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PROVIS IONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SEVENTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 6 December 1988, at 10 a.m.

President:

Mr. DLAMINI (Vice-President)

(Swaziland)

- The situation in the Middle East [40] (continued)
 - (a) Reports of the Secretary-General
 - (b) Draft resolutions
- Special economic and disaster relief assistance [86]
 - (b) Special programmes of economic assistance: Report of the Second Committee
- Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind: Report of the Second Committee [148] (continued)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 40 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

- (a) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/43/272, A/43/683, A/43/691, A/43/687);
- (b) DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (A/43/L.44 to A/43/L.46)

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia): The Middle East crisis has been the focus of international attention as one of the most dangerous and serious sources of international instability for more than four decades. Because of the importance of the Middle East for the world economy and international relations it is understandable that the dangerous situation in that region is a matter of utmost international concern. This year's debate on the situation in the Middle East is marked by a year-long uprising of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation and follows in the wake of the important decisions adopted by the Palestine National Council in Algiers, which, in the opinion of the great majority of Member States, opened up new prospects for the launching of a dialogue for a peaceful solution of the Middle East crisis and the problem of Palestine, which is at its core.

(Mr. Pečić, Yugoslavia)

However, I cannot but point out again that Yugoslavia deeply regrets the decision of the United States of America to refuse a visa to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Mr. Yasser Arafat. This decision has cast a pall of disappointment over expectations that this year's session of the General Assembly in New York would make a decisive effort towards overcoming the existing obstacles to the solution of the Middle East problem.

The unsatisfactory state of affairs in the Middle East is, by and large, the result of the persistent use of force, violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the countries of the region, the policy of annexation and occupation, and the denial of the legitimate rights of the peoples of the region to self-determination and independent development. The root causes of this situation are the policies of Israel and its continued refusal to accept dialogue on a lasting and just solution of the Palestinian problem. An aggravating factor in the overall situation in the Middle East is the persistent effort of non-regional forces to influence events and direct their course in accordance with their global interests and needs.

The dramatic developments in the West Bank and Gaza have borne out the untenability of the situation created by Israeli occupation. The decision on the declaration of the Palestinian State, which Yugoslavia, together with a large number of other countries, has officially recognized, is the expression of the years-long aspirations of the Palestinian people to decide on its destiny freely and independently. The uprising of the Palestinian population is, at the same time, a warning sign that each and every postponement of the solution of the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian problem, which is at its core, is fraught with serious danger of an outbreak of a new conflict of wider proportions, with unforeseeable consequences for international peace and security.

(Mr. Pejić, Yugoslavia)

Yugoslavia has always pointed out that the only possible way to a lasting stabilization of the situation in the Middle East is through the opening of a process for the political solution of the problem within the United Nations, on the basis of full respect for the authentic interests and rights of all the countries and peoples of the region. The Palestinian people's resistance to and refusal to accept continued occupation and domination have proved true the erstwhile warning that one cannot build one's own security on the protection exclusively of one's own interests at any price and at the same time ruthlessly trample upon someone else's elementary rights by the use of all possible means of brutal repression. It is also impossible to insist on protecting the security of one's own country by violating the territorial integrity of others.

It is therefore obvious that there can be no lasting peace and security in the Middle East as long as the recurrent sources of instability in the region are left untackled. It is therefore natural that the initiative for the speedy convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under United Nations auspices and on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with the participation on an equal footing of all interested parties, including the PLO and others who can make a constructive contribution to its success, has been met with wide support and approval. Unfortunately, major obstacles continue to lie in the way of the realization of this idea, first of all because of the intransigent position of Israel and its continued refusal to accept dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is recognized by the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and in the diaspora as their sole and legitimate representative.

We therefore consider that it is necessary to make a decisive effort at this session to influence the positions of those that obstruct the convening of the international conference. As a member of the Committee of Nine Non-Aligned

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

Countries on Palestine and a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Yugoslavia will continue, within the limits of its possibilities, to make its full contribution to and support every constructive effort aimed at the beginning of a process designed to lead to a lasting, just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian problem. In this context, we fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar. As we see it, the solution of the Middle East crisis implies the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all the territories occupied since June 1967, recognition of the legitimate national right of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, to self-determination and independence, and respect for the rights of all the countries of the region, including Israel, to peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Yugoslavia has been following with grave concern the continued deterioration of the situation in Lebanon as a consequence of Israeli intervention and the continued violation of the territorial integrity and interference in the internal affairs of that country. I would therefore like to point out again that we support the speedy restoration of the national unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon and consistent implementation of United Nations resolutions. We believe that the Lebanese people will manage to overcome the difficulties facing it at this moment, an essential pre-condition of which is the immediate and complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Lebanese territory and cessation of interference in the internal affairs of that country, so as to enable the Lebanese people to decide on its development freely and independently.

I reiterate Yugoslavia's satisfaction at the cessation of the war and the establishment of the cease-fire between Iran and Iraq, which came into effect on 20 August this year. Although numerous outstanding issues still have to be resolved before a lasting, just and honourable solution of the conflict between the

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

two countries is achieved, the acceptance of a cease-fire by the two parties is one of the most important achievements of the United Nations and its Security Council, confirming the irreplaceable role of the world Organization in the overcoming of the major international crises that beset overall world relations. I therefore commend once again the commitment of Iran and Iraq to the quest for a peaceful solution of the conflict on the basis of Security Council resolution 598 (1989) and reiterate our full support for the Secretary-General's efforts towards the realization of that goal.

The Middle East crisis, which continues to be one of the most difficult problems of international relations, makes it incumbent upon the United Nations to make a decisive effort at this session to initiate a process for its peaceful solution. We have in mind primarily the need for the urgent solution of the Palestinian problem, which brooks no postponement. We believe that awareness of this need is more than ever present in the international community. For its part, Yugoslavia will continue to do everything it can to make a contribution, together with other countries, to the solution of this question and thereby to the elimination of one of the major sources of tension and instability in international relations.

Mr. MOHIUDDIN (Bangladesh): The oldest problem that confronts this Assembly remains unresolved: I refer to the problem emanating from the situation in the Middle East. This is despite the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General and many others. All their endeavours have drawn a blank because of the intransigence of a single entity, Israel, which has refused to look reason in the face and chosen to ignore its voice.

It is not logical that there should remain some that still do not recognize what lies at the core of so intractable a problem. There can be no reason to doubt that it is the question of Palestine that is at the heart of the issue. Until this

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

is resolved, peace in the Middle East can be only a chimera, as elusive as a mirage in the desert sands.

What makes the matter more painful is the arrogance of Israel and the inability of global public opinion to respond effectively to it. Israel has sought to expand by carrying out with impunity its acts of aggression. It has illegally and forcibly acquired territories to which it has no right. The world, which had no doubt that the Golan Heights belonged to Syria, could only stand helplessly by as Israel annexed them.

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

In the occupied territories Tel Aviv has been ruthlessly crushing any expression of human rights under the jackboot of repression. In the occupied areas it has defied all resolutions and desecrated the holy places. Neighbouring countries continue to suffer the perpetration by Israel of its belligerent designs. Such acts as these threaten peace, not just in the Middle East but in the world at large. The Middle East today is a political Vesuvius, a cauldron of fire, sparks from which could set alight and destroy the fabric of peace and order so carefully knitted by our own generation. Must we, can we, should we, allow this to happen?

However, the situation is not past praying for. A solution is indeed possible. There are certain elements, however, that this must embrace. It must be recognized that Palestine is the centre of the conflict. Also, we must bear in mind that peace in the Middle East is indivisible and should be reached under the auspices of the United Nations. It can never be comprehensive, just and lasting without the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable national rights. In all deliberations the PLO - the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - must be allowed its right to participate on an equal footing with all other parties. Israel must withdraw from all illegally occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Jerusalem must be restored as the capital of the Palestinian homeland, whose independence was so recently proclaimed and hailed by freedom-loving nations, including my own. Bangladesh welcomed the declaration and recognized it.

We are sure some of these elements would require detailed and intensive negotiations. This is why we firmly believe in the efficacy of the international peace conference on the Middle East that has been called for. Since resolution 38/58 was adopted five years ago this Assembly has repeatedly called for

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

its implementation. We commend the Secretary-General for his vigorous attempts to set in motion the process leading to such a conference. We regret deeply the existing gaps between parties. However, there is no chasm that cannot be bridged given human will. We hope that such will will not be wanting, particularly when the issue at hand is so crucial to peace.

The people of Israel have a responsibility to ensure that rationality guides the conduct of their government. It is heartening to note the burgeoning acceptance of the belief that peace is better than war. Why must the annals of that region be for ever written in blood? Have not the deserts witnessed the birth of so many prophets? Have we not all - the nations beyond - learned at the feet of these wise and holy persons? Should not their descendents, of all people, heed their counsels?

Bangladesh has always espoused the cause of peace in the Middle East, as elsewhere. We are committed to the Charter of the United Nations and the values it enshrines. We call upon Israel to respect this institution that embodies the aspirations of humankind. We urge it to co-operate with the world body in our search for an honourable and durable peace. It is in Israel's own interest, as it is in the interest of the world.

The intifadah should serve as a signal to Israel that no people will for ever tolerate oppression in silence. The ball is now in Tel Aviv's court; Tel Aviv must act.

Mrs. HYDER (Pakistan): The year 1988 will long be remembered for the renaissance of the spirit of peace and co-operation. The advent of co-operative endeavour in international relations, after years of tensions and hostilities, augurs well for all nations as humankind prepares itself for a new millenium. Most of the intractable regional conflicts are becoming amenable to peaceful solution as

(Mrs. Hyder, Pakistan)

a concrete manifestation of the rejection of the use of force in the settlement of disputes and in inter-State conduct.

In the Middle East, however, the prospects of peace, unfortunately, remain as elusive as they were when the General Assembly first considered the threat posed to international peace and security by developments in that region, over 40 years ago. The current debate is indeed another reminder of Israel's inflexibility and its deliberate policy of thwarting every peace initiative. The reason for its attitude is simple: Israel persists in the mistaken belief that, through its military preponderance, it can, in due course of time, transform into a fait accompli its gradual absorption of the Palestine and Arab territories that it has, through massive abuse of force, continued to occupy illegally.

The General Assembly is today again addressing one of the most tragic and pressing issues of our times. This issue can best be summed up in the eloquent words of the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State by the Palestine National Council in Algiers on 15 November 1988, which states:

"When in the course of modern times a new order of values was declared with norms and values fair for all, it was the Palestinian Arab people that had been excluded from the destiny of all other peoples by a hostile array of local and foreign powers. Yet again had unaided justice been revealed as insufficient to drive the world's history along its preferred course and it was the Palestinian people, already wounded in its body, that was submitted to yet another type of occupation over which float the falsehood that Palestine was a land without a people.

"Despite the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian Arab people resulting in their dispersion and depriving them of their right to self-determination, following upon United Nations General Assembly resolution

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181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish, yet it is this resolution that still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence."

The crux of the problem in the Middle East has been the denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and statehood. Neither through five wars nor through its contemptuous dismissal of Palestinian rights has Israel been able to will away this problem. Neither through the protracted use of force and terror nor through its repeated attempts to liquidate the identity of the Palestinian people has Israel succeeded in extinguishing the flame of freedom which, for over four decades, the Palestinian people have kept alight through incalculable suffering and sacrifice.

(Mrs. Hyder, Pakistan)

Since 9 December 1987, the intifadah in the occupied Palestinian territories has demonstrated once again the determination of the Palestinian people to be free and independent. As the Secretary-General, in his report on the situation in the Middle East, has rightly pointed out:

"Born of the frustration and despair of a population that has lived under occupation for more than 20 years, the intifadah is a direct result of the stalemate in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian people have endured great suffering; the perseverance of the intifadah is evidence of their commitment to exercise their legitimate rights, including self-determination". (A/43/867-S/20294)

For too long has Israel's obduracy been allowed to run rampant in the Middle East. Israel's distorted vision of its destiny, buttressed by a siege mentality, has engendered grave turmoil and turbulence in the Middle East and wrought havoc on its neighbours. Israel continues its occupation of southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights.

On the other hand, the Arab desire for a genuine peace has been made repeatedly manifest in many peace initiatives which the Arab States have proposed. The most recent one, presented by the party most affected, namely the Palestine Liberation Organization, finds expression in the resolution adopted last month in Algiers by the Palestine National Council (PNC). There is no longer room for prevarication. The PNC resolution is clear and unambiguous. It underlines the necessity of holding an effective international conference concerning the Middle East and its essence, the Palestinian cause. The conference would be held under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the struggle in the region, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing. The international conference would be

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convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and would guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, first and foremost among which is their right to self-determination in accordance with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Charter and the inadmissibility of seizure of land of others by force or military invasion, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations regarding the Palestinian and Arab territories that it has occupied since 1967, including Arab Jerusalem.

No nation need condemn itself to a perpetual state of war. Israel has a choice between durable peace and an ephemeral security based on the instruments of war and coercion. The prospect of a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East still exists and can be resuscitated if Israel and its friends are willing to negotiate on the basis of the proposal for an international peace conference on the Middle East. That proposal was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 38/58 C.

The Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, in September 1986, reiterated their call for the speedy implementation of that resolution. While stressing the need for the early convening of the international peace conference, they emphasized

"the major responsibility shouldered by the Security Council in facilitating the convening of the conference and providing appropriate institutional arrangements to guarantee the implementation of the accepted agreements of the conference".

We believe that the members of the Security Council, particularly its permanent members, have a special responsibility to provide the necessary impetus for the convening of such an international conference. In that context, we share the Secretary-General's views that, with the full support of the Security Council, and in particular the co-operation of the major Powers, progress can be made

(Mrs. Hyder, Pakistan)

towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We also agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the recent session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process and that it offers fresh opportunities for progress towards peace which should be seized.

It is our conviction that the establishment of the independent Palestinian State, which constitutes a glorious milestone in the inexorable march of the people of Palestine towards their cherished goal, will serve to strengthen the process of peace in the Middle East.

Forty years ago, the Palestinian people were brutally uprooted from their ancient homeland. All these years, the people of Pakistan have remained steadfast in their support for the just cause of the Palestinian people. I wish to take this opportunity to renew our pledge of solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their right to self-determination and independence, and with the Arab States in their efforts to resolve the Middle East conflict and to strengthen peace and stability in their region.

Mr. TANASIE (Romania) (interpretation from French): Romania's foreign policy is well known for its militant support for solutions to conflicts and disputes throughout the world exclusively by political means, with strict respect for the right of every people to independence and free development without any interference in its internal affairs and in full respect for its vital interests.

My country's position is particularly pertinent in today's serious and complex international situation.

It is in that context that we address the crisis in the Middle East, which grows worse by the year and constitutes a permanent threat to international peace, security and co-operation.

The documentation provided this year by the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East very clearly reflects a disturbing reality. It is quite obvious

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

that, despite the United Nations long-standing interest and the many resolutions adopted since 1947 by both the Security Council and the General Assembly, tens of thousands of lives have been sacrificed and the conflict remains explosive, with consequences not only for the region itself but also for the international community as a whole.

The state of confrontation that persists in the Middle East and the entire development of the Arab-Israeli conflict confirm the historic truth that it is not possible to build and safeguard peace and security by means of the threat or use of force or by denying other peoples the right to free existence and independence.

Thus, it is high time for all Member States to assume their political responsibility so as to enable the United Nations, whose central role is the maintenance of international peace and security, to act more resolutely to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflict, in particular by the earliest possible convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

The Government of Romania hailed the decision of the Palestinian National Council at its Algiers session to proclaim an independent Palestinian State - the State of Palestine. Romania has recognized the new Palestinian State. We also welcomed the political declaration adopted at that time, expressing the desire to act to resolve the problems of the Middle East by political means, in the spirit and on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), in a way that would include recognition of the State of Israel, as well as recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and creation of an independent State. Romania, which has consistently advocated a political solution of the problems of that part of the world, takes the view that the Algiers decisions strengthen the prospects of convening an international conference under United Nations auspices to seek a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting solution to the problems of the Middle East.

My country is of the view that in the existing circumstances it is increasingly necessary to step up our efforts to organize such an international conference, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, together with Israel and the permanent members of the Security Council. Romania will continue to act with a view to promoting the earliest possible convening of such a conference. That would be the surest way to find a solution to the problems of the region, to put an end without delay to the situation created by the occupation of the Arab territories following the war of 1967, and to ensure that the Palestinian people may exercise the right to self-determination and set up an independent State of its own.

My country expresses the hope that every effort will be made by all parties involved in the conflict to arrive at a political solution in the Middle East which will ensure that lasting and just peace may be established in the region.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

At the same time we believe that any solution, if it is to be responsive to the legitimate interests and aspirations of the peoples and States of the Middle East, must guarantee the right to independent existence and sovereignty of every country of the region, thus enabling relations of co-operation, trust and mutual respect, to be established among all the States and peoples of that region.

Romania, desirous of making a contribution to the search for a political solution of the problems of the Middle East, proposed the convening of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations as long ago as 1978. Developments in the situation in that region since that year and the endeavours of many States and of the United Nations have unmistakably shown that the only way of achieving a solution of the problem is through the holding of a conference. That is why my country supported General Assembly resolution 41/43 D of 2 December 1986, which endorsed the idea of convening an international peace conference on the Middle East under the aegis of the United Nations. Romania also supported resolution 42/209 A, in which the General Assembly once again reaffirmed that the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East was the appropriate way to arrive at a peaceful, comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict in the region. This session's debates and the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East make it clear that the convening of a peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices is seen as the approach which offers the best prospects for successful negotiation of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in that area.

In view of the incontestable urgency of convening a peace conference, we believe that a priority requirement is the prompt formation of a preparatory committee to take the necessary steps for the organization of the conference.

My delegation would like to reiterate its conviction that every effort will be made to bridge differences and strive to find appropriate solutions in conformity

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

with the vital interests of the peoples of that part of the world, through negotiation and dialogue among the parties concerned.

The Romanian delegation reaffirms its great appreciation of the activities of the Secretary-General in the search for solutions to the complex problems of the Middle East and of his efforts to bring about the convening of an international peace conference. We believe it would be particularly important to involve the Secretary-General to a greater extent, with the support of all States, in the efforts to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East without delay.

The United Nations, as we have often said, can and should play a more active role in endeavours to solve the Middle East conflict, especially since the General Assembly has called for overall negotiations aimed at a just and lasting peace in the region, so as to respond fully to the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of that region and of all the peoples of the world.

Romania, for its part, is resolved to do its utmost to help bring about a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problems of the Middle East, to establish just peace in the region and to strengthen international peace, security and co-operation.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): This meeting is not supposed to be just a change of headline, a dress rehearsal for the debate on the question of Palestine, nor is this debate supposed to deal with the problem of Israel, of the very existence of my country. Unfortunately, as we listen to some Arab speakers in this debate, it seems that that is what they are really talking about. In accordance with past prescribed ritual, attempts have been made once again to turn this debate on the situation in the Middle East into another orchestrated attack on Israel in total disregard of the subject, namely, the real problems of the area.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

The Middle East is not confined to Israel, which constitutes a mere 0.4 per cent of its land area. It is a vast region, of many States and nationalities. The 21 Arab States alone cover a combined area of 5.5 million square miles - over 10 per cent of the world's land mass. It is an area rich in mineral resources, particularly oil, on which much of modern civilization is dependent. Yet the accumulated wealth of the Arab States has unfortunately failed to bring harmony or social accord to the peoples of the region. The contradictions of extreme wealth alongside abject poverty are accompanied by tensions between social progress and political extremism. Repression and the abuse of whole social groups - the denial of human rights and the exploitation of populations by undemocratic régimes - all combine to destabilize the area.

In the Middle East, conflicts are chronic and endemic. Many of the countries and régimes in the area suffer from instability. Each of the manifold conflicts in the region has a genesis and a dynamic of its own. Moreover, because of the centrality of the Middle East on the international stage, many of those conflicts impinge also on the security and economies of countries beyond the region.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Since 1948 there have been 30 successful coups d'etat in the Arab countries and at least 45 unsuccessful ones. Twenty Arab Heads of State and Prime Ministers have been assassinated and there have been more than 85 recorded political murders. Most of these events have involved subversions by "fraternal" Arab States against each other.

In recent years, the carnage has been particularly gruesome. Across the Middle East, from Beirut to Basra, from Tripoli to Tehran, tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been killed. Two weeks ago, Lebanon "celebrated" the forty-fifth anniversary of its independence with more shooting, more violence and more death. To the east, we have all been encouraged by the end of hostilities in the Gulf. Yet no peace agreement will ever restore life to the more than one million people who were killed in the bloodiest conflict since the Second World War.

Yet violence and murder continue there, too. Even before the smoke had cleared from the battlefields, the guns were turned in another direction in an attempt to wipe out the small Kurdish population.

And the art of chemical warfare has nearly been perfected in the Gulf and in other States in the Middle East.

Let us not forget the huge military build-up in the Middle East. Syria, Libya, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are the biggest arms importers in the world. Why are they making such concerted efforts to increase their arsenals? Where is the next war in the Middle East going to break out? Who will be the next victims?

These are the real problems of the Middle East with which this debate should have concerned itself. Instead, the Assembly focuses again on the Arab-Israeli conflict, not only during one, but during two debates: on the question of Palestine, which the Assembly will have the opportunity to deal with this year in

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Geneva, and the problem of the Middle East, now being debated. "Palestine" and "Middle East" - two euphemisms for another direct onslaught on my country, Israel.

Many of these assaults on my country come under the guise of the "Palestinian issue". Yet the Palestinian issue is not separate from the Arab desire to eliminate the State of Israel. It is, rather, a direct outcome of the ongoing belligerency. Since its rebirth 40 years ago, Israel's very existence has been continuously challenged by its Arab neighbours. Israel was attacked time and again even before 1967 when the territories now administered by Israel were administered by others. The PLO was founded in 1964, three years before the Six-Day War. Judea and Samaria were annexed by Jordan, and Gaza was administered by Egypt. Its declared goal was, and still is, the liquidation of Israel. "Null and void" - it is in the terminology of their covenant.

Even as Iran and Iraq fought with one another, both proclaimed the so-called liberation of Palestine to be their ultimate goal. Syria says that the chemical weapons it produces are meant to be used against Israel. Mahmoud Natour, a leader of Arafat's own bodyguard unit, "Force 17", declared that "Palestinian commandos have chemical weapons and will not hesitate to use them against Israel in future wars". Libya urges other Arab States to buy or produce nuclear bombs to be used against Israel. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya are the biggest purchasers of arms in the third world, and they all declare their enmity towards and make overt threats against Israel.

Reason has of late begun to assert itself in the settlement of international conflicts. Violence is costly in lives, and threats of violence wedded to ominous visions are yielding to quests for accommodation.

In each instance, this new spirit is manifested by direct negotiations between the parties to disputes. However arduous the road to settlement, there is no substitute for direct talks if the will for compromise exists.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

The dawn of reason and accommodation has yet to rise over the Middle East. This observation is not limited to the incessant Arab assaults on Israel, but rather to the wars, subversions and assassinations which Middle Eastern States practice with such alacrity. Israel-baiting is the only instance in which they find fraternal fulfilment.

It required the stature of a statesman like President Anwar Sadat of Egypt to change course, come to Jerusalem, and work out a peace Treaty with Israel for the benefit of both countries and the region as a whole.

He was, and remains to this day, the only Arab statesman who realized that it was Israel - after years of belligerency directed against it - which needed forthright reassurance that it was welcome in the Middle East. President Sadat realized that Israel wanted nothing other than to coexist peacefully with its neighbours; that it could be a partner to agreement and accommodation; and that its aspirations pertained to the development of its society, industry and science, and to defending these values from hostile designs. Israel wants no more and no less.

The attention of the General Assembly is riveted on the territories administered by Israel, on the unrest therein and on the declarations from Algiers. The problem of the Palestinian Arabs is presented as the core problem in the Middle East, and described as affecting Israel and the Palestinians alone.

This view is convenient, but completely false.

Some of the States surrounding my country still carry the banner of Israel's destruction. They amass weapons to this end and foment terrorism pending a suitable occasion to unleash another war. They do not care about the Palestinian Arabs except inasmuch as they provide a vanguard in the attempt to disrupt Israel.

The major issue facing the Middle East today is neither the question of Palestine nor the problem of the Palestinian Arabs residing in Judea, Samaria and

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Gaza. The major issue is the Arab world itself: torn, disunited, working at cross-purposes, conspiring, and spending billions of dollars on weapons. The seeds of international tragedy have grown time and again out of continual military conflict, international terrorism - the war between the wars - and out of the victory of extremism and fanaticism, however thinly disguised. These are the grim forces in the Middle East that pose a threat not only to our own region but also to global freedom and security.

Despite what we have heard during this and past debates, a solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute will not eliminate these dangerous forces. The greatest tragedy of the Middle East is that violence has become not an instrument of last resort, but rather the preferred means of settling disputes.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

"Armed struggle" in all its rhetorical disguises has evolved as the only method of many Arab countries in their attempt to resolve disputes. The Arab-Israeli conflict has endured only because compromise, direct negotiations and political solutions are adamantly and categorically rejected.

The Government and people of Israel do not subscribe to this notion. We want and need peace. We believe in it and therefore repeatedly encourage direct negotiations with our adversaries. We oppose the forces of violence and terror, and we seek compromise and a negotiated settlement of conflicts.

It is our neighbours who reject this approach. They set conditions for peace that are unachievable. In order to achieve peace, they have to depart from their aspiration for a "peace without Israel". Their rejectionism prevents the establishment of peace, and as long as this attitude persists compromise is unattainable. Once this attitude changes, peace can be achieved with surprising speed.

Israel is small, but it is there to stay. Peace will reign only as an outcome of readiness for direct negotiations and compromise between the States of the region. Such negotiations, we believe, will bear fruit when based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the ideas and spirit enshrined in them.

The Secretary-General concludes his report of 28 November 1988 saying, "The growth of extremism and the alarming proliferation of weapons in the area are trends that must be reversed if we are to avert disaster in a region that has already experienced five major wars, thousands of casualties and untold suffering. In concluding, therefore, I cannot but reiterate the fundamental importance of devising an effective negotiating process that can secure the interests of both Israelis and Arabs and enable them to live in peace with each other." (A/43/867, para. 37)

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Eighty-six years ago Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism - the national movement of the Jewish people - concluded his visionary book Altneuland with the words: "If you will it, it is no dream".

We in Israel hope for it, strive for it and believe that with the will of the Arab and Israeli peoples peace can and will become a reality.

Mr. PASHKEVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): The Middle East continues to be one of the most troubled regions of the world. The Middle East conflict has had a very negative impact on the international political situation. This is because of the close interdependence that characterizes the present stage of mankind's development.

As is known, the United Nations has, for four decades now, been striving tirelessly to resolve the problem of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. Over this time many correct words have been emphatically spoken from this rostrum calling for common sense and co-operation. Many specific decisions have been adopted identifying ways to bring about a just and lasting settlement in the region, taking account of the legitimate interests of all parties to the Middle East conflict.

In his report on this item (A/43/867) the Secretary-General gives us an impressive list of actions undertaken by the United Nations in 1988 alone to resolve the situation in the Middle East.

These activities have been spurred by the uprising that has been going on for a whole year now in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

Unfortunately, these efforts have not yet led to the start of a political settlement process in the Middle East.

Notwithstanding the many decisions taken by the General Assembly and the Security Council, Israel is increasingly violating the rights of Palestinians and other Arab peoples, continuing with unflagging obstinacy its policy of

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securing its domination in the occupied Arab territories and stepping up aggressive actions against Arab States. This is borne out, inter alia, by its ruthless methods in reaction to the uprising of the Palestinian people, including massacres, woundings, torture, deportations and mass arrests in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949. Israel continues bombings and other aggressive actions in Lebanon, which have resulted in further casualties and destruction.

The long list of heinous and wrongful actions by Israel in the Palestinian lands it seized is given, inter alia, in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/43/38). The sufferings of the Palestinian people are beyond measure, and the continuation of the uprising testifies to their resolve to implement their legitimate rights, including self-determination.

The Byelorussian SSR condemns all these actions undertaken by Israel and calls for their immediate cessation. The key to resolving the entire problem in the Middle East is the immediate resolution of the question of the implementation of inalienable right of the Palestinian people to the establishment of an independent State, within the framework of a just and comprehensive Middle East settlement. Until it is possible to achieve a comprehensive settlement on all aspects of the Middle East problem, the situation in the Middle East will continue to be potentially dangerous. A practical way to bring about such a settlement would be an international conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all interested parties, including the Palestinians, as represented by their sole, legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The idea of an international conference on the Middle East has been endorsed in General Assembly resolutions. In particular, as was cited by the Secretary-General in the report to which I referred earlier, all members of the

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Security Council consider it a good idea to convene such a conference. However, a practical decision on this matter, which brooks no delay, has been dragged out because of certain well-known States. As a result, as is noted by the Secretary-General,

"the stalemate in the peace process continues, with all its attendant dangers". (ibid., para. 34)

In this respect the Byelorussian SSR supports the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that

"In these circumstances, I think that the time is right for the Security Council, which has a major and historically recognized responsibility for this complex issue, to commit itself to a thorough review of the situation with a view to adopting a pragmatic approach that would take fully into account the concerns and security interests of all the parties." (ibid., para. 35)

That is particularly important now, when the latest decisions taken by the Palestine National Council have opened up new prospects for the realization by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and the securing of a lasting and just peace in the region by peaceful political means. The entire range of documents adopted by the Palestine National Council reaffirms that the PLO, headed by Yasser Arafat, is serious and an authoritative partner in the peace talks.

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The political declaration of the Palestine National Council cleared the way to the convening of the International Conference on the Middle East. It was important that the highest representative body of the Palestinian people proclaimed its commitment to the generally recognized principles of international conduct.

It is also essential to put an end to the arms race in the region, which has assumed particularly dangerous dimensions. That would help reduce tension and the threat of armed conflict there.

Full advantage should be taken of these new favourable opportunities for a speedy, peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem. We call for an immediate beginning of preparatory work on convening an international conference on the Middle East.

Throughout the world we are today witnessing visible, long-awaited changes for the better. Reliance on force and confrontation is gradually receding in international practice, and increasingly there is a shift to political methods for achieving peaceful solutions of urgent problems. An encouraging trend in the practical resolution of regional conflicts is gaining ground, as shown, for example, by the conclusion of the Geneva agreements on Afghanistan, the cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq and other moves towards the political settlement of situations of conflict in other areas.

All this inspires us to believe in the real possibility of a speedy settlement of the Middle East conflict, a conflict which is extremely painful to the parties. One party to the conflict has reaffirmed its good will with respect to a political settlement; it is now up to the other side and its supporters. Israel's belligerent circles must come to understand that their reliance on a policy of force and State terrorism has been fully discredited, and that such a policy cannot break the will of the Arabs in their struggle for their inalienable rights or bring

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about calm and peace, first of all for the people of Israel itself, a large proportion of which actively supports a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Byelorussian SSR will continue to support the initiatives of the United Nations and the work of the Secretary-General to achieve a peaceful, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East.

Mrs. FLOREZ PRIDA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Once again we are gathered here to consider the situation in the Middle East, item 40 of our agenda. The international community must not fail to seize the opportunity offered by this session; every measure or decision it adopts should be aimed at an early solution to the Middle East conflict, which has long been on the United Nations agenda. In that connection, all must realize that it will be impossible to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict, or to restore peace to the region, without understanding that the question of Palestine is the core of the Middle East problem and the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Similarly, a pre-condition for peace is the total and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories and the restoration to the Palestinian people of all its inalienable national rights, including the right to return to its homeland, to self-determination without outside interference, and to the establishment of an independent sovereign State in Palestine.

The vast majority of the States Members of the Organization have long understood the injustice dealt the Palestinian people. It is time for redress. The historic decision made in Algiers on 15 November by the Palestine National Council, proclaiming the independent State of Palestine, was a step of tremendous significance. It was received with great expressions of sympathy and solidarity throughout the world; it marked a new, higher stage in the noble cause of the

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valiant Palestinian people and attested to a readiness to seek a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

Now more than ever it is necessary for the United Nations to redouble its efforts and for the international community to step up its insistent call for a just and lasting peace in that region.

In that connection, it is deplorable that the Government of the host country has refused a visa to the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Mr. Yasser Arafat, thus preventing him from addressing the General Assembly on the question of Palestine, which would without question have been a major contribution to promoting peace initiatives on the Middle East conflict, initiatives that are so necessary.

The Palestinian people, which for 40 years has spilt its blood in a prolonged and unequal struggle, has answered the assault of the Israeli invader with the intifadah, which is an admirable manifestation of its determination to gain independence, which confirms the nationalist nature of the Palestinian movement and which marks a new chapter in that people's long battle against foreign colonization and domination.

Israel's persistent refusal to recognize the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and to withdraw from the territories it has occupied since 1967, together with the policy of aggression and expansionism it pursues with the support of its strategic ally, have exacerbated tensions in the Middle East, posing a grave threat to international peace and security.

The intransigence and obstinacy of the few cannot continue to block the attainment of peace in the Middle East or the full exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The few must be made to understand that times have changed, and that domination, colonialism and discrimination are being

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replaced by the liberation of peoples, national independence and equality among human beings.

A peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis must be found. The only way to do this is through the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation, on an equal footing, of all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

My delegation calls for the early convening of this Conference, as an appropriate framework for seeking a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict.

The Government of Cuba, which has always supported the just Palestinian cause, immediately supported and recognized the independent State of Palestine. We consider that the Palestine National Council's decision is in keeping with the genuine interests of the struggle of that fraternal people. Once again, we wish to reiterate our support for and recognition of the Palestinian State.

It is time for action. The international community must provide the support the new State deserves and must call more forcefully than ever before for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal, of Israeli armed forces from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

Mr. STRESOV (Bulgaria): For more than four decades the situation in the Middle East has continued to be the focus of attention of the world community. It is justifiably a cause of serious concern. Despite the consistent efforts and numerous resolutions of the United Nations to find a just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the vicious circle of tragic events in that part of the world has not yet been broken.

The main reason for the constant tensions in the Middle East is undoubtedly Israel's aggressive and expansionist policy directed against the neighbouring Arab States and the Palestinian people. A clear expression of that policy is the continuing occupation of the Arab lands seized in 1967 and afterwards, and Israel's refusal to recognize the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine. The policy and practices of Israel are in flagrant violation of the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. Israel continues to disregard the categorical will of the international community.

It is well known that the Palestinian problem is at the core of the Middle East crisis and that peace in that part of the world is unattainable without its just resolution. Events in the region have proved convincingly that all attempts to settle the issue by separate deals can lead only to further tightening of the knot of problems.

Events in recent years, and particularly the uprising of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which is already well into its second year, clearly demonstrate that there is no force capable of quelling the Palestinian people's desire for freedom and national independence. Its determined struggle in defence of its legitimate rights has further strengthened the support and sympathy of the nations of the world for its just cause. The time has come to put an end to the suffering and tragedy of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Stresov, Bulgaria)

Of historic significance are the decisions of the nineteenth session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers, which proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine. That is yet another important step in the direction of the materialization of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine. There can be no doubt that the Palestine National Council and its leadership manifested a realistic and constructive approach, as reflected in the political declaration. In addition, that approach confines the framework of the settlement of the problem to peaceful means. The world as a whole, with only a few notable exceptions, rightly hailed the decisions adopted in Algiers. Bulgaria was among those countries which recognized the Palestinian State.

In his message to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Arab People of Palestine, the Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and President of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, Todor Zhivkov, said the following:

"We are convinced that the further progress made on the road to finding a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the Middle East conflict will create favourable opportunities for the effective realization of the inalienable rights of the heroic Arab people of Palestine".

The situation in Lebanon continues to be tense. It is time to put an end to the bloodshed there, and to restore the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of that country by implementing Security Council resolutions 508 (1982) and 509 (1982), which stipulate the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces.

(Mr. Stresov, Bulgaria)

The People's Republic of Bulgaria has always supported the search for a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict on the basis of a balance of the interests of all the States in the region, the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and thereafter, the granting of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, and the guaranteeing of the security and free development of all the States and peoples in the Middle East, including Israel.

A just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict can be achieved only through the concerted and sincere efforts of all the parties concerned. Those efforts should be based on the principles of equality, equal security, non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, and respect for the political sovereignty and independence of all parties to the conflict.

It is quite obvious that the majority of United Nations Member States, including the People's Republic of Bulgaria, supports that approach. This is confirmed by the exceptionally broad international consensus on the mechanism for resolving the Middle East issue, as outlined in the numerous resolutions of the world Organization and the debates in the General Assembly.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria believes that the most effective way to settle the issue is to convene an international conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of all directly interested States, including the five permanent members of the Security Council and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the sole, legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. It is our view that the time has come to accelerate efforts to convene that international conference.

(Mr. Stresov, Bulgaria)

The recent development of world affairs, for example the signing of the Geneva agreements on Afghanistan and the beginning of the implementation of the Security Council resolution on Iran and Iraq, has proved convincingly that any dispute or conflict, no matter how complicated, can be resolved given the necessary political goodwill. The People's Republic of Bulgaria believes that this also applies to the Middle East conflict.

To achieve this, however, the States involved have to demonstrate a mutual desire to make peace by peaceful means. The Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organization have again adopted such a positive approach. Regrettably, this has not yet been done by the Government of Israel. It is our hope that the processes which have started in the Middle East will ultimately lead to breaking the knot of deep contradictions and to opening a new page in the history of the region.

The United Nations will have an extremely important role to play in the attainment of that goal. Over the past year the Organization has worked very actively and successfully to ease tension in certain regions. The enormous potential and prestige of the United Nations can now be utilized for finding a prompt, just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem in accordance with the Organization's aims, principles and resolutions.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria will continue to contribute to the attainment of that humane, difficult but not impossible task.

Mr. OKEYO (Kenya): The situation in the Middle East has for many years posed a serious threat to international peace and security. Indeed, there have been times when escalating tension has been so high that the world has been almost on the brink of being plunged into another world war. Thank goodness the world was spared that possible calamity.

The thundering guns that spat out death and destruction for eight long years during the protracted war between Iran and Iraq are now silent. That war caused tremendous loss of life and incalculable property damage. The suffering inflicted upon the peoples of both countries is unimaginable. Thus it was a great joy for Kenya and other peace-loving countries heartily to welcome the agreement reached between Iran and Iraq that resulted in a cessation of hostilities and ushered in a cease-fire.

The Republic of Kenya applauds the Secretary-General for the prompt steps he has taken to ensure implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 598 (1987). We urge both Iran and Iraq to continue to extend maximum co-operation to the Secretary-General at this critical period of returning that war-weary region to peace and tranquillity. We are convinced that both countries realize that lasting peace would be beneficial not only to themselves but also to other nations in the region in particular and the world in general. All nations, big and small, must work in unison to bring peace to the Middle East.

In this regard, the Republic of Kenya is proud of its modest contribution in providing an observer team for the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group.

Despite the happy turn of events in the Iran-Iraq conflict, we remain deeply concerned that no positive developments have taken place with regard to one of the main root causes of the instability in the Middle East. I am referring here to the Palestinian problem. Indeed, over the years the world has witnessed a rapid deterioration in the condition of the Palestinian people through increased acts of

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aggression and brutality by Israeli forces. The Palestinian people continue to be denied their legitimate right to a homeland; they have been forcibly removed from their homes; their property has been destroyed and their every basic human right flagrantly violated. Those unfortunate enough to live in the Israeli-occupied territories have been repeatedly denied legal protection and are constant victims of repressive Israeli legislation, arbitrary arrest, torture and killings. Even those who have sought refuge in foreign lands are not immune to attacks, as witnessed by the recent assassination in Tunis of Mr. Khalil Al Wazir, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The recent uprising of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories is a clear demonstration of the legitimate frustrations of people who have lived under brutal military occupation for more than two decades. We strongly condemn the excessive use of force by Israel to quell this uprising, particularly the killing of defenceless Palestinians, including women and children. We deplore the senseless acts of torture, deportation and detention, the closing of schools and other violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The Republic of Kenya fully supports Security Council resolutions 605 (1987), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988), and calls upon Israel to desist from further acts of aggression and fatal attacks on the Palestinian people. The State of Israel should know by now that no amount of violence will deter the Palestinians from demanding their legitimate rights.

Kenya is convinced that no just and lasting peace can be achieved in the Middle East unless and until the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are recognized, including their right to self-determination and a State of their own. Thus, while recognizing the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live within internationally recognized boundaries, Kenya calls upon Israel to restore to the Palestinian people their inalienable right to return to their

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homeland, their right to self-determination and their right to establish their own independent and sovereign State on the basis of General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX) and other relevant resolutions. Further, Kenya calls on Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since the 1967 war, believing that this is the only path to a durable and just solution of the Middle East crisis.

Kenya recognizes the Palestine Liberation Organization as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. We are therefore pleased to note the acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) by the Palestine National Council at its recent meeting in Algiers. We feel that this is a significant step towards a solution of the Palestinian question and we urge the international community to seize the opportunity to further the quest for a just and lasting solution. In this regard, we feel that the time is opportune to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all the interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Finally, I should like to touch briefly on another area of grave concern to my delegation, and that is the explosive and dangerous situation in Lebanon. Kenya strongly condemns the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory and unwarranted Israeli acts of aggression against the Lebanese population. We fully support Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 508 (1982) and 509 (1982), all of which call for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory and for full respect for Lebanon's territorial integrity and its right to exercise its sovereignty within its internationally recognized boundaries.

Ms. RASI (Finland): The United Nations has been particularly active and successful recently in efforts to resolve a number of international problems in various parts of the world. We have seen progress on regional security issues this year, progress that Member States would hardly have believed could emerge a year ago. Unfortunately, that stream of encouraging developments does not seem to have touched on one major problem: the question of the Middle East. Special attention should now be given to that unresolved conflict.

The situation in the Middle East continues to pose one of the most persistent threats to international peace and security. It has long been clear that a comprehensive and lasting solution can only be achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and of recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to national self-determination.

A lasting settlement will only be reached through negotiation. Acquisition of territories by force is inadmissible, and therefore Israel must withdraw from territories occupied by it since 1967. One major obstacle to a comprehensive settlement is the series of illegal acts committed by Israel in the occupied territories. Israel continues its settlement policies, it extends its jurisdiction to the Golan Heights and persists in acts aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem. The Security Council has rejected all those acts and, again this year, Finland joins the international community in rejecting them. It is also crucial to guarantee, within an overall settlement, that all States in the region, including Israel, have the right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.

The Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories clearly demonstrates how the question of Palestine remains the key problem in the Middle East conflict. The disagreement between Arabs and Israelis on the Palestinian problem serves as a

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dramatic and daily reminder to the international community of the existence of an open wound. There will be no lasting solution to the troubled situation in the Middle East as long as that problem remains unsolved. We have followed the seriously deteriorating situation in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza with deep concern. The Palestinian uprising, which began a year ago, clearly reflects the distress of a population compelled to live under occupation for over two decades without any political prospects.

We are all aware of the complexity of the Middle East problem and the difficulty of resolving it. However, would it not be better to have a settlement that takes into account the main concerns of all parties, rather than a stalemate that causes suffering to all in the area decade after decade? We urge that everyone, including the parties directly involved, seriously look for peaceful ways and means out of the intolerable situation. There are new developments emerging in the area. Palestinians and Israelis must be encouraged to enter into a dialogue that can open new prospects for the Middle East. There is a clear conviction shared by the community of nations that an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations would help to overcome the problems and obstacles in the way of a just and lasting solution to the conflict. All parties to the conflict should be represented in the negotiations, and that of course presupposes the right of the Palestinians and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as their most significant representative, to participate in negotiations on their own future within the framework of a comprehensive solution to the conflict.

The Finnish Government has noted with satisfaction the position adopted by the Palestine National Council at its meeting in Algiers, that an international

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conference on the Middle East should be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

That corresponds to the position of the Finnish Government on the basis for a solution to the question of the Middle East. In our view, the mutual recognition of the rights of Israel and of the Palestinians constitutes a pre-condition for a peaceful and just solution to the problems of the Middle East. That implies, on the one hand, Israel's right to live within secure and recognized boundaries and, on the other, the right to national self-determination of the Palestinians, including the right to statehood.

Agreement concerning the implementation of Palestinian statehood, including questions of territory and borders, must be reached at a peace conference or otherwise between the parties concerned.

Palestinian acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a basis for negotiations is an important political decision. It offers new opportunities for a constructive dialogue between the parties to the problem of the Middle East and promotes the convening of an international conference. We hope this opportunity will not be lost and strongly appeal to the parties to this effect.

Year after year Lebanon too remains a victim of the basic problems of the Middle East conflict. The independence, territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Lebanon must be respected and the unity of the country guaranteed. All foreign troops must be withdrawn and Lebanese authority over Lebanese territory must be restored as soon as possible. Finland once again appeals to all parties in Lebanon to refrain from violence.

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In accordance with its policy of neutrality, Finland takes a balanced and conciliatory position on the various controversial questions of the Middle East conflict. Finland has maintained good relations with all the nations concerned, including all the immediate parties to the conflict. It is our firm intention to continue this policy, which has enabled us to preserve the confidence of all parties to the conflict of the Middle East.

An expression of Finland's peaceful services is the sizeable contribution which Finland has made and continues to make to the United Nations peace-keeping activities in the area from their very beginning. Finland takes part in all ongoing United Nations peace-keeping activities in the Middle East - the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO). We consider the peace-keeping operations an essential element of United Nations services in supporting efforts towards a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland): Poland follows developments in the Middle East with grave concern.

The question of Palestine has long been recognized by the international community as the underlying cause of the Middle East conflict. The General Assembly, expressing the sentiments of Member States, has in numerous resolutions strongly reaffirmed that no comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region will be achieved without the full exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories.

During the past year we have witnessed the emergence of a more favourable atmosphere for the peaceful settlement of regional armed conflicts. Yet the beneficent effects of the improved international situation have not yet reached the Arab-Israeli conflict, which remains - as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report under this item - "one of the most tragic and threatening in the world". (A/43/691, para. 7)

The situation in the Middle East in the past year has in fact considerably deteriorated as a result of Israel's continued occupation of the Arab territories, its denial of the national rights of the Palestinian people and its repressive policies. The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694) noted that violence and repression had reached a level higher than before in the 21 years of occupation. The Israeli Government had continued to apply a general policy similar to that of the preceding years and adopted various measures to establish settlements, expropriate property, transfer Israeli citizens to the occupied territories and encourage, directly or indirectly, the Palestinian population to leave their homeland. The report states that the restrictive measures implemented against the civilian population had contributed to the deterioration of the situation leading to the Palestinian uprising. This view is

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shared and amplified by the Secretary-General, who states in his comprehensive report covering all aspects of developments in the Middle East that

"the intifadah is a direct result of the stalemate in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict". (A/43/867, para. 32)

The Palestinian uprising confirms the determination of the Palestinian people to resist Israeli domination and occupation, and it is a testimony to its determination to realize its national rights.

The just aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence found their expression in the Declaration of Independence adopted on 15 November 1988 at the meeting of the Palestine National Council held in Algiers.

Poland has welcomed with satisfaction the proclamation of the Palestinian State, viewing the Declaration of Independence as a historic step towards the realization of the just aspirations of the Palestinian people. With the establishment of the State authorities, we shall begin co-operation with them in accordance with international law.

The affirmation by the Palestine National Council of the need to convene the international conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the assurance of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people - above all, its right to self-determination - will contribute to the promotion of the Middle East process and to the achievement of lasting peace, guaranteeing all the States of the region the security and conditions for peaceful development.

This realistic approach calls for a proper, constructive answer on the part of other parties concerned. The denial of a visa to Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), by the authorities of the United States does not go in that direction. Apart from being incompatible with the obligations

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of the host country under the Headquarters Agreement, it is likely - as the Secretary-General rightly indicated on 27 September - to complicate and render more difficult the debates on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East at the current session.

For over four decades the United Nations has sought to find a solution to the Middle East conflict. Despite the numerous resolutions adopted by both the Security Council and the General Assembly and the persistent international efforts, the goal of peace in the region has remained elusive. Therefore, the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East must continue with a sense of urgency.

It is encouraging that a wide measure of agreement on the elements to be included in a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict has emerged. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, noted when addressing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on 14 January 1988, those elements are: the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied since 1967; respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and a satisfactory solution of the Palestinian problem, based on recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination.

The vital interests of all peoples and States of the region, as well as the interests of international peace and security, can be secured only through the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of United Nations resolutions and under United Nations auspices.

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As time passes there is growing support for the convening of the international peace conference, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, as the only realistic means of achieving a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its crucial part, the question of Palestine. That support has been forthcoming from the socialist countries and is also reflected in the position adopted by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of African Unity, the European Community, the Nordic countries and others.

Unfortunately, as is clear from the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East (43/691), deep differences remain about the nature of an international framework for the negotiation of a just and lasting settlement, about its powers, about the basis on which it should be convened and about who should take part in it, which make it impossible to establish an international negotiating process acceptable to all.

The history of the Arab-Israeli conflict provides ample evidence that partial and piecemeal solutions - and even more so any attempts to enforce unilateral schemes of settlement of the conflict - have no prospect of bringing this tragic conflict to an end.

The position of Poland on the settlement of the Middle East conflict is generally known, and we have presented it on numerous occasions. It proceeds from the conviction that only a comprehensive settlement based on the balancing of interests and equal security of all parties, taking fully into account the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, provides genuine prospects of achieving a just and lasting peace which would guarantee all countries of the region, including the people of Israel, secure existence and development within recognized international boundaries.

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An international peace conference on the Middle East, to be attended by the permanent members of the Security Council and the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, would be a proper vehicle for achieving such a settlement. Advantage should be taken of the improved international situation to multiply efforts for convening such a conference. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General to facilitate the convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East. We take note of his intention to pursue that matter with the Security Council, which has a major and historically recognized responsibility for that complex issue.

Poland stands ready to contribute to creating the conditions conducive to the development of the peace process in the Middle East. My country's participation in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force is a practical expression of that position.

Mr. DOST (Afghanistan): It has been universally recognized that the explosive situation in the Middle East, which has already resulted in several armed conflicts and continued unrest and instability in that region, is due to one and only one factor. That single factor consists of the policy of aggression, occupation and expansionism constantly pursued by Israel. It is Israel that has always opted for a course of confrontation with the Arab nations, beginning with the forceful usurpation of the land, homes and rights of the Palestinian Arab people and the occupation of their country by force of arms. That has brought untold suffering to the Palestinian people scattered around the world as refugees and to those Palestinian and Arab peoples living under Israeli occupation.

Therefore, it is obvious that the only solution for the Middle East problem lies in a drastic change in the policies of Israel. Only if Israel abandons the

(Mr. Dost, Afghanistan)

destructive policy of aggression, occupation and annexation against its Arab neighbours can a lasting, just and peaceful solution to the Middle East situation be found. The Arab countries of the Middle East, in numerous collective decisions, particularly that taken at Fez, which was subsequently reiterated on various occasions, have provided for an alternative to the state of continued conflict that has plagued the region for decades, bringing war, bloodshed, dislocation and deprivation of human rights to the victims of Israeli aggression.

The Israeli response so far has always been stubbornness and intransigence in its pursuit of the iron-first policy in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands and its thwarting of international efforts to bring peace to the Middle East. The total, unconditional and speedy withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands, including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, and the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return to their homeland and to establish a free, independent and sovereign Palestinian State therein, are the key to a lasting peace in the Middle East.

In that connection, may I express my warmest congratulations to the fraternal Palestinian people and their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for the historic declaration of 15 November 1988 on the establishment of the State of Palestine. The Government of the Republic of Afghanistan has recognized the State of Palestine, and we express our full solidarity with it, and support for it, in its legitimate and honourable struggle to achieve its national rights and aspirations. We also commend the Political Communiqué adopted by the Palestine National Council at Algiers on 15 November 1988 for the bold political step it contains. The Communiqué has provided a genuine historic opportunity for resolving the situation in the Middle East and settling

(Mr. Dost, Afghanistan)

the question of Palestine that lies at its core. The cause of international peace and security dictates that this unique opportunity should not be lost.

The heroic uprising of the Palestinian people in occupied Palestine has amply demonstrated the futility of the iron-fist policy pursued by Israel. That uprising, which has continued in spite of the ongoing murder of Palestinian youth, women and children at the hands of the repressive Israeli occupation force as a response to the illegal occupation of their land as a result of Israeli aggression, and to the long list of acts of oppression and brutality committed against them. That list includes such deplorable acts as collective punishment, the demolition of houses over the heads of their occupants, deportation, the forced expulsion of the inhabitants of lands confiscated for the establishment of illegal Israeli settlements, expropriation, the killing and wounding of a defenceless and unarmed populace and total disregard for the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people.

Israel is continuing the illegal occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, imposing on its inhabitants measures designed to destroy their national, cultural and historical roots and their Syrian Arab identity. We condemn the efforts of the occupying authorities to alter the demographic and socio-economic structure of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. The policy of the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights and Palestinian lands is deplorable and considered null and void by the international community.

In that connection I should like to reiterate the full solidarity of the people and Government of the Republic of Afghanistan with fraternal Syria in its just cause of liberating the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. An unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from the Golan Heights is the only solution for that problem.

(Mr. Dost, Afghanistan)

The question of Lebanon has been aggravated by the continued occupation of parts of its land by Israel. The aerial and naval bombardments and other acts of aggression perpetrated by Israel against Lebanon are gross violations of the sovereignty of independent Lebanon and have been condemned by the Organization and by other international forums. We deplore Israel's massacres and repressive measures against Palestinian refugee camps in the territory of Lebanon. Israel must withdraw from southern Lebanon, and the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Lebanon must be ensured.

The convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East, which is supported by the Assembly, remains the only practicable means for ensuring a just, viable and lasting peace in the Middle East. For that conference to succeed, the full participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing must be ensured. The conference should ensure the full and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to statehood. It is deplorable that Israel alone has created the only stumbling block on the path to the convening of that conference.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate once again the full solidarity of the people and Government of the Republic of Afghanistan with the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in their heroic and just struggle for the liberation of their land and the restoration of their rights. We will continue to support them until peace and justice prevail in the Middle East.

AGENDA ITEM 86

SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORT OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE
(PART II) (A/43/918/Add.1)

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 7 of Part II of its report (A/43/918/Add.1).

The draft resolution, entitled "Special programmes of assistance to the Sudan", was adopted by the Second Committee without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 43/52).

AGENDA ITEM 148 (continued)

CONSERVATION OF CLIMATE AS PART OF THE COMMON HERITAGE OF MANKIND: REPORT OF THE
SECOND COMMITTEE (A/43/905)

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 9 of its report (A/43/905).

The Second Committee adopted that draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 43/53).

The PRESIDENT: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their positions on the resolution just adopted.

Ms. VRAILAS (Greece): On behalf of the European Community and its member States, I should like to express our deep satisfaction at the adoption of the resolution entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind".

I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize the Community's deep interest in protecting the environment, as underlined at the highest level during

(Ms. Vrailas, Greece)

the recent meeting of the Heads of State or Government in Rhodes. This particularly holds true on the issue of climate change. The ratification of the Montreal Protocol by most of the States members of the European Economic Community is an example of the importance we attach to this problem. Furthermore, the Commission of the European Community has prepared a report on the climate issue, which is soon to be considered by the Council of Ministers. This report contains a number of recommendations to combat effectively the greenhouse effect, addressing, inter alia, the question of assistance to developing countries in their efforts to cope with the problems it causes.

I should also like to stress that a number of States members of the European Community have undertaken initiatives related to the climate question. Further initiatives have recently been announced in this respect.

In summary, I should like to assure the Assembly that the European Community and its member States look forward to discussing the question of climate change during the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta): On behalf of the Government of Malta I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to all delegations represented in the Assembly for the support extended to the important resolution just adopted.

Immediately prior to the opening of the current session, the Government of Malta alerted the international community, represented at the United Nations, to the serious threat to our climate as a result of certain human activities. We requested the General Assembly to include in its agenda an item on the conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind in order that urgent attention could be given to a matter of concern to mankind as a whole and with serious, far-reaching implications demanding urgent action to protect the global climate for present and future generations.

(Mr. Borg Olivier, Malta)

The response of the international community has been most encouraging. In a very short time, Malta has enlisted the enthusiastic support of all countries for its noble objective, and this has made it possible for the Assembly to achieve a consensus on this very important matter.

This is a very proud moment, not only for the people of Malta but for all the inhabitants of our planet. It is an important landmark which manifests the international community's determination to react responsibly in the face of emerging evidence that life on Earth could be threatened if corrective measures are not taken. We consider the resolution just adopted as an important first step, which should lead to effective collective action for the protection of the global climate for present and future generations of mankind.

All of us here are committed to the aims, purposes and objectives embodied in the resolution. We now have a responsibility, individually and collectively, to see to it that the resolution is implemented fully and comprehensively. For this, we count on all countries to participate actively in the important work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and on the full support and co-operation of the United Nations system of organizations, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization.

The PRESIDENT: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 148.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.