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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 14 December 1988, at 9 a.m.

President:

Mr. CAPUTO

(Argentina)

later:

Mr. AL-SHAKAR (Vice-President)

(Bahrain)

- Organization of work
- Question of Palestine (continued)
 - (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
 - (b) Reports of the Secretary-General
 - (c) Draft resolutions

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The meeting was called to order at 9.20 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Before calling on the first speaker, I should like to call the attention of representatives to some elements regarding our organization of work. We shall endeavour to listen to the largest possible number of speakers in the two meetings scheduled for today, particularly in the prolonged afternoon meeting. Representatives will recall that the holding of the meeting in Geneva was decided upon pursuant to a General Assembly resolution that assigned three days for our work here. Therefore, we have to conclude our work within that time-limit, which means that the afternoon meeting, which will begin at 3 p.m., will probably extend into the evening, certainly beyond 10 p.m. We will try to include all the speakers inscribed for Thursday afternoon in this evening's list of speakers.

I regret any inconvenience this reallocation of speakers may cause, but I am sure representatives will understand that we really must not exceed the time allotted to us in the resolution in which it was decided to transfer these meetings of the General Assembly to Geneva. Hence I must point out that, in so far as possible, statements must not be unduly long, and I thank representatives for their understanding.

AGENDA ITEM 37 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/43/35)
- (b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/43/272 and A/43/691)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (A/43/L.50, A/43/L.51 and A/43/L.52)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I remind representatives that pursuant to the decision taken yesterday the list of speakers will be closed

(The President)

today at 12 noon. Therefore, I request those participants wishing to speak to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

Mr. DOLGU (Romania) (interpretation from French): I, too, would like to pay a tribute to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat, for his vision, courage, and the brilliant manner in which he presented the decisions of the historic Algiers session of the Palestine National Council, as well as for the additional information he provided on subjects of vital importance.

The consideration by the General Assembly of the item entitled "Question of Palestine" is particularly important this year. The intifadah and the determination with which the Palestinian people has rejected foreign occupation; that uprising's striking confirmation of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; the broad movement of international solidarity with and sympathy for the struggle of the Palestinian people; and, last but not least, the contents of the recent decisions of the Palestine National Council - all represent a series of new elements from which one may conclude that more favourable conditions are emerging for the success of efforts aimed at a peaceful political settlement of the problems afflicting the Middle East. These elements provide the most representative world forum, the United Nations, an excellent opportunity to act and play its role as a catalyst of peace initiatives and to make a decisive contribution to the initiation of a process leading to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region.

My country, Romania, has always attached special importance to the Palestinian problem. It has consistently advocated a comprehensive settlement of the problems in the Middle East through peaceful, political means in order to arrive at a just and lasting peace in the region and a settlement guaranteeing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish an

(Mr. Dolgu, Romania)

independent Palestinian State, and the existence of all States in the region, including Israel, within secure and recognized boundaries.

Romania maintains active relations with all countries in the area, including all parties involved in the conflict, and has endeavoured, in so far as possible, to contribute to the settlement of the problem. To that end, the leadership of my country has undertaken a systematic dialogue with the leadership of the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, with the Government of Israel and the Governments of the Arab countries of the region. We have always candidly expressed our opinion on the basis of positions of principle, on the need for a comprehensive political settlement. My country was one of the first to underscore the urgency and the need for an international conference, under United Nations auspices, in the conviction that a settlement in such a framework is not only possible but also desirable, for it would provide for meeting the interests of the Palestinian people and the State of Israel, as well as be in the interests of peace and security in the region and in the world as a whole.

In our view it is high time that we agree on an incontrovertible truth. The problems of the Middle East cannot be resolved by delaying tactics, the maintenance of the status quo, or externally imposed solutions. It is high time to recognize by deed and through significant and responsible political action, that only the acceptance of reality, only dialogue on the basis of that reality and in a proper legal framework, can lead to a settlement that would be consistent with the interests of the Palestinian people and all States of the area and would promote world peace. The PLO has amply fulfilled these conditions, for the legitimacy, realism and seriousness of the decisions of the Palestine National Council seem to us undeniable.

(Mr. Dolgu, Romania)

The right of the Palestinian people to an independent State stems not only from the ancient and contemporary history of the region but also from United Nations resolutions, from General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947 to the numerous other documents, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). All these documents clearly underscore the rejection of the acquisition of territory by force, as well as the right of the Palestinian people to establish its own independent State, side by side with Israel, on the territory of Palestine. That is why Romania has, in keeping with its principled position, recognized the newly proclaimed Palestinian State.

The Romanian Government welcomes and supports the other decisions adopted at the Algiers session of the Palestine National Council, namely, the readiness to work for a negotiated settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the implicit recognition of the State of Israel, complemented in this Hall by the appeal addressed to the leadership of that State, the rejection of violence and terrorism in all its forms, and so on. These are extremely important steps for the initiation of negotiations in the framework of an international conference aimed at a comprehensive and just settlement.

The Romanian Government hopes that every effort will be made, and that there will be a sense of responsibility, in order to achieve the convening of such a conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties concerned, including the PLO, as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the State of Israel.

As my country's President, Nicolae Ceausescu, said recently:

(Mr. Dolgu, Romania)

"In keeping with the policy it has always pursued, Romania will continue to work for a settlement, through negotiations, of all existing problems, to support the realization of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in a free, democratic, independent homeland, in co-operation with its neighbours."

By dint of the will of the overwhelming majority of Member States, this session of the United Nations General Assembly convened in Geneva was able to hear the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Yasser Arafat. While we welcome this development, we note with regret that these meetings should have taken place in New York. Indeed, nothing can justify the refusal to allow the leader of an organization enjoying official status at the United Nations to participate in the work of the world forum.

(Mr. Dolgu, Romania)

Thus, we note with regret the attempts of the political circles of certain States to minimize the importance of the Algiers decisions or to distort their meaning. Similarly, we note with regret that new acts of violence and military aggression have been perpetrated in the region. In the interest of international peace and security, there must be no acts of any kind that could jeopardize the initiation of a political dialogue and the encouragement of all positive trends in that direction, or that could jeopardize the recognition and appropriate assessment of the overtures that have been made and the drawing of the necessary conclusions.

We recognize the overtures that had been made and draw the appropriate conclusions therefrom.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his efforts to ensure a settlement of the Middle East conflict and the Palestinian problem in the framework of an international conference, and we believe that the General Assembly should ask him to step up his efforts in that direction, in the light of the whole range of recent developments and the new conditions that have emerged. At the same time, it is necessary to update, and adapt to the new developments and conditions, the tasks and activities of United Nations bodies with special responsibilities in regard to the problem of Palestine - particularly the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories.

But, above all, Romania regards the fundamental objective of United Nations activities in this respect to be an increase in the efforts to convene an international conference under United Nations auspices to seek a peaceful, just and lasting settlement to the Middle East conflict.

(Mr. Dolgu, Romania)

The number of States that have recognized the new State of Palestine continues to grow. Its recognition by the largest possible number of States could help maintain and broaden the positive momentum of the proliferation of conditions propitious to initiating and successfully concluding a peace process in the Middle East.

It is high time that, in liberty, independence and sovereignty, Palestinians and Israelis put an end to the old dissensions and sources of confrontation and promoted co-operation for the peace and prosperity of all the peoples of the area, so that it could become an element of stability and make an important contribution to the solution of the problems confronting mankind.

Mr. FALL (Senegal) (interpretation from French): I do not wish to dwell on the reasons that have obliged the General Assembly to meet here, but would merely express my delegation's sincere gratitude to the Swiss Government as well as the authorities of the beautiful city of Geneva for their traditional, famous hospitality and everything they have done to facilitate the holding of our meetings here.

This year the Assembly's examination of the question of Palestine has special significance for my country, Senegal, for the following reasons.

First, it is taking place at a time when the United Nations has taken a new lease on life, when a process giving us reason for hope seems to be the common denominator of all the regional conflicts posing a serious threat to international peace and security.

Secondly, our discussions are being held only a few days after the historic decision taken by the Palestine National Council on 15 November in Algiers - that city imbued with the history of peoples fighting for freedom - to proclaim the independence of the State of Palestine.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

Finally, and above all, the presence among us of Chairman Yasser Arafat - whom we salute for his courage, clear-headedness and acute sense of responsibility - gives our debates the solemnity that befits the event. His clear, responsible and moving statement yesterday, his presentation of the Palestinian initiative, his vibrant appeal to Israel testify eloquently to the Palestinian commitment to the quest for a peaceful solution, to the Palestinians' desire to live on their land in dignity and freedom through the establishment of genuine peace, peace based on justice.

I have the great honour, on behalf of Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, to express again here to Mr. Arafat the energetic support and active and effective solidarity that the Senegalese Government and people are determined to offer our brother Palestinians. We have done so in the past and are doing so today while they are suffering and shall do so joyfully in the future when they have regained their homeland.

Is it not time for the Assembly, respecting the rights and freedoms of every people to determine its destiny in all sovereignty, to give new impetus to a genuine momentum towards peace in the Middle East, that region of the world which has contributed so much to the history and civilization of the world? In that quest for peace, the international community must first of all recognize that the Palestinian people has a right to affirm its national identity and establish a free and independent State.

It will be recalled that at the outset, in 1947, when the General Assembly adopted the plan for the partition of Palestine, in resolution 181 (II), the Middle East problem was raised in terms of the application of the right to self-determination of two peoples, one Jewish and the other Arab, on the same territory. Subsequently, we saw superimposed on this incompleting process of

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

self-determination the particularly complex elements of a conflict that has always pitted Israel and the Arab States against each other, thereby blocking any prospects for peace.

For a long time the United Nations itself, in its approach to the Middle East question, took account solely of the aspect of the conflict between Arabs and Israelis. It corrected that error only in 1975, by recognizing that the problem of Palestine was at the core of the Middle East conflict and by establishing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

A year after it was established, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People recommended to the General Assembly appropriate guidelines for the settlement of the Palestinian problem whose various constituent elements were: the withdrawal by Israel from all the territories occupied since 1967; the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State in Palestine; and the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in all peace efforts. All those recommendations were adopted by the Assembly in 1976.

In addition, there are the relevant provisions of a series of resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the question and providing for recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the States of the region.

Involved as it has been in this quest for a just and lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East, Senegal recalls that in 1983, during the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held in Geneva, the 137 participating countries recognized

"The right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all"

(A/CONF.114/42, para. 4 (f)) -

including the State of Palestine. Thus, the path to peace was clearly staked out.

Today more than ever before the question of Palestine arouses the conscience of mankind, creates an urgent challenge to the credibility of our Organization and, at the same time, requires us urgently to find the appropriate solutions for the cycle of violence and the intransigence of certain States that continue to deny, despite all the evidence, the inalienable rights of a martyred people.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

I need not recall that the intifadah - this revolution of stones, this new response of a generation that has chosen resistance from within - is nothing but the refusal by young people to be dominated, young people worried about their future, determined to struggle for liberation and aware of their historical responsibilities. These Palestinian young people, who ask only to be allowed to live in peace and security with their neighbours, are awaiting the reply that they are entitled to expect from us. We must not disappoint them. On the contrary, our Organization has the duty and the obligation, faced with the questions and the anguish of Palestinian youth, to bring them a new breath of peace, justice and respect for human rights.

This year - the fortieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights - any reply that is not based on law, justice and equity will only fuel rancour, create frustration, poison minds and finally lead to blind violence.

Senegal has noted and welcomed the fact that the Palestine National Council, with its faith in peace, its wisdom, its realism and its political sense, has accepted explicitly and unambiguously the very controversial Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Chairman Arafat confirmed that yesterday before the Assembly. This courageous, responsible attitude, which we are pleased to emphasize, is the clearest manifestation of the willingness of the Palestinian people and their authentic representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, to raise high the hand holding the famous olive branch, the symbol of peace and brotherhood.

How, then, can we fail to welcome this event and call on all the concerned and interested parties to stifle their differences and broaden and support the essential element - that is, the building of a peaceful Middle East, where all the peoples, while respecting their differences, will pool their creative energies and place them at the service of the peace and brotherhood of nations.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

That is why my delegation takes this opportunity of appealing urgently to the permanent members of the Security Council to consider the situation and arrive at a convergent assessment of it. For if each party clings to its position, we fear that the accumulated rancours of the past will become a burden of resentment that could for a long time to come banish the chances for a lasting peace in the Middle East, a region that has already seen five Israeli-Arab wars, with such harmful consequences.

The extortion, harassment and humiliation of all kinds, the innumerable acts of oppression and the other serious attacks on human dignity in the occupied Palestinian territories have not been able to stamp out the heroic struggle of the courageous Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and authentic representative that it has freely chosen.

History teaches us that it is useless to try to muzzle a determined people, a people committed and resolved to defend its right to exist. It teaches us also that only political responses can provide prospects for a just and lasting solution taking into account the legitimate aspirations of a people which has been dispossessed of its rights and whose dignity has been attacked but which is convinced of the rightness of its cause.

Thus, today the doors to peace in the Middle East are opening, so that finally the peoples of the region, so proud of their cultures and attached to their identities, may be able to live in peace and security within secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries.

For Senegal, which holds the chairmanship of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, that is the meaning and scope that should be given to the message that the Palestine National Council addressed to the international community on 15 November 1988 in Algiers.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

That is why my country considers it necessary, indeed urgent, to seize the momentum of the present situation to build a common front for the holding of the international peace conference on the Middle East. For, as President Abdou Diouf said in reply to a question on the constituent elements of the State of Palestine:

"... we must now see to it that the State of Palestine becomes a reality for everyone".

My country invites all nations that uphold peace, justice and liberty to participate in the realization of that noble plan.

Mr. FARAH (Djibouti) (interpretation from French): It will soon be two months since I warmly congratulated you, Sir, on your election as President at the forty-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I should like once again to reaffirm my delegation's confidence in your qualities as leader, particularly at this most crucial moment in the history of our Organization. I should also like to express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for the commendable manner in which he is guiding the Organization in the face of severe political and financial problems.

The Palestinian exodus or tragedy has turned 40 this year, which, ironically, also marks the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. That tragedy did not happen by accident. It was inevitable, since the roots of the problem go back more than a century to the emergence of the Zionist concept, followed by the Zionist infiltration into Palestine with the principle aim of capturing the whole of Palestine. Simha Flagpan, an Israeli historian, had this to say on the attitude of the Zionist leadership in respect of partition:

"In short, acceptance of the United Nations partition resolution was an example of Zionist pragmatism par excellence. It was a tactical acceptance, a step in the right direction and a spring-board for expansion when circumstances proved judicious".

Such sinister motives are even better articulated by the architect of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, who made his views explicit:

"The elimination of the Palestinian people both as adversary and as inhabitant of the same territory and the denial to them of their right to an independent State is our ultimate goal".

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

Israel's continued encroachment, its occupation and the establishment of settler communities in the Arab territories over the past 40 years must be interpreted as the transformation of that great plan into reality. According to Flagpan:

"The army, in the final analysis, was the basis of all political achievement".

In 1967, Israel, having achieved its awful designs, slammed the door once and for all in the face of the Palestinians. Israel has consistently rejected all forms of negotiation and has declared that the Palestinians have no role to play in the search for a solution to the conflict. Israel has become less and less concerned with the far-reaching moral, legal and political implications of its manipulations, distortions and lies. A renowned English historian, Arnold Toynbee, summed it up as follows:

"Right and wrong are the same in Palestine as anywhere else. What is peculiar to the Palestinian question is that the world has listened to the party that committed the offense and has turned a deaf to its victims".

Over the past 12 months, the eruption in the Arab territories has attracted the world's attention. The uprising or intifadah startled and shook Israeli complacency. It was inevitable. The intifadah represents the direct expression of a people against deprivation, dispossession and inhumanity. It is an expression of frustration and bitterness born of over 20 years of repressive policies.

For 40 years, the international community avoided the question of Palestine, which continued to feature in the United Nations agenda, though without any hope of finding a just and lasting solution. The United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine make up four volumes.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

Today, the Palestinian cause has been reborn, once more drawing the world's attention to the tragic destiny of the Palestinians. Djibouti salutes the tenacity, courage, maturity and pragmatism of the Palestinian people.

The result of all this came about in last month's historic move by the Palestine National Council in Algiers, which concluded in the adoption of a document of paramount importance:

A negotiated agreement was accepted on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories in exchange for security and recognition.

A Palestinian State was declared on the basis of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which partitioned Palestine into two States, one Arab, the other Jewish.

The recent session of the Palestinian National Council has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process and offered fresh opportunities for peace. The international community, through the United Nations, must find a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which embodies the struggle of a people fighting to free itself from the atrocities inflicted upon it by the doctrine of Zionism.

The adoption of General Assembly resolution 43/21 of 8 November 1988 on the uprising - intifadah - of the Palestinian people is a collective commitment by the international community to call for an international peace conference on the Middle East.

In that regard, we urge all Member States of the United Nations to insist on the convening without delay of an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, in which all parties concerned, including the State of Palestine, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council, would participate on an equal footing. The peace plan must be indivisible, comprehensible and based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

We are convinced that there will be no just and lasting solution without the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The consensus of the international community on the search for a lasting solution to the question of Palestine has led us, for the first time since the founding of the Organization in 1946, to convene the General Assembly outside its Headquarters in New York.

The presence of the majority of Member States here in Geneva to listen to Chairman Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole representative of the Palestinian people, who has been denied a visa by the host country, conveys a message of unanimity against an unjustified action that has damaged the perceived role of the United States in the Middle East as an "honest broker".

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

Mr. Arafat's presence here is historic. For more than a decade, the Palestine Liberation Organization, despite the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX), has not been participating on an equal footing with other parties; such participation is indispensable for any effort, deliberation or conference on Middle East problems convened under United Nations auspices.

It is our earnest wish that the Assembly would grant complete recognition to the young Palestinian nation, including its people's inalienable right to self-determination and national sovereignty.

I wish to conclude by thanking the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its effective, substantive contribution in bringing to the world's attention the plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation and in recommending to the General Assembly the implementation of a programme of action to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and national independence.

The Government of Djibouti has noted with pride and satisfaction the decisions taken by the Palestine National Council, enunciated here with courage and pragmatism by its Chairman, Mr. Yasser Arafat. We reaffirm our support for the Palestine Liberation Organization and we welcome the Palestine National Council's declaration of a Palestinian national State.

MR. QI Huaiyuan (China) (interpretation from Chinese): Since our discussion of the question of Palestine at the last session of the General Assembly there have been encouraging developments in international relations. The international situation is moving towards relaxation, and the peaceful settlement of regional disputes through dialogue has become a major trend. Conflicts in some of the world's hot-spots are on the way to settlement or possible settlement. However, the Palestinian question, which has remained unresolved for more than 40

(Mr. Qi Huaiyuan, China)

years, now looms large before the international community. The fact that we have to hold meetings here at Geneva to discuss this question is a matter of regret, and makes us feel more strongly the urgency of finding a solution to it, and to the Middle East question as a whole.

As is known to all, Israel is to date occupying large tracts of Arab territory. As a result, thousands of Palestinians have been crudely deprived of their rights and of their means of subsistence. The Israeli people too have shouldered a heavy burden. The early achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East is the common aspiration of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples, and the long-cherished wish of the Israeli people as well. It is also the universal desire of the international community.

In our view, the Palestinian question is at the core of the Middle East question. There will be no peace and tranquility in the region unless the Palestinian question is resolved. It is most unfair that the Palestinian people, which has been living in Palestine for generation after generation, should have been denied its legitimate national rights. The key to the settlement of this question lies in ensuring that the Palestinian people exercise its legitimate national rights. Over the past few decades the Palestinians, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), have fought indomitably and heroically for the restoration of their legitimate national rights. Especially since the end of last year, they have been fighting against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, demonstrating a strong will to defy brutal force and never to give up until they reach their goal. Their struggle has spelled the failure of the Israeli policy of occupation. This broadly-based struggle, with extensive sympathy and support from the world's peoples and the international community, has injected new vitality into the Middle East peace process.

(Mr. Qi Huaiyuan, China)

The nineteenth extraordinary session held recently by the Palestine National Council at Algiers was an important milestone in the course of the Palestinian people's struggle for the recovery of its lost territories and the restoration of its national rights. The resolutions adopted at the session, which were reasonable, practical and flexible, gave expression to the sincerity of the PLO in seeking a political settlement of the Palestinian question. A declaration of independence was adopted at the session, proclaiming the founding of a Palestinian State. It reflected the will of the Palestinian people and its historic choice. It marked a new stage in the Palestinian revolutionary cause.

The declaration of independence explicitly indicated the PLO's readiness to coexist with Israel and stressed the future establishment of a confederation between the Palestinian State and Jordan. In its political statement, the PLO agreed that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and guarantees of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people should serve as the basis for an international peace conference on the Middle East, and reiterated its opposition to terrorism in all forms, including State terrorism. Recently, Chairman Arafat reaffirmed in Stockholm that the PLO accepted the existence of Israel in the Middle East, as a State".

All of this fully demonstrates the sincerity of the PLO. Now it is high time for Israel to size up the situation and make a positive response. Regrettably, however, the Israeli Government has taken a hostile attitude and has rejected the positive steps taken by the PLO, threatening to suppress with greater relentlessness the Palestinian people's struggle against occupation. Facts have shown that the obduracy and intransigence of the Israeli authorities are now the main obstacles to settlement of the Middle East question. It is also regrettable that things should have developed to such an extent that the host country of

(Mr. Qi Huaiyuan, China)

United Nations Headquarters denied PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat an entry visa in an attempt to prevent him from addressing the General Assembly on the PLO's proposals for the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East. That act not only contravenes the relevant agreement between the host country and the United Nations but harms the peace process in the Middle East.

(Mr. Qi Huaiyuan, China)

The Chinese Government and people have all along firmly supported the just struggle of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples and opposed Israeli policies of aggression and expansion. We consider it imperative for Israel to stop its suppression of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and to withdraw from the Arab territories occupied since 1967 so as to create conditions for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question. The legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people must be restored to them. On that basis, all the Middle East countries may enjoy their rights to independence and existence. The Israeli authorities should face that reality. Israel and the Palestinian State should recognize each other and enter into negotiations through the convening of a Middle East peace conference so as to achieve a comprehensive and just settlement of the Middle East question. That is the only way to genuine peace and stability in the Middle East region. China will, as always, work hard for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East question.

We are pleased to note that the United Nations is playing an increasingly greater role in promoting a political settlement of regional conflicts. We believe that the United Nations is an appropriate avenue for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East question. The Middle East question has no parallel since the Second World War in terms of its long duration, the numerous wars it has triggered and the extent of disaster it has caused. It is the eager desire of the international community to see the Middle East question settled, which will be in the interest of all the countries in the world. The United Nations can play a greater role in the Middle East question and ought to pay more attention to it by urging all the countries concerned in the Middle East to take action so as to put an early end to the turbulence in the region.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): On behalf of the people and Government of Israel, I should like at the outset to extend to the people and Government of the Soviet Union our heartfelt condolences on the tragic and immense loss of life resulting from the earthquake in Armenia last week.

The atmosphere in the world today has dramatically improved. We have all been inspired by the hope that the improving relations between the two super-Powers will also positively affect our part of the Middle East. We hope that the war-torn nations in our region will also one day - and I hope soon - be able to resolve their problems peacefully and through direct negotiations.

True to this spirit, the United Nations has, in the past few months, been instrumental in bringing about negotiations in the Gulf area, in Afghanistan, in the Sahara, Namibia and in other areas. The battle-weary nations involved in those conflicts who seek peace have realized and affirmed the need for a political process and have asked for United Nations assistance to help resolve last lingering differences in order to facilitate such negotiations and thus foster the prospects of peace.

Unfortunately, some Arab countries do not accept the spirit of peace for which this Organization is supposed to stand. Year after year they use the United Nations as merely another forum to confront Israel with their hostility.

Some Arab leaders have welcomed the new climate in international relations leading to direct negotiations in place of confrontation. Unfortunately, most will not concede that that climate should govern their conduct vis-à-vis Israel.

The debate on the question of Palestine is one-sided and biased. Israel is confronted with repeated hostile and aggressive statements by representatives of more than two dozen States of the Arab League and some others. Those representatives do not call for a genuine peace, but rather state their extreme

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

demands, spiced with outrageous name-calling and false accusations, often coupled with ambiguous statements which in the same breath call for the destruction of Israel and for peace.

All this does not help restore tranquility in the territories, does not enable the Palestinian Arabs to return to normal daily life and does not even further their political aspirations. It definitely does not advance the cause of peace. This debate does not promote a political dialogue or direct negotiations between Israel and its neighbouring countries and the Palestinian Arabs. To the contrary: this debate, through the resolutions it adopts, obstructs any initiative for direct negotiations. This debate only blocks agreements and postpones the chance of peace.

I am not again going to enter into a detailed presentation of Israel's history and positions. You all know the facts: since its rebirth 40 years ago, Israel has been the victim of ongoing belligerency, aggression and terror by some of the Arab States. Israel has constantly been on the defence against the onslaught of its neighbours. Israel's call for direct peace negotiations have been repeatedly rejected.

The Palestinian problem is a direct outcome of the belligerency of Arab States.

Only one Arab leader had the courage to depart from this course. Ten years ago we welcomed the great leader of Egypt, President Sadat, when he took the courageous step of coming to Jerusalem. That historic visit, coming as it were, in the wake of the 1973 Geneva Conference and two interim agreements between Egypt and Israel, brought about the Camp David Accords, and six months later the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, all based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

The road travelled by President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, with the creative and constructive help of American mediation, proved that there are ways out of the cycle of belligerency, provided the wish for a negotiated peace exists on both sides of the border.

It must be clear to all that intimidation and violence must stop. Intimidation breeds belligerency, and violence will only complicate the situation in the area. Solutions can be found only by means of peaceful negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Hence, violent disturbances must cease. Tranquility and normal daily life must be restored in the territories. It is the human, civil and political obligation of the administering Power, in accordance with international law, which is quoted abundantly in the General Assembly, to maintain public order.

We act, as is our right - indeed, our obligation - under international law, to restore and secure order in the face of violent provocation. We do so with maximum restraint and in full compliance with the laws which were enacted not by Israel, but which were applied to these areas for almost half a century before Israel took control of them.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

As a rule, negotiations and dialogue are held between adversaries who strive for peace even though they may not agree on its details and may have different aspirations about its final outcome.

Political aspirations may be legitimate. Car bombs, grenades, shooting and shelling are not.

Peaceful demonstrations are legitimate. Slingshots, bricks, stones and firebombs are not.

To state one's opinion is legitimate. To instigate disturbances, violence and murder is not.

It must be clear to all that violence in any form and to any extent cannot be used to impose political solutions or conditions on Israel. Nor can solutions be imposed on Israel through ambiguous and misleading unilateral declarations.

The immediate problem we face is to stop the instigators from terrorizing and intimidating their own communities.

We believe that political deadlock may lead to radicalization and deterioration towards situations which could best be prevented through an effective peace process. Such a process includes negotiations and agreements on interim and final arrangements which must take into account the interests of all partners to the conflict, including Israel.

We are all witness to how the emerging aspirations to settle conflicts through peaceful means is taking root in all parts of the globe. Agreements and understandings are reached between the super-Powers, and regional conflicts are being negotiated in an atmosphere of peace.

We in Israel, like you, Mr. President, I am sure, have entertained the hope that this new atmosphere of peace would also be the guideline of nations in the Middle East and that a new effort would be initiated to solve the problem of this region by direct negotiations and peaceful means.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

We have for years nourished the hope that perhaps by the coming new year the atmosphere of peace would engulf our region too, and that the vision of the prophet:

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares" (The Holy Bible; Isaiah 2:4) would come to fruition here and now.

The Palestine National Council (PNC) recently met at Algiers and issued "declarations". Those who hoped for a genuine change were very disappointed. The Government of Israel believes that the recent declarations by the PNC have not departed from extreme and uncompromising positions. The PNC meeting at Algiers did not adopt meaningful steps. The common denominator of the different factions remains the extreme, excluding any compromise, rejecting the very idea of negotiations for peace.

I am not going to analyse here in detail the resolutions of the PNC. I would like, however, to comment on a few of them in order to illustrate some crucial points.

First, the decisions of the PNC constitute a unilateral act that will not advance dialogue and compromise. Nor will it advance the prospects for peace. In the striving for a solution to the Middle East conflict, every step must be negotiated and must be mutually agreed upon. In the Algiers declaration, the word "negotiations" is not mentioned, not even hinted at.

Secondly, the declaration from Algiers proclaims a so-called independent Palestinian State, with no territory, no borders and with Jerusalem, my home town and the capital of Israel, as its declared capital. That declaration has no meaning in reality. It serves only as another stumbling-block on the road to a negotiated peace, with no pre-conditions, which must take account of Israel's legitimate security interests.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Thirdly, the PNC reference to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) does not constitute acceptance of those resolutions and of the principles enshrined therein. Instead, the PNC referred to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) only in conjunction or, as they term it:

"in accordance with United Nations resolutions concerning the question of Palestine", (A/43/827, annex II, p. 7, para. 2 (a))

which contradict Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and undermine it. Many of those United Nations resolutions seek to impair Israel's legitimacy and its very existence.

Fourthly, the PLO has not abandoned terrorism. The killing of women and children in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem is clearly condoned. Burning Jewish families alive is encouraged. There is no indication that the "armed struggle" will cease. That is why we believe that the courageous decision of Secretary of State Shultz was necessary and justified and the decision of the General Assembly to move the debate to Geneva unnecessary and unjustified.

In fact, on 20 July 1988, a Fatah communiqué on the Algiers-based Voice of Palestine clearly stated:

"The position of Fatah can be represented as follows ... the right of the Palestinian people to practise armed struggle against the Zionist enemy."

Even as the PNC was meeting at Algiers, PLO terrorists of Yasser Arafat's Fatah were busy. Attempts were made to infiltrate Israel, to take hostages and carry out mass murders. One group was caught by the Israel Defense Forces. Another was confronted by a unit of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and two Lebanese hostages were murdered in cold blood by the PLO terrorists.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

And in Algiers, Abul Abbas, a member of the PLO's "executive committee", the mastermind behind the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro in 1985, even joked callously about the murder of the 69 year-old American Jewish passenger, Leon Klinghoffer: "Perhaps he went for a swim".

At Algiers, some Arab spokesmen tried to create the impression of moderation, claiming that Israel was recognized "implicitly". What does "implied" recognition mean? The sections of the PNC declarations referring to "solutions" of the conflict ignore Israel altogether. When it is mentioned, in other sections, it is accompanied by various adjectives which are beneath my dignity to even recall before you here.

Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO "political department", helps us not to misinterpret the PLO's "recognition". On 3 November 1988, he declared to the Tokyo Shinbun:

"The independence declaration which is based on the U.N. General Assembly resolution 181, is to define the identity of the Palestinian nation. However, this declaration does not mean the PLO's recognition of Israel's right to exist."

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Just last week, on 4 December 1988, Abu Iyad, the number two in the Fatah's hierarchy, was asked whether the PNC's mention of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) constitute a recognition of Israel. In his reply in al-Wattan al-Arabi, Lebanon, dated 4 December 1988, he stated:

"This is not a recognition of Israel. It is a de facto recognition of something that is found on the ground. It should not be understood that we have accepted it or are happy about it. De jure recognition is the recognition of the right of Israel to exist. The Arabs are fighting against Israel with cries and slogans, and we" - meaning the Fatah - "are the only ones fighting against it for real We must base ourselves on all the UN resolutions and the UN Charter."

A number of PLO spokesmen have reiterated, time and again, that a Palestinian State in the territories would only be an interim solution, which is part of a phased programme seeking, as its final objective, to seize "all of Palestine".

On 22 November 1988, Ahmed Sadki al-Dejani, a member of the PLO's "educational and cultural council" and high-ranking PNC deputy, wrote in Okaz, Saudi Arabia:

"We in the PLO draw a clear distinction between the charter and political programmes since the charter contains the permanent strategic policy while the political programmes contain the phased policy."

Abdel Hamid el-Saih, Chairman of the PNC, defines this objective in al-Shara, dated 22 August 1988, saying:

"We will take what we can, and afterwards we will demand the rest of the territory. We are not opposed to getting a state which would encompass a quarter or a half of our territory, and afterwards we will demand the rest."

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

In the complex and fragile setting of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the Algiers "resolutions" seem to have only further complicated prospects for a solution. The PLO continues to frustrate and stand in the way of negotiations that would serve to reach a solution mutually acceptable to Israel and its neighbours, including the Palestinian people. The vague phraseology of the PNC at Algiers cannot hide the PLO's continued commitment to the common denominator which unites all its factions: the path of rejection, violence and terror.

Such an organization cannot be a negotiating partner for Israel or any State which respects justice, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Neither the assumed acceptance of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), nor the implied recognition of Israel, nor the alleged abandonment of terrorism, has taken place. Indeed, the critical and careful balance represented by Security Council resolution 242 (1967) was violated and distorted to the point of threatening to undermine the only commonly accepted basis for a realistic political solution. Even outdated General Assembly resolution 181 (II) - overtaken by events as recognized by Security Council resolution 242 (1967) - was deformed so as not to suggest a clear-cut recognition of a Jewish State in any part of the once British Mandate of Palestine. Cessation of terrorism would have facilitated the peace process; yet terrorism inside Israel and the territories administered by it were specifically legitimized.

At Algiers, the PLO made demands and imposed conditions. Those unilateral acts and declarations of the PLO are meant to pre-determine the conditions and outcome of negotiations. Thus the PLO demands for an international conference clearly ignored efforts in recent years to construct an acceptable framework for negotiations: the kind of forum that the PLO envisages is something that Israel cannot accept.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

The PLO is bound by the resolutions of the PNC. Speeches made from this or other podiums do not amend or modify those resolutions. On the one hand, the Algiers declarations are quoted verbatim and, on the other, certain clarifications or interpretations of their so-called meaning are simultaneously being voiced in this chamber. If all this is not sufficient to confuse the situation, we have also heard various statements made by senior PLO members in various parts of the world which are at variance both with the apparent meaning of the Algiers declarations and with the statements heard here.

Any recognition or legitimization of the PNC declarations can only serve to reinforce the illusion that the outcome of the desired negotiations can be prejudged by unilateral acts or declarations. Acceptance of the PNC conditions would turn back the chances of peace and not move them forward.

Israel's only political aspiration is to live in peace and security. Israel's founding document, its Declaration of Independence of May 1948, declared:

"We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness."

Today, as then, we continue our efforts to rekindle the peace process in our region. In striving to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the dispute, we have long considered the Palestinian and Jordanian context as the preferred next phase in that effort.

It is in that context that we once again call upon Arab leaders to break with the past, to promote a resolution of the Palestinian issue through negotiations, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), in an

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

atmosphere of mutual respect for the rights of Israelis and Palestinians alike. It is in those negotiations that each of the parties will be free to present its ideas and proposals. Israel stands ready to conduct negotiations on this basis with Palestinian leaders from Judea, Samaria and Gaza, as well as with others who renounce violence as a means to achieve their objectives and do not resort to it.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Israel strives for and encourages Palestinian moderation which would enable Palestinian leadership in the territories to conduct direct negotiations or arrangements that would terminate the violence and lay the foundations for a political process towards a solution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects.

The participation of Jordan is essential. A stable peace on both sides of the Jordan River involves demographic, security and economic considerations that bind Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians residing there for the purpose of a negotiated political solution. Foundations do exist upon which peace can be built. Sound principles point the way.

Ten years ago Israel committed itself to a framework in which the Palestinian problem could have been solved in all its aspects, respecting the legitimate rights of all concerned. We should not forget that the supposed moderation that emerged from Algiers is the same so-called moderation that rejected the serious and substantive proposals incorporated into the Camp David accords. We remain committed to the basic premises of the Camp David accords, which provided that the permanent status of the territory would be determined by negotiations. We are ready for such negotiations.

The Camp David accords show that peace is possible, that negotiations lead to results and that agreements can be reached. In addressing the need to solve the conflict, Israel expressed its desire for a solution that will be mutually acceptable to Israel and its neighbouring partners, including the Palestinians. The final status of the territories will be determined not unilaterally but in negotiations. Israel has in the past spared no effort to foster and encourage trends of moderation. Israel has always been prepared to initiate and respond to genuine opportunities for peace with its neighbours.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) provide the basis for peace talks to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. This is because 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) determine that peace will be reached by agreement and negotiations, and that every State in the region has the right "to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force". The careful formulation of those two resolutions has made them acceptable to Israel, the Arab States and the international community and has retained their relevance to conditions today.

Negotiations between Israel and its neighbours, with the assistance of those who can constructively help, are the only way to bring peace. They succeeded before in the United States-assisted talks between Egypt and Israel. They can succeed again by helping the parties to address each other's needs, concerns and interests. The international community can facilitate a mutually acceptable solution to difficult problems. Yet, for that to happen, those interested in ushering the parties to the negotiating table must recognize that the ultimate responsibility for dealing with each other and forging an accommodation rests with the negotiating parties themselves.

Violence and terror have set a barren course in the region for decades; misery and suffering have been the consequence. The path to peace will not be charted by the gun, the grenade, the rock and the firebomb. Violence and terrorism must cease.

Palestinian representation in the negotiations, in keeping with these aforementioned principles and without setting pre-conditions that would pre-determine the outcome of the talks, is essential; but attempts to dictate and impose terms, to use the weapon of terror instead of peaceful dialogue, is not. It will lead to nothing.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

The time has come to stop exploiting and distorting the Palestinian issue in order to drum up hostility against Israel. The time has come to stop the campaign of vilification against the Jewish people, its national liberation movement, Zionism, and the State of Israel. The time has come for Arab Governments and the Palestinians to be ready and willing to engage in negotiations without pre-conditions. Within the framework of those negotiations the Palestinian issue can find its proper and agreed solution.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The General Assembly has arrived at the shores of Lake Geneva in order to have an opportunity to discuss properly the question of Palestine with the participation of representatives of all the parties concerned.

As is well-known, the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to consider the problem of Palestine at the European Office of the United Nations was taken as a result of a serious incident that occurred in connection with the work of the forty-third session.

The General Assembly stated with authority and in a responsible fashion its negative attitude towards the action of the United States authorities, which had not allowed the leader of an organization having United Nations Permanent Observer status to come to New York. It is particularly regrettable that all this happened at a time when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had taken an important and constructive step towards facilitating the search for ways to resolve the Middle East problem with the participation of the United Nations Security Council.

The peace initiative, which was announced yesterday from this rostrum by the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee, Mr. Yasser Arafat, opens a window of new opportunities to resolve the conflict that

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

has for many years overshadowed the international situation. Having expressly stated its willingness to enter into negotiations with Israel in the framework of an international conference on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), having expressed its desire to coexist with Israel in conditions of peace and security and having condemned terrorism in all its forms, the Palestine Liberation Organization has thereby reiterated that it is a serious and authoritative partner in peace talks.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

It is now up to the other side to respond. We call upon everyone to take advantage of this unique opportunity and, abandoning the stereotypes and prejudices, to accept the olive branch of peace that has been offered and to embark without delay on a path of international dialogue with a view to achieving a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East.

This is all the more important since the Palestine problem, the problem of the peace in the Middle East, is an organic, integral part of the foundation of peace and security on a truly comprehensive basis. Interdependence and the emerging integrity of the modern world underline its political indivisibility. The bell of the Middle East conflict, as of any regional conflict, tolls for all of us.

One of the most important tasks on the agenda of the international community is to disentangle the tight knot of contradictions and to defuse the explosive confrontation in the Middle East. The solution of that problem is in harmony with common efforts aimed at the transition of mankind to a qualitatively new and peaceful stage of its development.

The detailed conceptual account of those efforts was presented to the international community in the recent address delivered by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev before the United Nations General Assembly. As the Soviet leader stressed, we have entered the era when the interests of all mankind will become the basis for world progress, when world policy will be determined by the priorities of universal human values. This is one of the major features that radically distinguishes the current stage of world development from those at the beginning or even in the middle of this century. The interdependence of the world allows us to take a fresh look at the problem of eliminating regional conflicts, including the conflict in the Middle East. Life itself makes us reject stereotyped ideas, old views and illusions.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The formula of development at the expense of others is on its way out. In the context of modern realities true progress cannot be achieved by infringing the rights and freedoms of any individual, or of any people for that matter. The practical application of the concept of freedom of choice is becoming a categorical imperative today. If not accepted, it is likely to be fraught with very grave consequences for any region and for world peace. It is particularly important to realize and agree once and for all that it is impossible to maintain reliable security and safeguard the future without respect for the views and positions of others, without tolerance and a willingness to perceive different views, not as something necessarily bad or hostile, or without the ability to learn to live together while remaining different from one another.

It is this very concept of free choice that is proving its effectiveness in different regions of the world which previously had been engulfed in the flames of war and had suffocated in the atmosphere of intransigence. In those circumstances it is all the more impossible any longer to accept the fact that the Palestinian problem and the cause of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East remain outside the positive trends and the peace-making processes.

In welcoming the current discussion of the Palestinian question at the General Assembly we believe that the United Nations has a central and most important role to play in the process of internationalizing the dialogue on the entire set of Middle East problems. The gravity of the Palestinian problem and of the Middle East problem as a whole requires that the consideration of those problems at this session be fully consistent with the new way of political thinking and acting on the part of States, necessitated by the challenges of our time. In our view, the new situation in the world requires that the United Nations produce new decisions

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

with fresh approaches. The task today is to help find a balance of interests and acceptable solutions, taking into account the interests of different States and parties to the conflict.

The Palestinian problem clearly highlights the gravity of the situation that emerged because of the fact that the Middle East remains a source of violence and bloodshed and a target area of unrestrained militarization. The recently intensified deliveries of ever more sophisticated weapons to that area, which are likely to destabilize the military, strategic and political situation there, make that situation even more explosive. The proliferation of chemical and missile weapons in the region is a matter of particular concern. There are legitimate fears over the fact that the Middle East is approaching the nuclear threshold. All this jeopardizes the vital interests of peoples and States in the region and is fraught with grave consequences for international peace and security.

The absence of a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and its key problem - that of Palestine - underlies all those dangerous developments. The peaceful Palestinian uprising on the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank, the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip, which has been going on for more than a year now, is a convincing case in point. The uprising has starkly confronted the international community with the central issue, namely, that there can be no peace in the Middle East until the fundamental rights of peoples to determine their future and the rights of all States of the region to free development and security are guaranteed. There can be no peace as long as anyone attempts to hold the territories of others by force. Today we can state with satisfaction that the outline of a comprehensive plan for untangling the Middle Eastern knot of contradictions is emerging in the international community.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

First, an international legal formula to achieve a settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), guaranteeing the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, is taking shape.

Until recently the broad international consensus on these issues was not sufficiently supported by the development of positions of the parties directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this connection we consider the decisions adopted at the latest session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers to be important and highly beneficial to the peace process in the Middle East. They represent a significant contribution to the creation of favourable conditions for the transition towards practical steps to settle the Middle East conflict.

The Soviet Union has positively assessed the results of the supreme Palestinian forum in Algiers, and it has supported the decision of the Palestine National Council to found a Palestinian State within the framework of a comprehensive Middle East settlement.

Next, there has emerged an understanding of the necessity of at long last setting in motion a mechanism for a comprehensive Middle East settlement. An international conference is the central link of such a mechanism.

Nowadays almost no one, with the exception of a part of the ruling circles of Israel, contests that the convening of an international conference is the only realistic and reliable way to accomplish a comprehensive and just settlement that will enable the Palestinian people to regain its homeland and the Israeli and Arab peoples to enjoy lasting peace and security.

Thus today there already exists a solid asset in the form of an international legal and political foundation for the setting in motion of a mechanism for a comprehensive settlement, a broad consensus in favour of the convening of an

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

international conference and a serious desire among the immediate participants in the Arab-Israeli conflict to work for the achievement of mutually acceptable compromise solutions that take their interests into account.

All this makes it possible to resolve the key aspects of the settlement and to elaborate mutually acceptable agreements on specific ways and means of doing so. We have repeatedly proposed that the members of the Security Council without delay proceed to engage in consultations with a view to considering issues related to a Middle East settlement. We are prepared to respond positively to any constructive proposals on the parameters of such contacts.

In our view, in this regard a particular role could be played by contacts and consultations between the permanent members of the Security Council with the participation of the Secretary-General. There is no doubt that the consolidated authority of our Organization, its increased effectiveness and favourable conditions can serve as a forceful catalyst in the peace process, making possible a practical process leading to the convening of a conference.

We view the conference as a universal and flexible forum, which we believe would be the most effective and reliable machinery for defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict. It would require very varied forms of interaction among its participants, who could be all the parties to the conflict, including the Arab people of Palestine, whose sole and legitimate representative is the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council, whose role in the conference should in our view be to create a constructive atmosphere for negotiations. Their individual or collective proposals and recommendations; their contacts with the parties directly involved, should there be complications at any phase of the negotiating process; and the provision of guarantees and agreements could be crucial to the success of the work of the

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conference and the implementation of its decisions. At the same time, the right to make final decisions as specific issues should of course remain with the parties directly involved.

The variety and importance of problems may require certain interim measures or a stage-by-stage approach to a comprehensive settlement; such measures and stages should be considered and carried out within the framework of the conference and closely co-ordinated with a comprehensive settlement.

In conclusion I would express confidence that the international community's will and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations as the central mechanism for the maintenance of peace and security and the settlement of conflicts will finally lead to the elimination of such a serious threat to international security as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We are now at a turning-point. This can be a time of lost opportunities or a time heralding the beginning of a fundamentally new peaceful period in the evolution of mankind.

That is entirely true of the Middle East situation as well. We are convinced that we now have a unique opportunity to begin the journey towards peace in that region. It is important not to lose this opportunity. It is important that the uniqueness of the emerging world situation should immediately be realized and used in full measure to overcome old stereotypes and to move from rhetoric to calm, business-like and balanced work aimed at creating a just and lasting peace in the ancient land of the Middle East.

Mr. SHAMUYARIRA (Zimbabwe): It is over 40 years since the General Assembly last met in this beautiful city of Geneva by the lake. When the United Nations was formed we decided to move our Headquarters to New York, where we have lived and laboured to this day.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

But before I dwell much on the issue that has brought us all here, I should like on behalf of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries to express deepest condolences to the Soviet people and Government on the tragic loss of thousands of lives as well as property in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Armenia last week. We wish to add our own voice to those who have spoken before us in urging the international community to be fully supportive of the efforts being undertaken by the Soviet authorities to alleviate the condition of the survivors of this very tragic development. The Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement has already addressed a request to all members to give what assistance they can to the Soviet Union and the Soviet people.

While our return to Geneva fills many of us with nostalgia, it also leaves us with a foreboding sense of having travelled an ill-omened road. For our return to this city has not been voluntary; it has been forced upon us. The isolationist streak that kept the United States out of the League of Nations once again became a dominant sentiment in the anti-multilateralism of the 1980s and in part led to the decision that forced us to move this session of the General Assembly to Geneva.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

Earlier this year, the forty-second session of the Assembly reconvened three times in order to deal with the decision taken by the United States, host country of the United Nations Headquarters, to close the PLO Observer Mission in New York. In its communication with the Secretary-General on that subject, the host country had stated that it was going to close the Observer Mission "irrespective of any obligations the United States may have under the Headquarters Agreement", which was referred to by many speakers yesterday and today. This was blunt, unvarnished arrogance on the part of the United States. The response of the General Assembly was equally emphatic. It rejected the United States position and took the matter to the International Court of Justice. Confronted by a firm and determined international resistance, the host country relented and desisted from its intended illegal action against the PLO Mission to the United Nations.

Today, this Assembly finds itself taking another extraordinary measure, once again in response to a decision taken by the host country in violation of its treaty obligations. The General Assembly decided to transfer the debate on agenda item 37, the question of Palestine, to this venue because the United States, on 26 November, denied Chairman Arafat the visa requested to enable him to participate in the work of the forty-third regular session in New York.

Besides jeopardizing and disrupting the free, smooth and efficient working of the United Nations in New York, the United States refusal to issue a visa to Chairman Arafat demonstrates the host country's contempt for international law and disregard for the role of this Organization. The Secretary-General, in his statement circulated in New York on 28 November, stated that the decision by the host country was incompatible with its obligations under the Headquarters Agreement and that, if maintained, the action was likely

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

"to complicate and render more difficult the forthcoming debates on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East in the current session of the General Assembly".

We agree with this observation of the Secretary-General.

The United States has insisted that its decision was taken in the name of "safeguarding its national security". The entire international community, with the exception of Israel, of course, has rejected that argument as absurd and unacceptable. In view of the clear and unambiguous international legal obligations devolving upon the host country, which the United States itself has acknowledged, and the almost unanimous appeal made by this Assembly in its resolution on 30 November this year, as well as by other international bodies and Heads of State and Government, including my own President in his capacities as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and President of Zimbabwe, my delegation had hoped that the host country would act wisely and reconsider its move. To our dismay, the United States elected not only to disregard these international appeals, but worse still, to demonstrate its utter contempt for international law and for the United Nations, as well as for the very ideas it stands for, by stubbornly sticking to its original ill-conceived decision. These matters have been discussed by preceding speakers. But the Non-Aligned Movement would like to stress the gravity of this question and of the decision taken and the threat to the smooth working of the United Nations if these attitudes persist.

The United Nations Legal Counsel, in a statement made before the 136th meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country on 28 November, was of the view that Chairman Arafat's visa request fell under sections 11, 12 and 13 of the Headquarters Agreement, which provide, inter alia, that invitees of the United Nations shall not be impeded in their access to the Headquarters District, that

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

this applies irrespective of the state of bilateral relations of the host country and that the necessary visas "shall be granted ... as promptly as possible". The Headquarters Agreement stresses that the necessary visas will be granted to speakers who are to come to address the United Nations irrespective of the relations between the countries they represent and the United States. The Legal Counsel also made it clear that the Headquarters Agreement does not contain a reservation of the right to bar the entry of those who represent, in the view of the host country, a threat to its security. He therefore concluded that the host country was and is under an obligation to grant the visa request to Chairman Arafat. My delegation fully shares that opinion of the Legal Counsel and I am pleased to note that several other delegations that have spoken here have taken the same position.

My delegation joined the rest of the international community in supporting the decision to transfer this debate to Geneva as a way of overcoming the difficulties imposed by the host country in New York. But some deeply disturbing and fundamental questions still have to be faced. Does our coming to Geneva address fully, and provide the solution to, all the crucial aspects of this problem? It is a fact that the illegal and high-handed decision taken by the host country remains in effect. When our delegations return to New York, the disrespect and contempt shown by the host country for the United Nations will still be there. The rights of the United Nations under the Headquarters Agreement have been eroded. The host country has arrogated to itself the right to determine which world leaders are fit to address the United Nations in New York. Under these circumstances, can we continue to acquiesce in this high-handedness? If we do, what remains of the universality of the United Nations? And should our response in future be limited

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

to switching sessions to Geneva each time the host country "fingers" anyone or us? If so, then what about the unnecessary financial burdens the United Nations and its Members, especially the poor developing countries, have to carry?

Our minds are deeply preoccupied with these numerous disturbing questions regarding New York's suitability as a site for the safe, uninhibited and independent operation of the Headquarters of the world body. We therefore hope that the Secretary-General will seek clarification from our host and report to us at some length on these matters. We cannot accept that the host country can continue arbitrarily to limit the size of missions to the United Nations or to seize dependants of personnel enjoying immunity under the Host Country Agreement and other areas of concern.

The tragedy of the present situation is that it takes place against a backdrop of events in the Middle East that have positively affected the situation in that region and provided windows of opportunities. I have in mind the intifadah, Jordan's decisions regarding the West Bank and the outcome of the recent Algiers session of the Palestine National Council. These developments have created new realities on the ground in the Middle East.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

The intifadah, the popular uprising of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation, has brought the struggle for the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine to a qualitatively new stage. The uprising, now in its twelfth month, constitutes a rejection of Israel's "creeping annexation" of the Palestinian occupied territories, which has been the ultimate and unconcealed goal of such Israeli practices as the displacement and deportation of Palestinians, the introduction of Jewish settlements in occupied Palestine, the usurpation of Palestinian lands, and the alteration of the geographic and demographic features of the occupied territories. This alteration of the geographic features of Israel, as we know, has been a continuing phenomenon since 1948. The Israeli authorities have continued to grab one piece of territory after another, expanding the area given to them by the 1948 agreement.

The intifadah has indeed demonstrated that over 20 years of Israeli occupation, terror and repression have failed to destroy the will and determination of the Palestinians to live in freedom in their homeland, or their commitment to liberate the occupied territories and to establish an independent Palestine State, as well as their identification with their sole and authentic representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). As the Secretary-General aptly notes in his report on the work of the Organization this year, the uprising has also vividly demonstrated the dangers of a stalemate resulting from the inability to agree on a negotiating process. This historic stage of the Palestinian people's struggle has given special urgency and timeliness to the need to get the negotiating process on the question of Palestine into motion.

Faced with these realities, the Israeli authorities have intensified their "iron fist" policies and employed a variety of ruthless measures in their attempt to quell the intifadah. The representative of the State of Israel, who spoke

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

earlier this morning, did elaborate the views of his Government and his delegation on the question of negotiations. Israel says it wants direct negotiations with the Arabs and with the Palestinians. But we noted that in his statement he did not say that Israel wants direct negotiations with the PLO, the authentic representative of the Palestinian people. It wants negotiations with Arabs or Arab nations of its own selection, and Palestinians of its own selection. Yesterday Chairman Arafat called for direct negotiations with Israel. That question was not answered by the Israeli representative. Is Israel ready for direct talks with the true representative of the Palestinian people, namely, the PLO? That is the question to which he should have addressed himself. It is very nice to talk about wanting negotiations, but it is another thing to choose the partner with whom you are going to negotiate.

The international press, the latest report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the telling accounts carried in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, speak of the use of live ammunition, including high-velocity bullets, and of tear gas being used against unarmed Palestinian men, women and children. Again, the Israeli representative who spoke earlier today told us about the desire of his nation for peace and for negotiation. But it is precisely that nation that has been the greatest offender in the areas of breaking the peace, of brutality and of instigating violence, not only against the people of Palestine but even against the people of Lebanon and other Arab nations. There has also been widespread resort to gruesome beatings, including deliberate bone-breaking, detentions, the demolition and sealing of houses occupied by families of Palestinians accused of involvement in the uprising - the intifadah - to which I have referred, and the expulsion of individuals suspected of having played a role

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

in directing the intifadah. In fact, in his presentation yesterday, Chairman Arafat told the Assembly a great deal about the activities of the Israelis in suppressing the intifadah and I shall therefore not bore members with more details about that.

The non-aligned countries on several occasions have expressed their grave concern over the escalation of these inhuman practices of the occupation forces in the occupied territories as they desperately try to halt the intifadah. It is deeply disturbing that the absence of all forms of protection for the struggling Palestinians and other Arabs living under occupation has continued. The intifadah is a clear but desperate and defiant response by the unprotected Palestinian population of the occupied territories.

At the recent meeting of non-aligned Foreign Ministers held in Nicosia, the Security Council was called upon to place the occupied Palestinian territories under temporary United Nations supervision so as to protect the Palestinian people. We put these sentiments to the United Nations at the General Assembly meetings in September, and we continue to reiterate that position before this body. We should also like to call for the implementation of the urgently required measures to enhance the safety and protection of the Palestinians which the Secretary-General proposed in his report submitted to the Security Council in accordance with its resolution 605 (1987).

The Committee of Non-Aligned Countries on Palestine, in its communiqué issued in Nicosia on 7 September 1988, urged the Security Council to consider these recommendations with a view to authorizing their implementation and, in particular, those relating to the provision of physical and legal protection as well as general assistance and protection through publicity by the international media. We should like once again to request the United Nations to become, for a limited time, the

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

custodian and protector of the occupied territories and their residents by maintaining a United Nations presence in those territories.

The other significant event contributing to the new political realities in the Middle East, to which I have referred, relates to the additional responsibilities assumed by the Executive Committee of the PLO following the decision taken by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan last July concerning the West Bank. That important development, as well as the subsequent co-operation between Jordan and the PLO, is a factor that cannot be disregarded in future Middle East peace initiatives. That development, as well as the intifadah, are the two factors that have altered the situation qualitatively in the Middle East. It clearly demonstrates that the PLO alone has the full right to represent the Palestinian people and to participate on an independent and equal footing with other parties and Governments in all endeavours, international conferences and activities whose objectives are to ensure respect for and attainment of the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

The intifadah session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) held recently at Algiers was a historic event. At that session the PLO made a very constructive offer to negotiate on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It also took the bold step of proclaiming the establishment of the State of Palestine on Palestinian territory on the basis of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and in accordance with the universally recognized inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Those historic decisions taken by the Palestine National Council, which were elaborated upon by Chairman Arafat yesterday, have created a new atmosphere for the revival of the stalled Middle East peace process. Immediately after the PNC session, Chairman Arafat himself called for the urgent resuscitation of the negotiating process. In his statement a few minutes ago, the representative of the Soviet Union indicated one way in which the negotiating process could start immediately.

The vast majority of the membership of the United Nations welcomed the PNC decisions and expressed readiness to seize the historic opportunity offered by those decisions. The Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Comrade Robert Mugabe, in a statement issued on 17 November, welcomed those decisions and called upon Israel and its allies to show diplomatic flexibility in these changed circumstances by agreeing to the early convening of an international peace conference at which the PLO would participate on an equal footing with other parties. The 12 member States of the European Community, in a declaration issued in Brussels on 21 November reacting to the results of the PNC session, characterized the decisions as positive steps towards the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and appealed to all parties concerned to take this

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

opportunity to contribute to the peace process in a positive way. The Soviet Union and all other socialist States share similar positive sentiments about the Algiers decisions.

The response the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement has received from other non-aligned nations shows a similar trend: strong support for the PNC decisions and a strong desire that the Middle East situation should now move to the conference table.

The response, however, of both Israel and the United States to the opportunity for the peace process opened up by the recent developments and the decisions taken by the PNC have been most disappointing. Even their response to yesterday's historic speech by Chairman Arafat was, again, disappointing, seeking further clarifications, continuing to say there were still ambiguities in a speech which was quite clear: those of us who listened to it yesterday thought he stated his views very clearly and appropriately.

After giving lukewarm support to the Secretary-General's efforts to explore the possibilities for convening an international peace conference under United Nations auspices and pursuing their own rival initiatives, the United States and Israel now appear to be groping for new excuses for slamming this recently opened door to peace. We are now told that the PNC decisions did not go far enough, that the PLO had not met the conditions for recognition, that the PLO was not explicit enough, and that its decisions are ambiguous, vague and unclear, whereas we thought they were very clear and very direct. But, of course, if there is a need to clarify those decisions and the issues that are being addressed, the place for such clarifications is at the conference table, with all the parties concerned - including the PLO itself - not with chosen representatives that some want to negotiate with. Our appeal for a beginning of the peace process has been made stronger than ever by the recent developments.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

If the misgivings expressed by the United States and those voiced by Israel were genuine, why did the United States go so far as to violate international law by barring Chairman Arafat from giving his response to the world? We find it worthy of note that the United States of America, which in its own recent initiative insisted that participants in the negotiations must accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), now, faced by the PNC decision to do just that, lamely says the PNC "has not gone far enough". But how far do they want it to go when nobody is willing to talk with it? Both the United States and Israel still refuse to hold a dialogue with the PLO. The Israeli representative this morning referred to the West Bank and Gaza as "Judea and Samaria", going back to the biblical names of those districts. He did not really face the issue of negotiating with the PLO. If the United States and the Israelis do not want to talk with the PLO, how can the issues be clarified?

Is it fair to call upon the PLO to negotiate by itself until it meets some vague and undefined surrender terms demanded by the Shamir régime? Somebody here is changing the goal posts and rewriting the rules of the game in mid-play, and we must therefore cry 'foul'. Besides, we find it astonishing that a State can arrogate to itself the right to prescribe who qualifies to be the true leaders of the Palestinian people when the Palestinian people itself has chosen its own leaders? Is that not self-determination? Is that now what the United Nations Charter says? Is that not what the Atlantic charter says? Is that not what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says? What conditions for recognition as the representative of the Palestinians are we talking about?

The Palestinian people in the occupied territories and in exile have long since demonstrated that the PLO is their authentic representative. We in the Non-Aligned Movement have consistently maintained that the PLO, which is a full

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

member of our movement, alone has the right to represent the Palestinian people, and has the right to participate on an independent and equal footing in all endeavours, international conferences and other activities whose objective is to ensure respect for, the attainment of and the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We therefore welcome the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the PNC. Over 80 States have so far recognized the State of Palestine. The PNC declaration made it very clear that the State of Palestine was proclaimed on the basis of General Assembly resolution 181 (II). Moreover, the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine remains among the universally recognized inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

On behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Chairman Arafat for the important gesture he has made in coming personally before this Assembly to apprise us of the important decisions taken by the PNC. Our movement has high regard for the outstanding manner in which Chairman Arafat has led the Palestinian people in its legitimate struggle against occupation, and, as I said earlier, the Chairman of the Movement has urged members of the Non-Aligned Movement to support the newly proclaimed State.

We hail the important decisions taken by the PNC, which provide a real opportunity for a real breakthrough in the stalled Middle East peace process. Chairman Arafat fully explained those decisions last week in Stockholm, and he eloquently and lucidly did so yesterday.

It is now time for the entire international community, led by the Security Council, to accelerate its efforts to promote an effective negotiating process. We should like to appeal to the United States to have the courage to do what is right. As a world leader, the United States owes this to itself and to us all. A United States role in the Middle East peace process remains indispensable, and it

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

is an inescapable fact that if that role is to be a positive one there should be a recognition that the Palestinian question lies at the core of the Middle East problem. To refuse even to listen to the PLO and to exclude participation by the PLO on an equal and independent footing in the negotiating process is unrealistic. It amounts to ignoring the fact that the question of Palestine lies at the heart of the Middle East problem.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

The United States, as a major Power and a key supporter of Israel, as well as a permanent member of the Security Council, has an important role to play in solving the Palestinian question. Therefore, its continued credibility and moral leadership must remain intact. A morally weakened United States is no good for anybody: not for world peace, not for the Palestinian cause, and certainly not for Israeli security.

We should like also to urge the British Government, which, after all, created this problem in the Middle East, to be more positive in its approach to this question. We were pleased that the United Kingdom Government made contact with the PLO a few weeks ago, and we hope such contacts will continue and that the British Government will take the more positive position that is being taken by other European Economic Community Governments in support of the PLO and in support of the just cause of the Palestinian people. It should be aware of its historic responsibility and the burden on its shoulders resulting from having created an intractable problem by imposing the Jewish population on Palestinian territory at the end of the Second World War.

The United States refusal to issue a visa to Chairman Arafat is not only a violation of a solemn international agreement freely entered into by the United States of America, but also an offence against our sense of fair play and decency. How can we on the one hand call upon the PLO to use peaceful means to promote its cause while on the other hand we are refusing it the opportunity to address an international gathering of this kind, to address international opinion, to make its views known to the rest of the world? Unless our aim is to force the Palestinians to acquiesce in their loss of self-determination and statehood, we can never condone the refusal to grant a visa to Chairman Arafat, and we can never condone the attempts to muzzle the PLO as the authentic voice of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Shamuyarira, Zimbabwe)

Wise and bold leadership has been shown by the PLO and by the Arab front-line States in the quest for peace in the Middle East. The PLO has acted for genuine peace, and has created a basis for the negotiating process to begin. Other world leaders must now act like statesmen and assist in maintaining an atmosphere that will facilitate the constructive utilization of the newly opened avenues of peace.

Mr. ANDERSSON (Sweden): In his last interview, on 28 February 1986, a few hours before he was assassinated, the late Prime Minister of Sweden, Olof Palme, said

"The relationship between the super-Powers has for a long time been frosty. But there are now clear signs that the ice is breaking. The international situation has become brighter. This mistrust is receding like the mist of an early spring morning. We observe several signs of détente."

That was indeed a visionary statement. The frosty climate has turned into talks and improved relations between the super-Powers. The first agreement on nuclear disarmament has been signed. A number of regional conflicts are being solved.

In the Middle East too significant changes have taken place. The uprising in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 has created a new situation. The Palestinian people has clearly shown that it no longer accepts the continuing occupation. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has clearly shown that it wants to negotiate with Israel within the framework of an international peace conference, on the basis of a two-State solution. The stage is set for an important break-through in the peace process.

I myself and my country are true friends of both the Palestinians and the Israelis. Therefore, we feel deep despair at the fact that the two peoples are living not in peace, but in enmity.

(Mr. Andersson, Sweden)

The United Nations has a special responsibility for solving the conflict in the Middle East. The United Nations provided the basis for the establishment of a Jewish State and an Arab State in Palestine. The Jewish State was established 40 years ago. It is now high time the question of the Palestinians' national aspirations got the full attention of the whole world community.

Over the years, we have called upon the PLO to recognize Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries. We have also called upon the PLO to reject all forms of terrorism.

Over the years, we have called upon the United States to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Over the years, we have called upon Israel to cease the occupation of Palestinian territory and to start a dialogue with the PLO leading to peaceful coexistence between two peoples that have suffered too much.

Today we feel great satisfaction that the PLO, through its Chairman, Mr. Arafat, has in our view explained: that the PLO is prepared to negotiate with Israel, within the framework of an international conference, a comprehensive peace settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); that the PLO undertakes to respect the right of Israel to exist in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and that the PLO condemns terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism. That can, in our view, not be misunderstood, even by the most suspicious.

On this basis we now feel that the ground has been prepared for the initiation of a dialogue between the United States and the PLO. An important step has been taken towards peace and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.

(Mr. Andersson, Sweden)

We have repeatedly defended the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. It is self-evident that this right must contain the Palestinians' right to choose their own representatives and the right to establish a State of their own.

Sweden is committed to the existence and recognition of Israel. Sweden has for 40 years supported Israel's right to live in peace. That support will continue unabated.

What the Palestinians are asking for today is the right to establish a State of their own alongside the State of Israel, as was decided by this world Organization more than 40 years ago.

(Mr. Andersson, Sweden)

It must be in Israel's long-term interest not only to be accepted by, but also itself to accept, the neighbouring peoples and States.

To my Israeli friends I wish to say: remember and consider what Ben Gurion said in July 1967. He insisted at that time that the occupied territories should be returned very soon; to keep them could change, and in the end destroy, the Jewish State.

I hereby appeal to the Israeli Government to declare openly in the Assembly that Israel has no intention to acquire and remain in the territories taken by force in 1967. I appeal also to the Israeli Government to take the extended hand of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and to show a similar willingness to negotiate. The onus must now be on Israel to reciprocate.

The Swedish Government welcomed the decisions of the recent meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers. We share the view that an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations should be convened and that the basis for a peaceful solution should be Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

If Sweden can help bridge gaps and contribute to the peace process we are ready to do so. It was in this spirit that the meeting in Stockholm last week between representatives of the PLO and a group of American Jewish personalities was convened.

Sweden strongly believes in the need for international solidarity. The Swedes are a fortunate people. We have lived in peace for 175 years. We have been able to build our society in freedom, without external interference.

We are prepared, together with other countries, to assist in healing the wounds that decades of enmity keep wide open. We are prepared to support in every way those who strive for peace. We are prepared to extend humanitarian and economic assistance to the victims of occupation.

(Mr. Andersson, Sweden)

Bold political actions and courage are now required from all parties concerned. Let it not be said that, in spite of everything that happened in 1988, this year will go down in history as another year of missed opportunities in the quest for peace in the Middle East.

Mr. WAKIL (Afghanistan) (spoke in Dari; English text furnished by the delegation): At the opening of the present General Assembly debate on the question of Palestine we heard a very important and inspiring address by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Allow me to express our deep appreciation for the wise words and practicable ideas the Palestinian leader presented for the solution to the question of Palestine as the key to solving the whole Middle East problem and bringing a just and lasting peace to that troubled region. We are confident that this keynote address will prove an important positive factor towards constructive deliberation on the question of Palestine by the Assembly.

It is regrettable, however, that this address was delivered here in Geneva instead of at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York. We have joined the overwhelming majority of Member States in deploring an act which is obviously a violation by the United States of the host-country Agreement and of international law. We reiterate the indisputable right of the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the work and sessions of the United Nations and to have free access to the Organization in order to do so. We shall support the draft resolution which calls for the State of Palestine to be granted the rights and privileges now enjoyed by the PLO in the United Nations. That is in line with our traditional support for the General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Wakil, Afghanistan)

At a moment in their troubled history when the heroic people of Palestine have opened a new page in their national life, it is an honour for me to express to the leaders and people of the brotherly Palestinian nation our profound and heartfelt congratulations on the historic declaration of 15 November 1988 on the establishment of the State of Palestine. This is no doubt a watershed event on the path to the realization of the national aspirations of the noble people of Palestine. I am proud to note that the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan, which had already established diplomatic relations with the PLO, has recognized the State of Palestine.

We also commend and welcome the bold and courageous step the PLO has taken through the adoption by the Palestine National Council of the Political Communiqué of 15 November in Algiers, and also through the Stockholm declaration. The Political Communiqué - a document of profound importance - has provided a genuine, historic opportunity for all the sides concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict to solve the Middle East problem peacefully and bring genuine and lasting peace to the region. As we had occasion to say earlier in New York, the cause of international peace and security dictates that this unique opportunity should not be lost.*

In the present world circumstances, the new political thinking in international relations has resulted in new trends towards the solution of regional conflicts; great hopes have emerged of doing away with the hot-beds of regional conflicts.

The conclusion of the Geneva agreements for the solution of the situation around Afghanistan, the resolution adopted by the forty-third session of the General Assembly towards that end and the statements of Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev

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* Mr. Al-Shakar (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Wakil, Afghanistan)

on the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts - particularly his proposals on the political solution of the situation around my country reflected in his speech during the current session of the General Assembly - constitute prominent examples of political and all-round solutions to regional conflicts. Therefore, we must conclude that resorting to force is no basis for the solution to regional conflicts and there is no alternative to seeking political solutions, talks and dialogue between the parties concerned. Thus, we state that the new way of political thinking in regard to regional conflicts has opened hopeful horizons for the regulation of new international relations and the decreasing of tension in the framework of the settlement of regional conflicts, among them the problem of the Middle East, based on the solution of the Palestinian issue.

(Mr. Wakil, Afghanistan)

The question of Palestine, as we all know, lies at the core of the Middle East problem and is the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict over four decades. It is a great human tragedy of enormous dimensions, affecting not only a number of individuals but a nation as a whole. Through a policy of aggression, occupation and acts of repression directed against the Palestinians and the entire Arab nation, Israel has deprived the people of Palestine, not only of their homes and property, but of their territory and ancestral land. Those Palestinians left behind in occupied Palestinian lands have been systematically subjected to brutal repression and the complete denial of their human rights.

In that connection, it is indeed deplorable that the Palestinians have not been immune to Israeli aggression even in their refuge. The Israeli attack on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon on 9 December 1988 is yet another shameful example in the series of armed aggressions that demonstrates the essence of Israeli policy towards the Palestinian people and the Arab nation as a whole. All this takes place at a time when humanity in every nook and corner of the world is celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

That brutal act of aggression against the Palestinians, which was carried out with total disregard for the independence and national sovereignty of Lebanon, is a reminder of the bloody and cruel massacre in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps and of piratical attacks against other Arab countries, such as, to name but a few, the terrorist assault by Israel on 16 August this year against Tunisia and the one committed three years earlier.

The timing of that act of terror against the Palestinians is also very significant. It comes exactly on the first anniversary of the heroic uprising of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, which is nothing but a logical response to continued Israeli occupation and repression. It also takes

(Mr. Wakil, Afghanistan)

place on the eve of the present discussion by the General Assembly of the question of Palestine.

The heroic uprising - the intifadah - of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories is a clear manifestation of the will of the Palestinian people to take their destiny into their own hands. The uprising, which has continued in spite of the tightening of the "iron fist" policy by Israeli occupation authorities and the murder of Palestinian youth, women and children at the hands of repressive Zionist troops, is not only a response to acts of terrorism and brutality such as collective punishment, deportation, demolition of houses, forcible confiscation of land, expropriation of properties and killing of a defenceless population and other forms of violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, but is also the demonstration of their determination to liberate their land and restore their freedom and independence at whatever cost. It is an irreversible historical event that proves, on the one hand, the resolve of the Palestinian people to have a State of their own, and, on the other, the futility of Israeli efforts to continue the occupation and eventual usurpation of Palestine. It is a just struggle on the part of an oppressed people against occupation, a struggle which enjoys vast international support in every corner of the world.

In that connection, we condemn Israeli aggression against the holy places in the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories. All Zionist attempts aimed at altering the political, cultural, religious, demographic and other features of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories are illegal and null and void. We also condemn the Israeli policy of forcible displacement of Palestinians and the confiscation of their land for the purpose of establishing Israeli settlements. The establishment of those settlements is against international law and has been rejected by the international community.

(Mr. Wakil, Afghanistan)

The basic elements of the solution of the question of Palestine and the entire Middle East problem have been very clear for a long time. They have been outlined in numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Unfortunately, however, the question of Palestine remains unresolved and the Middle East continues to be a hotbed of tension and a threat to international peace and security. The continued state of confrontation, conflict, instability and unrest in the Middle East has brought about bloodshed, tragedy and destruction to the entire people of the region, particularly to the Palestinian nation.

The root cause of the tragic situation lies in the denial by Israel of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and its continued occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands. The situation is also the result of Israel's total disregard for international law and the resolutions of the United Nations.

In contrast, the Arab countries of the Middle East and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have time and again called for the peaceful resolution of the potentially explosive situation in the Middle East. Their collective decision in Fez, subsequently reiterated at other Arab summits and meetings has provided the alternative to a situation of war, conflict and tension by guaranteeing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to freedom, independence and statehood. The Political Communiqué of the Palestine National Council on 15 November this year in Algiers and subsequent statements by the PLO have clearly demonstrated the wish of the Palestinian people to solve the question of Palestine by peaceful means. The General Assembly should put every pressure on Israel to accept the path of peace and peaceful negotiations.

The best means for such negotiations is the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East with the participation, on an equal footing, of all parties concerned, including the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of

(Mr. Wakil, Afghanistan)

the Palestinian people. The Conference should have as its mandate the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Arab Golan and South Lebanon, as well as the full restoration of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine to their homeland and establish therein an independent Palestinian State.

That, we believe, is the only viable solution to the Middle East problem, and to the question of Palestine, which is at its core. It is the only means of restoring a genuine, just and lasting peace in the region.

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity once again to reiterate the unwavering solidarity of the people and Government of the Republic of Afghanistan with the heroic and just struggle of the Palestinian people for the liberation of their land the restoration of their rights. Their struggle will ultimately triumph and that day, we believe, is not far off.

Mr. AHMED (Somalia) (interpretation from Arabic): Allow me to express to the President the congratulations and thanks of my Government for his continuous and tireless efforts in guiding the work of the forty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly and its consideration of agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine". Those efforts instil great confidence on the part of my delegation in his skilled and enlightened leadership.

It is the duty of the United Nations to implement its legal obligations. We are accustomed to discussing this item in New York, but since the Headquarters Agreement has been breached we are forced to discuss it here.

(Mr. Ahmed, Somalia)

Despite the obstacles and legal impediments designed to thwart the declaration of the Palestinian Arab State, the efforts for peace in the Middle East are an essential concern for the United Nations, particularly in the light of the international atmosphere of relaxation of tensions and rapprochement between the two super-Powers which has provided propitious conditions for international co-operation in the settlement of regional conflicts. This is an excellent time for Member States to redouble their efforts to find a solution to the question of Palestine, which is at the core of the conflict and tension in the Middle East.

Following upon the historic resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council in Algiers, it is now time to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem, at the core of which is the Palestinian problem, on the basis of respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the exercise of their right to self-determination. I should like here to commend the role that has been played by Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to arrive at a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian problem.

Somalia wholeheartedly supports the fundamental elements of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, which are in keeping with the principles of the United Nations and international law, confirm the illegality of occupation by force and defend the right of peoples to self-determination and independence.

We reaffirm our unreserved support for the call for the total and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli forces from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Holy City of Jerusalem, and for recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the exercise of sovereignty in an independent State.

(Mr. Ahmed, Somalia)

Unfortunately, Israel's obstinacy in disregarding General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Palestine represents the major roadblock to peace, the clearest example of which is its stand regarding the historic resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council in Algiers on 15 November 1988, for it continues to reject the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.

The question of Palestine is without doubt at the core of the Middle East conflict. The year 1988 has witnessed a major turning-point in the area, and there is now a convergence in the attitudes of the parties that more than ever makes it possible to achieve a settlement. The intifadah of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories is the clearest example of the refusal of that people, including the youth and the elderly, to live under illegal Israeli occupation in the territories occupied since 1967 and its rejection of recourse to armed force to maintain occupation.

In this connection I should like to recall the Secretary-General's reports on the subject and the measures undertaken by the Arab States, in keeping with international law, to create the conditions likely to promote a peaceful and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, as advocated in the peace plan at the 1982 Fez Arab Summit, which has been endorsed by subsequent Arab Summit Conferences. The historic resolutions adopted recently, in November 1988, at Algiers by the PNC on a democratic basis have crowned those efforts with success and unambiguously confirmed the Palestinian people's desire for peace and for all peace efforts to succeed.

The proclamation of the Palestinian State and the Political Communiqué, which specified that General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947 constituted the legal basis ensuring the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State, side by side with the Israeli State, in keeping with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, are clear proof of that desire.

(Mr. Ahmed, Somalia)

The Government and the people of Somalia urges the General Assembly to act speedily to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by this body, with the participation of the PLO, as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing with the other parties to the conflict. The Palestinian people, through the resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council in November 1988, has explicitly accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), thereby making it possible to begin international preparations for the convening of the Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties concerned.

The Government of Somalia appeals to the two super-Powers, the European Community and the international community as a whole, to assume their responsibilities in this area, so that we do not miss this opportunity of establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Israel must without delay demonstrate good will and declare its readiness to withdraw from Arab and Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, occupied since 1967. The efforts of all States in the international community must aim towards a global and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, in accordance with international law, the right of peoples to self-determination, human rights and the right to live in peace and security.

Mr. LAVASANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) (interpretation from Arabic):

"To those against whom
War is made, permission
Is given (to fight), because
they are wronged; - and verily
God is Most Powerful
For their aid; -" (The Holy Koran, XXII:39)

(Mr. Lavasani, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

At the outset, and on the occasion of the commencement of the second year of the heroic uprising of the Muslim Palestinian people in the occupied lands, I salute each and every person of this valiant nation and pay a tribute to the souls of the martyrs of this glorious uprising; rightly, they are the true martyrs of the freedom and independence of their beloved motherland.

(Mr. Lavasani, Islamic Republic
of Iran)

We thank the United Nations General Assembly for its decision to convene these meetings in Geneva to support this heroic and valiant uprising which has the elements of success because of the Secretary-General's efforts. We also extend our appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for the excellent hospitality it has accorded these meetings.

We all know that the reason for the transfer of this particular session of the General Assembly from its Headquarters in New York to the European Office in Geneva was the United States disregard for its international commitments, particularly the Headquarters Agreement, and its insistence on preventing the realization of the will of the international community and also the United Nations from fulfilling its obligations.

Undoubtedly, the victory of the international will in convening these meetings at Geneva, despite the obstacles created by the Zionist régime and the United States Government, while exposing the domineering attitude of the United States, is also clear proof that the question of Palestine is deeply rooted in the conscience of the peoples of the world. If the United States, or any other Power, seeks to deny this irrefutable fact, it will definitely gain nothing but isolation. The United States of America has isolated itself in the international arena because of this question. Even its closest allies have expressed their disapproval of the United States decision to this effect.

In the light of past experience and recent events, well-informed people know that American hostility towards the Muslim people of Palestine has been particularly deep-rooted and violent. For this very reason, all efforts aimed at rectifying the situation have failed. In other words, the attempts to seek Washington's acquiescence have not brought about the slightest change in the United States hostile attitude towards the Palestinian people. The reason is clear:

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of Iran)

there is no difference between the United States true position and that of the Zionist occupiers of Palestine.

In our view, hopes for a softening of the United States position on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in their ancestral homeland are indeed illusory. The United States has already demonstrated its ill-intentions, as corroborated in the past. As a result, any resort to popular and armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine should not again be subject to testing of the intentions of the United States, which will only step up the atrocities of the Zionist régime. The United States intentions have become clear, and waiting is only going to increase the crimes of the Zionists against the down-trodden Palestinian people.

The continued subjection of the people of Palestine to injustice, the denial of their inalienable rights by the occupying Zionist régime and its imperialist supporters, and the unfortunate indifference of world Governments, led the Palestinians, on 8 December 1987, to begin a stone-throwing campaign as their means of defying the ultra-modern weapons of the occupying enemy. The heroic uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied lands has aroused the conscience of mankind, urging it to take a just stance towards the people who have put their lives at stake to gain their natural rights.

This blessed uprising is a manifestation of the strongest reaction of the Muslim Palestinian people against the Zionist occupation army, which only in the past year has taken a toll of 500 martyrs, 40,000 injured and tens of thousands prisoners, with a large number of people forced into exile. Hundreds of people have also been made homeless. This revolutionary move deserves the support and backing of all the world's revolutionary forces for the realization of the rights of the Muslim Palestinian people.

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of Iran)

The resistance of the awakened Palestinian nation and the blood of the young martyrs spilt on the path of Palestine's freedom and independence have not only shaken the very foundations of the Zionist occupiers but also caused discernible changes in the region and the world. Our presence here is a clear demonstration of this reality and these developments.

The genuine uprising of the brave Palestinian people, encompassing all occupied lands since 1948 or 1967, in addition to exposing the racist nature of the Zionist enemy, has produced the following results:

First, it has dragged the Zionist entity into a serious crisis, with its very survival at stake.

Secondly, it has proved that the Palestinian people have now taken the initiative themselves to defend their legitimate rights in a bid to form their own independent Palestinian State, and that the prolongation of the occupation of their homeland cannot prevent them from pursuing their inalienable, legitimate rights.

Thirdly, it has reaffirmed the fact that there is only one genuine solution to the issue of Palestine: the restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinians to self-determination for which they, along with the Islamic Ummah, have relentlessly fought throughout the past 40 years.

Fourthly, it has created a fundamental change in world public opinion regarding the Palestinian question and the Palestinian people fighting with stones against the sophisticated weapons of the Zionists.

Recognizing the genuineness of the uprising of the oppressed people of Palestine and supporting them and the valiant people of Lebanon are top priorities in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We firmly believe that this popular movement is the proper instrument for achieving freedom from the tentacles of the arrogant occupiers. We are convinced that the Palestinian question is the

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concern of all justice-seeking people in general and all Muslims in particular. Therefore the Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its full support for this sacred uprising, which is aimed at liberating Palestine and establishing an independent Palestinian State on all the occupied land. We are of the opinion that any measure that does not contribute to the realization of this goal will not have the support of the Palestinian people.

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Republic of Iran)

We are discussing the stolen right of the Palestinian people to their historical homeland, the land of Palestine. That discussion is taking place in the General Assembly. Under those circumstances we cannot simply ignore the oppression that has come about as a result of resolutions adopted by the United Nations. Unfortunately, the first act of oppression against the Palestinian people was initiated by the General Assembly on 29 November 1947 through the adoption of its resolution on the partition of Palestine. When, years later, the General Assembly declared 29 November as a Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it was, in effect, confessing its sin and trying to redress it.

Now that the General Assembly has resisted the domineering attitude of the United States and has unprecedently moved its work to Geneva, it is appropriate to look at the list of injustices against the Palestinian people, especially those inflicted through the partition of Palestine.

We consider the resolution on the partition of Palestine unjust. The only way to redress that injustice is to establish a Palestinian State in the entire Palestinian territory. Resolution 181 (II), which brought about the partition of Palestine in 1947, was adopted under circumstances when all the forces of evil - the colonialists, the Zionists and the plunderers - had joined hands. But at that time the Arab and other Islamic countries did not submit to that resolution. They refused to concede the violation of the historical rights of the Muslim people of Palestine.

Now that the Muslim ummah has been awakened, at a time when the Palestinians in the occupied lands have endangered the very survival of the Zionists and when the international community and its representative organization, the United Nations, has admitted the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and has

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established a committee on the exercise of those rights, it is appropriate that the General Assembly should take appropriate measures to rectify a resolution that gave away 56 per cent of Palestinian territory to the occupying Zionists.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on its Islamic beliefs and its unalterable principles, has consistently supported the formation of an independent Palestinian State in the entire occupied territory. It backs the right of the Palestinians to have a country of their own and refuses to accept the partition of the Palestinian territory. It was on that basis that after the victory of the Islamic revolution of 1979 the Islamic Republic of Iran was the only country that closed the embassy of the occupying Zionist régime and opened the embassy of Palestine in its place.

With due consideration of that principle, the Islamic Republic of Iran does not recognize an entity called Israel in the occupied territory of Palestine. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran is opposed to any position that includes recognition of the occupying Zionist entity, because any recognition of the Zionist régime means total disregard of the rights of the Palestinians and forgetting the blood of the martyrs who have given their lives to defend and restore those rights. Such positions will also result in Zionist massacres of the Palestinians. In addition, the presence of the Zionists in Palestine, from our point of view, is an occupying presence, and no international rule gives occupiers any right to occupied territories, no matter how long the occupation may have been in place.

Because of its illegitimate existence and its sense of isolation in the region, the Zionist entity has made aggression the basis of its unlawful existence, and continues to pursue the policy of the iron fist, massacre and unabated terrorism. The aggression launched some days ago by the Zionists from the air and

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the sea south of Beirut clearly substantiates that statement. Fortunately, the attack was heroically repulsed by the brave resistance of the Palestinian and Lebanese defenders. There is no doubt that with the momentum given to the moral position of the resistance in defence of its rights, any future aggression by the Zionists will also be foiled.

Having voiced our views, the Islamic Republic of Iran expects all to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people by recognizing the historical facts and respecting the principles of justice. The Islamic Republic of Iran calls on all nations to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent Palestinian State in all the blessed land of Palestine. It also invites all the freedom-loving nations of the world, particularly the Islamic nations, to back the struggle of the people of Palestine to achieve that sacred cause.

If you support God's causes, he will support you in your endeavours.

Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda): In his annual report the Secretary-General compared the Organization to a small boat in which all the peoples of the Earth were gathered and whose sails seemed to have caught a favourable wind. He noted that with careful and patient navigation the vessel had come within sight of large sections of the shore. For the people of Palestine, the shores do not seem to be on the horizon. What is worse, Israel, with the tacit support of a permanent member of the Security Council, is working to ensure that the ship remains in turbulent weather and that every plan and effort to bring about a peaceful solution to the problem is torpedoed.

(Mr. Karukubiro-Kamunanwire, Uganda)

The Palestine question stands out as an example of the negation of all the principles of the Charter, including the right of peoples to self-determination, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and the fundamental rights of individuals and peoples. The very persistence of this problem is a searing wound in the international body politic and a consistent reminder that the international principles embodied in the Charter have yet to be realized.

The struggle of the Palestinian people has over the years been a saga of bravery and sacrifice, tragedy and broken promises, unfulfilled hopes and a trust betrayed.

The infamous Balfour Declaration of 1917 - in which the British Colonial Secretary of the day, in a letter to Lord Rothschild, promised support to the Zionist movement in setting up a Jewish State in Palestine - set in motion a chain of events that were to bring tragedy to the region as a whole and that resulted in the establishment of a settler colony. Ever since, the entire Middle East region has been a cauldron of unremitting force, violence and conflict, with the Palestinians as the victims of the tragedy. Unable to contain the violent situation they had helped unleash, the British handed over the problem to the United Nations. On 29 November 1947 the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), containing the United Nations Plan of Partition for Mandated Palestine.

It is worth reminding everybody that in resolution 181 (II) the General Assembly decided to partition Palestine into two States, one Jewish and one Palestinian. A Jewish State, namely the State of Israel, has existed since then. It derives its legitimacy from that resolution. The Palestinian State has thus far not materialized. It became clear at the outset that Israel was not content with the territory allocated to it under the Plan of Partition. It embarked on a course

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of action aimed at frustrating the emergence of a Palestinian State and at swallowing up Palestinian and other Arab lands. That was in furtherance of its ambition to create a Greater Israel.

It is precisely because of those Israeli designs that the region has seen large-scale strife, death and destruction. Today Israel occupies lands larger than the territory allocated to it under the Plan of Partition, and it is determined to annex those lands. Millions of Palestinians have been forced against their will to flee their homes and lands and live as refugees. Those remaining have been subjected to policies of terror, exploitation and humiliation aimed at forcing them to flee so that a fiction of "a land without people" could be created for constructing new Israeli settlements. Quite apart from the express annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights and the Holy City of Jerusalem, the continued expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza is intended to create the de facto incorporation of those areas into Israel.

The reports of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories which have been submitted to the Assembly at this session provide a strong indictment of Israeli conduct. They all prove conclusively that Israel, the occupying Power, is in breach of its obligations under the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The extension of Israeli legislation, jurisdiction and administration to the occupied territories is contrary to the temporary character of military occupation. Those measures have been appropriately pronounced null and void by the United Nations.

What we have seen over all these decades is a timeless phenomenon. Peoples subjected to domination and exploitation by an alien Power are forced to rise and

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struggle to free themselves in order to attain their right to self-determination. That is exactly what the Palestinian people is doing.

Neither the passage of time nor the severity of the occupation can lighten the cost for the occupier. In spite of the magnitude and duration of their suffering, the Palestinians have withstood the merciless onslaught. They have not wavered in their quest for independence, justice and human dignity. The Israeli authorities had hoped that through their iron-fist policy they would have been able to silence the Palestinian patriots in the West Bank and Gaza. As we all know, that policy created the conditions for the intifadah, which has now been going on for a year. Israeli actions in that regard were censured by the Security Council in its resolution 605 (1987). To consider the intifadah as a temporary episode that can be glossed over is to misread deliberately the whole history of the Palestinian struggle. The intifadah has proved that the occupation has been rejected.

For too long we have been given the excuse that Israeli actions against the Palestinian population and acts of aggression against the Arab countries are undertaken on security grounds. Indeed, when Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) were adopted, Israel pretended that it would be willing to exchange the occupied territories for recognition as part of an overall peace settlement. That ploy was believed by many. But the Israeli annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and the construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories have clearly unmasked the Israelis' real intentions.

We believe the security of all States in the region is vital. We therefore find it unacceptable that the security of one country should be regarded as overriding, to the detriment of that of others, and that this should be used as a justification of the denial to the Palestinians of their inalienable right to

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self-determination in a State of their own. No country can legitimately claim security for itself while threatening the peace and security of others. Moreover, Israel must be reminded that it derives its existence from resolution 181 (II). That resolution has never been repealed and remains valid. Under the rule of equity, one cannot deny the validity of a document from which one derives a benefit. Israel, like the rest of the international community, has the duty to see to it that United Nations resolutions on the Palestinian State are fully implemented.

As has been stressed by many, the question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East crisis. The region will remain in turmoil so long as a just solution to this issue has not been found. The wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973, Israel's persistent meddling in Lebanese affairs, and the continuing tension in the region are ample proof of this self-evident fact. Each war has been followed by a fragile truce, only to give way to the outbreak of yet another war. If the present impasse continues, that is the likely scenario for the future too.

The General Assembly has assumed its responsibilities before history. In resolutions 2672 C (XXV) of 8 December 1970 and 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 it undertook to defend and work for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In resolution 38/58 C the General Assembly endorsed the Geneva Declaration of 1983, which called for an international conference on the Middle East which would work out a comprehensive solution. It was decided that the conference should be attended by the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, authentic representative of the Palestinian people, which would participate on an equal footing.

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The call for the convening of the Middle East conference enjoys the near-unanimous support of the international community. The Secretary-General has over the past five years exerted enormous efforts to ensure its convening. I wish also to register my delegation's appreciation of the important role in the whole question played by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Committee's activities have been instrumental in mobilizing support for the international conference and for the Palestinian cause.

We in Uganda remain convinced that the peace conference offers the only realistic path towards a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. We therefore support its early convening. In this regard, we consider the decisions of the Palestine National Council proclaiming the State of Palestine and elaborating its position on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a positive development. On the question of restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a State of their own, Uganda's stand has always been principled and unequivocal. We have supported and shall continue to support the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in its struggle. Uganda therefore recognizes the new State.

We find it regrettable that the holding of the conference continues to be subject to prevarications and delaying tactics by Israel with the tacit support of one permanent member of the Security Council. It is our view that there is a need for increased pressure on Israel to ensure that it complies with the will of the international community. The decision by the United States to deny a visa to Chairman Arafat to address the General Assembly is, to say the least, very unconstructive. Apart from being a violation of United States legal obligations under the Headquarters Agreement, it serves only to encourage Israel to continue

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its gross violations of human rights and other international laws. Viewed against the background of attempts to close the PLO office in New York, it puts in question the sincerity of United States initiatives and its impartiality in the Middle East peace process. It is this kind of blanket protection by the United States which has made Israel behave like a spoiled child in that region, just as South Africa does in its region.

There are those who still harbour the illusion that it is possible to solve the Palestinian question without the participation of the PLO. Inordinate efforts have been made to misrepresent the true nature of the PLO and brand it as a terrorist organization. The PLO has proved to be the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people. It has successfully gone through the rigours of battle. All intrigues and efforts to discredit the movement have proved futile. The recent successful outcome of the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers has proved the PLO's statesmanship and unity of purpose. Thus, for anyone to imagine that it is possible to achieve a solution to the Middle East crisis without the participation of the PLO is to bury his head in very deep sand. It remains the only authentic organization and representative of the Palestinian people.

For quite some time a permanent member of the Security Council had indicated that it would be willing to hold discussions with the PLO only when it accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and renounced terrorism. That was actually done by the PLO at Algiers. We find it regrettable that when the PLO demonstrated movement towards moderation the United States instead became provocative by denying Chairman Arafat a visa to enter the United States. Yet more demands for concessions are made to the PLO. One finds it ironic that no

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reciprocal demands are being made by the same Member of Israel, which has consistently failed to respond to the injunctions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Uganda's support for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis. The Security Council should shoulder its responsibilities and make Israel comply with the Council's injunctions. In our view the situation in the Middle East constitutes a danger to international peace and security. The United Nations must provide for a just and comprehensive peace. A framework for peace can be just if it restores the right of the Palestinian people and comprehensive if it takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the people in the region and involves the parties concerned. The restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians must constitute the centrepiece of the settlement. Israel must unconditionally withdraw from the occupied Arab lands.

I wish to take this opportunity of pledging Uganda's support for and solidarity with the PLO and the people of Palestine in their just struggle. We salute them on their proclamation of the new State.

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana): The forty-third session of the General Assembly has made history by holding some of its plenary meetings here in Geneva. The circumstances leading to the decision to convene here are well known. Suffice it to say that we gather here in the wake of violations of international law - a situation that compels us to lend support to those who protest against such a transgression of the fundamental principle of international law by insisting that treaties must be observed - treaty obligations which, in this case, are explicitly defined in the Headquarters Agreement.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

The actions of the host country, the United States, with regard to Mr. Yasser Arafat's application for a visa have created an aftermath of dismay. In spite of this, the international community has rallied, as it should, to meet its responsibilities in the cause of law and justice by ensuring that the voice of the brave Palestinian people be heard, as it must if a just and durable settlement to the question of Palestine and the Middle East crisis is to be achieved.

Broken bones, collective punishment, mass detentions, bloodshed and the death and destruction brutally imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the defenceless Palestinian people have not extinguished the embers of the intifadah a year after its outbreak. If anything, the continuation of the uprising in the occupied territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and in Jerusalem affirm a conscious determination for nationhood and a profound rejection by the Palestinian people of Israeli occupation, policies and practices. The uprising also sends a message to the international community that any political settlement that excludes a Palestinian State as the logical expression and outcome of the present struggle for self-determination will easily come to nothing.

It is with that concrete reality in mind, therefore, that the Ghana delegation holds the view that the intransigence of Israel, supported by its accommodating allies, is self-defeating and exacerbates an extremely tense situation in the area.

Israel's attempts to change the status and demographic character of the occupied territories through creeping annexation - expressed in the policy of Jewish settlements along the West Bank, its annexation of East Jerusalem, coupled with its brutal and exacting military occupation, all in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949 - have sown and continue to sow the seeds of discontent, violence and disruption. Policies that are tailored to illegal ambitions for

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territory and annexation place exceptional emphasis on the use and threat of the use of force in violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. Thus, Israel, heedless of international law and opinion, perpetrates acts of aggression at will against its neighbours and busies itself with creating buffer zones, most notably in southern Lebanon, thereby unilaterally and illegally carving out its own distorted version of secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

Despite these acts of provocation, the massive violation of Palestinian rights and the recalcitrance of Israel, prudence requires measured and tempered actions for peace. The Algiers declaration of the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988 is one such action. The acceptance by that body of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), together with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), establish an initial substantive foundation for dialogue and negotiation over the fate of Palestine, an issue central to any overall settlement of the Middle East question. The delegation of Ghana continues to support the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the full participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In that connection, we can only agree with the observations of the Secretary-General in his report 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". (A/43/867, para. 35)

That pragmatic approach must find a vehicle for its expression. That vehicle is the mandated call for the International Peace Conference with all five of the

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permanent members of the Security Council as indispensable participants. Indeed, since December last year, the Security Council has been called into session no less than five times to rebuke Israel for its violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Important as those reminders to Israel are, the Council unfortunately continues to address the fundamental issues arising from the situation in the occupied territories in an ad hoc and piecemeal fashion. Such an approach is clearly inadequate for resolving issues having such direct bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security. Moreover, the lack of a unified and coherent approach emanating from the Security Council has allowed room for unilateral attempts at peace-making by a permanent member, not surprisingly without success. The perennial nature of the problem can only be addressed, in all its dimensions, by the unity of action of the international community expressed through the Security Council, in particular through its five permanent members.

In times past, the leadership of the Palestinian people, the PLO, was called upon to make gestures that would accelerate the possibilities for peace. Persistent calls came from Tel Aviv and Washington in that regard. Such gestures, with specific and substantive repercussions for peace, were accordingly made in the Algiers declaration, which explicitly affirms, within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the right of Israel to exist within recognized and secure boundaries. Furthermore, the statement of Mr. Yasser Arafat, the PLO representative in this forum yesterday, suggested in moderate and measured tones the undertaking necessary for a peaceful and co-operative settlement of the conflict in the occupied territories.

And yet those to whom the olive branch has been extended hesitate, cast aspersions and ask for more without committing themselves to any negotiating

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process. Indeed, they act in such a way as to gag the very spokesmen without whom the core issue at the heart of the Middle East crisis - namely the question of Palestine - cannot conceivably be brought to a lasting solution. It is almost as if the implications of the Algiers declaration threaten the foundations of set-thinking in those capitals, that peace is not possible, or that peace must be imposed by force or at the very least on terms that deny the fullest expression of Palestinian self-determination. It is as if they were against peace and in favour of hegemony in the sub-region.

The Ghana delegation appeals to Israel and the United States, key partners in any viable negotiating process, to respond in a constructive and positive manner to the giant steps towards peace emanating from Algiers and attested to before the world Organization in the statement of Mr. Arafat. Now is the time to show good faith and resolute determination to bring about a just and durable settlement of the problem of the Middle East. The gains in the Algiers declaration must not only be recognized but must also be encouraged and nurtured.

The intifadah, coupled with the Political Communiqué emerging from Algiers, clearly establishes a new and irreversible dynamic, a dynamic that places unequivocal emphasis and immediacy on the resolution of the core issue of Palestinian national rights.

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In sum, the evolution of events should convey to Israel and its friends that it cannot choose whom it will negotiate with over the future of the occupied territories. Any attempt to establish preconditions that would have the effect of denying authentic representatives of the Palestinian people - namely the PLO - access to the negotiating table will greatly prejudice the possibility of credible and lasting solutions to the grave questions at hand. History determines that in the context of war negotiating partners are invariably one's enemies. The case can be no different between Israel and the representatives of the Palestinian people. Indeed pragmatism rings loudly and issues forth from the Algiers declaration and is the trend of recent times. It is now for Israel to respond in a responsible and clear fashion as to its intentions. Heavy reliance on force or rigid insistence on stiff preconditions can only slam the door in the face of peace.

We listened carefully this morning to the recitation by the representative of Israel of the PLO's "transgressions", and we must candidly state that in the present context it was tantamount to political quibbling. We call on Israel and all States rather to concentrate on the positive elements of the statement of the highest ranking leader of the PLO made in our presence here and to let all parties to the conflict now enter an era of peace.

We cannot for ever replicate this unending tale of woe and missed opportunities and sully the bright dawn of the next century with the blood and destruction of unending conflict in the Middle East. For, as the Secretary-General observes,

"It has been tragic that, in the history of the Middle East, opportunities have in the past only too often followed war. 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

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major wars, thousands of casualties and untold suffering." (A/43/867,
para. 37)

It is time to seize the olive branch or be the victims of our inaction and prejudices. Clearly the outbreak of peace on hitherto many fronts of bitter conflict in the last year offers a unique opportunity for a creative and determined effort at peace with dignity for all sides in Palestine. It is the Ghana delegation's hope that we can now build upon the recent positive developments concerning Palestinians and the occupied territories.

Mr. ESCHKEIKH (Tunisia) (interpretation from Arabic): Mr. President, I wish to greet you and to convey to you the best wishes of my country, which is firm in its principles and strongly supports the United Nations and its actions. We wish to bring about peace and security among all the peoples of the world.

The move of the General Assembly this year to discuss the question of Palestine in Geneva shows the role the United Nations is playing in the promotion of peace and justice and calls for us to renew our efforts in discussing this issue and to give thought to the origin of this question, the present situation and the future.

We listened very attentively to the major statement made before the Assembly yesterday by Mr. Yasser Arafat, when he explained the historic decisions taken by the Palestine National Council at its extraordinary session in mid-November this year. He explained the importance of those decisions, their constructive scope and their positive and direct repercussions for the steps towards peace being taken in the Middle East and the countries of the region. This is obvious proof of the commitment of the PLO in rejecting terrorism and of its attachment to dialogue and peace.

The path to peace in the Middle East is the path of the Palestinian people. They are ready to make great sacrifices and have already suffered a very heavy

(Mr. Escheikh, Tunisia)

toll. The decision of the United States Secretary of State that led to the denial of a visa for Mr. Arafat was rejected by us. We deeply regret this development and hope it will not be repeated. We salute the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution A/43/L.43 of 30 November 1988 to move the session to Geneva.

The General Assembly is discussing the question of Palestine at a time when there are signs of détente in international relations as a result of the détente between the two major Powers. To a very large extent this has alleviated tensions and reduced the importance and size of regional conflicts in many parts of the world, improving the international climate and enabling the United Nations to play its normal role in bringing about peace and security and creating a climate of confidence among the great Powers.

In that connection, the Security Council has once again shown its efficiency and demonstrated that it can apply the Charter when necessary to protect peace and security, as can be seen from its resolution 598 (1987), with regard to the Iran-Iraq conflict, which is a clear manifestation of international will and an example of the role that can be played by this international Organization if efforts are made in the right direction.

Nevertheless it is regrettable - and we are puzzled by this - that the question of peace in Palestine has been set aside though it is the core of the Middle East problem. Why has there been no progress, given all the progress achieved by the United Nations in settling other regional conflicts?

In paragraph 36 of his report in document A/43/867, the Secretary-General states:

"Recent months have seen tangible progress towards the settlement of several regional conflicts; the protracted and explosive nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict makes it all the more urgent that we now concentrate our efforts in this area."

(Mr. Escheikh, Tunisia)

The fact that the Palestine National Council has accepted General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) clearly shows that the Palestine National Council is committed to international law, that it respects international decisions and is prepared to work in accordance with them at a time when Israel continues to make tendentious allegations in an attempt to brand the PLO as a terrorist organization.

(Mr. Escheikh, Tunisia)

It can now be seen very clearly that it is Israel that is engaged in terrorism against the Palestinian people. The intifadah has now entered its second year, the Palestinian people has affirmed before the world its decision to hold on to its land and to abide by its decisions, though many have been constrained to leave and despite all efforts to change the characteristics of its land, culture and structure.

Israel is a Member of the United Nations, having been created by a United Nations resolution, yet it now challenges and defies the Organization and stands condemned for its practices in occupied Arab territories and its terrorist activities against the Palestinian people both within the occupied territories and outside them. Israel flaunts its "long arm" and continues to oppress the Palestinian people and to defy and challenge the international community. In its intransigence, Israel clearly intends to continue its defiance of those who favour peace and security.

We, however, have always supported the Palestinians in their efforts to exercise their right to self-determination and to recover their land in accordance with United Nations resolutions and under the leadership of the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

This year a report was issued by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694). Israel is violating the human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied territories; the report gives an overview of the oppressive and repressive practices perpetrated by the Israeli authorities against the defenceless Palestinians, and shows that the morale of the Palestinian people has been strengthened. That people is proud of its identity and prepared to make sacrifices to obtain justice for its cause.

(Mr. Escheikh, Tunisia)

The intifadah of the Palestinian people represents a decisive turning-point in its history and an important stage of its heroic struggle to regain its dignity and inalienable rights. It is a clear rejection of occupation.

The Security Council has met frequently in recent months to study the dangerous situation created by the Israeli practices. In its resolutions 605 (1988), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988) it has condemned the repression against the Palestinian people, called upon the occupying Israeli authorities to respect the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, on the protection of civilian persons in time of war, and called for recognition of the need to bring about a peaceful settlement of the problem and conflict in the Middle East.

In this connection, in his report in document S/19443 of 21 January 1988, the Secretary-General set forth ways and means to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians and to release them from the colonial yoke and indicated that it was only through those peaceful means that the explosive situation could be defused. The Secretary-General also said he continued to believe that this should be achieved through a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), taking fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, and that such a settlement should be negotiated by means of an international conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of all the parties concerned.

Pursuant to those recommendations - given in his concluding remarks in that report - which he reaffirmed in his most recent report on the Middle East, the Palestinian people, through its highest legislative body, the Palestine National Council, at its extraordinary meeting in Algiers, expressed its will to use the legal framework offered by the United Nations and to choose peace as the way to resolve the problem and bring about a just and lasting solution so that the Palestinian people may exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and the

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creation of an independent State and so that peace and security can be ensured for all the peoples of the region. The resolutions of the Palestine National Council accord with the recommendations of the Secretary-General and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Palestine National Council, in proclaiming the creation of an independent State of Palestine pursuant to international law, announced it would use peaceful means, renounced terrorism and asked for settlement of the question through negotiation in an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations. That represents a decisive step towards peace by the Palestinian people.

Fully aware of the magnitude of the tragedy the Palestinian people has endured for 40 years, Tunisia continues to support the just and heroic struggle of that people to establish an independent State of Palestine. We reiterated our solidarity when, in November, we recognized the proclamation of the State of Palestine and the courageous step taken by the Palestinian people.

We stand beside the Palestinian people in its homeland at a time when it has emphasized its identity. We welcome the decisions of the Palestine National Council. Many countries have recognized the independent State of Palestine, which shows the legitimacy of the decisions and their conformity with international law.

It is high time to render justice to the Palestinian people and to put an end to its suffering and its tragedy. The international community must recognize that it must act and take effective action to end the deadlock and to break the yoke and the shackles binding the Palestinian people. It must move ahead and prepare for the holding of an international conference to put an end to the conflict, to bring about peace and to guarantee the peaceful coexistence of all the peoples of the region.

(Mr. Escheikh, Tunisia)

The resolution of the international community, adopted almost unanimously, deciding to hear Chairman Arafat is an important lesson and obvious proof that we must use the historic opportunity we have been given to implement the constructive decisions of the Palestine National Council and adopt new and progressive approaches to bring about justice, peace and détente.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.