forthcoming from some quarters as expected. However, we welcome commitments to greater financial contributions to UNIFIL from other sources.

Mr. DIMKA (Nigeria): The United Nations was founded to end wars, to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes, to assure the enjoyment of human rights and to promote the self-determination of all peoples. Regrettably, these lofty objectives are being violated daily in the Middle East. The reason for the

(Mr. Dimka, Nigeria)

grave situation there is well known and arises from the aggressive policy of the State of Israel, whose expansionist ambitions have led it to deny the people of Palestine the right to self-determination in a state of their own, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947. The expansionist policy of Israel has also aggravated its conflict with its neighbours in the Middle East.

The United Nations has been seized of the various elements of the Middle East problem since 1947. This year, then, marks the fortieth year of the painful tragedy of the Palestinian people, whose plight is at the heart of the Middle East problem. The plight of the Palestinian people is again captured, as it has always been since 1976, in the two documents before the General Assembly, the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, document A/42/35, and the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, document A/42/650. Both documents paint a depressing picture of the brutalization of the people of Palestine. Both documents also depict Israeli annexation of occupied Arab territories, expulsion and deportation of Palestinians, restriction of freedom of movement, mass punishment and repeated closure of Arab universities in occupied territories. It is no exaggeration to state that the Palestinian people and the people of South Africa are those who have suffered the most brutality since the United Nations was founded.

This year is also another inglorious anniversary in the Middle East. Twenty years ago, the State of Israel seized large chunks of Arab territory in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem, thereby bringing under its control a large number of Palestinians and Syrians.

Half a decade ago Israel, without provocation and in another violation of the Charter, invaded Lebanon and, as I speak, it still maintains a so-called security zone in the area. In clear violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of

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the United Nations, which prohibits acquisition of territories by conquest, Israel has moved to change the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories. The United Nations has rightly described Israeli action in the occupied territories as null and void.

The Israeli action of creeping annexations, periodic invasions and incessant repression have continued to aggravate tension in the Middle East and make difficult of attainment the peace sought by the majority of States. Yet the need for peace in the Middle East is now more urgent than ever, if the region is not to slip into another regional war with cataclysmic consequences.

The United Nations has been relentless in its search for peace in the Middle East. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) spelled out the principles that should be applied for the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the region. The principles were confirmed in Security Council resolution 338 (1973), which called for their implementation. Briefly, the principles are the withdrawal of the armed forces of Israel from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, the cessation of the state of belligerency, and

"acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

(Security Council resolution 242 (1967)).

(Mr. Dimka, Nigeria)

These principles were further elaborated in the 1983 Geneva Declaration on Palestine, which stated that the guidelines were, inter alia:

"(a) The attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State in Palestine;

"(b) The right of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with other parties in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East;

"(c) The need to put an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories, in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and, consequently, the need to secure Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;

"(d) The need to oppose and reject such Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and any de facto situation created by Israel as are contrary to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly the establishment of settlements, as these policies and practices constitute major obstacles to the achievement of peace in the Middle East;

"(e) The need to reaffirm as null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, including the expropriation of land and property situated thereon, and in particular the so-called Basic Law on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel;

(Mr. Dimka, Nigeria)

"(f) The right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, the sine qua non of which is the recognition and attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people".

(A/CONF.114/42, p.2)

To give effect to those principles, the Geneva Conference suggested the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices.

Self-determination of peoples and peaceful settlement of disputes are two major foreign policy principles of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Accordingly, Nigeria endorsed the elements of the Geneva Declaration embodied in resolution 38/58 C of 13 December 1983 and voted for the resolution in the belief that it offered the framework for resolving the four-decade-old Arab-Israeli dispute.

However, the statement in the Secretary-General's report concerning his laudable efforts to pursue the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East is disappointing. In the words of Mr. Perez de Cuellar:

"It has not yet proved possible to obtain the agreement of all the parties to the principle of an international conference" (A/42/L, p. 2).

Whilst we encourage the Secretary-General to continue his consultations with all parties to ensure the convening of an international peace conference, we cannot but make known our concern at Israel's reluctance, indeed absolute refusal, to participate in such an international peace conference. The reluctance of Israel is tacit opposition to a peaceful settlement that could win universal approval and endorsement. The delegation of Nigeria once again requests all parties, especially the Government of Israel, to give peace a chance by co-operating with the United

(Mr. Dimka, Nigeria)

Nations in the quest for a comprehensive and negotiated solution for the most tragic and longest conflict of the twentieth century.

Israel could advance the cause of peace in the Middle East by implementing certain confidence-building measures. Amongst other things, Israel should cease forthwith its "iron-fist" policy in the occupied territories. It should, in addition, stop the building and/or expansion of settlements. Israel should also withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon to enable the United Nations force in Lebanon to fulfil its mandate. These actions will signal readiness on the part of Israel to give peace a chance so that the long drawn swords in the Middle East can be turned into ploughshares.

Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from

Russian): In the past 40 years, the world has witnessed more than 100 regional conflicts and wars, in which more than 20 million people have fallen victim. Unfortunately, we note that a large number of those bloody conflicts took place in the region of the Middle East. One after another, destructive conflicts have occurred in the Middle East, causing the Arab world extremely heavy losses, exhausting its material and intellectual resources and diverting its peoples from the path of constructive development. As has been pointed out over a period of time, the long-lasting conflicts, causing the loss of hundreds of thousands of human lives, have somehow become an every-day matter, part of our newspaper and television news. The Arab-Israeli conflict, now falling more and more under the shadow of the bloody and lengthy Iran-Iraq war, is an example of such habitual news. It is dangerous not only because there is a constant threat of the outbreak of war; it also serves as an obstacle to the solution of fundamental international problems. In the absence of such a solution, it is impossible to guarantee that mankind will not be annihilated.

(Mr. Oudovenko, Ukrainian SSR)

The world community has never failed to give attention to Middle East problems. This is the justification for the conclusion reached by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on this question:

"Forty years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its initial resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet despite this long-standing United Nations involvement, and despite the numerous resolutions adopted since 1947 by both the Security Council and the General Assembly, the people of the area have been subjected to endless suffering and to five major wars. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost, and the conflict continues to be explosive, with ramifications not only for the region but for the entire international community. And at the core of this conflict lies the plight of the Palestinian people, most of whom now live under occupation or in exile."

(A/42/714, para. 36)

How can we save the Arab peoples from this recurring threat of war? The answer is simple: only by putting an end to the danger of constantly renewed aggression on the part of Israel, which, from the day of its establishment, has failed to comply with international law as represented by the United Nations, its Charter and its decisions, which date from 1947 to the present day.

Not limiting itself to depriving the Palestinian people of their rights to self-determination and national independence, Israel in 1967 committed aggression against three neighbouring Arab countries - Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The consequences of that war have still not been eradicated even now, 20 years later.

(Mr. Oudovenko, Ukrainian SSR)

The Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories which Israel seized were subjected to the establishment of an occupation régime based on terror and crude force. Then, Israel undertook the direct annexation of those lands, as in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Israel's aggression gave rise to instability and tension in the Middle East. The fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict has not been settled has paved the way for the outbreak of new conflicts. Responsibility for maintaining tension in the Middle East lies fully and precisely with Israel, but it also lies with those forces which are interested in exploiting this international conflict for their own selfish purposes.

Numerous decisions and resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on the Middle East are openly sabotaged by Israel. The main reason for ignoring world public opinion and the will of the international community is the fact that, in its actions, it continues to rely on the comprehensive support of the United States. The special nature of the American-Israeli relationship is reflected in a very concentrated way in their "strategic alliance", especially in the participation of Israel in the American "Star Wars" programme. The United States fully protects its partner, giving it unlimited support in the military, political, economic, financial, information and propaganda and diplomatic fields.

As a result of the above-mentioned support, Israel maintains its presence in southern Lebanon and occupies the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which belong to the Palestinian people, and the Syrian Golan Heights. This support allows Israel not only to reject all proposals for a just settlement to the conflict, but also to exert constant military and political pressure on the Arab countries actively favouring a settlement to the conflict.

Special concern in the world community is being caused by Israel's position on the matter of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. For four decades it has had a

(Mr. Oudovenko, Ukrainian SSR)

consistent policy of comprehensive development of its nuclear capacity. There is particular evidence of this in Israel's stubborn refusal to join the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty. Numerous facts, constantly in the press, confirm that Israel has tested and has begun production of medium-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

This alarming fact is definitely confirmed in the Secretary-General's report on "Israel's nuclear weapons" (document A/42/581), where it says, in particular:

"... There is no doubt that Israel has the technical capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons and possesses the means of delivery of such weapons to targets in the area". (A/42/581, para. 2)

This policy, naturally, leads to a further aggravation of the situation in the Middle East.

Today, as never before, it is clear that Israel's characteristic approach, through the use of force, to the complicated problems of the Middle East, ignores not only the legitimate interests of a number of Arab peoples, primarily the Palestinian people, but it also ignores the cardinal changes in the position of the international community with regard to the Middle East conflict.

Opponents of a comprehensive Middle East settlement offer instead appeals for direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. It is enough to recall the failure of the negotiations on the so-called "Palestinian autonomy" provided for by the Camp David agreements, and the inglorious history of the "peace agreement" imposed by Israel on Lebanon, in order to be convinced once again of the groundlessness of such an approach.

There is another way. It lies in the formation within the United Nations, through joint efforts by Member States, of an integrated concept of establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Oudovenko, Ukrainian SSR)

This concept, reflected in decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council, assumes that the question of Palestine is at the root of the conflict in the Middle East and that its just settlement is possible only through collective efforts by all interested parties. Such a settlement should provide for the complete withdrawal of Israel forces from all Arab territories occupied since 1967. It should call for the implementation by the Arab people of Palestine of their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State. It should call for the acknowledgement of the right of all States in the Middle East to live in conditions of peace and security. The establishment of a programme for this settlement, bearing in mind the legitimate interests of the parties and existing political realities, and ensuring that it has virtually the universal support of the international community, is undoubtedly to the credit of the United Nations. The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic actively supports this concept of a settlement and advocates its full and unconditional implementation in concrete action. It is our opinion that the time has come to apply the principles of new political thinking to a solution of the acute problems of the Middle East - a political thinking that requires boldness, a sober account of existing realities and a rejection of accustomed stereotypes.

As was pointed out in the article by Mikhail Sergeyeovich Gorbachev entitled "The Reality and Guarantees of a Secure World":

"... at all stages of a conflict extensive use should be made of all means of a peaceful settlement of disputes and differences between States".

The road to achieving a comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict lies in convening a plenipotentiary international conference on the Middle East, to be held under the auspices of the United Nations, with the equal

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participation of all interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the permanent members of the Security Council. Since the last session of the General Assembly, there has been new international support for the idea of convening such a conference. There is convincing evidence of this in the interventions we have heard here by representatives of the most varied States. This was pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General in document A/42/714. In light of current developments in world events, the convening of a conference is becoming a more urgent necessity. Now there is no alternative to an international peace conference on the Middle East. Even those who do not want to participate and who stubbornly vote against any resolution containing mention of that forum have started to agree that a conference is possible. Under these conditions, it is important to make a timely shift to practical steps for its preparation, beginning, for example, with the relevant preparatory work within the Security Council of the United Nations.

We cannot fail to be concerned either at the fact that, before the convening of such a conference can be achieved, attempts are being made to turn it into window-dressing - a body with no real mandate - and to make it a screen to hide another round of separate negotiations. The Ukrainian SSR vigorously condemns such actions. The efforts of the international community today should be directed towards the development of favourable conditions for holding such a conference and the careful preparation therefor.

The conference will be successful under only one condition, namely, if the interests of all States, the Arab States and Israel, are observed. It is not a question of making peace between the parties for an hour and that an hour and a half later they begin firing weapons again. It is rather a question of establishing a system in the Middle East that will ensure lasting peace and

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guarantee the sovereign rights of all peoples living there. We are against any attempts to cast doubt on the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the Conference and to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people.

The Ukrainian SSR, as a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, states that the question of who should represent the Arabs of Palestine in the peace settlement process does not exist. A long time ago, the Palestinians themselves answered that question and as authoritative an international body as the General Assembly has also answered that question. The various speculations about disagreements existing within the Palestine Liberation Organization are groundless, as was convincingly demonstrated at the eighteenth session of the Palestinian National Council, which took place in Algeria this year.

The delegation of the Ukrainian SSR considers that attempts to keep the Office of the Permanent Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the United Nations out of the work of the United Nations are inadmissible. Such actions are contrary to the process of establishing peace in the Middle East. The positions of force which block a political settlement of the Middle East problem must be opposed by the united actions of the partisans of a just, peaceful settlement to that problem.

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In that respect, special significance attaches to the overcoming of inter-Arab disagreements, which complicate the co-ordination of Arab actions. Decisiveness and consistency by the Arab countries are required so that their actions can be co-ordinated and a solution can be found to the Palestinian question, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Each of them is inextricably linked with the others.

Any agreement on a Middle East settlement should provide for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. To avoid that question is to remain at dead centre, with no movement and with the possibility of further bloodshed. In that connection, the Ukrainian SSR welcomes the approach to a Middle East settlement that has been taken by the Arab States and that was confirmed in their recent meeting in Amman.

Peace in the Middle East is indivisible. All the peoples of that region have an equal interest in the attainment of peace. In the final analysis, all of us have an interest in it, because a settlement of one of the most acute regional conflicts would be in line with our main task: the strengthening of international peace and security.

Peace in the Middle East can be ensured only on the basis of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Ukrainian SSR is prepared to make its contribution to the task of achieving such a settlement.

Mr. YUSOF (Malaysia): The Middle East is still the most crucial hot-spot of the world. Since the creation of Israel, Palestine and its people, and the neighbouring Arab States, have been subjected to unspeakable violence by Zionism, which is bent upon Israeli expansion and regional domination.

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In asserting these policies, Israel has shown total disregard for the basic principles of human rights and international conduct. The war and the expansionist machines of Israel have resulted in the subjugation of the Palestinians and the occupation of Arab territories. On the pretext of safeguarding their so-called legitimate interests, the Zionists have not hesitated to use the most extreme methods to terrorize the population in the occupied territories. Millions of people, including women and children, have become victims of Zionist policies. They have been displaced and dispossessed. Ingenious and unthinkable methods of torture and repression have been used to perpetuate the systematic domination of the Palestinian people.

Much of this brutality has been effectively camouflaged, or neutralized by the manipulation of information flows by Israel and its friends. The dearth of objectivity about the Palestinian question in the international press in some of the Western countries is symptomatic of the collusion of these interests with the propaganda machines of Israel. Those that have the misfortune to be neighbours of Israel live daily with this blanket of deceit and disinformation. It is said that even the Israelis themselves are appalled by this smoke-screen.

We regret to have to note that Israel would not have succeeded in its policies had it not been for the support of certain major Powers which have exploited the situation to promote their own interests. We cannot accept these interests as enlightened in the context of the modern world; we therefore cannot accept them as legitimate. For more than 40 years the Organization has been debating the question of the Middle East. At the heart of that question is the State of Israel, its subjugation of Palestine and its aggression against Arab territories. It is the stark reality in the Middle East today. Yet the underlying motivations of Israel and its close supporters are to be found deep in mediaeval times. This crucial

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crossroad of civilization is still dominated by a mediaeval conflict of morality. That is the depth of the cynicism that characterizes the Middle East conflict.

Under this colossal guise, we have the litany of Israeli aggressions against the people of Palestine and other Arab countries. The United Nations is fully aware of the details of the horrors perpetrated by Israel in its deliberate action to assert its dominance. In the annals of mankind there have never been more fertile agents of cynicism than there are now in the Middle East, in Israel. We have the first-hand accounts of nations which contend directly with Israel and the military machines that it has created. We have the testimony of the Palestinians, who have shown remarkable courage and endurance in refusing to be subjugated.

We have had successive reports by the Secretary-General, including his excellent and thorough report this year in document A/42/714. We have benefited a great deal from the reports of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The efforts of the Secretary-General of our Organization and those of the Chairman of the Committee to ensure peace and justice in the Middle East deserve our highest commendation.

Since this item was first placed before the General Assembly, resolutions have been adopted on the question of the Middle East, on the United Nations peace-keeping activities, on the situation in the occupied territories, on the Palestinian refugee problem and on the question of Palestine itself. Israel has been condemned again and again for its aggression and its violations of human rights. The strategic co-operation between the United States and Israel has been singled out as having encouraged Israel to pursue its aggressive and expansionist policies. It is regarded as the main instrument of regional instability in the Middle East. This so-called strategic alliance is a blind alley. It is

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inconsistent with the objective of world peace as it negates the pursuit of regional harmony. My delegation therefore rejects the basis of this so-called strategic alliance. We regard it as a self-serving policy with questionable motives in the modern age. Perhaps Israel's collaboration with the racist South African régime better illustrates the mediaeval character of the Israeli motives which form the bedrock of the so-called strategic alliance.

In the face of international condemnation, Israel has remained arrogantly defiant. It has remained so because of its confidence in the support of some countries which still cling to mediaeval fears and prejudices - owing principally, perhaps, to a deep-seated sense of guilt, which has been exploited by the Zionists.

It is ironic that as nations leap into a new space-age civilization, the more insecure they feel about their circumstances. Consequently, there are those who must seek to muster themselves on the threshold of mediaeval history. This deep sense of antagonism has led Israel to tighten its grip on the occupied territories through further repressive measures which have significantly increased the suffering of the inhabitants. The activities of Israeli settlers, and especially the vigilantes, in the occupied territories were born out of hatred, not insecurity. This hatred will inevitably demand the permanent annexation of territories.

Malaysia strongly condemns the increasing level of violence that has been unleashed by Israel. We are deeply concerned by the escalation of repressive measures in the form of the so-called iron-fist policy. It is a policy of hatred, not insecurity. The Israeli leaders must desist from poisoning the minds of the Israeli people with hatred and ancient fears and prejudices. It cannot be denied that mass hatred is a potent force for self-destruction.

(Mr. Yusof, Malaysia)

We are more than saddened by the desecration of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. This violation not only demonstrates Israeli insensitivity to the spiritual concerns of other religions, but is also the epitome of the historical animosity that lies at the heart of Israeli domestic and foreign policies. It is Zionism in its most primitive state.

(Mr. Yusof, Malaysia)

This intolerable situation which has been created by Israel needs the most urgent attention of the international community. Efforts to secure a comprehensive, durable and just settlement of the problem in the Middle East must be given the highest priority. The basis for a negotiated settlement was laid by the Geneva Declaration on Palestine, in September 1986, and by United Nations resolutions 38/58 C and 41/43 D. The hope for permanent peace lies as much in the resolution of moral conflicts as of their political manifestations. Obviously, this must come from the willingness of all parties concerned to disengage themselves from ancient fears, prejudices and hatred. Hence, the wisdom that underlies the proposal for an international peace conference on the Middle East. With most parties concerned favouring the idea of the conference, the onus is on Israel and the United States, in particular, to commit themselves to the process without further prevarication. It is fundamental that the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, participate in this Conference on an equal footing with all the concerned parties. The Secretary-General has worked very hard to make this conference a reality. We urge him to continue his efforts and we call upon the United States and others to give him their unequivocal support.

The situation in the occupied territories has indeed worsened. Not only does Israel's refusal to comply with the relevant resolutions in this regard point to the urgency and necessity of the international conference, but the arbitrary detention and imprisonment of Arabs and Palestinians struggling for self-determination and the liberation of their territories cannot be allowed to continue. The devious designs behind the changes made by the Israelis in the demography of the occupied territories have been severely criticized by the international community. These changes must be stopped before they become so deeply entrenched as to defy correction.

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The world must maintain its diligent watch on the excesses practised by the Israeli occupation forces. This is now being done not only by the General Assembly and the Security Council but also by the Commission on Human Rights and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories.

The human tragedy and the injustices that stalk the land of Palestine are found in the large numbers of Palestinian refugees. They have lived for generations in camps under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), or in settlements in neighbouring Arab countries. Their plight remains one of the most serious concerns of the international community. As acknowledged in resolution 41/69 A last year, the repatriation or compensation of the refugees as provided for in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) has not been effected. There has also been little progress in the programme endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 2 of its resolution 513 (VI) for the reintegration of refugees by repatriation or resettlement. Compounding these difficulties, UNRWA is facing problems of dwindling contributions to cover increasing expenditure.

The intransigence of Israel, encouraged to a large degree by its allies, lies at the heart of the instability in the Middle East. The best hope in the search for a solution is to begin with the process of dialogue in the form of the international peace conference on the Middle East. My delegation calls upon those detractors to come forward in support of this proposal. We call upon them to put an end to the circle of violence, to the sufferings and displacement of the Palestinian people. We call for the eradication of ancient fears, prejudices and hatred, and a return to sanity in the region. Our dearest wish is for the people of Palestine to be able to return once more to their homeland and exercise their right of self-determination.

Mr. KORHONEN (Finland): The Government of Finland is deeply concerned about the continuing failure to bring about a solution to the complex of problems and conflicts in the Middle East. They pose one of the most persistent threats to international peace and security. The basis for a peaceful settlement is well known; it was laid long ago by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which are almost universally recognized. A lasting and peaceful settlement can be reached only through negotiations. The acquisition of territories by force is inadmissible; therefore Israel must withdraw from the territories occupied since 1967. All States in the region, including Israel, have the right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.

The question of Palestine remains the core of the Middle East conflict. There will be no lasting solution to the situation as long as this problem remains unsolved. Accordingly, provision must be made for the Palestinians to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to national self-determination. This presupposes their right to participate in negotiations on their own future within a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Finland continues to consider the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) the most significant representative of the national aspirations of the Palestinians.

A major obstacle to a settlement of the Middle East conflict has been the series of illegal acts committed by Israel. Israel has continued its settlement policies and extended its jurisdiction to the Golan Heights, and it continues to commit acts aimed at changing the status of the City of Jerusalem. All these acts have been rejected by the Security Council. Once again Finland joins the international community in condemning them. As for the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the tension remains at a high level. The result is more violence and suffering for the civilian population.

(Mr. Korhonen, Finland)

Lebanon, too, remains a victim of the basic problems of the Middle East conflict, national as well as international, political as well as religious and cultural. Finland once again appeals to all parties to refrain from violence. The independence, territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Lebanon must be respected. All foreign troops must be withdrawn and Lebanese authority over Lebanese territory must be restored as soon as possible.

In accordance with its policy of neutrality, Finland takes a balanced and conciliatory position on the various controversial questions of the Middle East conflict. Finland has maintained good relations with all the nations concerned, including all the immediate parties to the conflict. It is our firm intention to continue this policy, which has also enabled us to render services in the interest of peace in the area. Finland takes part in all ongoing United Nations peace-keeping activities in the Middle East; the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO). We consider the peace-keeping operations to be an essential element of United Nations services in supporting efforts towards a peaceful solution to the conflict. In spite of the unsatisfactory circumstances in which the troops of UNIFIL have to work, the Force plays a vital role in diminishing civilian suffering, as well as in promoting more stable conditions which create better circumstances for efforts aimed at a negotiated peace.

Finland is pleased to see that the idea of the Middle East peace conference has gradually gathered more support within the international community. Intensive efforts are now needed to bring about agreement on the principles as well as the mandate for such a conference. After 40 years of violence, nowhere is a lasting settlement more needed than in the troubled Middle East region.

Mr. TANASIE (Romania) (interpretation from French): At the beginning of this session of the General Assembly my delegation had distributed as an official document some considerations and proposals of Romania's President, Nicolae Ceausescu, relating to the major international problems and ways of settling them in keeping with the interests of and aspirations to peace, independence and progress for all the peoples of the world. In that document it is stressed that the conflicts and the states of crisis and tension in various regions of the world have not diminished but, on the contrary, have worsened, creating new threats to the security and stability of our world. The concern shown at these threats encompasses also the crisis in the Middle East, which worsens each year and is a constant danger to peace, security and international co-operation.

The Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Middle East submitted for consideration by the General Assembly very clearly expresses this worrying fact, by stressing the following:

"despite this long-standing United Nations involvement, and despite the numerous resolutions adopted since 1947 by both the Security Council and the General Assembly ... Tens of thousands of lives have been lost, and the conflict continues to be explosive, with ramifications not only for the region but for the entire international community." (A/42/714, para. 36)

The state of confrontation that persists in the Middle East and the overall development of the Arab-Israeli conflict confirm the historical truth that peace and security cannot be built and guaranteed by threats or the use of force, or by the negation of the right of other peoples to a free existence and independence.

So it is high time for all Member States to shoulder their political and moral responsibilities so that the United Nations, whose essential role is the

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maintenance of international peace and security, can act more firmly to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to this conflict, in particular by the convening as quickly as possible of an international conference on peace in the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Romania has constantly and firmly advocated a political solution in the Middle East which would guarantee a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. On the basis of its position of principle, that the occupation of foreign territories by force is inadmissible, Romania has affirmed from the outset that in order to be just and lasting any peaceful solution in the Middle East requires above all the withdrawal of Israel from the Arab territories occupied since the 1967 war. My country is also opposed to Israel's acts aimed at annexing a part of Syrian territory, namely the Golan Heights. We call for the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon to allow that country to achieve national reconciliation of the internal political forces and for a guarantee of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country. Another essential element of a peaceful solution in the region is recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and to establish its own State. It is clear that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace will not be achieved if we do not resolve the question of Palestine, which is the heart of the problem in the Middle East.

At the same time, we believe that in order to meet the legitimate interests and aspirations of the States and peoples of the Middle East any solution must guarantee the right to independent existence and sovereignty of every country of the region, which would make possible the establishment of relations of co-operation, trust and respect among all States and peoples in the area.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

Anxious to make its contribution to the promotion of a political solution to the Middle East problems, Romania, as far back as 1978, proposed the convening of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Developments in the region since that time, and the efforts made by many States and by the United Nations, have clearly shown that the only way to achieve a solution to the problem is by organizing a conference. That is why my country supported General Assembly resolution 41/43 D, of 2 December 1986, which endorsed the idea of convening an international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations.

As the debates at this session have shown and as is stated in the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Middle East, there is a growing consensus within the international community that a peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, would provide the best conditions for the successful negotiation of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in this area.

In the spirit of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, such a peace conference will have to involve the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the permanent members of the Security Council and other interested States wishing to participate and capable of making a contribution to the search for a peaceful solution. Given the urgent need to convene the peace conference, we believe that it is essential that a preparatory committee be established as quickly as possible to take the measures necessary to organize the conference.

As our delegation has already said, we should not miss this historic chance to restore peace in so sorely tried and troubled a region as the Middle East. Increased efforts are more than ever necessary by all States, by the international

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community to ensure the convening, without delay of the conference on peace in the Middle East. All countries should try to overcome their differences and find, through negotiations and dialogue between the parties concerned, appropriate solutions in keeping with the vital interests of the peoples of this part of the world.

The Romanian delegation deeply appreciates the activities of the Secretary-General in seeking solutions to the complex problems of the Middle East. We believe that it is especially important for the Secretary-General, with the support of all States, to be more closely associated with the efforts to bring about without delay the convening of the conference on peace in the Middle East. As we have often said, the United Nations can and must play a more active role in the efforts to bring about a solution to the Middle East conflict, especially since the General Assembly has already created the framework for comprehensive negotiations and for the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the region that would fully respond to the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the area and of the peoples of the world.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

For its part, Romania is determined to continue to make every effort to contribute to a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Middle East problems, to the establishment of a just peace in the region and to the consolidation of international peace, security and co-operation.

Mr. SEVILLA BOZA (Nicaragua) (interpretation from Spanish): The situation in the Middle East has traditionally been given the highest priority by the General Assembly, because that embattled region has long been a source of tension and anxiety throughout the world.

Our Organization has been making tremendous efforts to solve the problem in that region, but they have not yet resulted in the bases of a just and lasting settlement. It is fitting to recall resolution 3236 (XXIX), whereby the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and recover their property. The international community has also been reminded that it is necessary that resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III), adopted in 1947 and 1948, respectively, be implemented. In the first of those resolutions the General Assembly recognized the right of the Arab people of Palestine to an independent State in Palestine.

We are mentioning these important resolutions because Nicaragua, like the overwhelming majority of the countries of the world, is fully convinced that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East can be achieved only if the Palestinian people are enabled freely to exercise their inalienable rights. Therefore, no solution can ignore the need for respect for those rights.*

* Mr. Caffete (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Sevilla Boza, Nicaragua)

Similarly, the principle of the inadmissability of the acquisition of territories by the use of force must be taken into account. Therefore any settlement must be based on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories.

A week ago, in this Hall, Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, the head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), reminded us of the hardships suffered by his people. He also reminded us that this year marks the twentieth anniversary of Israel's occupation of the entire territory of Palestine. Since then, the Palestinian people have not been able to exercise their fundamental rights, which are guaranteed by various international instruments, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 relating to occupied territory. Israel has refused even to consider applying these instruments in the occupied Palestinian territories, because it has no intention whatsoever of withdrawing from those territories. Instead, it is trying to confer a measure of legitimacy on the occupation of those territories by increasing the number of settlements, annexing more territory, confiscating land and applying collective sanctions to the legitimate inhabitants of those territories.

Oppression and terror are ever present realities for the Palestinian people, together with the destruction of houses, mass arrests, the expulsion of leaders, deportations, the closing of universities, institutions and schools, and attacks on refugee camps, cities, neighbourhoods and even religious centres. Furthermore, there is a deliberate effort to alter the economic infrastructure so as to link it permanently to and make it dependent upon the Israeli economy.

Through this action Israel is flagrantly violating the norms of international law and all the principles of the Charter of our Organization, to which it owes its existence.

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Clearly, however, Israel would not be able to continue to defy and scorn the international community, and violate the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council were it not for the unconditional support of the United States in all fields. This support does not surprise us, but it should be a source of alarm for all peoples that cherish peace and justice. The United States, by promoting military aggression, destabilizing action and economic blockades against peoples and Governments trying to achieve their full liberation, has become the primary promoter of terrorism throughout the world. The United States is behind the illegal annexation of Arab territories, including Jerusalem. It is behind State terrorism and repression in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is behind the invasion of and constant attacks on Lebanon. It was behind the massacres of Sabra and Shatila. And it is behind the attempts to exterminate the Palestinian people. The United States is obstructing the fulfilment of the functions and responsibilities of the Security Council under the Charter of our Organization, and misusing its power of veto to prevent the adoption of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, which is the only way of putting an end to this political genocide.

The establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East must be based on the complete withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories and on guarantees of the national rights of the Palestinian people, within the framework of an international peace conference to be held under the auspices of the United Nations, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C.

The Arab countries have expressed their genuine desire for peace in the region. We would refer to the recent Arab summit conference in Amman, where the Arab countries declared their acceptance of an international conference as the most fitting means of achieving peace. That summit conference also rejected any

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settlement that did not encompass Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, and ensure the full exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We note with enthusiasm that there is growing support for the convening of the international conference. Large groups of countries have supported this idea. In addition to the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which for some time now has been giving the idea its firm and decisive support, the European Economic Community has made important declarations.

The work of the Secretary-General of our Organization deserves our commendation, and we support the continuance of his efforts to ensure the convening of the conference.

Finally, there can be no doubt that the peoples of the Middle East, in particular the peoples of Palestine, southern Africa and of Central America, have the same enemy, and that their struggle for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination and justice is one struggle.

We repeat yet again that unity is fundamental in confronting this problem. Let us respond to the urgent demand of the peoples of the world for a just and lasting peace.

Our people and our Government reaffirm our commitment to and solidarity with the Palestinian people, led by the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole, legitimate representative, and we stand by all the peoples of the sister Arab nation in their struggle for peace, which is also our struggle.

Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland): Poland follows the development of the situation in the Middle East with keen interest and grave concern. The underlying cause of the Middle East conflict has long been recognized by the international community. In its most recent pronouncement on the question, in resolution 41/162 A, the General Assembly reaffirmed its conviction that the question of Palestine was the core of the conflict in the Middle East and that no comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region would be achieved without the full exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable national rights and the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories.

Since the adoption of that resolution, the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated, especially as a result of the Israeli actions against the civilian population in the occupied Arab territories. Israel has introduced there a separate legal régime and military administration. It confiscates property and land and it widely uses preventive arrests and the deportation of undesirable individuals. The Palestinian population is deprived of labour protection and does not enjoy the right to appropriate remuneration, health protection and social welfare. The general strike of the Palestinian population of 24 June 1987, calling for equal rights, confirms that the situation in that respect is not improving.

On the other hand, there are some encouraging developments indicating growing support for the early convening of the international peace conference in conformity with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, as reconfirmed by General Assembly resolution 41/43 D of 2 December 1986.

Apart from the long-standing commitment of the socialist countries, including Poland, to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict through collective efforts, with the participation of all parties concerned, a strong boost to the proposal for the convening of the international peace

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conference on the Middle East has been given by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as is eloquently shown by the Harare Declaration of the Committee of Nine Non-Aligned Countries on Palestine, adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Nine, held at Harare on 14 and 15 April 1987.

Another welcome development is the support expressed by the Council of Ministers of the European Community in its declaration of 23 February in favour of an international peace conference on the Middle East, supplemented by the declaration of the ministers for foreign affairs of the 12 States members of the European Economic Community (EEC) of 13 July 1987. Support for a conference has also been expressed by the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), as evidenced by the joint communiqué of the Twentieth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, held in Singapore on 15 and 16 June 1987.

The idea of an international conference under United Nations auspices has been given high priority among the Arab parties to the conflict and the support for such a conference was reiterated once more at the meeting of heads of State and Government of the Arab countries in Amman.

In view of the renewed hopes that the Security Council can assume a greater and more efficient role in settling conflict situations, my delegation took note with interest of the report of the Secretary-General on the consultations with members of the Security Council on the Middle East and, in particular, the paragraph which reads, inter alia, that:

"in contrast with the experience of recent years, none of the Council members opposed in principle the idea of an international conference under the United Nations auspices."

This optimistic note has, however, been mitigated by his further remark that

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"wide differences still existed regarding the form that a conference should take". (A/42/277, para. 3)

What is even more serious, as he states in the report on the work of the Organization, is that:

"Unfortunately, it has not yet proved possible to obtain the agreement of all the parties to the principle of an international conference ...".

(A/42/1, p. 2)

Apparently the main task now is to ensure the agreement of all parties concerned to the idea of holding the conference. That presupposes abandoning any attempt to make separate deals or enforce unilateral schemes of settlement of the conflict which fail to take into account, in particular, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We commend the Secretary-General for the efforts he is making to bring the idea of convening the conference on the Middle East to fruition and share his conviction that:

"the search must by all means be sustained for a comprehensive settlement through a negotiating process, under United Nations auspices, in which all parties would participate". (A/42/1, p. 2)

It is a long-standing position of Poland that a comprehensive, just and durable solution of the Middle East conflict will be possible only on the basis of the return of the occupied Arab territories, respect for the right of all peoples to self-determination, including the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and equal security for all countries of the region.

Poland stands ready to co-operate constructively and to contribute in practical terms to the efforts to bring peace in the Middle East, as evidenced, inter alia, by Poland's participation in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). Hence our support for the initiative to convene the international

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conference on the Middle East for, as Mr. Orzechowski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, stated in the General Assembly on 2 October 1987,

"there cannot be a more secure world without the peaceful resolution of regional conflict situations." (A/42/PV. 22, p. 34)

Mr. AL-ASHTAL (Democratic Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): I am pleased to make this statement today on behalf of the two parts of Yemen, the South and the North.

The General Assembly is today discussing the situation in the Middle East after having recently dealt with the question of Palestine. The chronological order is not surprising. The one and indivisible subject is the Arab-Israeli conflict, the cause of which dates back 70 years and is a result of the Balfour Declaration, named for the then British Secretary of State. The British Mandate authorities co-operated with the Zionist agency to cause a demographic coup d'état in Palestine by organizing Jewish immigration on a large scale and by the absorption of immigrants into agricultural colonies, which later took on a military aspect and paved the way for the expansion of the activities of the terrorist Zionist organization and the establishment of a military entity.

The Israeli-Arab conflict started in 1947, when the Balfour Declaration led to the establishment of a Jewish State in some parts of Palestine. The United Nations shared in that development by adopting the partition resolution, thus legitimizing the Jewish State which, since the very first day, has defied the international community.

(Mr. Al-Ashtal, Democratic Yemen)

Today Israel occupies Palestine in its entirety, in addition to the Golan Heights and parts of southern Lebanon.

The General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict. An international consensus, which only Israel and the United States oppose, has emerged on the conflict and the fundamentals of a durable solution. It may be summed up as follows.

First, the question of Palestine is the crux of the Israeli-Arab conflict; the question of the Middle East is its wider context. Hence, just and lasting peace cannot be achieved unless there is a comprehensive solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in both the Palestinian context and the wider Arab context.

Secondly, the fragmentation of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the pretense of seeking piecemeal solutions for some of its fragmented aspects while ignoring the others is not conducive to peace and will not end the state of war.

Thirdly, a just and lasting peace can only be achieved through Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the Palestinian people's exercise of their national inalienable rights, including the right of return, the right of self-determination, and the right to set up an independent State on their national soil.

Fourthly, it is now feasible to hold an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices to seek a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects, with the full participation of all the concerned parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The Arab States have made clear their position vis-à-vis that international consensus. The consecutive Arab summit conferences held in Fez, Casablanca and, recently, in Amman have made clear the Arab States' full support for the peaceful

(Mr. Al-Ashtal, Democratic Yemen)

option in calling for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict through an international peace conference. Moreover, the Arab countries have urged the permanent members of the Security Council to put their weight behind the idea of holding an international conference. In addition, the Palestine National Council, which recently held a meeting in Algeria, blessed the idea of an international conference and declared the PLO's readiness to participate therein.

However, in all this, as in the case of the international consensus on the need for an international peace conference comprehensively and lastingly to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel has continued to stonewall. Israel's position continues to be adamant rejection of peaceful solutions. Moreover, Israel continues to pursue its policies of expansionism, violence and the imposition of fait accompli situations by the force of arms. It has annexed Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Golan Heights in defiance of United Nations resolutions. It has tightened its grip on the occupied Arab territories by building new settlements and expanding those already in existence in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. It has continued its reprisals and repression against the Palestinians and now pursues an undisguised policy aimed at evicting the Palestinians and escalating Jewish immigration into Palestine, with a view to changing the demographic character of the land.

As for the United States of America, instead of joining in the clear international consensus which has crystallized over the past years and giving added impetus to the peace process, it has adopted the Israeli posture as its own and continues to create obstacles and to impose crippling conditions with the sole aim of killing off the idea of an international conference. It rejects PLO participation in the conference. It expresses preference for direct bilateral

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negotiations; indeed it insists on them. In reality, the United States does not want an international conference. An international conference would run counter to the United States policy of excluding the Security Council from any peace process so that the United States may continue its role as sole mediator, a role it assumed with the signing of the Camp David Accords.

It has become abundantly clear that in insisting on fragmenting the conflict, in persisting in the role of sole mediator and in expressing preference for selective piecemeal solutions, the United States is trying to circumvent the international consensus. The United States is not interested in securing peace in the Middle East but in furthering the American-Israeli interests embodied in the strategic alliance agreement between Tel Aviv and Washington. No wonder then that, while hindering international peace efforts, the United States doubles its economic and military support of Israel to enable it to pursue its policies of expansionism and fait accompli.

The attempt to circumvent the international consensus by fragmenting the Arab-Israeli conflict and rejecting the machinery capable of securing an overall solution through an international peace conference is in fact aimed at bypassing the question of Palestine, which lies at the very heart of the crisis, and ignoring the PLO, which represents all the sectors and categories of the Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine. The Israeli-American manoeuvres are intended to preclude any role for the PLO in the international conference and devise some sort of alternative representation for the Palestinian people. This, of course, is accompanied by vociferous propaganda campaigns to blacken the image of the PLO by branding as terroristic the national resistance struggle being waged by the Palestinians against occupation and for the exercise of its right of self-determination.

(Mr. Al-Ashtal, Democratic Yemen)

Evidence of that harrassment of the PLO is provided by the latest measures adopted by the United States Administration to block Palestinian information activities in the United States. This has been done at the request of the Israeli Prime Minsister in the service of the Zionist propaganda machine in the United States. In this way, American public opinion has been deprived of the means of apprising itself of the tragedy of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

On another level, the United States seeks to detract from the diplomatic gains made by the PLO in the form of increased recognition by the majority of peoples and its wide representation in most of the world's capitals. The current attempts to close down the PLO Mission to the United Nations and to curtail its activities also show that the United States is opposed not only to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to gain their independence and freedom but also to Palestinian diplomacy designed to find a peaceful solution within the framework of the United Nations. The attempt to close down the PLO Mission to the United Nations is one of the efforts of the United States to nip the international peace conference in the bud.

(Mr. Al-Ashtal, Democratic Yemen)

Of course it is not important if the United States seeks to absolve itself in this way of its legal obligations in accordance with the Headquarters Agreement. The United Nations does not serve United States foreign policy or objectives, as was the case in 1947, when the General Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine.

The possibility of holding the international peace conference, a first step towards finding a comprehensive way of dealing with the Arab-Israel conflict, is affected both positively and negatively by the prevailing international atmosphere. Unilateral or piecemeal solutions surface whenever there is tension or confrontation on an international scale, as happened at the beginning of the 1980s, when all international co-operation efforts to establish peace in the Middle East region faltered. The same holds true in other regional hot-spots. The possibility of international co-operation and the chances of solving regional conflicts improve when we put an end to tension and instead find a positive international atmosphere. Thus we look forward with optimism to the summit meeting due to be held in Washington, D.C. at the beginning of next week between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States of America. We hope that this meeting will play a constructive role in alleviating international tension and turn a new leaf in international co-operation with regard to settling regional conflicts, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that it will gain sufficient attention so that the international peace conference scheduled to be held in 1988 may indeed take place.

Mr. DJOUDI (Algeria) (interpretation from French): One of the major

challenges that our Organization has faced since its establishment is undoubtedly the challenge of the Middle East conflict. That conflict, which has shaken that very sensitive part of the world for four decades and permanently endangers

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

international peace and security, now benefits from circumstances that provide a great opportunity for its definitive settlement.

It is indeed recognized by the international community that the Palestinian question is at the origin of the Middle East crisis. It is also unchallenged that resolution of one must necessarily be involved with the solution of the other. It is also admitted that satisfying the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State is the only way to a just and final settlement and that it is a condition for establishing lasting and genuine peace. Forty years of development in this crisis, far from proving this essential fact, have, quite to the contrary, confirmed and increased its political validity.

Similarly, the international community is more than ever committed to the idea of an urgent solution of the Middle East crisis because, with one war every ten years, this crisis has fully demonstrated through its persistence and worsening that it is the kind of thing that will get out of control. Dangerous developments constantly exacerbate the situation and thus contribute towards maintaining a climate of instability and insecurity. In this spiral of tension, the risk of a major conflagration has been far from eliminated. It is indeed through the deliberate use of this dialectic of violence that the Tel Aviv régime is exploiting everything that can feed its own intransigence and serve its intention to hide the central element that is the Palestinian fact.

Having clearly perceived these hindrances to a return to peace, the United Nations has agreed to deal with this crisis by convening, under its auspices, the international peace conference on the Middle East.

Acceptance of the principle and of the convening of the conference have enjoyed an international consensus with the exception of the Zionist entity.

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

Recognizing the responsibility it bears with regard to the question of Palestine, which remains at the heart of the Middle East crisis, the United Nations has committed itself actively to this process of maturing the idea of an international conference. From this point of view, the Secretary-General greatly merits the thanks of the international community for his devotion, in particular with regard to the exploratory consultations held with both the permanent members of the Security Council and the parties concerned.

In this context, the Security Council, which seems to be guided by a new determination with regard to some conflict situations, must assume all its responsibilities for a crisis which has intimately involved the United Nations since its establishment. The Arab countries, meeting at Amman, endorsed the principle of an international conference and reaffirmed the requirement that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) participate on an equal footing.

While the goal of this conference is, indeed, to bring about a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East crisis as a whole, the conference must be given the power to solve the question of Palestine, through the United Nations, by satisfying the national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to its own independent State, and assuring the evacuation of occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds. One could not, therefore, consider a credible framework a simple conference that would just be an umbrella and would hide the essence of the Middle East crisis.

The Zionist rejection of even the principle of an international conference, together with a speeding up of the colonization of the occupied Arab territories, is very revealing of a strategy of obstructing peace. Thus, the policy of fait accompli is taking on the dimension of a systematic colonization of occupied Arab

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

territories by the decision to implement a programme calling for the settling of 30,000 new settlers on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in the months to come. To this we must add the fact that Al-Quds already has seen an influx of 100,000 settlers. This influx of settlers, expelling Palestinians from their lands and dispossessing them of their property, is based on the goal of radically changing the physical character and demographic nature of the occupied territories.

In the occupied territory, as in exile, the Palestinian people is the victim of total war, whose goal is to destroy its identity and annihilate its will to exist. A powerful multifaceted harassment undertaking is attacking even the cultural patrimony and historical heritage of the Palestinian people in a furious attempt to take away their personality and culture. At the same time, the bombing of Palestinian camps in Lebanon is part of a strategy intended to break their resistance.

Similarly, Lebanon and the Golan Heights are subject almost daily to Zionist hegemony in the region. In the Syrian Golan Heights, the victim of an annexation condemned by our Organization, the Syrian population is undergoing all kinds of persecution and is resisting with determination the enterprise to eliminate their Arab essence. In Lebanon, a decade of aggression and interference has caused the division of a country, the occupation of its southern part, the ruin of Beirut, massacres and unspeakable suffering on the part of the Lebanese people and the Palestinian refugees.

While there is at the present time clear signs of an international will to settle the Middle East problem, the obstructive attitude of zionism is already giving rise to the possibility that the peace process defined by the General Assembly will be mortgaged.

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

Given the denial of law, which has only too long continued in the Middle East, and given the threat it poses to the preservation of international peace and security, it is an urgent duty of the international community to bring about the triumph of the will to peace - a just, comprehensive and lasting peace - by convening the international peace conference on the Middle East.

That is why it is of the greatest importance at this time for our Organization, and especially the Security Council, to spare no effort to remove the obstacles that prevent the convening of such a conference, in the interest of the peoples of the region and of peace and security in the world.

Mr. KARIM (Sudan) (interpretation from Arabic): The situation in the Middle East has become a hardy perennial on the agenda of the General Assembly because we have not been able to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, which the world has unanimously recognized is the principal cause of the conflict in the Middle East. The constant deterioration of the situation in that region and the failure of all peace efforts have caused increased international concern regarding the dangers it poses, especially Israel's intransigence and its defiance of all international appeals to recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The behaviour of the Israeli Zionist régime shows that it is hostile to peace; it is the only régime that remains outside the international consensus. That has been confirmed by the Zionist entity's scorn for and defiance of the numerous resolutions adopted by our international Organization.

That entity's persistent intransigence in the face of the will of the family of nations will certainly cause further deterioration of the situation in the Middle East and bloody and murderous confrontations there. The family of nations must deal with this state of affairs and adopt the measures necessary to compel Israel to bend to the international will including the sanctions provided for in the United Nations Charter.

Continuation of this state of affairs would be fraught with danger, and our Organization must give the matter serious consideration because its credibility is at stake. It must regain its effectiveness. The international peace conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, has been endorsed by the Arab States and by the Palestinian people. This is a constructive position which reflects our sincere desire for a just and lasting settlement to the Middle East conflict, as was reaffirmed by

(Mr. Karim, Sudan)

the family of nations during the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in the Geneva meetings and at the summit conference in Amman.

A just and lasting peace in the region is impossible without Israel's unconditional and complete withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the City of Jerusalem. The Palestinian people must also be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination and to build its own independent sovereign State on its national soil under the leadership of the PLO, its sole legitimate representative.

Israel and its counterpart, South Africa, are responsible for the most serious hotbeds of tension in the world. Both régimes have by force been occupying the territory of others; both have violated the legitimate right of peoples to live on their own national soil; and both régimes detain and kill women, children, youth and the elderly, and both attack neighbouring States and occupy parts of their territory. There is much evidence of this in Lebanon, in the Syrian Golan Heights, in Iraq, Tunisia, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia.

Forty years have passed without the triumph of human rights or implementation of the resolutions of our international Organization. How long shall we remain powerless in the face of these crimes, which go unpunished? Those who stand silently by as crimes are committed are more guilty than those who commit them. From the dawn of history the legitimate struggles of peoples have shown that oppression and barbarity never win out, that the will of the people is invincible, and their rights inalienable. Is the Zionist régime in Palestine aware of those realities?

In this connection an Arab poet said that if a people fights for life, then fortune will smile on it, the clouds will dissipate and the chains of servitude will be broken.

(Mr. Karim, Sudan)

In conclusion, the Government and people of Sudan espouse the cause and struggle of the Palestinian people for liberation and for restoration of their usurped rights. On behalf of the Sudanese Government and people, I once again appeal to the international community to meet its responsibilities and take effective action before the situation in the Middle East deteriorates further.

Mr. MAITHA (Kenya): Whereas there are many issues that call for attention and discussion under this item of the agenda, there is none that stands so prominently central to the problem of the Middle East than the unsettled situation regarding the plight of the Palestinian people. Any attempts to resolve any other issue without dealing with the Palestinian issue can only at best result in a temporary solution. It is in this light that Kenya supports the call for a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problems obtaining in the Middle East, with particular reference to the problem of Palestine.

Kenya bases its position on the concern that it feels over the unstable situation in the region, which has for far too long remained one of tension and unending conflict.

(Mr. Maitha, Kenya)

Although the United Nations helped to resolve the situation in 1947 and 1948, when the then mandated Territory of Palestine was partitioned into an Arab sector and a Jewish sector, that attempt did not yield the fruits of peace as expected. The full weight of the Partition Plan never took hold in all the sectors so partitioned. As a result, turmoil and incessant conflict have held the upper hand to this day.

On a number of occasions the unstable situation in the region has erupted into outright war between Arab nations and Israel and at times it has seriously impaired relations between some otherwise brotherly States in the region. In the course of this unstable situation, much destruction of life and property has occurred. The root cause of all this, while many other causes can be mentioned, continues to be, without any doubt, the unresolved problem pertaining to the plight of the Palestinian people.

Some of these people have been uprooted from their motherland and property and forced to live as refugees in foreign lands. Those who have remained in the occupied territories continue to endure harassment, oppression, repression and suppression. All of the Palestinians continue to suffer the indignity of being denied the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination and independence and the right to return to their homes and property in safety. This, in our view, constitutes the core of the current problems in the Middle East as well as the root cause of the tensions and conflicts in the region.

As I have already stated, the core of the ongoing tensions and conflicts in the region of the Middle East is the question of Palestine. The question demands an all-embracing solution. In the absence of such a solution the situation in that region will continue to be one of increasing tensions and incessant conflicts, endangering relations among the States of the region for a long time to come. It

(Mr. Maitha, Kenya)

is our hope that the parties directly involved will realize the potential magnitude and explosive nature of the problem. We further hope that they will start working for an acceptable durable solution. We feel the parties could de-escalate the tensions through moderation of positions in favour of a just and lasting solution.

The necessity for the international community to exert every effort towards the peaceful settlement of the problem cannot be overemphasized. In the view of my delegation, the international community has an obligation to the people of Palestine and must continuously participate in the efforts to bring about a comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

The international community must continue to stress the importance of respect for the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by the use or threat of use of force. It must also reiterate again and again the need for all countries to respect the principles governing the territorial integrity of States and non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States. Kenya upholds these principles of the international community and would like to see them respected by all nations. In this regard, therefore, Kenya calls upon Israel to withdraw from all territories occupied since the 1967 war and to cease its interference in the internal affairs of Lebanon.

Over the years, when this question has been debated, suggestions regarding possible solutions have been adopted, but the Israeli authorities have not seen fit to implement them. My delegation wishes to stress that it is the responsibility of the United Nations to see that Israel complies with the will of the international community and enables the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and independence.

(Mr. Maitha, Kenya)

In this regard, my delegation holds the firm view that no nation should ever be allowed to justify its own right of existence at the expense of others. We believe that the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and an independent State of their own in the region must be realized. The restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people would provide the key to a just and durable peace in the Middle East on the basis of the equal right of all States in the region to exist in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders.

In conclusion, it has been proposed in resolutions of this Assembly that an international conference on the Middle East be convened. Kenya endorses and has supported the proposal in the hope that such a conference will find a solution to all aspects of the Middle East problem. We regret to note, however, that some parties have not yet agreed to support the convening of the conference. It is important to note that other States directly concerned in the efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem have reached agreement to move together towards the achievement of a peaceful and just settlement of the crisis and the termination of Israeli occupation of Arab territories. We urge the other party to show understanding and agree to undertake negotiations in the framework of the proposed international conference.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.