



President: Mr. Imre HOLLAI (Hungary).

*Address by Sheikh Amin Gemayel, President of the
Lebanese Republic*

1. The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic, His Excellency Sheikh Amin Gemayel, whom, on behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations and invite to address the Assembly.

2. Mr. GEMAYEL (Lebanon): To address the Assembly is a unique privilege. I feel particularly honoured to stand here before you at this rostrum from which so many other Presidents of nations great and small have expressed the aspirations of their peoples and defended their cause. Allow me, Mr. President, while thanking you and the representatives here present, to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election.

3. May I also address my congratulations to the Secretary-General on his first report on the work of the Organization [A/37/1] submitted to the Assembly, a report in which the cause of peace is served by wisdom and intellectual honesty.

4. The fate of my country has often been debated here and expressions of sympathy and friendship have not gone unnoticed by the Lebanese. I come to the Assembly today with a message of confidence from a nation with regained strength and determination, a nation active again, not in war, but in a daring adventure of peace and reconstruction. I appreciate more the meaning of peace and give it the priority it deserves because I, like my compatriots, know the sufferings of war and carried arms in defence of a free, united and independent Lebanon. I address the Assembly in the name of my people, in the spirit of a sharpened national consensus that has been developing throughout this war and which manifested itself strongly in the wake of the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel.

5. Lebanon can no longer endure the burdens of the tragic war that has been raging in our land for the past eight years. Nor can the world go on watching our destruction with morbid fascination. Prior to the war, Lebanon was a stable, peaceful and prosperous country. Beirut was the cultural and commercial centre of the Arab world. All of a sudden the democratic edifice that was Lebanon was shattered. Perhaps because Lebanon was too democratic, too free—and even lax—it became the stage for one of the bloodiest wars in recent times. The conflict of interests of third parties, the tension among States, the competing ideologies in the Arab world, the Palestinian armed

and uncontrolled presence in our midst, the recurring Israeli invasions of and incursions into our land, the continued violation of our sovereignty and fundamental human rights all converged, fomenting a continuous state of war in Lebanon since 1975. The war claimed the lives of more than 100,000 citizens. It destroyed cities, towns and villages. It brought foreign troops into our land. It divided our people and converted Lebanon from a haven for culture and peace into an arena for terror and violence.

6. The war blurred many images. We could not, for example, tell who was the friend and who was the foe. All seemed to be bent on the destruction of our peaceful way of life. We feared that the war would lead either to partition or to annexation. Lebanon, which had been the link between East and West, became a source of danger to both, and in particular to the States of the Arab East. The problems and conflicts of the region that exploded on our land were more than the Lebanese could bear. Each foreign force claimed a divine right to interfere in our affairs and denied us the right to speak for ourselves. And thus, by forces beyond their control, the Lebanese were alienated from themselves.

7. We are now on the verge of a new era. A chapter of hope is unfolding before our eyes. The super-Powers and the regional Powers are recognizing the strategic importance of Lebanon for peace in the Middle East. The Lebanese themselves have learned a bitter lesson and are now more united than ever before. In the name of the Lebanese people, I want to tell the Assembly that we have had enough; enough of bloodshed, enough of destruction, enough of dislocation and despair. We have paid the high price of war. We should not pay an additional price for peace. As a Member of the United Nations we want our rights to be restored to us.

8. Each country enjoys internal sovereignty; so should we. Each country depends on an effective army to defend its independence; so should we.

9. As we wish to live in peace and freedom in our land, so should the Palestinians live in peace and freedom and self-determination in their land, Palestine. As we cherish our independence, we cherish also the hope that Palestinians and Israelis, with the support of the world community, will reach a settlement that will allow them both to enjoy the fullness of rights.

10. As for relations between Lebanon and Syria, they have always been close in the past. It is natural, therefore, that Syria and Lebanon should develop strong relations in the future in the context of independence, sovereignty and mutual respect. With this position in mind, I call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces from Lebanon. I call upon the world community to help

Lebanon to regain its real independence and to rebuild its economy.

11. I carry to the Assembly the promise I have made to my people: we shall all do our part, and do it well. We shall lay the foundations of a strong, independent and democratic State. And, just as we hold our liberty and sovereignty to be sacred and inviolable, so shall we respect the liberty and sovereignty of others, fully conscious of the responsibilities that this attitude entails.

12. We shall maintain our cultural plurality, but within a non-compromising political unity. Cultural diversity is to us inseparable from political oneness. We shall cultivate the pillars of national unity and build a new citizenry whose loyalties are clear, whose orientation is authentic. We shall rebuild what was destroyed and thus have Lebanon appear in your midst a few years from now, a phoenix rising victorious from its own ashes.

13. For all of this, for peace and stability in the Middle East, Lebanon needs your support. I have a clear vision of a future Lebanon, and the new Government, representing the entire Lebanese family, shares this vision with me. We start the adventure of peace and reconstruction with encouraging signs. We applaud all positive steps taken by our friends in the international community on behalf of a united and sovereign Lebanon, steps such as the United States initiative on Lebanon, which we shall explore to the fullest. We look to our Arab brothers for political and economic support in building a country which can be a source of pride, peace and progress for us and for them.

14. We have started the reconstruction process, and our free-enterprise system, which was responsible for much of Lebanon's prosperity, is now playing a leading part. We are clearing the rubble from our cities. We are building and repairing everywhere. We are rebuilding the army along national, equitable and rational lines, thus to assume full responsibility for the security of our homeland. Beirut has been reunified and the Lebanese army, in co-ordination with troops from friendly countries, is maintaining peace there. We are working out plans for our army and internal security forces to assume authority in all

parts of the country after the withdrawal of the non-Lebanese armies and forces.

15. We are receiving aid from several countries and organizations. We are receiving aid from United Nations agencies. We are grateful for this help. While I talk optimistically about the future, I want you to know that the situation in Lebanon and in the Middle East is still fragile. Only concerted effort on your part will reinforce the forces of peace in our part of the world. We now have an opportunity to arrest the cycle of war and chaos. Let us seize it. Peace in Lebanon is obviously a pre-condition for peace in the Middle East. There will be no peace in the Middle East without peace in Lebanon. Peace in Lebanon is a key to the region. If it is stable, so will the region be stable; if it is in chaos, so will be the volatile East.

16. Let us all work together for peace. Lebanon is ready for peace; the people of the region are ready for peace. For us now peace is an endeavour whose time has come. Let us not permit this opportunity to slip from our hands. Let nations forget the passions of the past. Let them transcend dogmatic positions and leap over both political ideology and political theology. Let States reason together in the pursuit of common interests. We in Lebanon want to be part of this reasoning process, particularly in matters that affect us directly and affect our standing in the region and in the world.

17. In a poem written a century ago about the American West, a line expresses the challenge that man faces in rugged mountainous terrain. It says "Bring me men to match my mountains". My country too is one of rugged mountainous terrain. The people are hardy and proud, like their mountains. Today in Lebanon men are awakening to the historic challenge that faces them. They are a match for their mountains, and their aspirations are as high as their cedars.

18. Give us peace and we shall again astound the world.

19. The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the important address he has just delivered.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.