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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda)  
later: Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria)

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AGENDA ITEM 136: ISRAEL'S DECISION TO BUILD A CANAL LINKING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE DEAD SEA

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The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he hoped that, in view of the importance of agenda item 136, the Committee would agree on the appropriateness of having all the discussions on that question reproduced in extenso.
2. It was so decided.
3. Mr. HAMDI (Saudi Arabia) noted that the formula which had been adopted and to which his delegation had lent its support in response to the appeal made by the Chairman, would make it possible to transmit to all delegations all the Commission's work on agenda item 136.
4. Mr. GILMAN (United States of America) said that his delegation was satisfied that that procedural question had been resolved in an equitable fashion. It was through such compromises that the Committee could continue its work. In any parliamentary deliberation, it was important not to impose restrictions on the free flow of information. Delegations must be ever vigilant in order to ensure that deliberative bodies did not take actions which they might regret subsequently.
5. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that two draft resolutions issued respectively as documents A/SPC/36/L.32/Rev.1 and A/SPC/36/L.33 had been submitted that morning. Since those texts had financial implications, the statement of them was to be prepared for the following Monday, or 7 December 1981. The Commission would then have to take a decision on those texts at the latest that Monday afternoon. It was essential for the Committee to complete its work on Monday, 7 December.
6. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the representative of Kuwait and the Permanent Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization had requested that their names should be added to the list of speakers. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee, in spite of the closure of the list, was prepared to accede to that request.
7. It was so decided.

ISRAEL'S DECISION TO BUILD A CANAL LINKING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE DEAD SEA  
(continued) (A/36/243; A/SPC/36/L.32)

8. Mr. ADHAMI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the question under consideration also related essentially to the Palestinian territories illegally occupied by Israel since 1967. In March 1981, the Israeli Government had approved a plan for the construction of a canal which would begin in the occupied Gaza Strip and end in the Dead Sea, near Massada. That canal would be used for the production of electricity, in view of the variation in level between its two ends (nearly 400 metres). Its construction would require ten years and would cost approximately

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(Mr. Adhami, Syrian Arab Republic)

\$800 million. United States and Canadian financial institutions and other international institutions would contribute to its financing.

9. The Israelis stressed the economic aspects of that project, but the available information confirmed that its objectives were political, military and strategic and that it would be prejudicial to the Jordanian economy. The Syrian Arab Republic was extremely concerned by the dangerous character of that undertaking, which constituted a flagrant violation of instruments of international law, including, primarily, the Charter of the United Nations and the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention.

10. That project required the confiscation of the Palestinian lands on which it would be built, in defiance of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations prohibiting the seizure of territories by force. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank were still occupied territories sovereignty over which still belonged to the Palestinian people.

11. That project was a flagrant violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention, because it aimed at changing the geographical nature, demographic composition and legal status of an occupied territory. It would lead to the consolidation of the Israeli presence in the occupied Gaza Strip and enable Israel to establish a new irreversible fait accompli, thus creating an explosive situation in the region.

12. By so doing, Israel proved that it did not care about a peace based on justice and that its only concern was to make the Palestinian people and all the Arab peoples capitulate under the weight of a military force which it owed to unlimited United States support.

13. The fact that the Arab States were once again appealing to the United Nations confirmed their respect for international legitimacy and the confidence which they placed in the Organization. The Syrian Arab Republic noted the statement made that morning by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of ten States members of the European Economic Community and welcomed the position of those States. Knowing that a new resolution would not suffice to change Israel's behaviour, he was waiting for the United Nations to make known its will in a new and categorical form. It was essential that the Security Council should go beyond the language of condemnation and impose the global and mandatory sanctions provided for in the Charter in order to prevail upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories and recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

14. He urged all States, public and private international financial institutions and transnational corporations to refrain from assisting Israel in implementing that project.

15. Mr. SEIF (United Arab Emirates) said that Israel's decision to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea confirmed the intention of the Israeli enemy to dig itself in in Gaza and the West Bank and to seize more

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(Mr. Seif, United Arab Emirates)

land there, at the risk of creating an explosive situation in the Middle East. That project would entail for the occupied territory strategic, demographic, geographic and ecological changes prejudicial to the vital economic undertakings of Jordan and its national sovereignty. Furthermore, it would violate the national rights of the Palestinians and their sovereignty over their natural resources in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. That project would create in the heart of the Arab world natural and human barriers of a new type, while contributing to the strengthening of the Zionist presence there. Moreover, the fact that Israel intended to use the canal for military purposes to satisfy its expansionist aims was a secret to no one.

16. His delegation condemned that new Zionist aggression directed against the natural and national resources of the Palestinian people. He urged the international community to condemn that initiative and to refrain from collaborating materially, humanly or technically, in that project. He asked the United Nations to take all the necessary measures to prevent Israel from implementing that project.

17. Mr. SAID (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation had already had an opportunity to draw the attention of the international community to the policy of fait accompli which the Zionist entity was trying to impose in defiance of international instruments, the resolutions of the United Nations and the norms of international law. The decision of the Government of the Zionist entity to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea was only one aspect of that Zionist policy.

18. Mentioned for the first time in 1978, that project was, nevertheless, the extension of a plan established by the Zionist movement since its creation, at the end of the nineteenth century: its object was to take possession of the water sources of the Arab world, exploit them for the implementation of various projects in the heart of the Arab nation and realize the dream of so-called "Greater Israel".

19. If the project was implemented, it would have grave repercussions at the strategic and security levels, be prejudicial to the economy of Jordan and make demographic and geographical changes in Jordan and Palestine.

20. With regard to the economic and agricultural aspects, he explained, by way of example, that mixing the water of the Dead Sea with that of the Mediterranean Sea would lower the salinity rate of the water of the Dead Sea by 15 per cent, which would have a prejudicial effect on the Jordanian and Arab extraction undertakings and the industrial projects which relied on certain of the riches of that sea. With regard to the human and geographical aspects, there was a risk that the raising of the level of the Dead Sea might submerge the communities established on the shores of that sea, in the low-lying areas of the Jordan valley, and deprive those inhabitants of their lands. Moreover, raising the level might, by the resultant increase in pressure on the floor of the Dead Sea, cause, in the long term, earthquakes or faults, particularly since the neighbourhood of the

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(Mr. Said, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Dead Sea was the region of the world where the earth's crust was the least resistant.

21. Turning to the strategic and security aspects of the project, he recalled the nuclear reactors which the Zionist entity proposed to build along the canal, to the northwest of the Negev desert. However, so far it had refused to sign the non-proliferation treaty and had also refused to co-operate with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

22. By building the canal in the occupied territories, by endangering the economic security of Jordan and Palestine and by exposing the environment of the Arab States to the pollution of nuclear fallout resulting from the establishment of nuclear installations along the canal, Israel was guilty of a flagrant violation of international law and of the Geneva and the Hague agreements. The project had been condemned by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Baghdad in June 1981 and by the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy held in Nairobi in August 1981.

23. In view of the foregoing, his delegation called upon the international community to unanimously condemn the project and to abstain from helping in its execution. Moreover, he appealed to the United Nations to act resolutely in accordance with its responsibilities, to end the tyranny of the Zionist entity and its defiance of international public opinion.

24. Mr. MAHMOOD (Pakistan) said that the Israeli project to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea, if carried out, would have far-reaching consequences in the whole region, which had been fully described by the representative of Jordan at the preceding meeting. The building of the canal would also submerge ancient Christian monasteries and other holy places and would place the entire Jordan Valley under a constant danger of inundation.

25. The project, which was to provide 7 per cent of Israel's energy requirements by the year 2000, also had military dimensions. It was part of a plan to consolidate Israel's annexation of the occupied territories. It was additional evidence of Israel's real intentions of not withdrawing from those territories. The project constituted a clear violation of international law pertaining to the jurisdiction of States and peoples over seas, lakes, rivers and gulfs, and of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

26. At its seventy-fifth session on 23 March 1981, the Council of the League of Arab States had called upon all countries to oppose with vigour the Israeli project and to refrain from providing any assistance, financial or technical, in its implementation. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at its twelfth session in Baghdad in June 1981, in resolution No. 4/12-P, strongly condemned that new Zionist aggression against the natural resources and inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and also called upon all States to refrain from providing any assistance in the implementation of the project. Finally, the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy held at Nairobi

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(Mr. Mahmood, Pakistan)

in August 1981 had condemned the project, describing it as an aggression against the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its occupied territory and called upon Israel to stop its implementation.

27. Pakistan, which had supported the resolution adopted on the subject by the twelfth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, condemned that new attempt by Israel to entrench itself in the occupied territories. His delegation fully supported draft resolution A/SPC/36/L.32.

28. Mrs. Nowotny (Austria) took the Chair.

29. Mr. HASSOON (Iraq) said that Israel's decision to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea was one of a number of hydraulic projects which Israel was carrying out to the detriment of Arab rights. But it also had a special part to play in implementing the Zionist design of creating a larger Israel which extended from the Nile to the Euphrates.

30. After many hesitations, prompted mainly by economic considerations, the Israeli Government had drawn up a project for the construction between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea of a canal for hydroelectric purposes. In adopting that project, the Council of Israel Ministers had followed the south-north line recommended by the Advisory Committee presided over by Yuval Me'eman. The canal would run from the south of the Gaza Strip to the Dead Sea passing close to the ancient fortress of Massada. The Council of Ministers had decided that the project would be financed by budgetary funds and private capital. However, it had not concerned itself with the technical aspects of the project and also had not considered the political problems to which the project might give rise and which had been mentioned by two of the Ministers. According to Me'arev of 25 August 1980 Begin, for his part, embraced the project with enthusiasm as a realization of the prophecies of Herzl. According to Me'arev, on the basis of the plan drawn up by the Advisory Committee, the waters of the Mediterranean would be pumped from the Katif region, in the Gaza Strip up to an altitude of 100 metres. They would then flow into a tunnel six kilometres long before emptying out into an open canal to the west of Beersheba. The next stage would be a series of closed canals towards Arad and the Dead Sea. In a letter he had sent to the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Me'eman had stated that, up to the year 2000 all that Jordan would have to do would be to ignore the project and not interfere with Israel's mobilization of international capital. The Advisory Committee had reached the conclusion that it was impossible to build the canal without passing through the occupied territories and had asked the Government to insist, within the framework of any peaceful solution, on the maintenance of the canal (Al Ha Michmar of 25 August 1980). In March 1981 the Shamal Company, to which the Council of Ministers had decided to entrust the preparatory work, had submitted recommendations to the Government and on 28 May 1981 it had begun the practical implementation of the project.

31. The aim of the project was not solely to produce electricity; it was part of the illegal policy of settlement of the occupied territories and of immigration conducted by the Israeli Government. By changing the geographical and human aspect

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(Mr. Hassoon, Iraq)

of the region, it would strengthen the Jewish presence in occupied Palestine. What was more, Israel, by constructing the canal through the occupied territories, was revealing its true intention of never giving up those territories. Furthermore, the construction of two nuclear power stations on the canal would strengthen the nuclear capacity of the Zionist entity. Finally, the project was highly damaging for the development of the Arab countries and particularly Jordan to the extent that it was likely to cause a rise in the level of the Dead Sea and thus to flood the new potassium installations, the tourist facilities, the road network and the arable land situated along the Dead Sea.

32. His delegation had already protested against the systematic plundering of Israel of the natural resources of the occupied territories. The canal project, by increasing the salinity of the Dead Sea and of the Jordan, would reduce still further the amount of fresh water available for agriculture.

33. The project was designed to meet purely strategic and military objectives and was in no way designed to contribute to the development of the region, as the Israeli representative had tried to suggest by describing the project as Israel's contribution to the development of new and renewable sources of energy (A/36/575). How could that position be reconciled with the fact that the project had been undertaken at the expense of Arab interests and particularly those of Iraq whose nuclear power station Israel had bombed shortly before?

34. For all those reasons Iraq appealed to the Committee and the international community to prevent the implementation of the project.

35. Mr. LAKHMIRI (Morocco) said that the project to build a canal between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea was designed to uphold the myth of a beneficial zionism bringing the region the benefits of progress and civilization. In fact, the project merely engendered hatred and destruction and showed that Israel did not hesitate to use plunder and violence to achieve its ends.

36. To implement the project, Israel was violating international instruments and the rights and interests of the countries of the whole region and particularly Jordan and Palestine. The project was a flagrant violation of the rights of States and peoples to dispose of their natural resources and also of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Furthermore, the canal, whose construction would take from 8 to 10 years, would pass right through the occupied territories. It was therefore clear that Israel, in defiance of the international community, was planning to remain in the occupied territories and that the project, which also had strategic and military implications, was directed against the Arab peoples of the region. Its true aim, as the Council of the League of Arab States had revealed to the world, was to bring about within the region profound geographical, demographical, ecological and economic changes with a view to establishing a fait accompli and of conferring a character of legitimacy on Israeli occupation, colonialism and expansionism.

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(Mr. Lakhmiri, Morocco)

37. The international community must not let itself be taken advantage of by Israel's fine-sounding words and must at all costs prevent the implementation of the project, especially by refusing to contribute financial aid of any kind.

38. Israel claimed to want peace and security. Actually it survived only by sowing the seeds of dissension in the Arab camp and misleading world public opinion. In the face of that new danger, the Arabs must set aside their disagreements and act together.

39. The provision of technology and capital could not contribute to peace unless it took place in a spirit of understanding and peaceful coexistence. When motivated by a spirit of domination, it could only foster anxiety and hatred in the region.

40. The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy had condemned the project, rightly considering it to be a violation of the legitimate national rights of the Arab countries and, in particular, of Jordan and Palestine. The project had also been condemned by the Twelfth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Baghdad in June 1981 (A/36/421), which had called upon the States and Governments of the whole world to condemn that aggression and to refrain from providing Israel with any material or moral assistance. On the basis of the Mecca Declaration, the Conference had expressed its serious concern regarding the project and its possible consequences, especially as it created new natural barriers between the Arab East and West.

41. After a conflict of more than 30 years, during which it had failed to subjugate the Palestinian people and the Arab nation, Israel persisted in believing that fallacious propaganda was sufficient to camouflage its hostility and repeated acts of aggression. Instead of violating the rights of an entire nation on the pretext of making the desert bloom, Israel would be better advised to contribute honestly towards promoting a spirit of peace, justice and brotherhood in the region.

42. Mr. MOUSSA (Egypt) said that Egypt's policy was aimed at achieving a just peace in the Middle East within a comprehensive settlement which would secure the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people. That necessitated application of the provisions of the instruments whereby those rights were recognized: international conventions and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. That was why his Government was opposed to Israel's project to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea, as the canal would run through the Gaza Strip for which Egypt had a historical responsibility, as recognized by the United Nations. The project therefore constituted a violation of the principles and provisions of Security Council resolution 242, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and a series of General Assembly resolutions which called upon Israel to desist from any act that would change the physical character, geographic and demographic composition, or the legal status of the occupied territories or any part thereof, and also a violation of the principles enunciated by the General Assembly on the right of all peoples to

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(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

sovereignty over their natural resources, and in particular the resolutions concerning the Palestinian people. Instead of acting in conformity with the legally binding commitments, Israel had taken a decision adversely affecting the efforts to create a favourable atmosphere for a comprehensive peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis, a settlement whose essence remained the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation would therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution submitted by Jordan and other delegations on the subject.

43. Mr. AL HASSANI (Kuwait) said that Israel's illegal actions in the occupied territories were multiplying to the point where they exposed its real intentions. The canal project proved that Israel was in no way contemplating withdrawal from those territories. The dreams of the pioneers of the Zionist movement had been to create a linkage between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea or Lake Tiberias after the creation of the Jewish State in the Arab land of Palestine, which indicated that the new project was part and parcel of the Zionist design for the so-called "Land of Israel".

44. His delegation appealed to all nations not only to condemn the Israeli project but also to withhold any kind of help, whether economic, political or technical. The message which Israel wished to send to the international community was that it placed itself above international law and intended to pursue its policy of *fait accompli*. That was further proof that the statements of the Israeli authorities concerning a negotiated settlement in the Middle East were nothing but empty talk serving only as a time-gaining device while Israel went ahead in achieving its ultimate goals in the occupied territories.

45. The project portended very dire consequences not only for Jordan and the Palestinian people but also for the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East. To stop the construction of the canal would be a first step in the right direction and should be followed by a more comprehensive effort to put an end to Israel's disregard of international law and its challenge to the international community.

46. Mr. ABU KOASH (Palestine Liberation Organization) recalled that the Israeli delegation had submitted the canal project for linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea to the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy in Nairobi as a new and renewable source of energy. The international community had studied the matter and had resolved that it was in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law and constituted aggression against the national rights of the Palestinian people and their occupied land. It had also called upon Israel to stop implementing the project. Some countries had abstained in the vote on the resolution on the ground that the issue should be referred to the General Assembly. He therefore called upon those countries to reconsider their stand by voting for draft resolution A/SPC/36/L.32/Rev.1 which had been prepared so as to take into account also the views of the countries which had abstained in Nairobi.

(Mr. Abu Koash, PLO)

47. Israel's decision to construct the canal was a colonial project which had been contemplated more than 80 years before by the zionist leaders who had been planning then for a racist zionist State extending from the Nile to the Euphrates. By approving the project, on 24 August 1980, and choosing from among the alternatives the route passing through the Gaza Strip which was part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, the Israeli authorities, while claiming otherwise, had made a political choice, as was borne out by an article of 15 May 1981 by Mr. Yuval Ne'eman, head of the project's steering committee, in the Israeli newspaper Me'arev.

48. Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories was illegal and in violation of United Nations resolutions. The Israeli project violated the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law which confirmed the illegality of any action taken by the occupying authorities to change the nature of the occupied lands. The project was indeed an act of aggression against the national rights of the Palestinian people. It was intended to guarantee the permanent colonization of the territories occupied in 1967 through the creation of new zionist colonies in those territories and to create new physical and demographic facts which could be used as an excuse for annexing them.

49. Implementation of the project would lead to the flooding of adjacent Jordanian and Palestinian fertile land. It would also jeopardize Jordanian industry by reducing the quantities of potash that Jordan extracted from the Dead Sea. In addition, it had military purposes since it could be used to flood the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian and Jordanian lands near the Dead Sea. Moreover, the canal waters would be used for cooling the Israeli nuclear reactor in Dimona and, in that connexion, he warned against the Israeli build-up of nuclear weapons and its consequent threat to peace, particularly because of the collaboration in that field between Israel and the South African régime both of which had shown little regard for human lives, world opinion or United Nations resolutions.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.