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LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1980 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL

When the Security Council met on 4 September 1980, to consider Malta's complaint against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Libyan representative, whilst making declarations of friendship towards the people of Malta, requested more time to prepare his reply. The Security Council accepted his request and adjourned without fixing a date for the resumption of the meeting.

This was most unusual, especially as at that very moment a Libyan warship was anchored to one of the buoys of the Italian drilling contractor to force the rig out of Maltese waters. No doubt the Council were led to believe that Libya's alleged friendship towards Malta would eventually mean some Libyan assurance to the Republic of Malta that no force or threat of force would continue to be used.

Unfortunately this hope has not materialized. On the contrary the threat of force was continued until the drilling rig was compelled to plug the unfinished well and withdraw to Sicilian waters.

At the same time, the Libyan Government, through its Foreign Office, informed the Maltese Embassy in Tripoli that as evidence of goodwill and friendship they were prepared to consider resuming the supply of concessionary oil to Malta at prices which came to an end in June of this year.

The Maltese Government promptly replied to the Libyan authorities that what was vital for the preservation of peace in the region was that Libya would assure the Security Council that, under no circumstances would they harass or threaten with force, oil firms enjoying concessions from the Government of Malta.

To date no such assurance has been given to the Security Council or to any of the friendly States who have made representations with Libya or to the Government of Malta.

All this means that, seven days after Libya's protestations of friendship towards the People of Malta, Libya has successfully threatened and used force to assert claims over areas to which Libya has not only no legal rights but which not even morally can it now claim to be in dispute. This moral right was lost when Libya, for four and a half years, refused to ratify an agreement to refer the question of the disputed area to the International Court of Justice.

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The Government of Malta, like any other self-respecting State, will not accept this position any longer. Should recourse to the Security Council prove to be futile Malta would be left no alternative but to ask for help from third parties who may only be too willing to settle other scores.

There is only one way in which this Security Council can strive to perform its duty of maintaining peace and stability in the region: it must urgently and unequivocally give to the unarmed and peace-loving Republic of Malta all the protection at its disposal. Only if this is done will the people of Malta believe that we live in a world where force need not be resisted by force.

I have the honour to request that this letter be issued as a Security Council document.

(Signed) V. J. GAUCI
Permanent Representative of Malta
to the United Nations