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Fiftieth Session

77th plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

Fourth report of the General committee (A/50/250/Add.3)

The President: The fourth report of the General Committee (A/50/250/Add.3) concerns a request by the delegation of Spain for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item, "Admission of the World Tourism Organization to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund"; a request by the Secretary-General for the inclusion of an additional sub-item under agenda item 15, "Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs"; and the allocation of agenda item 164, "Normalization of the situation concerning South Africa".

In paragraph 1 of its report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Admission of the World Tourism Organization to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund" should be included in the agenda of the current session. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that this additional item should be allocated to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate the additional item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional sub-item, entitled "Election of a member of the International Court of Justice", should be included as a sub-item of agenda item 15, "Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs". May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional sub-item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that this additional sub-item should be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 4 of its report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that, given its political importance, agenda item 164 should be considered directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that, owing to the financial complexity of the matter, the Fifth Committee would be invited to provide technical observations regarding the implementation of any draft resolutions to be submitted for action by the General Assembly in plenary meeting. The General Committee also decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the Fifth Committee should be asked to submit its technical observations by 12 December 1995.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts these recommendations?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/574)

Draft resolutions (A/50/L.24, A/50/L.37, A/50/L.38)

The President: I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.38.

Mr. Abderahman (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my pleasure, while we consider agenda item 44, "The situation in the Middle East", to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.38, entitled "The Syrian Golan", on behalf of its sponsors: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and my own country, Egypt. I have the further pleasure of announcing that the following States have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution: Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

The draft resolution acquires special importance in the light of the developments that have been unfolding in the Middle East and of the peace process in that region. The draft resolution recalls one of the main points of reference adopted by the Security Council regarding the occupied Syrian Golan, namely Security Council resolution 497 (1981) of 17 December 1981. The draft resolution reaffirms the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and reaffirms once more

the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the occupied Syrian Golan.

The draft resolution notes with satisfaction the convening at Madrid of the Peace Conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with the hope that substantial and concrete progress will be achieved on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks for the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. The draft resolution also expresses deep concern over the fact that Israel has not withdrawn from the Syrian Golan, contrary to the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

By adopting draft resolution A/50/L.38, the General Assembly would reaffirm its determination which was stated in previous resolutions, that the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War continue to apply to the Syrian territory under occupation, and would determine once again that Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and its de facto annexation constitute a stumbling-block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

On behalf of the sponsors, we hope that adoption by the General Assembly of the draft resolution A/50/L.38, which we hope will be for the last time, will result in bringing about complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan, as called for in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Pibulsonggram (Thailand): In speaking on the situation in the Middle East, allow me first, on behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, to express our condolences to the Government and the people of Israel for the untimely loss of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. To us, he was much more than just a leader of a nation. He was a man of great courage, in war and in peace. He fought brilliantly and resolutely for peace. His enduring vision for peace in the Middle East will undoubtedly live on as his most commendable legacy for generations to come.

In this regard, the Thai delegation wishes to commend the unwavering efforts of the Palestinians, under the wise and resolute leadership of Mr. Yasser Arafat, in his pursuit of peace amidst turbulent surroundings and, at times, against all odds. It is my delegation's fervent hope that Mr. Rabin's martyrdom

will inspire all sides in the Middle East conflict to redouble their efforts to achieve the peace of which Mr. Rabin, Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat have been the chief architects.

We have witnessed a number of positive developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993. The Palestinians, who have fairly established self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, are now in control of their own affairs, be they in education, health care, tax collection, social services or tourism. Moreover, we witnessed historic progress in the signing last September of the Interim Agreement extending Palestinian administrative authority over the West Bank, which ushered the peace process into its second and vitally important stage. Thailand welcomes the signing of this Agreement, for it manifests the constructive development of the peace process. We commend all parties involved for their untiring efforts in achieving this noble goal.

Admittedly, the situation in the Gaza Strip under Palestinian self-rule is still fragile. The international community should not let the Palestinians struggle alone. The international community must work together with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that the support and promotion of economic and social development in the occupied territories are sustained. This is the only way to bring about tangible improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinians. Indeed, it serves as a basis for fulfilling a long journey towards successful self-rule.

With regard to Israel and Jordan, I am happy to note that the peace process has taken a rather ambitious form. One year after the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli Treaty of Peace, the international community has witnessed the normalization of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Having committed themselves to embracing the spirit of cooperation, Israel and Jordan are already exploring ways and means to enhance the prospects for regional development. The Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit recently held in Amman stands as evidence of that. My delegation strongly believes that with durable peace as a foundation the Middle East will realize its full potential as a dynamic region of economic prosperity.

As for relations between Israel and Syria, it goes without saying that reconciliation between the two countries is of paramount importance for the peace process. In our view, the negotiation between the two Governments that took place in May this year truly attested to their good will in striving towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Dialogues between these two countries are necessary, we believe, in order to sustain a favourable political climate and safeguard the gains that have already been achieved.

While we acknowledge these encouraging developments, we must realize that the peace process still faces some obstacles. The differences of views on reconciliation among various parties to Middle East conflicts have often led to acts of violence. But resort to violence is not the way to solve the problems. We believe that durable peace can be achieved only when all sides work together to settle their differences through diplomatic and peaceful means. In order for the peace process to continue to gain momentum, mutual accommodation and unwavering commitment from all parties concerned will be crucial.

It seems a paradox that, while the political process is moving towards a successful *rapprochement*, the problem of refugees and immigrants increases because of the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees to their motherland. Therefore, we, the Members of the United Nations, must continue our support and provide increased resources to help the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East meet its increased responsibility at this crucial time of trial. Without assistance, the plight of the refugees will be too enormous for any one organization or any one country to handle.

The continued progress of the Middle East peace process has been a matter of great interest and concern to the countries of Southeast Asia and has always been high on the agenda of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers. At their meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan last July, they issued a joint communiqué which stated, *inter alia*, the following:

“The Foreign Ministers welcomed the progress made in the Middle East peace process, in particular the implementation of the PLO-Israeli Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 1993. The Ministers stressed the importance of continuing the discussions between the Palestinians and Israelis to reach an agreement on the details of the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from the West Bank. They also welcomed the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel and believed that these would contribute to a comprehensive settlement to the Middle East problem.”

Thailand will continue to follow the situation in the Middle East with great interest and concern. Indeed, we wish to reaffirm our support for a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as other relevant United Nations resolutions. It is my delegation's hope that the global community will maintain its efforts and its support in nurturing the peace process until the attainment of a lasting peace in this region becomes a reality.

Mr. Huaraka (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): The current Middle East peace process, which was launched with the Madrid Conference in October 1991, has continued to make significant progress throughout the year. Indeed, there are encouraging signs that the Middle East, a region fraught for so long with disputes and confrontations, is entering a new era in which its constituent countries are beginning to recognize their mutual dependence and to forge relations of trust. The most noteworthy progress made recently, of course, is the agreement reached in September between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the expansion of the Palestinian interim self-government Authority. Under the terms of that agreement, Israeli forces in the West Bank are being redeployed, and the election of a Palestinian Council is scheduled to take place perhaps as early as the beginning of next year. Japan heartily welcomes this Agreement and pays high tribute to the parties concerned for their tireless efforts in reaching it. It is our earnest hope that over the course of time the Palestinian interim self-government Authority will prove a viable and effective institution.

Our attention now turns to Israel's talks with Syria and with Lebanon. We look forward to progress in those bilateral talks in the hope that peace will be achieved throughout the Middle East in the not-too-distant future.

Amid the generally promising regional developments, the world was shocked and saddened in November by the tragic assassination of Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. Japan hopes that the talks between the PLO and Israel will continue to move forward, and that the parties concerned will not yield to violence. That they have declared their determination to overcome this tragedy and to continue their efforts towards the realization of peace is, in my view, confirmation that the peace process is in fact irreversible. Indeed, it is clear that both sides have

progressed too far along the path to conciliation and that the commitment to peace among their peoples is too strong to allow the quest for a peaceful solution of the Palestine question to be thwarted by such acts of terrorism.

The year 1995 has also been noteworthy in terms of Japan's Middle East diplomacy. This past September Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Israel, the Gaza Strip and Jordan and held frank discussions with the leaders in the region on the promotion of peace and on strengthening ties with Japan. The assurance he gave them that Japan would continue to contribute to the advancement of the Middle East peace process and pursue its diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the Gulf region was acknowledged with gratitude.

Also in September, Minister for Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono represented the Government of Japan at the signing of the Agreement on the expansion of the Palestinian interim self-government Authority and attended a ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for assistance to the Palestinians, where he affirmed Japan's continued support for its goals. Recognizing the importance of a peace dividend, as I mentioned in my statement earlier this week, in September 1993 Japan pledged \$200 million in assistance to the Palestinians, and to date it has disbursed \$150 million of that amount. Japan will continue to extend the same positive assistance it has provided in the past, extending a portion of its assistance directly to the Palestinian people. Japan also intends to provide both goods and personnel required to hold the elections for the Palestinian Council.

In addition to advancing the peace process through bilateral political dialogue, it is also necessary to create relations of mutual trust through multilateral talks on issues of common concern to the people of the region. To develop a basis for such cooperation, it is important that people in the region share a common code of conduct and common objectives. This is particularly true in the field of environmental protection and conservation. Thus, at the meeting of the Multilateral Negotiations Environmental Working Group last year, Japan proposed that a set of guidelines be established in this area. This proposal was brought to fruition in October 1994 with the adoption of the Bahrain Environmental Code of Conduct.

Tourism is another promising area for regional cooperation, and Japan participated in efforts on this issue

in the context of the Tourism Workshop of the Regional Economic Development Working Group. Those efforts led to an agreement on the establishment of the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association on the occasion of the second conference of the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit held in Amman, Jordan, this past October.

The peace and security of the Gulf region continue to be of concern to Japan. In this connection I feel obliged to say a word about Iraq, a country that has tremendous influence on the peace and stability of the region.

Japan remains firm in its insistence that the Government of Iraq heed the will of the international community and fully comply with all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. At the same time, Japan is deeply concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people, who are experiencing severe medical and nutritional problems. Therefore, out of humanitarian concern, Japan supports Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which would allow the Government of Iraq to export limited quantities of oil in order to purchase necessary goods for its people. Japan calls upon Iraq to comply promptly with this and the other relevant resolutions.

Once a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is achieved in the Middle East and the people of the region are able to enjoy stability and prosperity, the entire international community will be better off. Japan thus believes that it has a role to play in efforts to establish a new framework of international relations in the region.

Let me conclude my statement today by expressing Japan's determination to redouble its efforts on behalf of international peace and security on the basis of its close partnership with the countries of the Middle East.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Lebanon is the country that has suffered most as a result of the Israeli-Arab conflict. We feel that we have a great deal to gain from the achievement of the just, comprehensive and lasting peace we are striving to establish in the region on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

My delegation wishes to reaffirm Lebanon's sincere commitment to the peace process which was launched in Madrid in 1991. At the time, we accepted the initiative of the two co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the then Soviet Union, on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). However, for 17 years now, Israel

has continued to refuse to implement that resolution and has continued instead to occupy parts of southern Lebanon and to launch attacks, on a daily basis, against innocent civilian populations while Lebanon has continued persistently to call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which reaffirms the sovereignty of Lebanon and its territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders.

Israel should also withdraw completely from the occupied Golan Heights, to the lines of 4 June 1967, in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Indeed, peace cannot be achieved in the region without Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Golan. Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon since 1978 has brought nothing but tragedy and devastation to my country. Neither the 1978 invasion, known as the "Litani operation", nor the 1982 invasion provided Israel with the security it sought. On the contrary, the occupation created more complications and caused great suffering.

The violence in southern Lebanon reaffirms anew the complete failure of the concept of the security zone established by Israel. Israel's almost daily attacks to the north of that area underscore the failure of that concept. Over the past two weeks, Israel has fired more than 8,000 artillery shells on southern Lebanon. Therefore, we reaffirm the absolute necessity of implementing resolution 425 (1978) as such implementation is the only means of bringing stability and peace to southern Lebanon.

In this context, the Security Council, in our view, is the supreme international organ entrusted with protecting States from aggression and with following up the implementation of its resolutions. We believe also that Council meetings should be held whenever necessary in order to consider Israeli aggression against southern Lebanon, as this cannot but support the peace process in the Middle East.

As for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), it has a focal and vital role in the implementation of resolution 425 (1978). Accordingly, we once again call for maintaining the size and effectiveness of the UNIFIL presence in view of the important role that awaits in that respect. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the officers and personnel of UNIFIL for the sacrifices they have made since 1978. Our deep recognition goes also to the UNIFIL troop-contributing countries.

I wish also to reiterate Lebanon's commitment to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and to the enablement of that people to exercise its right to self-determination. We call for the complete implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and of the resolutions that clearly and unequivocally affirm the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes. Lebanon categorically refuses any attempt to settle any of the Palestinians residing in Lebanon on its lands. That consistent position has been enshrined in Lebanon's constitution, in consonance with the Taif Agreement of 1989, and is the subject of a national consensus among all Lebanese.

The Commission on Human Rights, which has adopted several resolutions concerning human rights issues in southern Lebanon, has reaffirmed clearly that Israel, by its practices, violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and The Hague Agreement of 1907. Lebanese detainees are still living in Israeli camps in southern Lebanon, in particular the Al-Khiam camp, under arbitrary detention. We call for their immediate release.

As regards Al-Quds, we reaffirm that Israel's decision to apply its law and its administration to the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif is illegal, and is, therefore, null and void as it has no basis in legitimacy. Likewise, we condemn the decision by certain States to move their diplomatic missions to Al-Quds, in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980), and deplore their refusal to comply with the provisions of that resolution. Accordingly, we call upon those States to respect the relevant United Nations resolutions, in consonance with the Charter of the Organization.

As regards the decision of the United States Congress to transfer the United States embassy to Al-Quds, we once again reaffirm our condemnation of that decision, which we consider to be null and void, since it contradicts United Nations resolutions as well as official United States positions. This decision threatens to bring about the collapse of the peace process in its entirety. We call upon the United States administration to maintain its declared position in regard to that decision.

As for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we believe it has no effect on the Middle East region so long as Israel refuses to accede to the Treaty and continues to threaten the region with its nuclear arsenals, in defiance of

international law and of the resolutions of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

With respect to draft resolution A/50/L.24 concerning the Middle East peace process, we reaffirm our consistent position, namely, that we would wish to see this draft resolution sponsored unanimously in order to express the international community's unconditional support for the peace process in the Middle East. Unfortunately, however, the draft resolution has neglected to mention Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which is one of the essential foundations of the peace process begun in Madrid and thus neglected one of the essential mechanisms of the peace process. Consequently, the Lebanese delegation, in keeping with its unchanged position that has been declared in the context of the Middle East peace process, will vote against this draft resolution. We feel certain that the international community will consider carefully the deeper meaning of this vote by Lebanon, in particular since Lebanon is a principal partner in the peace negotiations.

In addition, my delegation wishes to reaffirm, in relation to preambular paragraphs 3, 4 and 7, and operative paragraphs 5 and 8 of the draft resolution concerning multilateral negotiations, that it is important that such multilateral negotiations not take place before the bilateral negotiations have led to a fair and comprehensive agreement between all the participants in the peace process. We are completely convinced that the multilateral talks held thus far have been premature and that, therefore, they will not bear fruit since the bilateral tracks have not yielded results that are in consonance with international law. This is now becoming abundantly clear from one day to the next.

Israel has the duty to unequivocally abide by the international will in conformity with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. That is the only guarantee for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Our sole objective is to secure peace and prosperity. Lebanon, which has endured a 16 year war that ended only four years ago, aspires to reconstruct its State, hopes to ensure a better future to its coming generations and this will never be unless peace in our region is just, comprehensive and lasting in conformity with international law, the United Nations Charter and resolutions.

Mr. Yañez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary,

Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia also subscribe to the content of this statement.

It is impossible to begin this statement without mentioning the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. The intolerance of the enemies of peace has taken the life of one of the main champions of the peace process begun in Madrid in 1991. Nevertheless, we must not let this despicable act disturb the dynamics of dialogue between the parties. To the contrary, it should serve as a catalyst to continue down the path already undertaken.

This past year has been crucial to the future of the Middle East and has demonstrated that the peace process in the region is now irreversible. The signing of the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Jordan on 26 October of last year has opened the way to the normalization of relations between the two States.

Moreover, the historic Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, signed on 28 September 1995 and witnessed by the European Union, has already produced its first visible results with the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Jenin and their replacement by the autonomous Palestinian Police. It is essential that any progress achieved in the negotiations be reflected in results on the ground; we hope, in particular, that redeployment will continue in accordance with the Interim Agreement. The holding of Palestinian elections should lay the foundations for democratic government and respect for human rights in the autonomous areas. The European Union would like to pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the parties to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, despite the difficulties encountered.

The support and participation of the European Union in the peace process have been constant and unconditional. I wish to recall, in this regard, that the President of the Spanish Government, as President of the European Council, undertook a tour of the region last September, in accordance with the mandate conferred at Cannes by the European Council. This visit to Israel, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, constituted a new expression of the commitment of the European Union to the peace process, and served to examine the situation on the ground and to reaffirm to the parties our willingness to assist them in their efforts, if they consider it necessary.

The European Union hopes that the parties will continue to work in a constructive spirit, and we encourage them to continue the dialogue. We welcomed the

resumption of the negotiations between Israel and Syria last June, and today we would like to call upon them and Lebanon to restore the momentum for the respective bilateral negotiations and reach an agreement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) that would lead to the signing of a peace treaty. We reaffirm, in particular, our commitment to Security Council resolution 425 as the basis for the settlement of the Lebanese question.

In order for the peace process to be successful it is essential that political negotiation be accompanied by economic and social progress and a reduction in the disparities between the peoples of the region.

Throughout the years, the European Union has established an institutional framework of cooperation with the majority of the States of the Near and Middle East, by means of bilateral agreements of association or cooperation.

We are at present in the process of renewing and strengthening a large part of these agreements with the ultimate aim of increasing both our political and economic cooperation with our partners.

In the multilateral negotiating framework of the peace process, the European Union continues to preside over the Regional Economic Development Group and to participate in the organization of three other working groups. We have prompted the establishment of a follow-up committee which we co-chair with one of the regional interlocutors, and we intend to continue encouraging the parties to assume greater responsibility in contributing to the economic development of the region as a whole.

The European Union actively participated in the recent Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit at Amman. Private sector participation is vital to the economic development of the region. The living conditions of all the region's inhabitants must be improved and new prospects for a peaceful future need to be provided. We were particularly pleased to see that every participant at the Summit expressed firm support for the Middle East peace process and stressed the importance of reaching a comprehensive and lasting peace.

The European Union is fully convinced that peace in the Middle East is feasible. The results achieved so far in the peace process lead us to take an optimistic view of future negotiations, which should bring a comprehensive,

just and definitive peace to a region that has already known too much suffering. We have confidence in the parties and their willingness to continue, despite the intolerance of the enemies of peace, along the road that will guarantee the well-being of all peoples of the Middle East and strengthen hopes for peaceful coexistence for future generations.

Mr. Skrypko (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which the world community is celebrating this year, is taking place against a background of significant progress in a Middle East peace settlement. Two months ago, on 28 September 1995, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed a bilateral Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In so doing, they confirmed the irreversibility of the peace process in the Middle East which began with the Peace Conference on the Middle East at Madrid in 1991 and their determination to support, develop and strengthen that process. The delegation of the Republic of Belarus feels that the document is an important starting point for the second phase in the implementation of the historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and we look forward to a successful conclusion.

The September Agreement is an example of a balanced and constructive approach to resolving the acute problems that built up during the period of confrontation. Not only will they provide for a broader field of action for Palestinian self-government in the West Bank through a gradual transfer of civil powers and responsibilities to the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, as agreed, but also respond to the vital interests, including security aspects, of all participants in the peace settlement.

We consider that the parties should focus, at this stage, on the scrupulous implementation of the provisions of that Agreement and make every effort to stick to the appointed timetable for the redeployment of Israeli armed forces on the West Bank and the subsequent holding of the first democratic elections to the Palestinian Council in January 1996. We can say without fear of exaggeration that this moment in the history of the region is a test of the durability of the basis for a comprehensive peace settlement.

Overall, the delegation of Belarus believes that the unravelling of the tightly interwoven complex of problems in the Middle East should be based on the format of the Madrid Peace Conference and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), in the context of respect for the right of all States in the

region to live in peace within internationally recognized borders.

The recent villainous murder of one of the main architects of the Middle East peace process, Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin, tragically confirmed the presence in that region of significant political forces that will stop at nothing to see the collapse of the Middle East peace process. Therefore, priority should be given to the efforts of the interested parties in the decisive struggle against outbursts of violence and of domestic and international terrorism, which is one of the main obstacles to a long-term settlement. Our delegation notes with satisfaction the clear mechanism laid down in the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip for bilateral cooperation in this field.

Constant attention must also be paid to the question of strengthening of measures to build mutual confidence. As we see it, a gradual and permanent expansion of contacts, primarily in the economic field and in environmental protection, scientific research, the transfer of technology, culture, education and tourism, could also bring about substantial changes in the qualitative content of the political dialogue. Here, we must strive to maintain the constant dynamism of bilateral links at all levels, from the highest State level down to the level of "popular diplomacy".

Of extreme significance in strengthening the success already achieved is support provided by the United Nations and the international community for the efforts of the Arab people of Palestine to organize their daily lives. In this context, our delegation notes with satisfaction the significant activity of major donor countries and of the international financial organizations, primarily the World Bank, to provide scientific, expert and technological assistance to the Palestinian people to tackle tasks related to the need to improve their social and economic conditions rapidly, strengthen institutions of self-government, establish a financial and banking system, and train highly qualified national personnel. The Republic of Belarus supports the activities of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories in collaboration with the relevant United Nations organs, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They continue, within available resources, to make every effort to provide

effective assistance to the Palestinians in their respective spheres of competence.

Our delegation considers it necessary once again to affirm its conviction that peace in the Middle East will be durable only if all the States formerly involved in the conflict in the region contribute to its achievement. In this context, against the backdrop of continuing fruitful Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, we note with satisfaction something which is perhaps no less significant, namely the breakthrough in bilateral relations between Israel and Jordan expressed in the signing on 26 October 1994 of the Treaty of Peace. As the year since that historic moment has shown, the parties have succeeded not only in eliminating the situation of confrontation, but also in securing significant progress towards the establishment of genuine good-neighbourly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Republic of Belarus also hopes that Israel and Syria will soon reach a mutual understanding at their bilateral talks, bring their positions significantly closer together and find an acceptable basis for a peace settlement.

It is also very important to achieve progress on the issue of Lebanon. Our delegation urges the resumption of direct talks between the parties in order to seek common ground on territorial questions and conditions for ensuring mutual security. The framework for these talks should be based on Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Effective economic cooperation between the countries of the Middle East can be called, without fear of exaggeration, a main component of lasting peace and an essential condition for the development of mutually beneficial and harmonious bilateral and multilateral dialogue. Similarly, support should be given to the many regional initiatives to establish free-trade zones, industrial parks and specific joint projects in the areas of finance, transportation, energy, agriculture and tourism. Unhindered movement of manpower, capital, goods and services and the reallocation of considerable amounts of resources from military to peaceful purposes will make it easier to attract foreign investment and will contribute to the economic revitalization of the region.

Our delegation welcomes the institutionalization of dialogue on strengthening regional economic cooperation between the States of the Middle East and North Africa through the convening of annual economic summits. We also note with satisfaction that the participants in the second

Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, held last month in Amman, Jordan, came out in favour of further measures to lift the economic blockade against Israel.

Four years have elapsed since the Madrid Peace Conference that initiated the process towards a settlement in the Middle East. Four years is a brief time, but in that time the nature of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours has changed radically. Through direct talks, sound compromises and lessening tensions, an entire region has left behind an era of military confrontation and is moving towards one of peace and development. Today, all parties to the conflict, with the support of the world community, particularly the United Nations, should make the utmost effort to realize finally the 50-year-old dream of peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): The Brazilian Government has been closely following recent developments in the Middle East. We are confident that the encouraging results achieved so far will gradually prevail, creating the conditions for a new era of peace and prosperity for all in the entire region. The brutal assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has cast a shadow over the hopes of all those who have sided with peace and tolerance. But the courage and leadership displayed by men like Rabin will remain a source of inspiration to peoples and Governments on all sides to persevere in their efforts to settle differences through peaceful means. Such cowardly acts of violence and all other forms of extremist opposition to the peace process must continue to be met with the harshest international condemnation.

As a multi-ethnic nation, Brazil is honoured to have citizens of both Jewish and Arab descent living together in peace, elevating the country as an example of a highly cohesive society where harmony prevails in diversity.

We wish to restate our full support for the continuation of the negotiations, which, we are convinced, will lead to the building of a permanent peace in the Middle East through a fair, comprehensive and long-lasting negotiated solution, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The convening of the Peace Conference on the Middle East at Madrid in October 1991 was the first step towards the achievement of a negotiated peace in the region. We applauded the signing by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government

Arrangements, in Washington on 13 September 1993; of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, at Cairo on 4 May 1994; of the Agreement on the Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, in August 1994; and of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, on 28 September 1995. As a consequence of these historic acts, we have witnessed the constitution of the Palestinian Authority, a remarkable symbol of progress for the Palestinian people in its struggle for the full exercise of its legitimate right to self-determination.

With reference to the Israeli-Jordanian segment of the peace process, my delegation once more commends the two Governments for the significant progress already achieved. The Brazilian delegation wishes to recall the importance of the signing of the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda in Washington on 14 September 1993, which created a favourable atmosphere for further significant developments, such as the adoption of the Washington Declaration on 25 July 1994 and the signing of the Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994, which I myself, in my former capacity as Brazil's Minister of External Relations, had the honour to witness. We wish to express our sincere hope that Israel and Jordan will continue to cooperate in a constructive fashion, enhancing the present positive prospects for negotiations in the region.

It is the earnest wish of the Brazilian delegation that similar progress may be attained between Israel and Syria. We wish to stress our serious concern with regard to the situation in Lebanon and reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders, as stated in Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Over the years, the United Nations has played an important role in the Middle East, not only through peace-keeping operations and other important diplomatic initiatives, but also through economic, social and humanitarian-assistance programmes. We wish to stress the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the settlement of the situation in the region. The Brazilian delegation wishes to reaffirm its full support for the continuing participation of the United Nations in the multilateral negotiations between the Israeli and Arab parties.

My delegation also wishes to underline the importance of ensuring economic development in the occupied territories as an indispensable tool for the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The

Brazilian delegation is confident that the strengthening of economic relations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government is absolutely necessary for the creation of a constructive environment between the two sides.

The Palestinian Authority is facing serious challenges because of the gradual transfer of responsibilities to its competence. In this regard, we commend the Palestinian Authority for the large-scale efforts it has undertaken to build a national economy, reconstruct vital infrastructure, establish national institutions and achieve overall economic and social development. However, it is our view that, together with the measures carried out by the Authority, the support of the international community is of paramount importance in order to maintain the momentum of the peace process.

Brazil's readiness to contribute to these efforts has already found expression in concrete initiatives, such as the organization of technical-cooperation missions to the region, Gaza in particular. My delegation notes with satisfaction the convening of a donor's conference in Washington and of the Economic Summits in Casablanca and Amman as significant events in which Brazil had the privilege of participating.

A word of acknowledgement is also due to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its important role. I wish to praise the Agency for its monitoring of the Peace Implementation Programme, which is helping create a positive environment to enhance the peace process through the economic recovery of the occupied territories.

Fully aware of the importance of the peace process and of the need for supportive participation on the part of the international community, the Brazilian Government will continue to pay close attention to the development of the situation in the Middle East. In this spirit, my country hosted the United Nations Regional Seminar and NGO Symposium on the question of Palestine for Latin America and the Caribbean from 20 to 23 March 1995 in Rio de Janeiro. Bearing in mind the vital role of economic rehabilitation as an integral part of the peace process, the Government of Brazil has actively participated, as noted earlier, in the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summits. We also wish to reaffirm our willingness to participate in international efforts, particularly those supported by the United Nations in the fields of technical and scientific cooperation.

The negotiations that lie ahead and the difficult choices they imply will require patience and a genuine spirit of compromise on the part of the parties involved, as well as the unflinching commitment of the international community to the peace process.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic): Allow me, at the outset, to join other representatives in praising the memory of Yitzhak Rabin. Mr. Rabin was a friend of my country, and his last meeting, in New York, with its President, Václav Havel, is something about which I shall talk to my grandchildren.

In September 1993, when representatives of Israel and of the Palestine Liberation Organization met in Washington to sign the Declaration of Principles, the Middle East seemed ready to follow a course towards peace in the coming months, in line with the time-frame of the Declaration. In the event, the course turned out to be full of brambles and boulders. But, given the history of the region, the marvel is that the peace process did continue, not that it did not meet its self-imposed schedule.

The progress has been obvious. The parties have established expanding Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and in the West Bank. They have settled urgent security problems and created conditions for elections to the Palestinian Authority. An Israeli-Jordanian Treaty of Peace has been signed, and its provisions are being successfully implemented.

The Czech Republic welcomes this progress. We have throughout supported the peace process and any talks on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

To be durable and successful, any Middle East settlement has to have a tangible effect on the daily life of the local people. Economic development and reconstruction — above all, in the autonomous Palestinian territories — is therefore an indispensable part of the peace process. Old conflicts will not, of course, simply dissolve in economic prosperity. Nevertheless, without positive economic and social effects, peace will hardly take root.

Many countries are therefore endeavouring to promote comprehensive economic development in the Middle East and in northern Africa. The 1994 Casablanca Summit outlined trends in regional economic integration, private investment and the establishment of regional economic institutions. The recent Amman conference, which followed

up on Casablanca, elaborated these ideas and triggered concrete development projects.

In this context, we wish to commend the activity of the five working groups on multilateral talks on the Middle East. They are very important as a vehicle for preparing and implementing concrete projects in the region and as a forum for nurturing mutual contacts and cooperation between erstwhile adversaries. In September 1995, the Czech Republic was admitted as a member of the groups for water resources and for regional economic development. Our membership will allow us to intensify our participation in the development and reconstruction of the region. We hope that the experience of our experts and companies, based on their long-standing business connections in a number of Middle East countries, will prove its worth.

So far, the Czech Republic has sought to assist by contributing — as, in fact, we did just yesterday at the pledging conference — to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) fund. Furthermore, we grant scholarships to Palestinian students. Earlier this year, the Czech Government authorized development aid to the autonomous territories. The concrete form and methods of financing are being considered.

Economic prosperity is not a universal medicine; the functioning of human communities is more complex. Nevertheless, there is no doubt but that economic crises — that is, the lack of economic prosperity — constitute one breeding ground for extremism. Economic growth in the Middle East is therefore an important tool for thwarting extremist and radical tendencies. We condemn such tendencies and strongly oppose the violent acts of extremists, often targeted at civilians.

Even as we welcome the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Jordanian settlements, we hope that all other necessary bilateral negotiations will begin and will produce tangible positive results. We are convinced, for example, that the peace process will eventually alleviate the incessant tensions troubling southern Lebanon and will restore Lebanese sovereignty over its entire territory, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Unlike the Middle East peace process, the situation in Iraq offers only scant encouragement. Over the past two years we have carefully and responsibly studied the situation as Security Council members. Although from

time to time we thought that we had registered positive signals from Iraq, the overall view is today far from satisfactory.

Despite partial steps taken by Iraq, we are still awaiting its compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 687 (1991) and 715 (1991). We found Iraq's own recent admissions regarding its programmes of arms of mass destruction very disturbing. They proved that the work of the United Nations Special Commission is nowhere near its end.

We also continue to be concerned about the fate of Kuwaiti and other nationals abducted and detained in Iraq, and we have not ignored the issue of restitution of stolen Kuwaiti properties.

In connection with Iraq, one hears expressions of concern, even in today's newspaper, over the plight of people resulting, allegedly, from the imposition of sanctions. We are not going to compare the suffering of those people with that which Iraqi leaders had in store for mankind, in the form of heinous biological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction. We do, however, wish to urge Iraqi leaders once again, as we have repeatedly done in the Security Council, to take a second look, and a third look, at Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which provides ample mechanisms to feed the hungry and minister to the sick — if only Iraqi authorities were prepared to take up the opportunity.

Mr. Butler (Australia): The Assembly takes up its agenda item on the situation in the Middle East at a critical time for the Middle East peace process. The succession of historic agreements, which began with the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington on 13 September 1993 and which was added to most recently by the signing on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza, has laid the foundation for a comprehensive settlement to a dispute that has for so long bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours and deprived the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity.

We applaud the progress which has been made to date, the vision of those responsible for taking the hard decisions and the untiring efforts of those who have played crucial roles to bridge negotiating differences.

It has taken great courage to pursue the peace process. One individual who possessed such courage was the late

Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. The tragic assassination of Mr. Rabin robbed us of a great man, a man who was committed to the peace process. We must not now allow extremism and intolerance to rob the parties of the courage to secure a durable peace in the Middle East.

Like other responsible countries, Australia has a deep interest in the Middle East and has been concerned for many years at the implications for global security of conflict in the region. Australia's long-standing policy in this area is based on two main premises: a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and recognition of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to the possibility of an independent State.

Australia has supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure boundaries.

While a series of important steps have recently been taken on the road to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, we cannot become complacent about the remainder of the journey.

The challenge the international community now faces is threefold: to ensure that recent positive developments do not founder for lack of economic and political support, to nurture progress on the other bilateral tracks of negotiations to match that achieved between Israel and the PLO and to prevent acts of violence and terrorism by extremist groups that seek to endanger the peace process and threaten to drive the Middle East back into conflict and suffering.

Political achievements must be reinforced by the realization of economic benefits. Thus, it is imperative not only that the parties to the agreements maintain their commitment and expedite the remaining processes of negotiation and implementation, particularly on the commencement of the final-status negotiations next year, but also that the international community ensure speedy and constant economic and political support for this purpose.

In recognition of the importance of providing international economic support and practical assistance to the Palestinian Authority, Australia has committed more than \$A18 million dollars in connection with the implementation of the Oslo accords. These funds are being spent principally on development activities crucial to the Palestinian people, such as income generation, education and training, health, sanitation and water resources.

Australia has been pleased to participate in the multilateral arm of the peace process. We are particularly committed to involvement in the working groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are both areas where Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise and where we judge we will be able to make a contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region.

For example, in April 1995 Australia hosted a workshop on rainfall enhancement. This workshop provided regional water managers and scientists with an opportunity to discuss the potential for cloud seeding to enhance water availability in the countries of the Middle East. Australia has also provided practical input to the regional working group on arms control and regional security, in particular ideas relating to the establishment and operation of regional conflict-prevention centres.

We also warmly welcomed the convening of the Middle East/North Africa Summit on Economic Cooperation in Casablanca and the follow-up Summit recently convened in Amman as a way of building economic cooperation and regional development in the Middle East.

Recent developments reinforce the need for Israel, Syria and Lebanon to continue progress towards their own peace agreements. Australia warmly welcomed the Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel, signed last year, as a significant commitment to securing peace for the peoples of the Middle East, and we urge Israel, Syria and Lebanon to redouble their efforts to achieve a peace settlement based on the widely accepted principle of land for peace.

We continue to oppose any activity by outside forces that compromises Lebanon's sovereignty. We unequivocally maintain our support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Australia believes that further progress in the negotiations will benefit from all parties' adopting positive and forward-looking policies that serve to build confidence

and nurture an atmosphere of cooperation. Now is not the time to maintain obdurate policies of the past that can only obstruct cooperation and hinder peace.

We therefore consider that the Arab economic boycott of Israel, a symbol of Arab hostility to Israel, has no place as a negotiating point in the peace process. We believe the boycott unnecessarily constrains the economic development of the region and, in particular, may restrict the development of the Palestinian Authority. Australia welcomes the moves by a number of Arab States to wind back the boycott and urges all members of the Arab League to pursue this path as a practical and concrete step towards peace and towards consolidating the agreements already achieved.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all Middle East States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, particularly those which operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, and we urge all parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their non-proliferation obligations.

Similarly, universal adherence by States to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention is essential and would make an important contribution to the security of the region.

Mr. Odium (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Australia continues to support fully the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the investigation and monitoring of Iraqi weapons programmes. We welcome Iraq's recent declaration that it intends to cooperate with the Special Commission, and we look forward to this being given practical application. Responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government, so Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions which would allow it to resume limited oil exports so that the hardships that are evident amongst the civilian population can be addressed.

The situation in the Middle East has been a major preoccupation of this Assembly almost since the birth of

the United Nations. At times, it has seemed the most acute and intractable of the regional conflicts threatening international peace and security. It is appropriate and heartening that as the United Nations celebrates its fiftieth year a peace process is in train, a peace process which, with international support, good faith and political will on the part of those directly involved, will allow us to contemplate a new environment in the Middle East, an environment in which Arabs and Israelis can live together in peace, cooperation and well-being.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The dynamic of peace and reconciliation that began in 1991 with the onset of the Middle East peace process has continued in recent years to grow stronger through the mobilization of increasing support by all, within the region and throughout the world, who are convinced that the only promising route lies in the search for a negotiated solution. The noble enterprise of building a just and lasting peace on which Palestinian and Israeli leaders embarked when they met at Washington on 13 September 1993 to sign the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes and the subsequent memorandum of understanding, needs this broad support, because it must avoid the numerous obstacles and traps set by extremists of all stripes, who are determined to thwart peace.

It was thus that on 4 November 1995 one of the main initiators and architects of the peace process, Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, was cut down, a tragic victim to the blindness and violence bred of intolerance and hatred. It is fortunate indeed that this ordeal, as hard as it may be, has thus far only strengthened the determination of Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and of the vast majority which favours peace and supports them, to pursue progress in the implementation of the agreements.

To be sure, the road ahead is long. But the 28 September signing at Washington of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip marked the successful conclusion of a year of difficult negotiations and confirmed the determination of the parties to persevere and continue to move forward.

Like the rest of the international community, Senegal fully supports that agreement, as it supported earlier ones. We hope it will be another milestone on the road towards the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and to sovereignty in their homeland, and will thus contribute to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The emphasis on the question of Palestine derives from the unanimous conviction that it lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that only if it is settled in all its aspects on the basis of the principles set out in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) will it be possible to lay the foundations for true peace in the Middle East.

Negotiations between the parties will soon enter a crucial phase in settling sensitive problems of permanent status, and we think it important that the peace process go hand in hand with renewed support from the international community, especially from the United Nations, which continues to bear responsibility until the Palestinian people achieve the restoration of their legitimate national rights. In that connection, the international community must continue and increase its support for all in the region who have chosen the difficult road of peace, and must reflect that support in concrete action that will enable the immense majority, which aspires to peace, to hope for a better tomorrow.

With specific regard to the Palestinian population of the occupied territories, whose commitment and support are indispensable for the success of the peace process, the international community's support in their task of rebuilding the economic and social infrastructure is one of the most important pillars of peace in the Middle East. In this connection we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to coordinate assistance to the Palestinian people and support for economic and social development in the region.

The new climate in Israeli-Palestinian relations has begun to have its positive effects, inspiring a dynamic that has enabled Israel and Jordan to establish formal diplomatic relations and Syria and Israel to hold several sessions of talks on substantive issues. We hope that progress will be rapid in the negotiations between Syria and Israel and that talks between Lebanon and Israel will get under way, in the spirit of the 1989 Taif agreement and Security Council resolution 425 (1978), with a view to broadening and consolidating the basis for the peace that is a prerequisite for strengthening cooperation and for developing the rich economic potential of the region. In this regard, the second North Africa-Middle East summit meeting, held in October at Amman, Jordan, showed that peace has returned to that region and that a prosperous future is in the offing.

I shall conclude by quoting from the message of His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

“With every passing day, the spectre of war and destruction retreats further from Palestine. It is up to all of us together to work tirelessly for the triumph in Palestine and throughout the Middle East of the ideals of peace, justice and solidarity that inspire the courageous leaders of the region, who have chosen to wage the noble struggle for peace”.

Mr. Ni'mah (Qatar): For a considerable time now, the United Nations General Assembly has made a practice of discussing the situation in the Middle East, year in and year out. This, of course, has been due to the General Assembly's awareness of the importance of this vital region to the consolidation of international peace. The questions arising from the conflict in the Middle East have been the focus of a large number of the strenuous efforts deployed by the international community in trying to find viable solutions to the problems of that conflict and to contain the repercussions of the resultant disputes and the flames of successive wars.

If we examine the history of the Middle East region, we find it to be a history fraught with momentous events — events that arose out of various reasons and under various circumstances. Some of them were momentous events which mobilized feelings, only to metamorphose after a while into a continuous concern. Other such events shook swords in their sheaths in anticipation of a perceived day of reckoning. Such a day, at times, becomes a pitch black night in which the traveller yearns for dawn, and, at times, becomes a compassionate, invisible hand that reaches down from heaven, and lightening, in which one descends, a break in the clouds for a Middle East that struggles with its destiny, to be beaten at times and at times to be gripped by various states of despair and hopelessness, in which it — that is, the Middle East — remains upright, unvanquished and patient, with its infinite hopes, dreams and visions. These hopes, dreams and visions have been spent on the principles of the United Nations Charter, a Charter which was designed by mankind to be a covenant of peace, conciliation, rapprochement, dialogue and solidarity among mankind in all its races, and among the cultures and civilizations of the entire world. It is a Charter that humanity looked up to for justice in its tribulations and relied upon to be the bedrock of righteousness, justice and peace. We also wanted it to be an end to the age of wars, a breakthrough into the time of

peace, with its norms regarding the sovereignty and independence of countries, its standards for the protection of territories and their reconstruction and its concepts of preserving the options of peoples regarding their ways of living and adopting their political and socio-economic systems. Such diversity provides the foundation for interaction among nations in solving problems and conflicts through constructive dialogue, consultation, cooperation and coordination.

When the Conference on the Middle East was held in Madrid, we saw a door that augured a new dawn of *détente* in the history of our region, putting an end to the suffering of the masses of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peoples afflicted with Israeli occupation. This gave rise in our hearts to hope that praiseworthy international efforts expended since that Conference would be able to put an end to the tragedy of the Palestinian people and would help it to regain its legitimate right to the establishment of its independent state on the soil of its dear Palestinian homeland.

The dawn of this new era, reflected in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Gaza and Jericho in 1993, the Cairo Agreement of 1994, the agreement between Jordan and Israel, and, finally, the agreement signed in Washington on 28 September 1995, renew our hopes that the process of peace in the Middle East will arrive at its safe haven, and our hopes that this process will continue its vigorous march in order to achieve the aims desired in the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, and to achieve a settlement which is comprehensive and just to all outstanding problems, so that a just and lasting peace can be achieved on the basis of mutual respect, fruitful cooperation and the desired coordination, in order to uphold the interests of all the peoples of the region and to achieve their ambitions.

The expansion of the self-government on the West Bank to include the area of Jenin, the plan for it to include Nablus — the major city on the West Bank — and later to include all other territories under occupation, is of itself a positive development which renews our hopes in the establishment of a Middle East yearning for prosperity, advancement and growing progress in the fields of human endeavour and in the realms of cultural competition — in arts, letters, science and knowledge.

The dawn of this new era, embodied in the launching of the process of peace and cooperation in this important region of the world, has placed great

responsibility on its makers and guarantors, and has added other burdens during this important transitional stage of the peace process. The continuity of this process and its progress towards the desired aims should not be taken for granted, but should instead be seen as something calling for the deployment of more efforts by all parties concerned and their mobilization of greater energy to promote negotiation towards greater and more comprehensive ends.

Our hopes are great, and our expectations are even greater, as a result of the wide global support enjoyed by the peace process, and by the support of those who believe in peace — those who now have even greater hopes regarding the regaining of the occupied territories and regaining usurped rights, putting an end to war and initiating a new era of regional cooperation in order to put an end to armaments and to achieve economic development for all States of the region and to upgrade the level of the peoples of the region, who have long suffered the wars and problems of occupation.

The aspiration after actual peace is linked to laying the foundations for mutual confidence amongst the parties concerned. Such mutual confidence cannot enjoy the fruitful cooperation and the exchanges in the growing socio-economic and political relations among the parties until the full withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and the renunciation of the ideas of hegemony and supremacy, as well as by the steering away from acts of confrontation and violence, the casting away of patterns of extremism and intolerance, the acquisition of territories by force and the continued attempt to occupy these territories as a basis for security.

The State of Qatar, proceeding from the sagacious instructions of His Highness Sheik Hamad bin-Khalifa Al-Thani, seeks all that would serve the national aims and would provide the necessary means to uphold the national Arab right to achieve a full comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. Such a peace would strengthen peace and security in the region and ensure its stability.

Qatar sincerely seeks to mobilize all the necessary Pan-Arab energies so that they may contribute to the unification and coordination of the efforts in this delicate, significant stage in the history of our nation which calls for more Arab solidarity and more Pan-Arab brotherhood which would enable our Arab nation to play its distinct and typical role in the history of humanity and its pioneering creative contribution to the realms of cultural development.

Furthermore, the State of Qatar, through its continuous support for the Gulf Cooperation Council and the strengthening of the links of brotherhood and fruitful cooperation, through enlightened consultation and the exchange of the right concepts and of skilful participation in laying the foundations in the interests of progress and the welfare of the peoples of the region now and in the future and in protecting their lands, their dependants and the territorial integrity of all countries of the Gulf region without exception.

This policy affirms the principles of regional cooperation and strengthens the concept of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and commitment to the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter and lay the foundations for mutual understanding based on commitment to the values of continuous exchanges of joint vital interests. This would lead to the establishment of domestic social peace and stability and would contribute to strengthening security under international as well as Islamic national and regional standards. In particular, it would contribute to the achievement of the aims of the peace process in the Middle East to which Qatar has, and continues to make, a praiseworthy and well-known contribution reflected in its having hosted the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East in 1994. It was also reflected in its participation in the conferences and meetings regarding the peace process and related questions on socio-economic development and as a further contribution to the promotion of the peace process we will host the Fourth Summit of Regional Economic Cooperation. Qatar's contribution is a living expression of an enlightened awareness that the concept of peace based on a just, comprehensive and lasting foundation and on the principle of land for peace and on the implementation of relevant international resolutions — Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) which call for ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian-Arab Golan and ending the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon which has been afflicted with wars and suffering as a result of that bitter occupation. We call on the international community to put an end to that situation so as to return southern Lebanon to its motherland in dignity. History records the suffering of Lebanon and records its pain. Its civilization gave the Middle East the world's greatest treasures and the greatest alphabet where we read of beauty and goodness as well as beautiful words which form the melodious tunes in our world. This is reflected in its generous bounty, its grains of goodness and in its grapes and olives, a sustenance for mankind.

The international community is called upon to return southern Lebanon to Lebanon. We would also like to reaffirm our full and complete support for fraternal Lebanon, for its sovereignty over all its territories and its regional security. We commend the efforts made by the brotherly people of Lebanon towards the reconstruction its country. We are pleased to note the participation of our Arab brethren in its reconstruction so that Lebanon may regain its place as a beacon of light — one which gives an example of tolerance, love, development and prosperity.

We look forward to further achievements in the peace process and to progress in the endeavours now being made on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the peace negotiations. We call upon all peace-loving forces to contribute to the achievement of progress on these two tracks. In particular, we call upon the United States, the sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East, to continue its praiseworthy efforts in this regard in order to bring the process to a successful conclusion that would be reflected in the establishment of full justice, security, stability and permanent peace in the Middle East.

The stability of the Middle East economically and politically is intimately linked with an important question, namely curbing the arms race in the region. Therefore, we call for more concerted efforts by the international community to halt the arms race in the region which is in dire need of mobilizing its resources and potential in order to achieve the progress and prosperity it has long sought. Curbing the arms race should encompass all the countries of the region without exception.

Qatar emphasizes the need for the region to be free of weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons. In this regard we recall the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of 11 May 1995 which noted with concern the continued presence of nuclear facilities in the Middle East.

It reaffirmed the importance of achieving universal accession to the Treaty, and called upon all States of the Middle East that have not yet acceded to it to do so. It also called for those States that have not yet placed all their nuclear installations under the full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency to do so without exception.

We believe that the efforts of peace-loving peoples will enjoy increased support and encouragement from all the Members of our international Organization, which is

called upon today, more than ever before, to step up its efforts in this regard. This would help create a climate of confidence and tolerance, and would foster the will to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. This would enhance the status of the peacemakers in the negotiations and enhance the value of the significant achievements made in the peace process, in spite of the risks it faces and of the sacrifices made for its success.

This process holds out the hope of achieving a harmonious present and a brighter future for the Middle East, marked by the values of tolerance and cooperation and the enjoyment of peace and security. Hence, my delegation looks forward to the adoption without a vote of the draft resolution on the peace process in the Middle East.

Let evil know that good will defeat it, and let destruction know that the forces of reconstruction will prevail.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Ukraine welcomes the new developments in Arab-Israeli relations over the course of the past year aimed at settling the Middle East conflict by political means, with the help of a peaceful and constructive dialogue between Israel and the Arab countries.

During this period, a multilateral summit meeting was held in Cairo, with the participation of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Hussein Ibn Talal of Jordan, the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and Mr. Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestinian Authority. In addition, a number of bilateral talks, aimed at facilitating the practical implementation of previously signed documents and the continuation of the peace dialogue, have taken place.

In this context, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, signed on 28 September 1995, constitutes a milestone on the road to achieving peace in this region, and particularly between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples.

In a letter to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and head of the Palestinian Authority, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, said:

"I wish to express the hope that the practical implementation of this document will contribute to the continuation of the negotiating process towards the final settlement of the problem by political means and to the establishment of lasting peace and mutual understanding in the Middle East, and will serve the cause of the Palestinian people's exercise of its right to national self-determination through the creation of an independent State of Palestine."

Ukraine welcomes the positive developments and the steps taken towards achieving a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. The compliance by the parties with the obligations undertaken in accordance with the signed agreements and the consolidation of mutual confidence are of paramount importance.

In solving the Middle East problem, Ukraine proceeds from the need to reach a compromise between all the parties to the conflict and to implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the provisions of the bilateral agreements. A comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East problem, must be based on these principles.

We should pay tribute to the leaders of the PLO, Israel and Jordan for their efforts to achieve peace in the region. We would also like to commend the sponsors of the peace process and the Government of Egypt for their dedication and commitment to this task. At the same time, we resolutely condemn the manifestations of terrorism and extremism in this region. Special attention should be paid to the great danger posed by such actions on the part of the radical elements in Arab countries and in Israel alike — elements that take no consideration of the new political realities or of changes in the region and act on the basis of old stereotypes, applying terrorist methods as a means of solving the problems. In our view, terrorism and extremism have an adverse effect on the process of negotiations, jeopardize the achievements of the previous negotiations and destabilize the overall situation in the region.

The Government and the people of Ukraine learned with great sorrow and profound shock of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. This barbaric terrorist act was aimed not only at one of the principal architects of the Middle East peace process, but also at the peace process itself. We share the hope expressed by many delegations that the people of Israel will not allow this terrible tragedy to discourage them and that they will remain committed to the peace process.

In our opinion, the United Nations should maintain its responsibility for finding a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and promoting dialogue and confidence-building measures by creating an atmosphere conducive to the eradication of the hostility and mistrust that still divide the region.

Ukraine is also hopeful that progress will be made on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the negotiations. This will undoubtedly enhance the chances of bringing about peace and stability in the region.

Ukraine pursues a balanced and constructive policy in its relations with all countries of the Middle East. As is known, all the States and peoples of the region are willing to engage in mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Our country is interested in the speediest possible settlement of the Middle East conflict and the development of relations with all countries of the region. In this regard, Ukraine, with its considerable scientific and technical potential, is ready to establish Ukrainian-Palestinian cooperation, in particular in the economic sphere.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope of the people of Ukraine that the seeds of peace will soon take root in the ancient soil of the Middle East and that the peoples of the region will know no more war.

Mr. Shah (Pakistan): Since our last debate on this agenda item, positive and encouraging developments have taken place towards the peaceful solution of the Middle East conflict. The people of the Middle East have continued to demonstrate a serious commitment to achieving a peaceful settlement of their long-standing problems by forswearing the path of conflict and making earnest efforts towards promoting peace and understanding among themselves through dialogue.

Ever since this crisis began, the Government of Pakistan has followed with keen interest the situation in the occupied Arab territories. The recent agreements concluded between the parties involved constitute significant steps toward a just and durable peace in the Middle East. We earnestly hope that the final settlement will include the withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and, moreover, will adequately address all the aspects of the Middle East issue, including the return of the refugees.

Pakistan's persistent support of the just struggle of the Palestinian people is well known. We have

consistently endorsed Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as a basis for the resolution of the Middle East and Palestinian problems.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has, therefore, always been assumed that a solution to the Palestine problem would pave the way for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. We welcome the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 28 September 1995. Pakistan fully shares the belief that the peace process, which began with the Madrid Conference in 1991, will lead to the Palestinian people's exercising their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. My delegation also welcomes the fact that alongside progress on the Palestinian issue significant movement has taken place towards solving the problems between Jordan and Israel. We very much hope to see similar progress in resolving the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese conflicts. In order to achieve a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, it is vital that successful results be simultaneously achieved on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. We fully share the view that unless these fundamental issues are adequately addressed peace will continue to elude the region.

It is imperative to maintain the present momentum that has been achieved in the negotiating process. We fully share the expectations of the international community that there will be no delay in the implementation of the agreements concluded so far. Furthermore, the provision of these agreements should be complied with both in letter and in spirit. We strongly urge all parties concerned to demonstrate the requisite flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the vision of lasting peace in the Middle East.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its commendable work in alleviating the sufferings of the Palestinian people. We commend the selfless dedication and unwavering commitment of the Commissioner General of UNRWA and his staff, and note the progress achieved by UNRWA in the transfer of its headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip.

The United Nations must continue its efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East problem. The Organization and its specialized agencies can make an invaluable contribution

in extending assistance to the Palestinian people. They have a special responsibility to help build the social and economic infrastructure and national institutions that are a prerequisite for the attainment of peace and prosperity in the Middle East. In this regard, my delegation would like to extend its appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the most able and distinguished manner in which he has continued to guide the work of the Committee.

The crucial linkage between the political process and the social and economic dimensions of the problem cannot be ignored. This linkage is vital for the achievement of lasting stability in the region. The Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit Conferences held in Casablanca and Amman were a reflection of the resolve of the international community to assist the parties in achieving this objective. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the international community continue its constructive contribution to the peace process and assist the parties in accomplishing their mission.

The international community is fully committed to the exercise of the right to self-determination by all peoples under colonial or other forms of alien domination and foreign occupation. The United Nations has recognized the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir. Although encouraging developments have taken place towards the resolution of the question of Palestine, the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir has yet to be exercised through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations. Pakistan wishes to continue to extend all possible support to the Palestinian cause in their efforts for national reconstruction. Our links with the people of the Middle East region are deep-rooted and Pakistan anxiously looks forward to further reinforcing these natural linkages of our common history. My delegation also appeals to the international community, particularly the United Nations, to provide urgent assistance to the Palestinian National Authority in its efforts to rebuild the Palestinian economy and consolidate its control over the liberated areas.

The environment for peace in the Middle East surpasses the promise of any known in the past. It is therefore essential that the region not relapse into another period of instability. The international community must seize this historic opportunity and ensure the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): It is with deeply mixed feelings that I stand at this rostrum today to speak about the peace process in the Middle East, which has thus far traversed a path of both great hardship and historic achievement. Like so many in the international community, the Republic of Korea has rejoiced in witnessing the seeds of peace being sown in the Middle East through the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and this year through the implementation of an Agreement which extends Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Through candid and open-minded dialogue, Israelis and Palestinians have jointly proven to the world that they have the courage, fortitude and vision to establish a real peace in the Middle East.

The critical Agreement, which contains a concrete action programme for Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-government in certain areas, has dramatically altered the political and military landscape of the Middle East and has paved the new-found way towards peace and reconciliation. Indeed, for those of us who still vividly remember the bloodshed and violence of the wars of the 1960s and 1970s, the transfer of control over sections of the West Bank from Israeli to Palestinian hands was a poignant reminder that even the most deeply rooted and seemingly insurmountable hatreds can be extinguished by the conscious efforts of human beings.

The Israeli-Jordanian relationship has formed another critical stepping-stone towards comprehensive peace in the region. The watershed peace accord between these two countries, signed last year, has been implemented faithfully and supported by an increase in substantive bilateral cooperation. With the trade agreement signed between Jordan and Israel on 25 October 1995, the door has now been opened for even greater economic achievements, which promise to further bolster relations between them.

Despite the progress in the Middle East peace process, 1995 has also been a year of tragedy and loss. We have mourned the passing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, an individual who never tired in his struggle to secure peace in the Middle East and whose heroic commitment and boundless faith in the prospects for peace were a central factor in propelling the Middle East peace process to this stage. His guidance and wisdom will be dearly missed not only by the people of the Middle East, but by all the peace-loving nations of the world, which found such great inspiration in his words and actions. Indeed, it is his spirit which will continue to serve as a beacon for the efforts to realize peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the Israeli position of pursuing all the commitments for regional peace and sincerely hopes that the leaders of the region — Prime Minister Peres of Israel, King Hussein of Jordan and Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will, in a spirit of mutual cooperation and respect, strive towards constructive solutions and advance the peace between their peoples. Since the Middle East peace process was set in motion by the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the Republic of Korea has consistently held the view that peace cannot be whole without reconciliation between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon. Although much remains to be done on these two tracks to round out the peace process, progress in these areas may allow the Middle East to set an example of genuine regional peace in the post-cold-war era, in which the security landscape is by and large characterized by conflicts of a local nature. It is in this context that the Republic of Korea welcomes the recent positive signs regarding the relationship between Israel and Syria and hopes that they will be forged into more concrete plans for peace.

One of the critical lessons of the post-cold-war period is that economic well-being is a precondition for peace and security. We have seen, for example, the grave implications which rampant hunger and poverty, if left unattended, can have on regional and global stability. In this vein, the Republic of Korea views the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit as instrumental in enhancing regional economic cooperation and development since its first meeting, in Casablanca, last year. The second Summit meeting, held last month in Amman, laid the foundation for promoting the expansion of private-sector investment in the region and fostering a public-private partnership in fields such as tourism, telecommunications and transportation. The Amman Summit, in accordance with the Casablanca Declaration, also mapped out key institutional arrangements to underpin the peace process.

In my delegation's view, one of the most vital organizations is the Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa, which will be headquartered in Cairo and will dedicate itself to developing the private sector in the area and supporting regional infrastructure projects. Given our view that peace in the Middle East will eventually hinge on the economic viability of the region, the Republic of Korea has decided to join the Bank as a founding member and make an initial investment of \$62.5 million. We have also offered \$12 million for the rehabilitation projects of the

Palestinian people for the period between 1994 and 1998 and are currently considering the provision of assistance for the establishment of the Middle East desalinization centre.

Despite our geographic distance from the Middle East and certain budgetary constraints, the Government of the Republic of Korea has been trying to actively join the international efforts to build peace and prosperity in the Middle East. The reasons for the Republic of Korea's participation and assistance in the Middle East process is twofold. In a general context, we recognize the critical implications that peace in the Middle East would have for global peace and security. However, as a country which itself experienced the scourge and devastation of war 40 years ago and still suffers from the division of the Korean peninsula, the Republic of Korea also has a special interest in the Middle East peace process.

We are particularly interested in and supportive of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue as a way for the parties directly concerned to solve their disputes. While there are numerous and daunting obstacles to overcome in the ongoing Middle East peace process, it is understood that the final-status negotiations between the two parties, scheduled for May 1996, will constitute the critical stage.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has every confidence in the wisdom and courage of Israelis and Palestinians, who have already achieved what seemed to be an impossibility just a few years ago. We continue to support their efforts to achieve success in their endeavours on the basis of the principles and spirit enshrined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

My delegation takes this opportunity to reaffirm to all the Member States gathered here that the Republic of Korea, particularly in its capacity as a Security Council member starting next year, will make every possible effort to assist in securing peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): Since the Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened at Madrid on 30 October 1991, and thanks to the ensuing bilateral and multilateral negotiations, that strategic region of the world has, to our great satisfaction, progressively entered a new era of *détente*, improved relations and reconciliation. The evolution of the peace process has been marked by largely positive results, which we wholeheartedly welcome.

The historic signings of the Declaration of Principles in Washington on 13 September 1993 by the Palestinians and Israelis, the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994 and other related agreements have created a dynamic of peace that has made it possible to take welcome steps towards the definitive settlement of a crisis that seemed thoroughly insoluble. We therefore fully support the peace process, which has become irreversible, and welcome the efforts of the international community — the sponsors of the peace process in particular — to free the Middle East region from the burdens of the past. The draft resolution they have submitted to us cannot but strengthen further this well-founded process. We are confident that the will and spirit of cooperation inspiring the parties will be commensurate with the challenges that lie ahead.

The signing on 28 September 1995 in Washington of the Taba Agreement on the extension of self-rule certainly marks another important stage in the settlement of the Palestinian problem. We therefore welcome its implementation in accordance with the commitments undertaken and the agreed timetables. Indeed, we are sincerely pleased to see the two parties moving firmly and resolutely ahead on the road to peace, despite the tragedies and acts of violence and provocation that have taken place in the region. We must all take action to prevent terrorists and extremists from taking the long-sought peace as their hostage and burying the hopes that have begun to dawn over the region.

It is reassuring to see that the settlement of the Palestinian problem has been the subject of sustained and ongoing efforts. We hope that the parties to the conflict will display a constructive spirit and will realize where their legitimate interests lie, in particular during the negotiation of questions still awaiting a definitive solution.

The international community must therefore act to ensure that the peace process enables the brotherly Palestinian people to enjoy all its legitimate rights, particularly the rights to self-determination and to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In this connection, we wish to reaffirm that that Holy City, which is at the core of the Palestinian problem, is an integral part of the territories occupied since 1967. We are therefore opposed to any modification of the status of the Holy City until its final status has been negotiated.

In this regard, it should be stressed that the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993, which was welcomed with great optimism by the international community, stated that the permanent status of that city must be one of the issues negotiated in 1996 and, in article V, paragraph 4, that:

“The two parties agree that the outcome of the permanent status negotiations should not be prejudiced or pre-empted by agreements reached for the interim period.” (A/48/486, p. 5)

In addition, article I of the Declaration clearly states that:

“the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)”. (*ibid.*, p. 4)

In this context, we also wish to recall Security Council 478 (1980), which calls on States to withdraw their diplomatic missions from Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is obvious that one decision taken recently in this connection is in accordance neither with that resolution nor with the spirit and letter of the Declaration of Principles and is unlikely to facilitate progress in the peace process.

There can be no doubt that a lasting settlement of the Palestinian question can be based only on law, justice and equality. The credibility and success of the peace process for the entire region are at stake. In this context, allow me to pay a tribute to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to congratulate its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé of Senegal, and the leaders of the Division for Palestinian Rights for their tireless efforts to achieve a settlement of the Palestinian question on the basis of international legality.

Respect for international legality is also a *sine qua non* for breathing new life into the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli peace negotiations, which, unfortunately, remain deadlocked. We therefore support any process that will result in the return of the Syrian Golan to Syria and respect for Lebanon's territorial integrity, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions and out of respect for the legitimate interests of the parties concerned. Thus will the comprehensive nature of the peace be duly enshrined.

The achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region will depend on the process's achieving results based on United Nations resolutions, the rules of international law and the United

Nations Charter. It is a long-term project requiring good will, patience, trust, perseverance and respect for others.

However, we cannot overemphasize the fact that political peace in the Middle East is nothing without economic peace. That is why we consider the Economic Summits held in Casablanca in 1994 and, more recently, in Amman in October 1995, to be important steps towards the establishment of an integrated peace based on trade, cooperation and economic partnership that will lay the foundations of stability, security and prosperity in the Middle East. Genuine peace must be mutually beneficial to all the peoples of the region, who most certainly aspire to a better, more dignified life and the well-being we all aspire to.

It was therefore a source of great satisfaction for us that at the Amman Summit it was decided, *inter alia*, to set up the Executive Secretariat of the Economic Summits in Morocco and to create a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development, to be headquartered in Cairo. In this context, we call on the international community to support appropriately the commendable efforts of the Palestinian Authority for economic, social and cultural development in the occupied territories and to consolidate the institutional and socio-economic structures of the emerging Palestinian entity so that it will be able to fulfil its responsibilities in the best possible conditions.

My country, which is deeply committed to the peace process and to improving the situation in the Middle East, believes that the relationships being established between the Arab countries and Israel are a guarantee of peace and will make it possible for the Arab and Jewish peoples to come together so that they can turn the page of the past and look resolutely to a future full of promise. It is therefore essential that the international community defend the peace process, give it political, economic and moral support and encourage the parties concerned to work for a genuine peace based on mutual understanding, cooperation, security, dignity and respect for the legitimate rights of all.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item.

I should like to inform members that, to enable consultations to be completed, action on the draft resolutions submitted under this item will be taken on Monday 4 December, in the morning, as the second item of business.

One representative has indicated that he wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to respond to some comments in the statement of the Ambassador of the Czech Republic concerning my country. Let me summarize my reply as follows.

First, if the intentions of States towards the human race are gauged by the number of weapons they possess, the representative of the Czech Republic ought to have applied his criterion to the States that possess huge arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, particularly those States that have not hesitated to use such weapons in situations totally unrelated to the principle of legitimate self-defence. Furthermore, as the item under consideration concerned the situation in the Middle East, he ought to have referred to Israeli nuclear weapons and the threat that they pose to that region as many other States have done with regard to the threat of Israel's nuclear weapons to peace and security in the Middle East.

Secondly, the representative of the Czech Republic said that Security Council resolution 986 (1995) was adopted to relieve the human suffering of Iraqi civilians caused by the embargo. Regardless of the substance of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), that remark

amounted to clear and frank recognition that the Security Council resolutions by which the embargo was imposed five years ago took no account of the human suffering of Iraqi civilians. This, in actual fact, is a clear condemnation of those resolutions as inhuman.

On the other hand, it is not accurate at all to describe that Security Council resolution 986 (1995) as humanitarian, since it includes stipulations that undermine Iraq's sovereignty and constitute interference in its internal affairs. It even imposes the condition that a particular harbour must be used to export oil, regardless of the facts of the market.

Thirdly, the representative of the Czech Republic said that Iraq's latest statements on weapons were very disturbing. We find this strange. Why is that representative so very disturbed? Does he not welcome such declarations? Do they not mean that the remaining requirements of Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) and 715 (1991) — the very resolutions for the implementation of whose provisions he called — are being abided by?

Fourthly, the representative of the Czech Republic called for the return of Kuwaiti detainees. I affirm yet again that there are no detainees. As in the case of any other war, there are missing persons. The missing persons are being searched for in cooperation with the parties concerned, under the aegis of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Progress is being made in that respect.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.