

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION



## 66th PLENARY MEETING

Tuesday, 30 November 1993  
at 10 a.m.

Official Records

NEW YORK

*President:* Mr. INSANALLY  
(Guyana)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.*

### AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

#### QUESTION OF PALESTINE

##### (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/48/35)

##### (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/607)

**Mr. YAACOB** (Israel): I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I am confident that your wealth of diplomatic experience will be of invaluable assistance in guiding the Assembly's current session. I should also like to extend my congratulations to the former President, Mr. Stoyan Ganey, and compliment him on his skilful direction of the General Assembly's affairs.

One hundred years of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians have exacted a heavy price. The human loss has been tragic, the social and economic loss enormous. But now we have witnessed a great victory of those with a vision for the future over those who are blinded by the past. We believe that the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September and the Letters of Mutual Recognition between Israel and the PLO are significant steps towards peace and prosperity in the Middle East. This progress follows the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, which shattered the stalemate in the Middle East 14 years ago.

Now we have reached another historic crossroads. Change is inevitable. The old status quo could only bring more suffering and despair. The alternative to peace and reconciliation is war and devastation. The time has come to depart from conflict and move towards cooperation so that Israelis and Palestinians can enjoy the fruits of peace and the shelter of security. In the words of Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres:

"Let us bid once and for all farewell to wars, to threats, to human misery. Let us bid farewell to enmity, and may there be no more victims on either side." (*The New York Times*, 14 September 1993, p. 12)

It is time to depart from violence and terror. It is time to establish good relations between Israel and its neighbours. We are now working together, Israelis and Palestinians, according to the mutually agreed timetable, as we turn the agreement from principles into reality. This is not an easy task, but there is no other way but to walk the path that we have chosen. The interim period will provide needed time for the seeds of trust to grow. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said:

"The basis for our advance and progress in the implementation of the agreement is that each side must keep its commitments."

From these roots, mutual confidence will grow.

Far from the limelight, Israeli-Palestinian committees are hard at work focusing on the details. The Coordinating Committee is negotiating security arrangements and other modalities of the transfer of authority in Gaza and Jericho. Of course, there are and will be ups and downs in the process. This is a time of transition, but now is the time

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to realize the simple truth: We can choose either painful compromise or perpetual conflict. The implementation will succeed if both parties work persistently, pragmatically and professionally towards this end. I believe both sides are proceeding in this spirit, despite moments of hardship and outbreaks of violence.

A constructive atmosphere also marks our negotiations on economic matters. As we face the great challenges that lie ahead of us, progress towards economic development is essential. Two weeks ago in Paris the Economic Cooperation Committee began its work, guided by the principles of reciprocity, equity and fair relationships. The Committee is exploring joint action in diverse fields - water, energy, industry and infrastructure, among others. Working groups have been established specifically to address these issues. Three subcommittees are meeting to deal with trade and labour, fiscal matters and finance and banking. The work of those groups will become the economic foundations during the interim period.

We also seek progress in our negotiations with other partners. Israel desires a comprehensive peace based on treaties with all our neighbours - Syria, Jordan and Lebanon - as well as with the Gulf States and the North African States, and with all other Arab and Muslim countries. The United Nations should encourage peace by adopting an attitude that reflects the positive changes in the Middle East. Resolutions wielded as political weapons are relics of a bitter past. It is time for a change; it is time to move forward. Let us adopt resolutions that support the peace process and its accomplishments and indicate a wish for a better future.

In the wake of things said here yesterday, I should like to set the record straight. Forty-six years ago yesterday the General Assembly decided on the establishment of two States in British mandated Palestine: the State of Israel and an Arab State. The Jews living under the British Mandate accepted that resolution and established the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. The Palestinians, with the support of all the Arab countries, rejected the resolution and launched a war on the State of Israel. At the war's end about a year later the State of Israel had survived, and it grew. Some Palestinians became citizens of Israel, some became citizens of Jordan, which captured the West Bank, some became subjects of Egypt, which captured the Gaza Strip, and some became refugees in Arab countries.

I hope that at least we have learned the lessons of the past and will now turn to build a new future. As we continue the work of implementing the agreements, we confront many problems. Among the most severe are the continuous acts of terrorism designed to undermine the

peace process and sow unrest and anarchy. Some of the terrorists are driven by radical Islamic fanaticism. Others are political opponents of the PLO. In a prosperous environment the fanatics would have no support, because they rely on despair. The international community should help the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza through this transition period by helping improve social and economic conditions, by improving the infrastructure, by expanding education and health centres, and by creating jobs that put more people to work.

In the short run, economic aid will finance services until other arrangements are made. In the long run, it will spur growth and prosperity.

In October the International Donors' Conference in Washington, D.C. raised \$2 billion in pledges for development in the territories. The United Nations has established a high-level task force to achieve this same goal. United Nations agencies are doing excellent work in the territories. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has improved infrastructure and irrigation networks and built a fishing port in Gaza. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has established clinics and hospitals and has done commendable work with children. But the United Nations could do more. I repeat here the appeal made by Prime Minister Rabin to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to double the budget of the agencies which work in the territories and double the United Nations effort.

We also appeal to the countries and organizations that promised economic aid: "Meet your pledges. Time is precious." The Palestinians have taken upon themselves an enormous responsibility. The challenges they face are immense. International assistance is critical, but it alone will not suffice. The Palestinians know that they themselves will have to create an economic environment that will generate growth and maintain prosperity.

There is an answer to the question of Palestine. The answer is in the Declaration of Principles and in its implementation; it should be left for the parties to resolve.

The United Nations and the Member States have a historic responsibility to support this agreement. Help the Palestinians to meet the enormous challenges, and encourage us all to stay on course. Mobilize resources; increase investment; avoid distraction; refrain from rhetoric; create a positive political and economic environment.

Help the peacemakers to make their own peace.

**Mr. ALLAGANY** (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly, considers the question of Palestine at its current session, against the backdrop of radical changes on the international arena and in the Arab-Israeli conflict itself. Those changes have ranged from the ending of the cold war, to the transition from confrontation to cooperation between States to the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and Jericho which is supposed to take place within the next two weeks. Therefore, consideration of the question of Palestine at the current session acquires special importance.

In our view, all this creates a climate that favours the redoubling of efforts in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, which is the core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, the important fact is that the international community has reached consensus on the fundamental principles of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East: namely, the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders; and recognition and implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people - and, in particular, its right to self-determination.

My country welcomed the holding of the Conference on peace in the Middle East that started in Madrid and the bilateral and multilateral negotiations that followed it. However, we now view with concern the continuing deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We read in the newspapers of Friday, 26 November 1993, that the cycle of violence between the Israeli police and the civilian population is expanding and that 37 Palestinians have been injured. Civilians in the occupied territories continue to sustain heavy losses. Many deaths and injuries are caused by the violent, harsh and disproportionate practices pursued by the Israeli authorities in repressing the popular *intifadah*. In addition, Israel continues to expropriate land, continues to build settlements, persists in tightening its iron grasp on water and the natural resources and in obstructing every Palestinian economic, social and political activity. A special cause for our concern is the ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court that the Al Aqsa Mosque is part of the land area of the State of Israel and that all restoration and maintenance work in the Mosque will be subject to Israeli planning and building regulations and archaeology laws. How can Israel have taken such a serious decision right in the midst of the climate of relaxed political tension - relative though it may be - following the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement on 13 September 1993? We would have expected Israel to take measures to consolidate

the agreement and to build confidence between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and not to take such measures that indicate the possibility of negative effects.

It is regrettable indeed that this year's reports of the various United Nations agencies and other organizations and special committees, like those of previous years, leave no doubt as to the difficulties that the Palestinian people continue to experience. We are convinced that the peace process must go hand in hand with confidence-building measures that would reduce tension, improve the general climate in the region, and mitigate the hardships suffered by the Palestinian people in its own country.

Until a comprehensive settlement is achieved, the security of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories will continue to be a source of concern to the international community. Consequently, it is absolutely necessary to implement the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 - the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The Security Council, in all its relevant resolutions, has made a point of reaffirming that that Convention is applicable to the occupied territories. The Secretary-General, in his report to the Security Council stated that he intended to ask the Commissioner General of UNRWA, the United Nations most important organ in the occupied territories, to take the initiative, *inter alia*, in strengthening the monitoring and control mission for the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. In his report, the Secretary-General also emphasized the need for the International Committee of the Red Cross to continue to play its important role, as, in accordance with article 10 of the fourth Geneva Convention, it has a special responsibility in the area of civilian protection. We feel it is high time this was done.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East conflict, a conflict that has lasted nearly 50 years and that has been on the United Nations agenda since the founding of the Organization. Before the United Nations commemorates its fiftieth anniversary, it must ensure that the Palestinian people is able to exercise its right to self-determination and establishes its own Palestinian State. Otherwise, we shall be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the inscription of the question of Palestine on the United Nations agenda.

In conclusion, I wish to voice once again my country's hope that the parties concerned will cooperate in adopting a gradualist approach with a view to demonstrating genuine goodwill, dissipating suspicions and building confidence. When the peace process leads to a peaceful settlement, my country will support the consolidation of the edifice of peace and the economic recovery of the Palestinian territories.

**Mr. AWAD** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My country has done all it can to find a just solution to the question of Palestine on the basis of the principles of international legality set out in the relevant United Nations resolutions. Our latest attempt in this direction was our participation in the Madrid conference on peace in the Middle East. Syria has worked diligently, in a spirit of responsibility, to achieve the goals of that conference and to reach a just, permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of full implementation of all elements of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) on the Jordanian, Syrian and Palestinian fronts, adherence to the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force; Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Lebanese territories, through the full, unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978); respect for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the linking of the interim and final stages with the full implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) with regard to the occupied Palestinian territories; the illegality of Israeli settlement in any part of the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds and the Golan Heights, and on the basis of the equal right of all parties to live in peace and security.

The peace process started and continued under the eyes of every State in the world as a process that had its basis in the legality of international resolutions and in the formula defined at the Madrid conference. The 11 rounds of peace negotiations were conducted within the context of the official, legitimate mechanism agreed upon by all parties concerned and by the two co-sponsors of the Madrid conference. Then, all of a sudden, came the secret agreement on Jericho and Gaza which departed from the peace process we had been pursuing over the past two years. That agreement undermined the very concept of a comprehensive settlement and the very basis of the Madrid conference as it forestalled progress on the other tracks.

Despite the fact that the Oslo agreement was concluded between two parties in isolation from the peace process and outside the framework and terms of reference of the negotiations, Israeli officials have persisted in marketing that agreement as though it were the promised peace which would put the whole region on the threshold of security and stability. To this end, Israel has launched an unprecedented misinformation campaign which targeted international public opinion with the aim of persuading people everywhere that the Middle East conflict is now over and that peace now prevails throughout the region. Israel's mouthpiece mass media have targeted Arab public opinion with the aim of deluding it into believing that the Palestinian question has been resolved, that there is no longer any reason for Arab hostility towards Israel and that

the Arab boycott must now be lifted and relations between the Arabs and Israel should be normalized.

We in Syria, however, do not believe that this agreement will lead to the desired just solution to the Palestinian question, the solution that should include the establishment of a Palestinian State, the right of return, and sovereignty over Al-Quds. We believe that the agreement will give the Palestinians nothing but a form of limited self-rule that is shrouded in ambiguity and that leaves the doors wide open for future interpretations to Israel's benefit. In fact, the agreement has mortgaged the Palestinian future through the use of the loose ambiguous expression of "permanent status", which, of necessity, does not cover the whole gamut of the political aspirations or legitimate demands of the Palestinian people. These are facts which are self-evident and which cannot be denied except by determined liars.

The Jericho-Gaza agreement does not recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, and does not deal with the most important issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict, namely the question of borders, the right of return, the question of Al-Quds and the future of the settlements, to mention only a few. As an example of ambiguity, no one knows what is meant exactly by the word "Jericho". Does it mean the city of Jericho, the district of Jericho, or the province of Jericho? While we are on the subject, we must remind ourselves that Israel is the only State in the world that has not adopted an official map of its territory. This, most certainly, cannot be attributed to any lack of the necessary means of drawing a map.

The truth of the matter is that the agreement has guaranteed for Israel that it will not withdraw to the 4 June 1967 borders, and has made it possible for Israel to hold on to all it wants to keep of the territories of the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while relinquishing the areas with large Palestinian populations which it wants no part of anyway.

The agreement has ignored the question of the Palestinian refugees were expelled by Israel from their lands and their homes. According to Israeli logic, this is an Arab problem, and only the Arabs should find solutions to that problem which does not concern Israel. Consequently, Israel has continued to reject General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, which stipulates that the Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to their homes and that those who do not wish to return should be compensated. Israel's pretext is that there is no land for those refugees to return to. However, it continued to bring in hundreds of thousands of new Jewish

immigrants to settle on this very land that has no place in it for the Palestinians.

The agreement has cancelled out the international role in the peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, and has deprived those negotiations of the monitoring and support that that international role entailed. The act of transferring the venue of the negotiations to a place far from international control has helped Israel to achieve its objective of transferring bilateral negotiations to the region of conflict before there has been any agreement determining the Palestinian role. Israel's aim in this has been the imposition of a new direction on the negotiations with the Arabs, and the ability to deal unilaterally, at will, with the provisions of international resolutions that stipulates withdrawal by Israel from the occupied territories.

Even with regard to the implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, the Israelis, yesterday, at the Taba meeting, interpreted withdrawal by Israeli forces from Gaza and Jericho as meaning no more than the redeployment of those forces. They also threatened to erect an electric fence round the Strip. Two days ago, they resumed firing indiscriminately on the Palestinian masses in Gaza. Furthermore, they declared that it will not be possible for them to withdraw within the time-frame stipulated in the agreement. In addition, the Israeli Police Minister, Mr. Moshe Shahal, stated yesterday that the agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization will be null and void if the Palestinian opposition candidates win in the elections to the self-rule Council.

Despite all the negative aspects of the agreement, Syria has not opposed it, and will not obstruct it. Syria, however, does not support it and it leaves to the Palestinian people and its institutions the responsibility of judging it and of opting for what it considers to be in its best interest. Syria's position in this respect stems from its desire to continue with the peace process and to achieve the objectives of that process, namely the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Having said this, we must point out that Syria wishes to achieve viable solutions that have the makings of durability and not "solutions" and "agreements" that carry the seeds of future conflicts.

The Arab States, in their communiqué by the meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers in Cairo on 20 September 1993, have affirmed that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement is but a first, important step in the direction of a comprehensive solution, and that it should be complemented by other urgent steps on all tracks and that such steps should ensure withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied territory of the Syrian Golan Heights and from the occupied territory in

Lebanon. This Arab stance stemmed from the conviction of the Council of the Arab League that in order for peace to be lasting, peace must be comprehensive, just and based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and on the behests of international legality.

Syria which, historically, has been associated with the defence of the Palestinian cause and the defence of Palestinian rights, is firmly determined, now more than ever before, to continue to work for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace that would guarantee withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Arab territories and guarantee the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.

**Mr. ABDUL GHAFAR** (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since the adoption last year by the General Assembly of resolution 47/64 on the question of Palestine, positive developments have taken place in the Middle East peace process. Those developments have culminated in the signing, by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, in Washington, on 13 September 1993.

The State of Bahrain considers the signing of the Declaration of Principles to be an important step towards settlement of the question of Palestine, and a first step towards a comprehensive and just settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute. We should like to underscore the need for the full implementation of the provisions of that agreement, especially in terms of the date set for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Jericho and Gaza, within the next few weeks. The reported intention to redeploy the Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area will be a measure that could not be termed as implementation of the provisions of the said Declaration.

We should also like to stress that the aim of the implementation of the Declaration should be to enable the Palestinian people to establish its independent State. As for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area by the date set in the Declaration and the holding of the elections that will follow, such matters must be viewed as steps that must be taken so that the Palestinian people may exercise its legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination and achieve all its other legitimate aspirations.

Although negotiations on the final settlement have been scheduled under the Declaration to take place not later than the beginning of the third year of the period of transition, we consider that diplomatic efforts to ensure the success of these negotiations should be intensified. A

declaration of intent concerning these issues is necessary for mutual confidence building. In addition, we deem it important to focus on the achievement of the following objective, in order to ensure the success of any peaceful settlement:

First, the goal of the Declaration should be the establishment of the independent Palestinian State through withdrawal by Israel from the Palestinian territories it has occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds, as well as from the other Arab territories, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and with the land-for-peace principle;

Secondly, the question of Palestinian refugees must be resolved according to General Assembly resolution 194 (III), adopted on 11 December 1948 - with special emphasis on paragraph 11 thereof, which stipulates the right of refugees to return and the right to compensation of those who do not wish to return;

Thirdly, Israel must fully apply the relevant stipulations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which have been declared applicable to the occupied Arab territories by the international community;

Fourthly, the Israeli settlements built in territories occupied since 1967 must be dismantled;

Fifthly, security arrangements must be made to guarantee that all States of the region would live within secure and internationally recognized borders; and

Sixth, the Middle East region must be rid of all weapons of mass destruction and this should apply to Israel, so that its nuclear arsenal may not continue to threaten the region's security and stability.

In conclusion, my delegation should like to stress that the sort of peace the peoples of the Middle East aspire after must be based on the just settlement of the question of Palestine. I should also like to reiterate the position of the State of Bahrain, which supports the independence of the Palestinian people and its right to establish its own State on its native soil. I also must underscore the need for resolving all intractable problems through the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

**The PRESIDENT:** I should like to inform the Assembly that the United Republic of Tanzania and the Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference have requested to be allowed to participate in the debate on this item.

Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed yesterday morning, may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to the inclusion of the names of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Observer for the Islamic Conference in the list speakers?

There appear to be no objections. The names of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference are therefore included in the list.

May I remind delegations, however, to follow closely the announcements regarding closure of the lists of speakers, so that adequate planning can be made for our debates.

**Mr. OBADI (Yemen)** (*interpretation from Arabic*): This is not the first time that the question of Palestine has been discussed by the General Assembly. The Assembly has remained seized of this question over the past four decades and has adopted numerous resolutions thereon. However, the unique aspect of this session's discussion that highlights its significance is that it takes place in the wake of the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, in Washington, of the Declaration of Principles, on 13 September 1993.

The signing of the agreement and the mutual recognition that has taken place, constitute a new, important chapter in the history of the Palestinian question and in the annals of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, this is the first time that Israel has officially recognized the identity and the very existence on its native soil of the Palestinian people and has recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization. Thus, the Palestinian people has demonstrated its ability to wage its national struggle by every means, including the ability to make peace through negotiation on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1978).

The slow pace of the arrangements of Israeli withdrawal show that Israel is not practically preparing for the total withdrawal of its military forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho before 13 December 1993 and that it is not making any concrete, visible or urgent arrangements for any speedy transfer of power to the national Palestinian Authority. Quite the contrary: Israel is seeking to redeploy its military forces and to entrench its settlements in the occupied Arab territories.

Without a doubt, what we have here is the first real test with regard to the issue of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. Israel must demonstrate the credibility of its intentions and show that it has successfully passed the test it has taken upon itself to face

in the eyes of the world. This it can do only through the postures it will take in the current and future negotiations and through its withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon as well as through its acceptance of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

Israel's attempts to avoid adherence to the provisions of the agreement and its attempts to avoid translation of that agreement into concrete reality are attempts to avoid the peace the Israeli officials have continued to speak of since the creation of the State of Israel. The Palestinian side, on the other hand, has accepted peace on the basis of justice, even if at present that peace does not restore to the Palestinians all their rights. Israel must understand that it cannot obstruct the peace process or stand in the way of the new spirit that prevails in the world today. It must realize that procrastination and the rhetoric of "promised land" can no longer be used as pretexts. The world as a whole is engaged in seeking a just comprehensive peace that is acceptable to all parties.

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area would constitute the real beginning of the establishment in the region of that long sought after peace which peoples have aspired to. In order for that peace to endure in a region that has suffered for far too long from wars and perpetual conflicts, it must be born strong and healthy. This, in turn, will be achieved only through all out international support for the Palestinians, especially in the economic sphere, so that the Palestinian people may be able to face up to the challenges that confront them, to rebuild the infrastructures needed by their nascent State and to revive their economy, which has been devastated in the course of four decades of occupation. The international community must provide generous assistance and support to this nascent State as soon as it emerges.

This new phase in world history, following the end of the cold war and the beginnings of a new international order that is taking shape and that has no room for wars and conflicts, makes it necessary for peace to be re-established in the Middle East on solid foundations, so that the peoples of the region may be able to channel the resources of their countries to the development of their societies and the raising of their standards of living.

Experience shows that peace and security in the Middle East can exist only if Israel withdraws from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967, including the Lebanese territories occupied in 1982, and only if an independent Palestinian State is established, so that all the States of the region could live within secure and recognized borders. Here we must emphasize the importance of and the need

for continuing the peace process in the Middle East so that agreement may be reached on the Syrian track, on the return of the Golan Heights and on the Lebanese track on the withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon in implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). It is equally important that such measures should be followed up by additional agreements that would guarantee total withdrawal by Israeli troops from all Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds and from all the other occupied Arab territories.

We must refer here to the ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court this month that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is part of the land area of the State of Israel and that all restoration and maintenance work in the Mosque is subject, therefore, to Israeli planning and building regulations. This ruling is a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions on the status of Al-Quds, particularly Security Council resolutions 252 (1968) and 267 (1969), whereby any measure which may tend to change the legal status of the Holy City or of religious property is null and void.

My country wishes to voice its deep concern over this ruling which has been adopted in contradiction to the atmosphere of relative relaxation that was generated by the signing of the Declaration of Principles. This is a ruling that is meant to enable the Israeli authorities to interfere in the internal affairs of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It constitutes a serious threat to the status of the holy site and a usurpation of the competence of the authority of the Islamic Waqfs which is the only body that has the legal capacity to carry out building restoration and/or maintenance operations in Al-Haram, Al-Sharif, Al-Aqsa Mosque. This ruling is clear evidence that Israel has not in any way renounced its expansionist ambitions and designs that aim at swallowing up part after part of the Arab territories and at judaizing Al-Quds.

At a time when the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles is supposed to be on the verge of implementation and when preparations are under way to set up joint committees and arrange meetings to undertake the actual implementation of the Declaration, the hopes of the Palestinians have been dashed by the acts of violence and terrorism perpetrated by the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories. Over the past few days, media coverage has brought to us the pictures and reports of mass attacks by armed settlers on towns and villages, the wrecking and burning of Arab cars and Arab homes under the very eyes of Israeli troops. Such acts, which continue to be perpetrated in full view of complacent Israeli forces show the need for international forces to be deployed in the region to protect the Palestinian citizens who are at the receiving end of this violence.

In this context, we believe it is relevant to underscore the need for respecting human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, therefore, we call for providing effective genuine protection for the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israeli authorities and Israeli forces must stop their raids and combing operations in the towns and villages against the Palestinians in their homes. Those authorities must desist from their acts of aggression and put an end to the activities and acts of aggression perpetrated by the Jewish settlers against the Palestinians. Such acts and practices not only impact the peace process negatively, but also breach the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Israel must take all necessary measures to ensure that such conventions are respected and adhered to.

**Mr. HATANO (Japan):** On 13 September the world witnessed an event that would have been unimaginable just a few weeks earlier. Demonstrating great courage and wisdom, the leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Declaration established an ambitious set of objectives. It is now crucial that progress be made according to the schedule set forth in the Declaration. The first tangible step is anticipated in mid-December with the conclusion of negotiations on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, which is to be effected by April 1994. In conducting these negotiations, the two sides should avoid raising issues that go beyond or are inconsistent with the Declaration.

Primary responsibility for advancing the process lies, of course, with the parties themselves. However, as long as Israel and the PLO demonstrate a desire for peace and the political will to work together in good faith, the international community will help them achieve their objectives. Indeed, our task now is to ensure that there is no turning back - that the progress made thus far is irreversible. Towards this end, the Palestinian people must have evidence that their daily lives are changing for the better and that peace does indeed make a difference.

In the recognition that economic progress is crucial to progress on political questions, on 1 October representatives of 46 countries and international organizations gathered in Washington to reaffirm their commitment to improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the short term and to establishing a structure for long-term economic growth.

As Prime Minister Hosokawa of Japan announced in his statement to the General Assembly last September, my Government intends to contribute about \$200 million in assistance to the Palestinian people over the next two years. This assistance will include grant aid for medicines and concessional loans for infrastructure development. In addition, my Government has dispatched a team to the region to collect information regarding development needs and to discuss with the parties concerned how it might best support their efforts. Japan is also serving on an ad hoc liaison committee to ensure coordination and cooperation among the donors.

I feel it is important to point out that the recipients of international aid also have certain obligations. A system based on transparency and accountability must be established to ensure the effective and non-political use of resources.

Peace between Syria and Israel is essential to a comprehensive peace. Every effort must be made to encourage tangible progress along the Israeli-Syrian track. While the two sides continue to differ over key issues, such as Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and ways to ensure peace, I am confident that the two countries remain committed to negotiating a settlement.

Progress in bilateral negotiations and progress in regional confidence-building are mutually reinforcing. Prompted by the recent progress on the bilateral track, the fourth round of multilateral negotiations has seen very fruitful discussions on concrete projects for regional cooperation.

In the context of multilateral negotiations, the refugee working group was recently convened in Tunis, and the environment group, which Japan chairs, met in Cairo. We welcome this development.

Japan looks forward to broad regional participation in the multilateral talks. Syria and Lebanon, in particular, have insisted they will not participate until they perceive concrete progress in the bilateral negotiations. The participation of these two countries is essential for effective regional cooperation.

The bilateral and multilateral negotiations provide the framework for the political process. They cannot in themselves, however, ensure a lasting solution to the Palestinian issue. Broader and deeper economic interaction throughout the region is also essential. The countries of the Middle East share many problems and advantages; all gain from greater economic cooperation.



Japan will continue to make efforts within the framework of the ongoing peace process for stability and prosperity in the region.

**Mr. LE VAN BANG** (Viet Nam): This year our discussion of this agenda item, the question of Palestine, takes place in the context of significant developments in the Middle East. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel on 13 September 1993 marks a major positive turn in that region's situation. This important initial step in the new process demonstrates a fundamental conviction that there is always a possibility of settling conflicts by peaceful means, even those conflicts that might have been very fierce and protracted.

My delegation has studied with keen interest the report (A/48/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The report presents us with a comprehensive review of the tremendous work carried out by the United Nations system for the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. In this regard, I should like to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, and the Secretariat's Division for Palestinian Rights for their highly commendable contributions.

For several decades the situation in the Middle East has always evoked in our minds images of excessive tension and uncontrolled conflict. The international community has strongly supported the just cause of the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable, fundamental, national rights - primarily, the right to self-determination.

We may recall that last year, at the forty-seventh session, we clearly expressed in resolution 47/64 D a hearty welcome to the ongoing peace process, which started at Madrid in October 1991, and the earnest hope that the process would lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in that part of the world. It is gratifying to note in this connection that the historic agreement recently reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel constituted an important breakthrough creating favourable conditions to move further towards the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. It provides initial steps for the realization of Palestinian self-government and, we hope, for broader prospects of better relations between the countries in the region and of shared prosperity for all in that part of the world.

At the same time, however, it should be clear to all that there remain numerous difficulties and obstacles. This is only the beginning - an important beginning, of course - of a difficult and complicated transition period. Continued efforts by all the parties concerned should therefore be further strengthened in order to sustain the momentum. The international community should also render more concerted support to the peace process, which has started rolling in the right direction.

My delegation shares the view of many others in this Hall that the United Nations, whose purpose under the Charter is to maintain international peace and security and promote development, should play a more active role in the peace process in the Middle East, as well as in the process of building up the future Palestinian national authority and in providing development assistance to the Palestinian people at this important juncture in their history. With regard to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, while commending it for its work well done in 1993, we believe it will make more valuable and positive contributions to the overall United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by, *inter alia*, mobilizing international opinion and action in support of the Palestinian people until the final settlement is achieved.

The people and the Government of Viet Nam have been following very closely and with the utmost interest the evolution of the situation in the Middle East. Together with other peoples all over the world, we welcome the recent signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the PLO and Israel and consider this a breakthrough in the peace process in the Middle East. This, we hope, will help facilitate further progress towards a satisfactory political solution, which must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Just yesterday, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in a message to the United Nations Secretary-General, to the Chairman of the Committee and to President Yasser Arafat, the President of my country once again reiterated:

"the Vietnamese people have always been supporting the just cause of the Palestinian people and strongly believe that, with the tradition of courageous struggle and with the sympathy and support of the world's peoples, the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, will certainly achieve success."

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to register our strong and earnest belief that, following the recent important steps in the right direction, all parties concerned

and the international community should not become complacent or harbour the illusion that the task has been completed, but should continue and even step up the negotiations and efforts to achieve a final, comprehensive, just and durable solution to the conflict in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

**Mr. KABIR** (Bangladesh): Bangladesh sincerely welcomes the recent exchange of letters of recognition and the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel on 13 September 1993. This laudable breakthrough in the peace process, which holds out the promise of cooperation between the Palestinians, Israel and its Arab neighbours, will, hopefully, lead to concrete developments benefiting all parties in the region. We sincerely hope that the agreements will also be the beginning of an expeditious process that will ultimately allow the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination in their own homeland. We also hope the agreement will be an important stepping stone for the safety and security of all States in the Middle East.

The road to these desirable goals will no doubt have its share of obstacles rooted in decades of confrontation and distrust. Tolerance, forbearance and patience in negotiations will therefore be the critical ingredients for building confidence in the hearts of the dispossessed and disinherited Palestinians and for initiating the process of healing that will allow them to live their lives in dignity and peace. Israel, with its democratic culture, should, hopefully, be capable of displaying the necessary flexibility for the speedy conclusion of all negotiations, while ensuring that there are no more human-rights violations in the occupied territories. Otherwise, the noble intentions of the Declaration will remain on paper only.

The report (A/48/557) of the Special Committee on Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs in the Occupied Territories, which covers the period from 27 August 1992 to 27 August 1993, provides a grim and an unchanged picture of the deplorable human-rights condition of the Palestinian people in the occupied areas. This is supported by reports in the mass media of Israeli atrocities, deaths and severe injuries to those who dare to defy, and stand against, the inhuman practices. The *intifadah* which arose in such defiance has already left several thousand dead in its wake, among them defenceless students, women, and even children and infants.

What is worse, the number of fatalities shows no sign of diminishing, even after the agreement. When the agreement was signed, it was expected that the occupying

Power would show restraint, but the recent incident of 25 November in the Gaza Strip, in which over three dozen Palestinians were shot and wounded, was, to say the least, most incredible. Also of concern is the imprisonment and continued detention under cruel conditions of several thousand Palestinians whose only fault was to stand up and fight against alien occupation. The rate of release of such prisoners and the criteria on which they are now released offer hope of an early end to their prolonged suffering.

During the last four decades, the Palestinian refugees have been living in difficult and harsh conditions. The agony and suffering they have endured - whether in the occupied territories of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights or in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan - are well known. The Special Committee's report indicates that their situation is likely to become even worse with the anticipated deterioration of conditions. Illegal practices and inhuman acts are serious violations not only of many Security Council resolutions, but also of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant provisions of international law.

We have stated many times that the crux of the Middle East problem is the question of Palestine and the Palestinian refugees. Here, we recall General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which clearly called for an immediate and just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees based on their right to action and compensation. With the agreement in place, let us hope that substantial progress in this regard will now take place and that the tragic drama still drawing the attention of the General Assembly every year - that is, that repatriation and compensation of the refugees, as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), has not been effected - will come to a positive end for Israelis, having received such compensation from other countries, cannot deny it to the Palestinians.

Our position on the status of Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and other territories is well known. Year after year in clear resolutions the General Assembly and the Security Council have reaffirmed the cardinal principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. It is our hope that Israel will respect the clear decision of the international community by vacating all occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Any territory which Israel retained by force would continue to be a sword of Damocles threatening the entire Middle East peace process. More than that, it would ultimately stand in the way of a just and durable peace in the area and negate the fundamental norms and principles of international law. Let us hope that Jerusalem will be the point of convergence of amity, peace and harmony for all faiths rather than an obstacle between the concerned parties in the Middle East.

Bangladesh feels that the results of the peace agreement would be meaningful if the Palestinian people were afforded the opportunity to improve their well-being and the affected areas were allowed to develop a sound socio-economic infrastructure. This not only would sustain the foundation of a durable and viable Palestinian nation, but also would ease political tensions, thereby promoting the cause of peace and stability. It is here, we believe, that the international community must fully support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), with its vast reservoir of experience, and the other agencies which continue to play a vital role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the area covering the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and also in the areas where displaced Palestinians have taken refuge in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. This year's report on UNRWA's activities paints a foreboding picture of the Agency's financial prospects in 1993, particularly because growth in the level of contributions has not kept pace with the growth in the number of its programmes and the higher demand for basic services and rising costs. It is clear that the new challenges and responsibilities UNRWA will be shouldering must be matched by the financial support of the international community. It is therefore important that the major donors to UNRWA increase their contributions and support at this crucial period and that donors make their contributions in a timely fashion. As a part of the international community, Bangladesh will continue to play its due role in the peace process and the reconstruction of war-ravaged Palestine.

In the recent agreement we at last see a turning point in the history of the hitherto war-torn and tension-ridden region of the Middle East. We would like to congratulate the architects of this agreement for their magnificent courage and far-reaching vision. They must now display even more determination and courage to conduct future negotiations which will indeed be complex and fraught with difficulties as they involve the issues of the return of Palestinian refugees and compensation, the status of Jerusalem, the question of Israeli settlements in occupied territories and other security and border issues.

Bangladesh hopes that despite the difficulties the parties in conflict will not allow this unique opportunity to pass but that, through patience and understanding, they will do their utmost to resolve the issues. Let us all hope that before too long we may witness with joy the achievement of a permanent solution to the Palestinian problem and the much-desired just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. That in turn, we believe, would bring social and economic progress and prosperity to the peoples not only of the region but far beyond it, given the vast reservoir of human, technological and material resources

the peoples of the Middle East possess. This is our hope for the future.

**Mr. LAVIÑA** (Philippines): The issue of Palestine is the longest-standing issue in the annals of the United Nations. So much blood and tears have been shed to resolve it. It was even thought at one point or another that the world had come close to the brink of thermonuclear confrontation.

The Philippines therefore received with just elation the news of 1993 - the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September 1993, which was preceded by the exchange of letters on mutual recognition.

President Fidel V. Ramos, in a statement on the occasion, saluted the statesmen who made that historic event possible, Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel. He considered the agreement between the two visionary leaders as marking the most vital breakthrough for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

We sincerely congratulate all the parties to the peace process, including its sponsors, the United States and Russia, as well as Norway.

The Philippines notes that the agreement provides for a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority and that a five-year transitional period will begin upon Israel's withdrawal from Jericho and the Gaza Strip. It stipulates that the permanent-status negotiations will commence as soon as possible, but not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period. The negotiations will include such complex issues as the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbours, and other issues of common interest.

Heartened by this development, the Philippines fully supports the peace process, not only between the Palestinians and the Israelis but also between Israel and its other Arab neighbours, namely, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. The negotiations, which began in Madrid, are indeed arduous and fraught with difficulties, but the process cannot but lead to the final settlement of the conflict - a settlement based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We are thus encouraged by the degree of progress achieved by the various bilateral and multilateral working groups negotiating on a number of difficult issues. We

would cite in particular the endeavours of the working group on refugee issues, which successfully attempted to accelerate Palestinian family reunification and placed emphasis on assisting Palestinian refugees.

The success of the peace process depends largely on the situation on the ground. A corresponding improvement must therefore be registered in the daily lives of both peoples. The average Palestinian should now be able to find work to feed, house, clothe and educate the young while at the same time fulfilling his deepest and legitimate yearning for a homeland. The average Israeli now should be accepted as a neighbour and made to feel secure in his own home.

The Philippines is cognizant of the overriding importance of the development of the economic and social infrastructure in the occupied territories. We are gratified at the fact that the two annexes of the Declaration address exclusively the issue of economic cooperation between the two parties. The region's long-term peace, stability and prosperity depend on how the two sides will cooperate in development programmes such as those relating to the use of water, electricity, energy, transport and communications, as well as in the areas of trade, industry, environmental protection, communications and the like. The representative of Israel alluded to this coordination in his statement earlier today.

It is axiomatic to say that the well-being of one group depends on the well-being of the other. We are pleased, therefore, to note that members of the international community pledged generously to assist Palestinian reconstruction at a meeting of donor countries held in Washington, D.C., on 1 October of this year. While the Philippines is unable to contribute financially, we have nevertheless indicated our desire and willingness to participate in Palestinian reconstruction by sharing our expertise, for instance in the medical and engineering fields.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the establishment of the high-level United Nations Task Force to support the economic and social development of the West Bank and Gaza. We encourage an active United Nations role in the overall Middle East peace process and primarily in assisting the parties in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

At this very delicate stage of the peace process the Philippines believes that the negotiations between the parties must be accompanied by confidence-building measures. We urge Israel to accept the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Consequently, the

human rights of the Palestinians and the other Arabs in the occupied territories must be scrupulously respected. We urge both sides to refrain from further acts of violence which could derail the peace process.

We express the hope that the Israeli practices described in the reports of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs, both of which covered the period prior to the signing of the Declaration, can now be relegated to history. The same holds true for the situation in the area referred to by the representative of Saudi Arabia this morning.

The Philippines is keenly aware that the road ahead for the Palestinians, the other Arabs and the Israelis is fraught with uncertainties and unseen dangers. Yet, that road also opens up tremendous opportunities. One thing is sure: the fates of the Arab and Israeli peoples are inextricably linked. Both peoples have made the momentous decision to try to tread the path to peace together. One cannot make it without the other. We wish them courage, wisdom and perseverance in their difficult journey. At the end of it all, they will bequeath peace to their children - perhaps the greatest legacy for us all.

Let me sum up by saying that the international community looks forward to the conclusion of a final settlement - just, comprehensive, lasting - between and among the parties in the region, based, predictably, upon the terms of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). I believe that it is our collective view that that kind of peace arrangement would be a fitting climax to the most difficult, painful and, indeed, unparalleled United Nations story that is Palestine.

**Mr. AL-NI'MAH** (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to convey to the General Assembly my country's views on the question of Palestine - a subject that we have debated here year after year. On this occasion I should like to pay tribute to Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the other members of the Committee - for their very important and comprehensive report, which is full of salient facts. They all deserve our gratitude. We thank them for a job well done.

It is indeed a source of relief that this occasion differs from previous ones and that this debate takes place in the wake of a portentous event, namely the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the

Palestinian people, and Israel. With the signing of this agreement, the Palestinian question has taken a historic turn in the direction of negotiation, following the Palestinian people's great struggle to have its inalienable rights secured and implemented.

**Mr. Musuka (Zambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.**

The Palestinian people has long endured great suffering. It has been denied the most basic of rights that every free peoples on God's Earth enjoys. Now Palestinians look for the light at the end of the tunnel of their suffering.

The State of Qatar follows with great interest the successive positive developments in the Middle East peace process. Those developments mark the turning of a new leaf in the history of the region. The State of Qatar, as is known, has welcomed the agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel on the granting of self-government to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, as a first important step towards securing a just and permanent solution to the Palestinian question and to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on the land-for-peace principle. This will entail complete withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Arab territories - first and foremost, from Holy Al-Quds, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon and all the other occupied territories. It will also entail the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights, including its right to self-determination. In our opinion, all this will lead to the laying of the firm foundations of security in the Middle East, will promote mutual trust and will ensure stability in the region, so that the region may pursue the building of a better future for all its peoples on the solid foundations of social development and economic progress.

I do not think it would be wrong to state that the overall change in international relations and the *détente* that has led to far-reaching transformations in regional and international relations were the factors that afforded the opportunity for the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel the opportunity to work in earnest for implementing that agreement.

In consonance with this and with every peace concept generated by the will to agree and to work for pursuing the march towards the achievement of the national objectives of the Arab nation, the State of Qatar, in addition to supporting the Declaration of Principles, has played an effective role, at the highest possible level, in the Washington Conference of last month, whose purpose was

to mobilize international action on the provision of assistance towards implementing development programmes and laying the most important foundations of the much needed economic infrastructure in Gaza and Jericho.

The State of Qatar welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the PLO and Israel as a first step in a decisive stage of the peace process based on the principle of land for peace. We hope that principle will be the guiding light that will steer the peace process towards the achievement of the goal of full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories in return for full peace in the entire region. That will lead to prosperity in the region and enable the Middle East to become a safe haven of peace, cooperation and coexistence after having been for far too long a hotbed of tension, hostility, hatred and aggression and, consequently, of threats to the world's peace and security.

**Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria):** The new phase of international relations, which may be described as being characterized by a shift from confrontation to cooperation and by a renewal of commitment to solving long-standing regional conflicts, gives my delegation the belief that a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestine question is in sight. In this regard, the delegation of Nigeria wishes to register its strong recognition and welcome of the recent breakthrough in the Middle East peace process, which started on 30 October 1991 and culminated on 13 September 1993 in the historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the State of Israel. We hope that this development will be followed by a dramatic change of attitude on the part of the parties to the conflict.

Nigeria welcomes the signing of the Declaration of Principles, and sees it as the beginning of a process which could provide a basis for the people of the region to live peacefully in mutual respect and security. The agreement represents a major step towards peace in the Middle East. It is imperative, therefore, that the provisions of the agreement be strictly implemented by the two sides. Nigeria also hopes that similar understanding will be applied in the Arab-Israeli context.

The ensuing developments have made it necessary for us to take a fresh look at the nature of deliberations concerning the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine during the current session of the General Assembly.

Through the years, debate on the two items has been characterized by serious disagreements and acrimony between the various parties involved in the conflict in the

Middle East and between their respective sympathizers. This has led to the adoption of resolutions and decisions during each session of the General Assembly; to date, however, these have failed to be fully implemented, notwithstanding the enormous resources that have been devoted to the search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

During the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly the polarity of positions started to dissipate, albeit subtly, with a new cautious approach being applied in our deliberations. This certainly flowed from the expectations of the international community in respect of the encouraging signals that came out of the first rounds of the United States-Soviet Union-sponsored Middle East peace conference in Madrid, Spain.

In terms of concrete achievement towards a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis, only the Camp David accords of 1979 can match the recent mutual recognition by the State of Israel and the PLO and the subsequent agreement to grant limited autonomy to the Palestinians in the occupied Gaza and parts of the West Bank. Moreover, with the rapid pace of events in the region there is every ground to hope for a more positive outcome in the negotiations between Israel and other Arab parties to the peace process. In this connection, the Israeli-PLO negotiations that led to the release of some 700 Palestinian prisoners are most encouraging.

As a strong advocate of a just and comprehensive settlement of the crisis in the Middle East under Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), Nigeria has maintained a measure of consistency in its position on the issues under consideration. In addition, Nigeria's record as a crusader for the right of peoples under domination to self-determination speaks for itself and is accentuated in this case by our having been a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since its inception. In a similar instance, Nigeria proudly stands out as an apostle in the unfolding transition in South Africa, where it has been proven that perseverance, tenacity of purpose and moderation are indeed effective tools in resolving an almost intractable situation.

It is in that same spirit of cautious optimism about developments in the Middle East that my delegation deems it appropriate to call for a radical realignment of approach in the deliberations on this item during the current session of the General Assembly. Our attention should be focused more on consolidating the activities of the relevant United Nations agencies concerned with the development needs of the Palestinians in their new status of self-rule. Our debates should be less acrimonious and better attuned to

the new realities. Let me, however, hasten to make it unambiguously clear that the new approach we are advocating is without prejudice to the stated positions of other Member States. In any event, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) should be strongly applied and upheld. Let us encourage the prevailing spirit of realism, compromise and consensus in tackling the various facets of the crisis in the Middle East. I am certain that we all stand to gain from such a posture.

**Mr. KALPAGE** (Sri Lanka): The thirteenth of September 1993 marked the culmination of one phase in the peace negotiations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), representing the Palestinian people. Thus the peace process initiated at the Middle East peace Conference, convened in Madrid in December 1991, came alive after nearly two years of fitful negotiations. The Government of Norway played a commendable role in arranging for the two parties to conduct one-to-one negotiations away from the glare of publicity and in an atmosphere which generated mutual confidence and trust. The world will surely be deeply grateful to the Norwegian authorities for their most valuable contribution to this peace process.

An important breakthrough came with the letters of mutual recognition exchanged on 9 September 1993 between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chairman Yasser Arafat. Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people; the PLO acknowledged Israel's right to exist in peace and security and renounced the use of terrorism and other acts of violence.

The historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed on 13 September 1993, vindicates fully the stand adopted over the years by the United Nations. The Declaration states that Israel and the PLO,

"agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process." (A/48/486, p. 4, *preambular paragraph*)

The Declaration provides for certain interim arrangements, including the establishment of a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza

Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In this context, although the negotiations have taken place outside the United Nations framework, it is significant that the validity of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) has been accepted by both Israel and the PLO. Having thus contributed to an understanding by both Israel and the PLO on a solution of the question of Palestine, the United Nations should now resolve to assist, in every possible way, the successful continuation of the peace process. We hope that the General Assembly resolutions will reflect the new reality.

The parties that have come together after decades of confrontation and bitter conflict deserve to be congratulated, and must be urged to move forward speedily to implement the Declaration of Principles. The other Member States in the Middle East should be urged to continue negotiations to resolve all outstanding issues. Those groups which are still sceptical and hesitant should be urged to accept the genuine desire of all peoples in the Middle East region for peaceful development.

The United Nations should help mobilize the resources that will be needed to reconstruct and rehabilitate the lands that will soon be self-governing and free. In this connection, we welcome the convening of the Conference in support of peace in the Middle East, held in Washington, D.C. on 1 October 1993, and the results that the Conference achieved.

This, we believe, is how the United Nations can contribute at this juncture to the hopeful situation that has at long last arisen in the Middle East. Thus will a complex and serious threat to international peace and security finally be peacefully resolved.

Sri Lanka has consistently viewed the question of Palestine as the core of the Middle East problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict. We have always advocated a fair and durable settlement, with withdrawal by Israel from all occupied territories, and the restoration of the national and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and their right to return to a homeland of their own.

Sri Lanka hopes that the political will and foresight shown by both parties - which was conducive to the agreement of 13 September 1993 - will lay the foundation for making the Middle East an area of lasting peace and stability with a promising future, free from tension and conflict, in the larger interests of world peace.

**Mr. IDRIS (Sudan)** (*interpretation from Arabic*): On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People yesterday by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, perusal of the records of the United Nations over the past five decades will show that the question of the Palestinian people has continued to be a burning issue since its inscription on the General Assembly's agenda in 1947 and the agendas of the following two sessions.

However, despite the clear and just resolutions adopted by the international community, in the General Assembly and in the Security Council, no comprehensive, just or durable solution has been devised for this question because of the dilatory tactics of the Zionist entity on the Arab Muslim land of Palestine.

The creation of the Zionist entity in the Middle East was a major turning point in the history of the region. The results may be seen in the problems and tragedies that have continued to beset the region's peoples year after year. This open-ended tale of woe includes:

First, the continued occupation of the territories of others through wars of aggression that have continued to be waged with the most destructive of weapons and which have undermined the fundamental human rights of the peoples of the region;

Secondly, the waves of refugees, whose numbers now exceed 2,800,000, in search of asylum in neighbouring countries. Those refugees have been forced to leave their properties and to flee from the harsh conditions of a life of murder and mass arrests;

Thirdly, the trampling of Arab and Palestinian human rights, especially in the occupied Arab territories, in Gaza, the West Bank, the Syrian Golan and south Lebanon; and

Fourthly, the proliferation of Israeli colonialist settlements in the Arab territories and the exploitation by the settlers of the Arab and Palestinian resources, especially the resource of water and agricultural land in such a manner that Israeli settlers today represent a continuous daily threat to the livelihoods, security and peaceful existence of the Arab population in those areas.

The negative developments in the Middle East situation that have become the norm in the region since the creation of the Zionist State in Arab Palestine, must be seen as marking the beginning of a series of devastating blows that have continued to be aimed at the stability of this strategic region with a view to subverting the vital national interests of the peoples of the region and to furthering well-known colonialist and foreign interests.

Since that date, the security, stability and interests of the Arab and Palestinian people have continued to be trampled. That is why this problem has found no just or durable solution and the reason why the United Nations has evinced total impotence with regard to the implementation of its resolutions, which have remained dead letter.

This is confirmed by the fact that the United Nations has been excluded from all the negotiations and settlement processes relating to this question. For all of these reasons, the question of Palestine has become the glaring example of the application of double standards in dealing with situations that should be dealt with in consonance with the rules of international law and the stipulations of resolutions of the United Nations, especially those of the Security Council.

The successive developments that have taken place recently in the course of the question of Palestine, and which have culminated in the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, have ushered in a significant and historic stage in the Arab Palestinian conflict with Israel. The people of Sudan, who have always stood by the Palestinian people in its struggle for freedom and independence, have clearly declared their position *vis-à-vis* the signing of the Declaration of Principles, as follows:

First, Sudan is on the side of the Palestinian people and concurs with every consensus of the Palestinian people that would guarantee for it the exercise of self-determination and the establishment of its independent State on its native soil, with Al-Quds as its capital;

This stance on our part stems from our belief that it is the Palestinians, all the Palestinians, who have the right to decide for themselves and the ability to safeguard their lawful right to live in peace and dignity, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973);

Secondly, it is in this context that Sudan underscores the importance of honouring the undertakings the parties to the agreement have taken upon themselves especially since the recent history of the conflict shows that Israel tends to prevaricate and to try to shrug off its obligations. This has been the pattern with regard to each and every agreement with Israel.

Consequently, Sudan has always been and continues to be convinced that a just and lasting peace and a final settlement of the tragedy of the Palestinian people must involve the following:

First, total withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories - Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and south Lebanon;

Secondly, the return of all Palestinian refugees to their land and properties and the payment of appropriate compensation to those who do not wish to return, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948;

Thirdly, the dismantling of all Zionist settlements in the territories occupied since 1967;

Fourthly, free access to the holy places and religious sites;

Fifthly, protection of the human rights of the Palestinians and Arabs in the occupied territories and putting an end to all killings, mass arrests and other practices that continue to be pursued against the Palestinians; and

Sixth, full implementation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

**Mr. BATIOUK (Ukraine):** We are witnessing today heartening changes in the Middle East. We are witnessing new trends which have appeared in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in this area. Our delegation reaffirms Ukraine's unqualified support for the ongoing Middle East peace process initiated by the Madrid peace conference in October 1991, as well as the subsequent bilateral and multilateral talks which brought about initial, long-awaited progress in the Middle East peace process. This first step towards unblocking the core problem in the Arab-Israeli conflict - the Palestinian issue - should open new possibilities on the road to peace in the Middle East.

Ukraine welcomes the decision on mutual recognition reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as the historic agreement for Palestinian self-government in the Gaza Strip and Jericho signed in Washington on 13 September. The honest implementation of these decisions is crucial for breaking once and for all the vicious circle of unending violence, distrust and bitter hatred in everyday life in the Middle East.

The Government of Ukraine hopes that the agreed Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization will become the real basis for the solution of the Palestinian issue within the framework of



Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The implementation of these resolutions will provide for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, as well as the security of all States, the State of Israel among them.

Our delegation takes this opportunity to express to the Government of Israel and the Palestinian leadership the support of the Government of Ukraine for their courageous and realistic steps towards lasting peace in this region. Building on this initial breakthrough, the peace process may gain new momentum. While welcoming the tangible results achieved, we cannot overlook the fact that such outstanding issues as the status of Jerusalem, the plight of refugees, settlements, borders, security arrangements and relations and cooperation with neighbouring States remain unresolved.

In this context, the United Nations has its own significant role to play. It has to cope with the urgent tasks of adapting its activities to the requirements of the new realities in the region. The efforts of the international community and regional organizations and the active participation of States are of great importance in removing obstacles to the creation of new modalities and mechanisms for resolving pending problems.

Ukraine has always deeply sympathized with the Palestinian cause and has constantly lent its support to the fight for a just settlement in the Middle East. As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Ukraine stands for the earliest possible solution of the problems in the region and in particular the problem of the economic development of the Palestinian people. It welcomes the active efforts of the world community in this direction. It is necessary to stress the need for an effective United Nations role in providing all kinds of assistance to the Palestinian people as they rebuild and revive their society.

Despite the positive steps taken by the Israeli Government to improve conditions, the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories continues to arouse international concern. The elections planned for July 1994 might allow tensions to be alleviated between the Palestinians and the Israelis and create new possibilities for further progress. For the same reason, we call upon Israel to apply to the occupied Palestinian territories the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The United Nations has made a significant contribution to the search for ways and means to settle the problem of Palestine. Suffice it to recall the important

contribution of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in monitoring the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and in heightening international awareness of the question of Palestine. Under the leadership of Ambassador Cissé, it promotes the search for a peace formula with due regard for the rights of Palestinian people.

In conclusion, our delegation notes with appreciation that, acting in perfect harmony, the General Assembly at its present session wants to be instrumental in safeguarding positive developments in the life of the peoples of the Middle East. This feeling of creative harmony was ably summarized yesterday by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Palestine, Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, when he said:

"All of us sincerely hope to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in a region that has witnessed a succession of wars, a great deal of bloodshed, a great deal of injustice and all sorts of persecution. So let us work together for the building of a new Middle East that will be free from weapons of mass destruction and hegemony, a Middle East whose countries and peoples enjoy security, stability and freedom, a Middle East free from occupation by force of the territories of others, a Middle East of democratic, advanced and developed societies that respect human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 65th meeting, p. 26-27*).

May everybody concerned live up to this sincere wish.

**Mr. ABDELLAH** (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We meet today to consider once again a question that has weighed and continues to weigh heavily on the world's conscience and which has a direct impact on the international situation: namely the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. It is no wonder that this important question should be of such concern to the international community. It relates to the future of a people that has suffered the greatest injustice in modern times and to the stability of a region that has been the theatre of four wars, with all the occupation, and miseries those wars have entailed and all the threats they have posed to international peace and security.

However, the situation has taken a new turn, or so we hope, with the mutual recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel and the signing of the Declaration of Principles, on 13 September 1993, concerning Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho. Tunisia has welcomed those developments when they took place as it saw in them a first important step towards the

restitution of its legitimate rights to the Palestinian people including its right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State on its land.

My country welcomed those developments because they are consonant with the values we hold and with the basic tenets of our foreign policy especially the belief in the right of every people to freedom, equality, justice, and self-determination, and the belief in the benefits of dialogue and negotiation in the peaceful settlement of disputes in strict adherence to international legality. It was within this framework that Tunisia has supported the peace process in the Middle East, since it began in Madrid. It was also on this basis that we actively participated in the steering committee and the working groups in the context of the multilateral negotiations that emanated from the Madrid conference, including the working group on refugees, whose latest meeting my country hosted last month.

While we welcome and support the agreement signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in view of the possibilities it presents for relaxing tensions in the region, we feel, none the less, that advancing the cause of peace in the Middle East requires other very important measures if a final settlement to the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East conflict, is to be reached. Such a settlement should guarantee to the Palestinian people its other fundamental rights, especially the right to its own independent State on its own land with Al-Quds as its capital and the right of the refugees to return, in accordance with resolution 194 (III), the implementation of which the General Assembly has continued to call for yearly since 1949. Similarly, in the short term, and in consonance with the spirit of Washington, Israel is required to take concrete and urgent steps to ensure the release of prisoners and the return of deportees.

Since peace is indivisible, Tunisia wishes to reaffirm that the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and the strengthening of security and peaceful coexistence amongst all peoples and States of the region cannot be achieved unless Israel withdraws completely from the Syrian and Lebanese territories, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and other relevant resolutions. While we view with satisfaction the developments on the Jordanian-Israeli track, we believe that progress must be made also on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks, in the context of the current peace process and in accordance with the land-for-peace principle. We call upon Israel to renounce once and for all the futile policies of the past and to show a sense of realism and the necessary courage to act in a spirit of openness *vis-à-vis* the implementation of the

Gaza/Jericho agreement and the withdrawal from all the occupied territories so as to put an end to more than a half century of strife and conflict and thereby to ensure security and stability for all the States and peoples of the region.

The natural thing is for the United Nations to play a role in achieving peace or in helping to strengthen the underpinnings of the agreements that have been and/or will be concluded between the parties concerned. It was the United Nations that, in 1947, decided to create two States - one Arab and one Jewish - in Palestine; it was the United Nations that played its role in all the phases of the Middle East crisis; and it was the United Nations that laid the foundations on which the final settlement should be based. We therefore hope that the United Nations will take an active part in the building of peace, alongside the parties concerned, both in the political sphere and with regard to the provision of the material and moral support needed to strengthen the autonomous authority and to stimulate the subsequent rebuilding of the region.

At the political level, while we recognize that positive developments have taken place as we have just said, it is none the less necessary to strengthen the underpinnings of international legality in relation to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. Those underpinnings to which the international community is staunchly committed must be translated into reality in the context of direct negotiations. The peace process cannot be used as a pretext to circumvent the objectives that have been defined in United Nations resolutions and that constitute the only legal frame of reference for the negotiations.

With regard to economic and social development, the international community is required to provide the necessary assistance to the Palestinian authority to enable it to cope with the requirements for rebuilding the state and meeting the basic needs of its people. The Washington meeting was a positive and praiseworthy initiative. Tunisia took part in that meeting and stated that it was prepared to play its part, in particular, with regard to the training of professional Palestinian administrative and technical cadres to shoulder the responsibilities of administering the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Tunisia is determined to spare no effort in ensuring the success of the peace process in the belief that there is no security without justice and no justice without withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and that the Middle East region needs the efforts of all in order for it to meet the needs of its peoples and to achieve comprehensive development. There is some cause for optimism. So let us hope that the coming days and months will justify that optimism and that the Palestinian people will be able to attain its national objectives, heal its

wounds and revive its hope in the better future it has earned the right to through its sacrifices. We hope, finally, that, once the spirit of hegemony and domination has been left behind, the region would enjoy the security and stability it has lacked, so that its resources may be put to use for the benefit of future generations and mankind as a whole.

In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Under the leadership of our brother, Ambassador Cissé, the Committee has provided valuable assistance to the Palestinian people in its striving for its objectives.

I also wish to pay tribute to the tremendous humanitarian effort of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and lightening the burden of occupation that weighs so heavily upon them. We are grateful to UNRWA and hope that it will continue its activities until the Palestinian people fully regain their rights.

**Mr. KHARRAZI** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The question of Palestine remains the most enduring one since the establishment of the United Nations. The inhuman practices of the occupying forces have continued and the sacred land of Palestine is still under occupation. The Palestinian people continue to live under painful conditions resulting from such intensified collective punishments as the imposition of curfews, arbitrary mass arrests, mass detention of Palestinian civilians, prolonged school closings, the expansion of settlements, confiscation of Palestinian land and the shooting of Palestinian people by the occupying forces. Many documents, including the report (A/48/13) of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the report (A/48/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people and the periodic reports (A/48/96, A/48/278 and A/48/557) of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories indicate that the Palestinian people have continued to suffer under the brutality of the occupying forces during the last year.

My delegation is deeply concerned over the increasing number of killings, deportations and detentions and the ill treatment of detainees. Several thousand Palestinians have been killed or injured since the beginning of the *intifadah*. The increase in the number of deaths and severe injuries suffered by defenceless students, women and children has been reported by various sources. The report (A/48/13) of

the Commissioner-General of UNRWA states that the security forces have been responsible for the death of 80 Palestinians from the West Bank, including 8 children, and 120 persons from the Gaza Strip, including 28 children. A report (A/48/557) of the Special Committee similarly indicates that 110 of the 923 Palestinians killed by the security forces have been killed by undercover units since the beginning of the *intifadah*.

The situation of the detainees is also of grave concern. Relevant documents state that 14,000 administrative detention orders have been issued against Palestinians from the occupied territories. The report (A/48/557) of the Special Committee indicates that most of those detained have been interned without trial for six months. In our view, these inhuman acts by occupying forces deserve strong international condemnation.

The human-rights situation of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories also deserves serious consideration. Fundamental principles of freedom, including freedom of movement, education and religion and freedom of expression, have been violated by the occupying forces during the past year. According to testimony recently collected by the Special Committee, Israel has imposed curfews and closed entire areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for up to two weeks at a time, confining 250,000 to 400,000 persons to their homes; this information is to be found in paragraph 895 of document A/48/557. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA indicates that by the end of June 1993, 14.8 per cent of school days in the West Bank and 16.4 per cent of school days in the Gaza Strip were lost because of military-ordered closures, curfews, general strikes and other factors. As we read in document A/48/557, the restrictions imposed in the occupied territories have also continued with regard to freedom of expression, as has the persistent harassment of journalists.

The expansion of settlements and land confiscation in the occupied territories by the occupying forces, in contravention of all international rules and norms, have also continued. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA states that over half of the land in the West Bank and 40 per cent of the land in the Gaza Strip have been confiscated by the occupying forces for military or other purposes. The policy of annexation and confiscation of land has affected the socio-economic situation in the occupied territories. The continuation of this policy, in outright disregard of the legitimate rights of Palestinians, creates an atmosphere of instability in the region.

In itself, the continuous occupation of Palestine constitutes a violation of international law. In our view,

the lasting, just and comprehensive solution would be the recognition and implementation of all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the return of all refugees to their homeland and the establishment of an independent State in Palestine. Recent agreements in the region will not lead to the full restoration of all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We believe that the international community should lend its support to the exercise by the Palestinian people of all their legitimate rights.

**Mr. NYAKYI** (United Republic of Tanzania): The vision of a new Middle East which the leader of the Observer Mission of Palestine, Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, shared with us in his address at the start of the debate on this item yesterday is one which many people have dreamed of but which few expected to see realized in their lifetimes. For the problem of the Middle East, and in particular the question of Palestine, its root cause, has remained one of the most intractable - if not the most intractable - that the international community has had to contend with. It is a problem that has eluded solution for nearly 50 years.

From the very moment of partition in 1947, the hope of the international community for a future of peace and cooperation between a Palestinian state and the State of Israel was dashed. In the hope of satisfying the aspirations of one people to a homeland of its own, the international community unwittingly created conditions under which the legitimate rights and freedoms of another people were violated and its legitimate aspirations denied.

The announcement of mutual recognition by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the signing in Washington on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel have therefore rightly been hailed as constituting a major breakthrough in the Middle East negotiations. It is now possible for the international community to go back to the vision of 1947. A Palestinian State and a Jewish State existing side by side, their peoples cooperating to create a future of hope and prosperity for themselves, is now a realistic prospect in the Middle East. My delegation joins in the congratulations that have been extended to the leaders of Israel and Palestine for the courage they have demonstrated in taking the difficult decisions that made possible the historic agreement signed in Washington in September.

As my Minister for Foreign Affairs observed in his address to the Assembly during the general debate, the first step is always the most difficult. We urge the leaders of Israel and Palestine to use the momentum generated by the

September agreement to move rapidly towards implementing its provisions. We are concerned by reports that suggest that the process of the withdrawal of Israeli forces may be delayed. We urge that everything possible be done to avoid a delay in the start of the process of withdrawal. There are many elements on both sides of the argument that do not like the agreement and that would welcome its collapse - and, indeed, that use every opportunity to wreck it. A delay in the start of the process of troop withdrawal is just such an opportunity. For the same reason we urge that every effort be made to complete the withdrawal in the period of four months envisaged in the Declaration.

We welcome the release of Palestinian prisoners announced by Israel since the signing of the Declaration and urge the speedy release of all remaining political prisoners and detainees. Regrettably, as an article in today's issue of *The New York Times* brings home, violence remains endemic in the occupied territories, claiming many innocent lives, both Palestinian and Jewish. We urge the two sides to do everything possible to curb and end the violence. In particular we urge Israel to end settler violence against Palestinians.

The two sides have given themselves a maximum of three years in which to start tackling the difficult and complex issues of the status of Jerusalem, the future of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and the questions of refugees and boundaries. While it is understandable that the parties should want to deal with first things first, the temptation to relegate these issues to the background should be avoided. Their importance and complexity demand that they be kept constantly in view.

An early solution to the plight of the refugee population, which has been languishing in camps for several years, will help defuse a dangerous time bomb, in the occupied territories in particular and in the Middle East in general. Mr. Kaddoumi reminded us yesterday that the United Nations has over the years adopted positions on all these issues. As the negotiations proceed it will be our duty to draw the attention of the parties constantly to the pronouncements of the international community on these issues. They include various United Nations resolutions, and in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The struggle of the Palestinian peoples has been predominantly a political one. With progress now achieved on the political front, the time has arrived for appropriate attention to be paid to the urgent tasks of reconstruction and development in order to enable the long-suffering people of Palestine to catch up with lost development. We therefore join in the appeal for

assistance to and support of the efforts of the Palestinian people to realize their aspirations to economic and social development. In this connection we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General and of the recent Conference in support of peace in the Middle East held at Washington, D.C., on 1 October 1993 for the mobilization of assistance and support for the reconstruction and development of Palestine. We urge the donor community to contribute generously to those efforts.

The question of Palestine has always been regarded as the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The conflicts between Israel, on the one hand, and Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, on the other hand, stemmed from the question of Palestine. It has therefore always been assumed that a solution to the question of Palestine would open prospects for solutions to these other problems. We welcome the fact that in tandem with progress on the question of Palestine movement seems to be taking place towards solutions to the other problems. We welcome indications of progress towards a solution of the conflict between Israel and Jordan and congratulate the leaders of the two countries for their courage and foresight. We very much hope to see similar progress soon in resolving the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese conflicts.

The two sides in the Middle East conflict have come a long way these past 46 years since the partition of Palestine in 1947, from a position of war and mutual recriminations through a period of "No War, No Peace," to a period when the two adversaries were able to sit down around a table and face each other, and finally to the present time, when a solution to the long-running sore of the question of Palestine is on the horizon. We congratulate those involved and urge them to press on.

**Mr. MOUMIN** (Comoros): After 48 years of constant pressure on Israel and of persistent debate, year in and year out, in this body on the questions of Palestine and the Middle East, we seem at long last to be able to perceive light at the end of the tunnel. It is our ardent hope that the light is not a false one, like a mirage in the desert. If, through some unforeseen circumstances, the dawn that seems to be breaking over the Israeli-Palestinian problem, with which the international community has now been concerned for decades, should turn out to be false, how great our disappointment will be.

The Government and people of the Comoros, which have been following the situation in the occupied Arab lands since the day of the problem's inception, followed with keen interest, and they welcomed, the events that took place in Washington on 13 September 1993. On their behalf, therefore, I should like to call upon the extremists of both parties to the conflict to give peace a chance and to stop sabotaging the peace process. In this day and age

we of the international community have little sympathy for the spoilers of peace. The Israeli Government must stop its military forces and settlers from further aggravating the situation. The Israeli forces and settlers must stop killing Palestinian leaders and unleashing violence against the Palestinian people.

The Government of Israel has a moral obligation to respect the purpose and principles of the Declaration that it signed in Washington, D.C., and the United States of America must use its influence to see to it that all parties abide by the agreement. As for the Comoros, it is our understanding that the initial steps set out in the Declaration of Principles are an integral and non-prejudicial part of the entire peace process, and we endorse the Palestinians' demand that the interim arrangements include recognition of their right to exercise jurisdiction over all the occupied territories, including total control over their political and economic affairs.

To us, it is of crucial importance that all the provisions of the Declaration be scrupulously adhered to and implemented. That is why we are deeply concerned at the fact that the ongoing negotiations continue to face obstacles and difficulties, particularly with regard to the question of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

The Declaration of Principles leaves to a later stage the negotiations on a number of fundamental issues that are of paramount importance to the final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. These issues include the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian lands, refugees and boundaries. The position of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros is that these remaining issues must be settled in full compliance with international legality - in particular, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which constitute the foundation for a durable structure of permanent peace and stability in the Middle East. All the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly must be adhered to.

The political process has started, and we all wish it success. However, it is well that we should remember that, as was stated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Palestine, Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, in his speech to the Assembly yesterday, if this political process is to be successful, the international community must make a determined effort to provide the people of Palestine with substantial financial assistance to enable them to reconstruct their territory. Therefore, the convening and the results of the Conference in support of peace in the Middle East, which was held in Washington, D.C., on

1 October 1993, are a good omen. We wish the process all success.

**Mr. TAAPOPI** (Namibia): I should like, at the outset, to express to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People my delegation's gratitude for and appreciation of its informative and comprehensive report. We wish to congratulate the Chairman, Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, and the other officers of the Committee.

The Palestinian problem is a prolonged human tragedy that the community of nations is called upon to resolve. Namibia has always held the view that denial of the political aspirations of the Palestinian people - in particular, denial of its right of self-determination, as expressed through the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - is at the core of the conflict in the Middle East.

My delegation welcomes with guarded optimism the historic breakthrough constituted by the agreement, reached in secret talks between Israel and the PLO, on Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and the city of Jericho. In the same vein, we welcome the exchange of letters of mutual recognition between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the subsequent signing, by the representatives of the two sides, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. This is a historic agreement, which will open a new era of peace and understanding among the peoples of the Middle East. Both the Israeli Government and the PLO deserve commendation for this far-reaching achievement, as well as encouragement to carry it through to the desired end - namely, full Palestinian statehood.

The international community must support this courageous agreement. My delegation strongly believes that this interim agreement will pave the way to self-determination for the Palestinian people and to the establishment of the Palestinian State. However, if a just and lasting peace is to be achieved in the Middle East, the Israelis must withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) must be implemented. We call for intensified support and assistance from the international community for the Palestinian people, under the recognized leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to ensure the successful implementation of the agreement that has been reached.

I should like, in conclusion, to echo the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People by saying that we believe that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved. In

accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, we call upon the international community as a whole to intensify its efforts to assist the Palestinian people in building the foundation for the exercise of national sovereignty and, thereby, to ensure a successful outcome of the agreement that has been reached.

For its part, Namibia, as a State Member of the United Nations, will continue to support and promote all efforts to bring peace and stability to the Middle East region in general and to the Palestinian State in particular.

**The PRESIDENT:** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), of 10 October 1975, I now call upon the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

**Mr. ANSAY** (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on an issue of such extreme importance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The question of Palestine is one of the issues that have received the undivided attention of the United Nations for almost half a century. Today the Assembly has before it the latest report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which it is reminded once again in no uncertain terms of the continuing ordeal of the Palestinians, as well as having its attention drawn to the new, very encouraging developments in the making of peace in the Middle East. I should like to express to the Committee our sincere appreciation of its dedicated service, under the able and dynamic leadership of Ambassador Cissé of Senegal.

Equally, we wish to commend the Secretary-General for his untiring efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question, under the auspices of the United Nations.

We would also like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all the parties involved in the peace process since the convening of the Madrid conference.

Since the launching of the Middle East peace process over two years ago, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its Secretary-General have affirmed their support for that process, which aims at achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and to the conflict in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the land-for-peace formula, and at securing the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

The cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif remains at the forefront of the concerns of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its 51 member States. We have recently witnessed highly important positive developments in the peace process: the signing on 13 September 1993, at Washington, of a Declaration of Principles on procedures for self-rule in the occupied Palestinian territories, and Israel's recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

Here I would like to laud the wise leadership of the Palestinian people and the courageous decision taken by President Yasser Arafat; this must be viewed as a big step on the road to achieving a comprehensive and just settlement and ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people.

While welcoming such positive developments, which it considers to be a serious step towards achieving a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East that will restore to the Palestinian people their inalienable national rights and return the occupied territories to their legitimate owners, the Organization of the Islamic Conference affirms its commitment to the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the first *Kiblah* of Islam, with all that it stands for in the eyes of the Islamic *ummah*, such as religious, historical and ideological values, and to the necessity to restore the city to Palestinian sovereignty.

In this regard, the annual coordination meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held at New York on 29 September 1993, welcomed the positive developments in the Middle East peace process following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on the modalities for interim self-rule in the occupied Palestinian territories and the recognition of the PLO by Israel, as well as President Clinton's decision to resume dialogue with the PLO and the agreement between Jordan and Israel on the agenda for negotiations. Further, it reaffirmed the need to make progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks with a view to arriving at a just, comprehensive and final settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace.

It also reaffirmed that Al-Quds Al-Sharif, with its national and religious significance, remains a fundamental issue for all Islamic States, an issue that can be neither ignored nor forgotten, and that its restoration to Palestinian and Islamic sovereignty is necessary.

We look forward to the implementation of the agreement reached between the PLO and Israel, and to its proceeding as planned, without any delay whatsoever and

unhindered, particularly with respect to the withdrawal of Israel from Jericho and the West Bank and to the holding of free elections to appoint a provisional transitional council.

We also see the necessity of a major role for the United Nations and its organs, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in the peace process. We consider that the United Nations should shoulder its complete responsibility, in all fields, for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the implementation of the relevant international resolutions and support for the peace process and for the agreement concluded between the parties concerned. This would be a way of guaranteeing and executing those agreements.

Moreover, we request that these positive developments be reflected in the situation in the occupied territories by a halt to acts of repression and inhuman practices by Israeli occupation authorities, the release of all detainees and an end to violations of Palestinian human rights. We believe this may be the only course of action that can bring lasting peace to the area and eliminate all acts of terror, violence and fanaticism.

The Palestinian people have suffered long years of occupation, repression and denial of the exercise of their national rights. Now that a new dawn has broken forth in the Middle East and the time has come to reap the fruits of the Palestinian struggle, the international community is called upon, especially in the context of yesterday's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to affirm that solidarity and extend all forms of support to those people until they are able to live in freedom and dignity in the land of their fathers and forefathers, have their inalienable rights restored and establish their independent State.

Establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires uniting the efforts of the international community and mobilizing its energies in order to ensure security and peace in the region; this would prove a major support for international peace and security. This could be achieved through consolidating Palestinian authority over all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and extending all forms of support to the Palestinian people. It is incumbent on all of us during this crucial period to continue to extend assistance of all types to the PLO to enable it to confront the coming phase and establish its authority and national institutions. This requires that the international community extend support to the Palestinian people in the economic and material spheres and all other fields until they launch the process of

reconstructing their national economy and rebuilding their infrastructure.

In conclusion, I would like on this occasion, and on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to hail the glorious Palestinian people while affirming the solidarity of the Islamic *ummah* with them in their just and legitimate struggle under their legitimate and sole representative, the PLO, until they are able to restore their inalienable national rights, including their rights to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on their national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Some time ago on a similar occasion, I said from this rostrum that the Organization of the Islamic Conference

yearns for the day when the flag of Palestine will be unfurled over its own territory and will wave proudly here also, amidst those of the other Members of the United Nations. When that day comes, Israel too may be able to savour the sweet taste of recognition and cherish the blessings of peace. Well, I believe that that day is now not very far away.

***The PRESIDENT:*** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform members that the Assembly will consider draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 35 at a later date to be announced in the *Journal*.

***The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.***

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