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Further report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations
Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

As indicated in my report of 24 November 1975 on UNDOF (S/11883), I visited the Middle East from 22 to 27 November 1975. I arrived in Damascus during the afternoon of Saturday, 22 November, and stayed until Monday morning, 24 November. I met for several hours with President Hafez Al-Assad and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam. The substance of these discussions is outlined in Part I of this report. While in Damascus I also met the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Yassir Arafat.

During the morning of 24 November I arrived in Israel, where I stayed until 25 November. I had extensive talks in Jerusalem with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Yigal Allon. During the meeting with Prime Minister Rabin, Defence Minister Shimon Peres was also present. The main elements of these conversations are set out in Part II.

On 25 November I arrived in Cairo where I had talks with President Anwar el Sadat and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy. At the talks with President Sadat Vice President Husni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Fahmy were also present.

On the morning of 26 November I left Cairo for Beirut. On my arrival in Lebanon I had talks with President Suleiman Frangie and Prime Minister Rachid Karamé. At a luncheon offered by the President I met other members of the Lebanese cabinet.

During the afternoon of 26 November I returned to Damascus where I had another round of meetings during the evening with President Assad and Foreign Minister Khaddam. The results of this meeting, which lasted several hours, are reflected in Part I.

During the morning of Thursday, 27 November, I left Damascus for London where I had talks with His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Zeid Al Rifai on the afternoon of the same day. In the evening of 27 November I left London for New York.

I. DISCUSSIONS IN SYRIA

President Assad expressed his strong disappointment that no progress has been made in the negotiating field with respect to Syria since May 1974 when UNDOF was established. For this reason Syria finds it difficult to approve the prolongation of UNDOF's mandate without a corresponding prospect of progress in the negotiating process and does not want to engage in negotiations on further partial measures. Syria wishes the Security Council to deal with the substance of the Middle East problem, including the Palestinian question. It will not participate in the Geneva Conference or any other forum of negotiation so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization is not a participant.

In the course of extensive discussions, the President declared his readiness to agree to a renewal of UNDOF's mandate for another six-month period, combined with a specific provision that the Council will reconvene in January 1976 to hold a substantive debate on the Middle East problem, including the Palestinian question, with the participation of representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

II. DISCUSSIONS IN ISRAEL

Israel holds views divergent from those of Syria with respect to the context of UNDOF's mandate and as regards the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Middle East negotiations. Israel regards UNDOF as an integral part of the disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria signed in May 1974.

Israel remains opposed to linking the extension of UNDOF's mandate to the form of further negotiations. However, it is willing to negotiate at any time with Syria, but not with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Once UNDOF's mandate is prolonged, Israel is ready to participate in a reconvened Geneva Peace Conference on the understanding that only the original participants will be at the Conference.

Resolution 338 (1973) provides, in Israel's view, the basis for negotiations, and it therefore does not accept the Security Council as the negotiating body for the Middle East problem. Finally, Israel declared its agreement to the prolongation of UNDOF's mandate for a further six-month period.

III. OTHER DISCUSSIONS

During my visits to Egypt and Lebanon I had most useful talks with the leaders of those countries. Since these talks were not directly related to the prolongation of the mandate of UNDOF, I do not consider it appropriate to elaborate on their content in the present report. This is also the case with regard to my talks with His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Zeid Al Rifai in London on 27 November.

These talks were most helpful and contributed considerably to my understanding of the over-all situation in the Middle East. I am grateful to the leaders of these countries for making possible this exchange of views.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It remains my considered opinion that the presence of UNDOF is essential not only to maintain quiet in the Israel-Syria sector but also to provide an atmosphere conducive to further negotiating efforts. In the light of my consultations in the area with the parties concerned, I therefore propose the extension of UNDOF's mandate for a further six-month period. This proposal is made on the assumption that the Council will reach agreement on a corresponding decision, taking due account of the positions put forward by the parties, as described in the preceding paragraphs.

I wish to assure the members of the Council that I shall not fail to continue my efforts, in close co-operation with the parties, to assist in the search for a just and durable peace in the Middle East.
