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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHTY-FIRST MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 15 December 1988, at 9 a.m.

President:

later:

later:

Mr. CAPUTO

Mr. MORTENSEN (Vice-President)

Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vice-President)

(Argentina)

(Denmark)

(Vanuatu)

- Question of Palestine [37] (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

- Statement by the President

- Programme of work

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

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The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

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)

Mr. NAFFAH (Lebanon) (interpretation from Arabic): Lebanon, which saw the birth of the United Nations and participated in its founding, attaches great importance to the future of this Organization, the crystallization of its goals and the development of its machinery and bodies, for it provides the best way towards a better future and a more comprehensive peace in the world.

Undoubtedly, justice must be the very basis of international peace. As members are aware, at the core of the question of Palestine, which we are considering today, and of the problem of the Middle East and peace in that region is the fact that the Palestinian people are being deprived of their legitimate rights. Hence, for peace to be achieved, the rights of this people, as the General Assembly has defined them, must be recognized, including the right to exercise self-determination, the right to return to their homeland and the right to create a State on their own land. We believe that we should denounce and reject Israeli practices in all the occupied territories, as well as any situation stemming from faits accomplis imposed by Israel, contrary to international law, in particular the creation of settlements, which are a serious obstacle to peace.

The measures and administrative arrangements imposed by Israel by force, are null and void and cannot be condoned. Hence the Lebanese Government has supported and recognized the declaration of the Palestine National Council (PNC) at its last meeting in Algiers proclaiming the Palestinian State.

(Mr. Naffah, Lebanon)

Israel persists in occupying part of southern Lebanon and continues its acts of aggression against Lebanese citizens and their land. Those practices constitute a violation of human rights, the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Conventions. Such a situation calls for all-round international support in order to put an end to this occupation. Those acts of aggression and those arbitrary practices include random bombing by land, air and sea, killing and wounding citizens and causing extensive damage to their homes, property and harvests. When the Israeli authorities expel Palestinians from their land, in flagrant breach of international law, those Palestinians are deported to southern Lebanon, despite the fact that Lebanon refuses to condone their deportation into the country. Those acts constitute renewed violations of the sovereignty of a country reduced to powerlessness. That is also a well-known aspect of established Israeli policy.

Israel must withdraw immediately and unconditionally from southern Lebanon, in conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 425 (1978), 508 (1982) and 509 (1982). Israel must respect the will of the world community, the dignity of peoples and the States Members of the Organization.

(Mr. Naffah, Lebanon)

Israel's persistence in occupying parts of southern Lebanon on the pretext of protecting its northern region is a grave precedent; it is a distortion of the doctrine of self-defence that is fraught with serious consequences. My country has always firmly believed in inalienable rights, democracy, freedom and human rights; those values take on added significance now that it lacks the strength to defend itself. Respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and its internationally recognized boundaries is a right all States Members of the United Nations must respect.

Lebanon has already embraced the principle of holding an international peace conference on the Middle East, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, to achieve a comprehensive and just solution to the Middle East conflict. But that does not mean that Lebanon is in favour of the solution to its own problems being integrated into the solution on the Middle East problem; rather we believe that those problems require separate, immediate attention, given the seriousness of the current situation and its negative consequences on its social, political and economic structures. In this context, we assert our rejection of resettling Palestinians on our land, and we believe that the enshrinement of the principle of the self-determination of peoples requires ipso facto recognition for the Palestinian people of their right to create their own State on their own homeland.

Mr. MAJEWSKI (Poland): The current debate on the question of Palestine takes place at a time of a clear turn-about in international relations towards a reduction of tensions, halting the arms race, the development of a positive dialogue and mutually beneficial co-operation. There is an increasingly firm conviction that all regional conflicts can and should be settled by political means, with due regard for the interests of the parties involved. With considerable help from the United Nations and its Secretary-General, significant

(Mr. Majewski, Poland)

progress has been made in this respect in various parts of the world. However, this has been true only to a small extent as regards one of the most prolonged and complicated areas of tension - the Middle East conflict.

We believe that today as never before prospects are emerging for a breakthrough in the vicious circle of the Middle East, which has been marked by a succession of wars and tragedies, to start businesslike discussions on the settlement of all aspects of the conflict. This is the only way to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Poland has adhered consistently to the view that the essential elements of a Middle East solution ought to include the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories seized in 1967; the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence; and guarantees of secure existence and development as well as full respect for the vital interests of all States in the region. Owing to the complexity of the problem in its regional and global aspects, a realistic chance for working out a solution in accordance with those principles is offered only within the framework of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties concerned, on the basis of United Nations resolutions.

The central issue remains the Palestinian question. The developments in the situation in the past 40 years, particularly the intifadah, which has now lasted more than one year, have proved that the Palestinians' rights cannot be ignored or bypassed. Nor can they be undermined by repressive measures which have been universally condemned. The existence of the Palestinian people is a fact. Palestinians living on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have demonstrated beyond doubt that they do not wish to live under occupation and are determined to carry on the struggle for their inherent rights.

(Mr. Majewski, Poland)

The Palestinians' aspirations were expressed in the decisions adopted at the extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers on 15 November 1988. The recognition of the need to convene a Middle East peace conference on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) is evidence of realism and a responsible approach. This pragmatic approach was strongly reaffirmed by Mr. Yasser Arafat in his important address to this session of the General Assembly. He presented realistic proposals that call for a constructive response by all the parties concerned. The hand extended by the Palestinians ought to be accepted. That is our desire as well as that of the overwhelming majority of the international community.

Guided by the conviction that the Palestinian people should be guaranteed the right to self-determination to the same extent that it is enjoyed by other peoples, including the people of Israel, Poland has recognized the sovereign act of the Palestinian Parliament concerning the proclamation of a State. We are prepared to establish co-operation with the Palestinian State authorities the moment they establish themselves.

That is also the logical consequence of the support we have given to the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians and their legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, with which we have traditionally maintained co-operation. We are ready to support all relevant steps leading towards adequately improving the status of representation of the Palestinian people within the United Nations corresponding to the recent developments in the situation.

We express the hope that the present debate will contribute to making all members of the international community aware of the opportunities that have arisen for the settlement of the pressing problems of the Middle East and for the

(Mr. Majewski, Poland)

establishment of peace in the interests of the States and the peoples of that region and the entire world. Poland will continue its efforts to promote such a solution and will contribute to the start and successful conclusion of the Middle East peace process.

Mr. MALMIERCA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Sir, two months ago I congratulated you on your election to the presidency of the forty-third session of the General Assembly. Today I am obliged to do so once again for the successful results achieved under your guidance, especially at this session of the Assembly that we have had to hold in Geneva, even though it should have been held more than 10 days ago at United Nations Headquarters in New York. That, however, was not possible. The Power which has served as the main support of the Zionist Israeli régime in its expansionist war at the expense of the Arab nation and the Palestinian people for more than three decades, the United States, in an unprecedented move in violation of its international obligations under the Headquarters Agreement, prevented Comrade Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine National Council, from participating in the debate begun today in Geneva.

The obscure arguments with which the United States tried to explain that gross violation of its role as the host country of the United Nations do not convince anyone. By himself, Yasser Arafat, could not have endangered the security of the most powerful imperialist State of all time.

The reprehensible decision of the United States to gag the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to silence the truth about the heroic struggle waged today by the Palestinian people, is an additional expression of its total support of the repressive, racist and colonialist policy of Israel and of its unconditional support of the executioners of Palestine's finest sons and daughters, who have now maintained their glorious intifadah for more than a year. Hence, the subterfuge and the arbitrary and illegal attitude shamelessly taken by the United States Secretary of State to prevent Yasser Arafat's presence before the General Assembly. The decision of the General Assembly was just. If imperial Pharisaism



(Mr. Malmierca, Cuba)

prevents the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and State from addressing the international community in the United States, their voice will be heard in a country that truly indeed deserves to be the host of our world Organization. For that purpose, we have come to Geneva, together with the overwhelming majority of Member States.

The international community has been struggling for a solution to the so-called Palestinian question for four decades now. As a matter of fact, this has been a struggle to defend a people that has been deprived of its independence, seen its homeland trampled by foreign occupation and suffered the plundering of its lands, properties and homes. However, this has also been the unequal struggle of a heroic people that has stood firm in its resistance and in order to reconquer what rightfully belongs to it.

In his opening statement at the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Havana in 1979, President Fidel Castro referred to the situation of the courageous Palestinian people, saying:

"No more brutal pillage of a people's rights to peace and existence has occurred in this century. ... Pushed off their land, expelled from their country, scattered throughout the world, persecuted and murdered, the heroic Palestinians are a vivid example of sacrifice and patriotism, living symbols of the most terrible crime of our era". (A/34/542, p. 237)

This year, our debate takes place in a significant context. To the improvement in the international climate at present prevailing and the efforts being made in several regions for a peaceful solution of conflicts, must be added the Palestine National Council's historic proclamation of the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine of 15 November last in Algiers.

(Mr. Malmierca, Cuba)

That declaration, which is gaining increasing support and recognition, has been solidly supported by the blood of the Palestinian people in their unequal and glorious struggle against the Zionist occupation. The Declaration of Independence of the Palestinian State has been written in the blood of the courageous fighters who sacrificed their lives in Palestine and other Arab lands defending their inalienable rights. Today, with the glorious intifadah, the Palestinians are disrupting the occupationist machinery of Israel while gaining the admiration and support of all freedom-loving peoples.

For a long time now the overwhelming majority of the Members of the Organization have been aware of the injustice committed against the Palestinian people, which must come to an end once and for all. With the support of its strategic ally, Israel forced the Palestinians into exodus and dispersed them all over the world by expelling them manu militari from their lands and properties and occupying their territories, which constitute the Palestinian State, as provided by General Assembly resolution 181 (II) adopted by the General Assembly in 1947.

The fate of the Palestinians who remained in the occupied territories where they were subjected to all forms of discrimination, mistreatment, and the denial of their inalienable rights, including the most sacred right to survival, could not have been worse. Zionist policies in those territories are still designed to eliminate the Palestinian inhabitants and to replace them by Jewish settlers through the establishment of settlements.

The latest report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories constitutes clear proof of this. While the occupation in itself constitutes a blatant violation of human rights, the illegal Israeli expansionist policy - based on torture, collective punishment, demolition of houses, deportation of the

(Mr. Malmierca, Cuba)

indigenous inhabitants, the systematic imposition of curfews, the closure of entire neighbourhoods, and many other such repressive measures, all witnessed by the international community - constitutes an affront to human dignity.

Israel has not only repeatedly violated United Nations resolutions relating to the territories occupied by force since 1967 - more than 20 years ago - but, to top it all, has turned Security Council resolutions into worthless pieces of paper. In addition to that, the Zionist State continues to violate the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and persists in altering the physical character and constitutional status of the Palestinian territories.

Cuba's position is well known. We have always supported the cause of the Arab peoples and pointed out that the Palestinian question is the core of the Middle East problem.

(Mr. Malmierca, Cuba)

In order to reach the solution strenuously demanded by the international community, and to achieve a lasting peace, Israel must withdraw totally and unconditionally from all the occupied territories, which presupposes the Palestinian people's right to return to its homeland and its right to self-determination and independent statehood in Palestine. To achieve these objectives, it is essential to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, and with the participation, on an equal footing, of all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

With the historic Palestinian national uprising prevailing in the occupied territories, the Palestinian people has proved its determination to struggle until the end to defend its homeland and its right to live. The Political Communiqué of the Palestine National Council and the Declaration of Independence, both of which were adopted in Algiers on 15 November last, constitute additional evidence of the determination of the PLO and of all Palestinians to achieve a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

The Cuban people, brothers-in-arms of the Palestinian people, supports the establishment of the Palestinian State and the right of the Palestinian people to be admitted to the Organization in the capacity of observer. The status which was granted to the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1974, when the issue was first discussed in the General Assembly, should rightfully be granted to the Palestinian State.

The decision of the Palestine National Council is in keeping with the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and should receive the most determined support and solidarity of the international community. It is high time to provide that support to the new State that has emerged from the just struggle of

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the Palestinian people and to make an even stronger demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from all the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.

We cannot conclude without emphasizing the concrete proposals made by Yasser Arafat in his statement before the Assembly. We support his call for serious efforts to establish a preparatory committee for the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and to have the United Nations play a vital role in the entire peace process in that region in order to reach an agreement among all parties within the context of that international Conference on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We unhesitatingly transferred the venue of our meetings to Geneva to exemplify our condemnation of the United States' aggression against the representation of the Palestinian people and against our Organization. We thus manifested our decision not to tolerate passively any new provocations.

Today, more than ever, we are sure of the success of the Palestinian people, the outstanding protagonist of the heroic intifadah, a struggle that has the full solidarity of all peoples of the world, as is evident in this Assembly. The already legendary quest of the Palestinian people and the international support backing it will surely result in a liberated Jerusalem which will be a symbol of peace and human brotherhood.

Mr. ANKA (Nigeria): The international system is moving towards a peaceful era. Conflicts which hitherto have been difficult to solve appear to be amenable to resolution. Disputants, who once shunned each other, are reaching for the United Nations to engage in dialogue. One of the few exceptions to this near universal trend towards dialogue and rapprochement is the problem of Palestine, which has been in this forum since 1947. We note with sadness and regret that

(Mr. Anka, Nigeria)

violence has increased in the Middle East in general and in the occupied Palestinian territories in particular. The continuing unfortunate situation in the area portends unnecessary bloodshed, agony and misery. We believe that the contrived violence and destruction are avoidable.

In the period of over four decades since the Palestinian question has been before the United Nations, the Palestinians have suffered untold hardship and misery. They have been dispossessed of their land and turned into refugees. Palestinians in the occupied territories have received treatment more befitting that accorded prisoners, their having been denied basic and fundamental freedoms. It is painful to have to bear testimony to such anachronisms while the international community celebrates the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The perpetual refugee status of Palestinians, which denies them their dignity, has led them, old and young, men and women, to engage in a mass uprising. The uprising, or intifadah, has now been sustained for over one year. The length of the uprising reflects the depth of feeling of the Palestinian people and their iron-willed determination to be rid of the shackles of occupation.

Instead of seeing the Palestinians' uprising as the true manifestation of the Palestinian desire for freedom, independence and respect in a State of their own, the Israeli occupying authorities responded, and continue to respond, with harsh and draconian suppression of a population in revolt.

The sight of small Palestinian children with stones confronting armed Israeli soldiers; the spectacle of unarmed Palestinian women facing Israeli paratroopers, and of old men being harassed by Israeli security forces, are sobering and sorrowful. Two reports, one by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories

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(A/43/694), and the one submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General, in accordance with resolution 605 (1987) (S/19443), corroborate stories of Israeli repression and flagrant violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people.

The catalogue of Israeli draconian measures reported are many. They include the killing and torture of Palestinians, the destruction of their homes, the annexation of their lands, the expulsion of their leaders, mass detention imposed on Palestinian towns and villages and the closure of their schools. Added to all these are economic and financial sanctions. The foregoing apart, the Palestinians in the occupied territories have also been victims of harassment by armed Israeli settler vigilantes who maim and kill their Palestinian neighbours. Furthermore, it has been reported that Israeli soldiers have engaged in actions such as live burial of Palestinian demonstrators. Such action, in our view, is repugnant to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Charter of the United Nations, to which Israel committed itself upon its admission in May 1949, prohibits the acquisition of territories by force. It also enjoins Member States to settle their differences by peaceful means. When conflicts break out, there are covenants to protect civilians in the area of conflict. The Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in the Time of War, of 12 August 1949, contains provisions to protect and guarantee the rights of civilians under occupation.

Apart from these conventions the General Assembly and the Security Council have, in past years and also recently, adopted many resolutions regarding Israeli occupation, its repression in the occupied territories and its policy of the creation and expansion of settlements in the occupied territories. Despite the covenants, resolutions and appeals, Israel has refused to change its policies in the occupied territories.

(Mr. Anka, Nigeria)

The Federal Government of Nigeria wishes to reiterate its rejection of Israeli settlement in and annexation of Arab occupied lands. It declares as null and void those Israeli actions that seek to change the physical and demographic structure and legal status of the occupied territories. Nigeria regrets the failure of Israel to abide by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War and again calls on Israel to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the Convention. Israel should also lift its heavy hand of repression imposed on the occupied territories. The continuation of present Israeli policies and practices can only escalate the cycle of violence and make peace more difficult than ever, if not impossible to achieve.\*

In this forum, two days ago, we heard the moving and bold statement of Mr. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The statement was an affirmation and elaboration of the Palestine National Council Declaration, blazing as it does the new path of peace charted by the Palestinian people. Peace can only be achieved through dialogue and negotiation, through flexibility and compromise. Certainly, peace is not promoted by refusing to hear the principal spokesman of a party to a dispute. Such denial of a forum can only complicate the peace process and make peace elusive.

We welcome the decision of the Government of the United States to open discussion with the PLO. We hope that this move will lead to fruitful discussion and contribute significantly to the search for peace.

While the dark and ominous cloud of hopelessness hangs thick over the Middle East, there is a ray of hope. That ray of hope is the recent proclamation of a

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\* Mr. Mortensen (Denmark), Vice-President, took the Chair.



(Mr. Anka, Nigeria)

State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council at its meeting in Algiers in November 1988. That meeting also accepted Security Council resolution 242 (1967). The declaration of a Palestinian State has as its legal basis General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which provided for two States: one Arab, one Jewish. The Declaration is a significant step forward in the quest for peace in the region. That is why the Government of Nigeria, consistent with its support for the Palestinians and believing in their right to self-determination, has recognized the State proclaimed by the Palestine National Council.

The Federal Government of Nigeria regrets the attitude of Israel to the peace overtures of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Israel should grab the olive branch being extended to it by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Nigeria believes that vision, sacrifice and leadership are needed to resolve the problem of Palestine. The Palestine Liberation Organization has shown that it has these qualities. We call on Israel to demonstrate the same flexibility and vision by withdrawing from Arab occupied lands it seized in the 1967 war. We believe that it is in the interest of Israel to lend support to the early convening of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Israel's friends also have a special role to play: they should encourage and persuade the Government of Israel to seize this unique opportunity for peace.

We appeal to all States in the region to discard old bellicose stereotypes. We appeal to them to embrace the peace process and commit themselves to fresh peace moves through an international peace conference. Such a conference should be held under United Nations auspices with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all other parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian

(Mr. Anka, Nigeria)

people, which should participate in such a conference on an equal footing with all other participants.

Let us make peace reign in our time and let the swords in the Middle East be turned into plowshares.

Mr. TRAN HOAN (Viet Nam) (interpretation from French): Viet Nam emphatically joins the Secretary-General and virtually all States Members of the United Nations in asserting that the refusal to grant Chairman Arafat an entry visa to New York, and hence the denial of access for him to the Headquarters of our world Organization, constitutes a flagrant violation of obligations binding the host country under the United Nations Headquarters Agreement and can only continue to arouse the justified concern of Member States about the future independence of the Organization. Exercising its sovereign authority, the Assembly decided to transfer the debate on the question of Palestine to its European Headquarters, here in Geneva, where it has been able to hear Chairman Arafat and freely to express its continued support for the just cause of the Palestinian people at a particularly crucial stage. In so doing, our world Assembly has been carried along by the irresistible tide of history, which affirms the undeniable right of peoples, including the people of Palestine, to self-determination and independence.

On 15 November last, a historic event of vast importance for the problem of the Middle East and, in particular for the question of Palestine, took place in the capital of a sister country, Algeria. It is indeed in Algiers that, at its nineteenth special session, the Palestine National Council declared the founding of the State of Palestine on Palestinian land, with Jerusalem as its capital. We should see in the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State the culmination of the valiant and unremitting struggle waged in the course of the last four

(Mr. Tran Hoan, Viet Nam)

decades by the heroic Palestinian people, in particular during the last 13 months of its insurrection, the eloquent manifestation of the maturity of a people fashioned in the struggle for independence, freedom, peace and justice against the policy of expansionism, terrorism and repression perpetrated by Israeli Zionists with the connivance and assistance of imperialism. Hence, this proclamation has enjoyed the widespread support of peace- and justice-loving peoples and Governments throughout the world. The people and Government of Viet Nam, as close comrades-in-arms of the Palestinian people, have warmly welcomed and recognized the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine.

In retrospect, the events which have taken place during the past year in that region of the world appear encouraging to us because of the progress of the Palestinian cause and, in particular, by the success of the intifadah in the course of the last 13 months. At the same time, our indignation has been prompted by the obstinacy of Israel in pursuing its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and other Arab territories and in stepping up its repressive measures against the population in Palestine and in other occupied Arab territories.

(Mr. Tran Hoan, Viet Nam)

As as been stressed in the mass media and reports of international organizations, including reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, the Zionist authorities have during the past year persisted in their policies and practices which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. In particular, we should mention such acts as army and Israeli-settler shootings in which defenceless Palestinian civilians have been killed and wounded; beatings resulting in bone fractures; the deportation of Palestinian civilians; the imposition of economic restrictions; the demolition of houses; punishments and collective detentions and the denial of access to the media. Concurrently, the establishment of new Israeli settlements continues relentlessly. A policy of obscurantism has been imposed through the closure of schools and universities in the occupied territories for the express purpose of changing the political, cultural, religious and demographic configuration of those territories in order to perpetuate and render permanent the occupation of Palestinian lands and relegate the Palestinian question to oblivion.

None the less, despite the brutal acts of repression and terror perpetrated by the Zionist authorities and their underhanded tactics, the heroic Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole and legitimate representative, has overcome countless difficulties and tests and obtained major successes, the most remarkable of them in the context of their intifadah. That popular uprising in the occupied territories shows not only the unshakable revolutionary will of the Palestinian people but also their great national unity in their valiant struggle against Israeli occupation forces for their inalienable national rights, including the right to return, to

(Mr. Tran Hoan, Viet Nam)

self-determination and independence. The Palestinian people have also given proof, as stated in their political communiqué of the Palestine National Council of 15 November last, that:

"our people's struggle is the decisive factor in ensuring that our national rights are wrested from the claws of the occupation and that it is the authority of the popular masses ... which controls the situation and confronts the occupation authority and its crumbling apparatus." (A/43/827, p. 5)

There is not the slightest doubt that the Palestinian question constitutes the core of the Middle East problem and is the basic cause of the Israeli-Arab conflict. It follows, then, that the Palestinian question can be settled only within the context of an overall just and lasting solution to the Middle East situation, a solution that ensures the full withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territories and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and enables the Palestinian people to exercise their national rights, particularly the right to self-determination, and affirms their independence on their own territory. Any partial or separate solution will only give rise to further complications and, finally, deadlock.

To arrive at such an overall comprehensive solution in current conditions - which are propitious for international peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and global and regional conflicts - an international peace conference on the Middle East should be convened without delay. That conference should deal with the substance of the problem, the Palestinian question, and take place under the auspices of the United Nations; it should bring together all the parties concerned, on an equal footing, including the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in order to arrive at a just and lasting solution of the Palestinian question and the problem of the Middle East in general.

Mr. MARVILLE (Barbados): The circumstances which have unexpectedly brought us here are indeed most disturbing. They represent yet another ominous signpost in the history of this Organization, another blow to the very foundations of multilateralism at a time when perhaps more than ever the United Nations needs the encouragement of all States. Ironically, this comes at a time when the United Nations has been the beneficiary of increased international support.

This Organization is, of course, many things to many people. Above all, it is a forum for discussion and negotiation at all levels; a place where the voice of the weak may be equally heard with the voice of the strong; a place where differing, often opposing, opinions may be expressed free from obstruction and efforts made to close the gap.

From this perspective, the United Nations is especially critical to the survival of small States, such as my own, whose diplomatic outreach is constrained by a lack of resources. Barbados therefore views any move to restrict access to this Organization as a direct threat to its survival and integrity. Regrettably, we are not capable of extending to the United Nations system the same level of support as our much larger and more powerful partners. Implicit in the principles upon which this Organization has been founded is the understanding that larger States will commit to its operations a level of support commensurate with their resources.

It is clear, however, that dangerous forces have already been unleashed. All who would call into question the very legal foundations of this Organization must be aware that the consequences of their action may be uncontrollable. They run the risk, in attempting a selective application of their international legal obligations, of not receiving, in other circumstances, the vindication they may deserve. For who can guarantee for them the support of a system they have helped to weaken?

(Mr. Marville, Barbados)

It was against this background that Barbados unhesitatingly supported the resolution calling for the United States to reconsider its denial of a visa to Chairman Yasser Arafat, and, in the absence of the requested response from the United States, a resolution shifting the debate on item 37 to the United Nations offices here in Geneva.

It is indeed that, ironic at a time when financial austerity is being invoked repeatedly, the General Assembly must be compelled to transfer, at great expense, its deliberations to Geneva.

The Government of Barbados views the question of Palestine as central to the efforts to bring peace to the Middle East. Peace and stability in that troubled region will be an elusive dream unless and until the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a homeland of their own are fulfilled. How can an uprooted people forced for so long to live in refugee camps be expected to welcome a message of peace? How can a generation which knows no home, a place most of us in this Hall take for granted, be expected to remain quiescent? For the Government and people of Barbados, deeply treasuring our independence and national integrity, it is obvious that the establishment of a sovereign, independent and non-aligned Palestinian State remains the key to any lasting peace in the region.

(Mr. Marville, Barbados)

The Government of Barbados welcomes the recent decision of the Palestine National Council to support Security Council resolution 242 (1967). We also applaud and support Chairman Arafat's call for peace. We remain convinced that resolution 242 (1967) provides the essential framework for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. It is our view that lasting peace cannot be brought to the Middle East if it is predicated on the elimination of any State. We know only too well that any policy that has as its objective the annihilation of a people will only fuel the fires of misunderstanding, hatred and violence.

Barbados supports the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss the Middle East question. Our commitment to the principles of the Charter regarding the peaceful settlement of disputes and the vision of a more peaceful world in which there is full support for fundamental human rights leaves us in no doubt that the United Nations offers the best hopes for bringing a just and lasting peace to the Middle East.

The measure of success that has been achieved through the United Nations in silencing the guns across the Iran-Iraq border and in Afghanistan has reaffirmed our confidence in the Organization. Barbados joins in the call for the removal of all obstacles to the convening of the international conference on the Middle East, which should involve the participation of all parties concerned, including both the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. In that context we support the call of Chairman Arafat for peace, security and the integrity of all in the region.

But we should not let our hopes and optimism regarding such a conference cloud our judgement. Barbados believes that some preparatory work still needs to be done before we can be assured of a successful conference. As is so often the case with issues before the Assembly, much time usually passes, in which small progressive



(Mr. Marville, Barbados)

steps are taken, before that critical mass is reached and all final obstacles in the way of peace are overcome.

The recent Declaration by the Palestine National Council is just such a step along the road to peace. Above all, the declaration helps to clarify the position of a central actor in the Palestine question, namely the Palestinian people itself. The declarations of the Palestine National Council and Chairman Arafat represent a bold move at a time when the atmosphere was not necessarily conducive to such a positive development; they represent a willingness to take forthright decisions, which may not be popular in all circles, in the interests of peace and the creation of a better world for future generations; they represent a willingness to accommodate the concerns of others without setting unreasonable pre-conditions. Those declarations are above all a victory for the voice of moderation and peace. Barbados feels that the international community must now fulfil its responsibility by ensuring that that voice is never silenced.

We understand and are happy that some other small steps of progress are already being taken. Yet we must not be under any delusions. The road to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East stretches long before us. In many ways this road is intertwined with the future of the United Nations. Should the Organization be further weakened by the continued attacks on its very foundations, the prospects for peace in the Middle East will become dimmer. The few possibilities for dispassionate consideration of the problems in that region will be lost.

It is imperative therefore that all States fulfil all their responsibilities to the Organization. That is especially true of those that must rightly bear the brunt of the burden because of the capabilities with which good fortune has equipped them. It is only in that way that the United Nations can execute the mandate of peace and justice assigned to it by the founding fathers.

Mr. COSTELLO (Australia): The last 12 months have been a time of hope for the world. The East-West confrontation, with all its potential for global nuclear catastrophe, has moved at an entirely unexpected pace towards a more positive relationship. In the Western Sahara, between Iran and Iraq, in Cyprus, Afghanistan and Cambodia, we see movement towards the resolution of long-standing and often bitter conflicts. Today we can celebrate the signing of an agreement that holds out the best hope we could have imagined for the independence of Namibia.\*

It is the case that progress in resolving each of those conflicts is uneven and at different stages of development. It is the case that the problems that face the world, both in regional conflicts and in large issues such as debt, poverty and the environment, remain daunting. But progress there is, with the parties to conflicts engaged in various forms of negotiation and dialogue, in almost all cases with the involvement of the United Nations and its Secretary-General.

The Arab-Israeli conflict stands out as the major exception. Perhaps that is not surprising. In the 40 years since the establishment of Israel, there have been enormous changes in the world. The great process of decolonization, with all its attendant conflicts, is almost completed. Wars and disputes of great magnitude have begun and ended. But a constant feature has been the seemingly irreducible enmity between Arab and Israeli. Five major wars have been fought and, even short of major war, there has been continuous violence between them. Statesmen, diplomats, scholars and men and women of good will have put forward plan after plan for its resolution, but none has begun to succeed in achieving a comprehensive solution. The dispute has seemed as intractable in 1988 as it did in 1948.

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\*Mr. van Lierop (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Costello, Australia)

There are, however, two basic facts that we have learned from these 40 years of conflict. The first is that Israelis will not be driven into the sea. The State of Israel is here to stay. The second is that the Palestinians will not simply disappear. If anyone had any doubts about that, the uprising in the occupied territories over the last 12 months should dispel them.

From those two basic and irreversible facts flows an equally basic and inescapable conclusion. The destinies of Israeli and Palestinian are inextricably and indissolubly linked with each other. The future of each depends on the other. Israel cannot have either peace or security while the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people are denied. Nor can the Palestinian people achieve their legitimate aspirations while the peace and security of Israel - indeed, its very existence - are denied.

So in essence the choice is clear. The choice is not between victory or defeat, because neither can ultimately achieve victory or be defeated. Rather, the choice is between perpetual conflict and hatred on the one hand or a negotiated peace on the other. And can there be anybody who accepts the prospect of the indefinite continuation of the sort of violence that has accompanied the uprising in the occupied territories, violence that has led to extensive loss of life and injury and to such arbitrary measures by Israel as to require its stringent criticism by virtually the whole international community, including Australia?

(Mr. Costello, Australia)

From that conclusion, there flow in turn the two basic conditions for peace. The first is recognition of the State of Israel and its right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries. Australia is committed unqualifiedly to that. It is an indispensable condition for peace. From that firm basis of commitment and friendship to Israel, we see the second basic condition for peace as the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Those rights include their right to self-determination, including the right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of establishing their own independent State.

The great question for diplomacy has been how to encourage the acceptance of those two basic conditions and move towards beginning the process of negotiation and ultimately the achievement of a comprehensive settlement. There is no doubt that in the end the only peace that will be acceptable and enduring is one negotiated between Israeli and Palestinian. But other countries have legitimate interests in the Arab-Israeli dispute and will inevitably have a role to play in negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement.

Australia's position is one of support for an international conference to address in a comprehensive way the whole Arab-Israeli problem. We believe that such a conference can realistically occur only on the basis of mutual recognition by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of each other.

Australia unreservedly welcomes the comments to the press in Geneva on 14 December of the PLO Chairman, Mr. Yasser Arafat. Mr. Arafat's statement clearly meets the three conditions that Australia set before direct dealings between Australia and the PLO could occur. Those three conditions were: recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized borders; acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the basis for any settlement; and unequivocal rejection of the use of terror and acceptance of the process of negotiation. Mr. Arafat has in that way cleared the way for direct

(Mr. Costello, Australia)

dealings between the Australian Government and the PLO. Moreover, his clear and unambiguous statement of the PLO's position undoubtedly now provides a basis for discussions and negotiations that could lead to a settlement of the Middle East dispute.

The situation has developed rapidly over the past three days. Nevertheless, one comment by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Evans, in the Australian Parliament on 14 December is even more relevant today. Senator Evans said that if the trend towards a more moderate position by the Palestinians were not encouraged and reinforced by appropriate responses from the other principal parties, then the risk of a return to the extremist positions of the past was all too starkly apparent.

Australia welcomed within hours of its announcement the news of the United States' decision to enter into a substantive dialogue with PLO representatives as exactly the kind of positive and constructive response that the Australian Government has been urging.

The Australian Government believes that it is now vital for Israel to respond to those developments in a similar manner and open a dialogue with the PLO. Of course there are risks for Israel in any step down the settlement path, but that country has been prepared to take enormous risks in the past in order to secure its viability and its integrity. We simply hope that the Israeli Government will share our judgement that there are greater risks inherent in standing back now than in active participation.

We must be realistic. The Arab-Israeli conflict has seen 40 years of war, and each has its own legacy of suffering. The hardest and most difficult choice for any party to conflict to make is to move from the security of formal and well-tryed statements of policy and position to the uncertainty and risks of dialogue and negotiation. But no conflict, however bitter, however long-standing, has ever been

(Mr. Costello, Australia)

resolved other than by enemy talking to enemy. However suspicious Israel may be at the offer of the hand of peace, however tentatively and reluctantly Israel may believe that offer to have been made, if that hand of peace were to turn out to have been genuine it would be yet another tragedy in 40 years of tragedy for Israel to knock that hand aside.

Mr. KHAMSY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (interpretation from French): Last year, at the forty-second session of the General Assembly, my delegation reaffirmed its unwavering support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people for the recovery of its fundamental and inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination and the creation of its own State. Thus, loyal to its constant policy of solidarity, my Government welcomed the proclamation of the State of Palestine solemnly announced by the Palestine National Council at its extraordinary session from 12 to 15 November in Algiers. It expressed warm congratulations and immediately recognized the new independent State with its capital in Jerusalem, while at the same time assuring the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of its constant support and full solidarity.

It will be recalled that since the partition of Palestine into two States in 1947, the Arab Palestinian people - though deprived of its right to self-determination, scattered, driven from its own territory and subjected to an iron-fist foreign occupation régime - has never ceased struggling against the Zionist occupiers. The widespread uprising, the intifadah, which started just over a year ago in the occupied territories and is the very expression of the determination and courage of that oppressed people, has given new impetus to the struggle against the repressive and tyrannical power of the Israelis. More than 40 years ago the latter chose to implement the most barbarous policies and practices ranging from arrests and detentions without charges or trials to abductions,

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

assassinations, premeditated murders, the destruction of houses, the closing of schools and universities, expulsions and the confiscation of property, including land, buildings and livestock. Moreover they used armed commandos to terrorize the populations of villages and camps, firing on them indiscriminately, burning their crops, cutting off water and electricity and brutalizing women and children.

Since the beginning of the intifadah, we have counted more than 300 or 400 dead - some killed with bullets fired by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers, others felled by blows, beatings or poison gas. More than 5,000 have been injured and at least 20,500 arrested, according to the Israeli press itself. The victims often include young people, schoolchildren and women. In certain cases, members of secret army units have shot down inhabitants in cold blood during clashes, particularly in the West Bank.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

As in the case of those repressive practices of which the unarmed and defenceless Palestinian people are victims almost daily, the international community has been a helpless witness to the continued widespread establishment of settlements in the occupied territories. Those settlements, the policy of which was conceived at the end of the 1967 war of aggression, have multiplied at a more accelerated rate since 1977. Indeed, according to an Indian newspaper, The Hindustan Times, of 17 June 1988, there are now 152 of them. More than half of the West Bank and a third of the Gaza Strip now belong to Jewish families in those new settlements.

The urgent and renewed appeals made by the Security Council in order to halt all measures or attempts to alter the legal status of those lands, their geographic character and demographic composition have thus far had no effect. In defying those appeals, Israel is jeopardizing all attempts at reaching a peaceful, comprehensive solution to the problem of the Middle East.

As to the Palestinians forced to live in exile - and more than half of their total population of 5 million are in this situation - most of them are languishing in refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries. Their living conditions remain deplorable; without any security, the refugees run the constant risk of being massacred by the Zionist forces. Repeated air raids against Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, including attacks south of Beirut, to mention only the most recent, have caused heavy casualties among the defenceless civilian population, not to speak of major material damage.

All those arbitrary and inhuman practices, which are contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and to



(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

all the basic norms of international law have been deliberately conceived in order to achieve the criminal goal of stripping that martyred people of its civil and political rights, destroying its cultural heritage and national identity and accelerating the total annexation and Judaization of their territories. My delegation joins the international community in condemning vehemently these flagrantly racist, expansionist policies, which not only delay and jeopardize the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights but also threaten regional, as well as international, peace and security. We demand that Israel, the occupying Power, abide strictly by the aforementioned Convention and withdraw totally and unconditionally from all Palestinian and Arab territories that it has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

Convinced that the two Declarations of the Palestine National Council of 15 November 1988 were a major positive step towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, the international community rightly welcomed the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine. From this very rostrum Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) restated the day before yesterday the appropriateness of those two Declarations. He plainly recognized the creation of the Jewish State by virtue of the 1947 partition and vehemently condemned all forms of terrorism. He also invited Israel to negotiate peace within the framework of an international conference on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). My delegation, however, deplores the unco-operative attitude of the host country, which unjustifiably refused Mr. Arafat a visa, thereby preventing his participation in the debate at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on a question that is of prime concern to him.

That decision was a flagrant violation of the Headquarters Agreement, under which the host country is obligated to accede to any such request for a visa,

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

especially in this case, since Mr. Arafat is Chairman of an organization that has United Nations Observer status. What is even worse, it is an impediment to the peace efforts being made in that troubled region.

Faced with this explosive situation, which continues to deteriorate, the international community has become more aware than ever of the need for finding a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the heart of which is the question of Palestine. In my delegation's view, a prerequisite for any solution, however is the rapid convening of an international conference for peace on the Middle East, pursuant to the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 38/58 C and 42/66 D, in which all the parties directly concerned, including the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, would participate in an equal footing.

In order to achieve the just and lasting solution advocated in the foregoing resolutions, the proposed Conference must necessarily consider a number of guiding principles: restoration of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right of return, the right to self-determination and the right to create a sovereign independent State in Palestine; withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem; as well as the right of all States in the region to live in security within safe and internationally recognized boundaries.

In this connection the refusal of a visa to Mr. Arafat can only be considered as yet another obstacle to the convening of such a conference. Therefore, the international community has every reason to be concerned, especially since the host country is a permanent member of the Security Council, which has primary responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

Through its irresponsible position the host country has openly encouraged Israel to defy world public opinion, when it should be using its influence in the international search for a peaceful settlement of the problem in the interests of regional and international peace and security and of the peoples of the region, including the Israelis.

My delegation is pleased, none the less by the latest news that the United States Government has finally agreed to hold direct talks with the PLO in Tunis.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

Before concluding, I wish to state that I am very glad that the United States has said it will engage in a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunis.

I express my sincere congratulations to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the many activities it has carried out throughout the world to mobilize public opinion about the need to establish a just and lasting peace in that part of the world, through the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations. I also pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General for the sustained efforts he has made in the quest for the achievement of conditions that would enable the conference to be convened and thereby bring about a just and final settlement of the conflict.

For its part, the Lao People's Democratic Republic fully subscribes to all the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions providing for the restoration to the Palestinian people of their fundamental, inalienable rights. We are convinced that with the firm and constant support of the international community the heroic struggle of this martyred people will be crowned with success.

Mr. DUGERSUREN (Mongolia): The Government of the Mongolian People's Republic, like the overwhelming majority of the international community, proceeds from the premise that the question of Palestine constitutes the core of the Middle East problem. And the heart of this question is the speedy exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to independence and self-determination, ending the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory and ensuring the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homeland. The matter requires top priority. Any delay in its resolution is fraught with a grave threat to international peace and security stemming from, inter alia, the unabated militarization of the region.

(Mr. Dugersuren, Mongolia)

This time the General Assembly is dealing with this vital issue against the background of new developments which are discernible in both this trouble-ridden region and the world as a whole.

The intifadah - the popular uprising - of the Palestinian people in the Israeli-occupied territories has raised to new heights the resolve of this heroic people to implement its legitimate right to self-determination. It has underscored emphatically the urgency of an active search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has commanded the widespread support of all peace-loving and upright forces.

This important development naturally found its consummate expression in the political decisions of the extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council on 15 November this year in Algiers. The proclamation of the establishment of the independent State of Palestine is augmented by the Council's new positions and postures, which display a manifest sense of responsibility and realism. Indeed, the steps taken by the highest political forum of the Palestinian people have opened good prospects for a comprehensive, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and international law. This statesmanlike approach was comprehensively highlighted by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in his clear statement from this rostrum on 13 December 1988.

All this goes hand in hand with the positive trends apparent in world politics and has brought a timely call for common sense and restraint in the Middle East.

My delegation, like many others, is of the view that this new momentum, which offers fresh opportunities for progress towards peace in the Middle East, should be seized without any delay.

(Mr. Dugersuren, Mongolia)

We are gratified to note that the declared commitment by the Palestine National Council to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter is amplified by the acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which constitute a widely recognized basis for a just settlement of the Middle East problem.

There had been a widespread expectation that these constructive steps taken by the Palestine Liberation Organization would meet with a positive response by the other parties directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. Regrettably, recent pronouncements and actions by the Israeli authorities do not offer at this moment sufficient grounds for hope and optimism. Moreover, according to the letter of 6 December 1988 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the Secretary-General,

"the occupying Power has further intensified its repressive actions in the West Bank and Gaza". (A/43/946, p. 1)

In that context, the Mongolian delegation joins the many preceding speakers in deploring the refusal by the United States Administration to grant a visa to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization to allow him to address the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters. Such an act is contrary to the obligations of the host country under the Headquarters Agreement. Furthermore, it boils down to, inter alia, overt disregard for the positive openings conducive to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the interests of the long-suffering Palestinian people and the Arab nation at large. Here it should be stressed that until the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is recognized and implemented, peace in the Middle East will

(Mr. Dugersuren, Mongolia)

continue to elude our grasp. Any approach which ignored this reality would be a futile and at the same time a dangerous exercise.

The Mongolian People's Republic has invariably supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood. It was thus only natural that my country should have been among the first to recognize the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine.

(Mr. Dugersuren, Mongolia)

In his message of congratulations addressed to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Comrade Jambyn Batmunkh, Chairman of the Presidium of the Great People's Hural of the Mongolian People's Republic, stated that:

"The Government of the Mongolian People's Republic believes that the declaration of the independent Palestinian State at the recent extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council is an event which will give powerful impetus to bringing the years-long heroic struggle of the Palestinian people to final victory and the Middle East crisis to a comprehensive and just settlement".

Mongolia, together with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, has consistently advocated the convening of an international conference to tackle the Middle East problem, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO, the legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. We are heartened by the growing awareness of the international community that the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian issue, can and should be resolved within the framework of such a conference under the auspices of the United Nations. The idea of the convening of an international conference on the Middle East seems to be shared by the five permanent members of the Security Council. That would be of crucial importance.

At the same time, we regret to say that despite those encouraging indications no real progress in launching a tangible negotiating process has been made so far.

Therefore, what is urgently required at present is the redoubling of efforts with a view to starting, in practical terms, the preparations for the convening of an international conference. In this regard my Government commends the



(Mr. Dugersuren, Mongolia)

Secretary-General's energetic efforts to set in motion the process leading to such a conference.

We fully support his view that

"the time is right for the Security Council ... 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)

We support the proposal made by the Foreign Ministers of the non-aligned countries in Nicosia in September this year to the effect that a preparatory committee for the Middle East conference be set up, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council, to examine effective ways and means of holding such a conference. My delegation shares the view that the Security Council is called upon to take the lead in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problem on the basis of its resolutions. To our mind, with the constructive steps taken by the Palestine National Council the situation now makes such action more opportune.

We are fully cognizant of the fact that this is not an easy process and endorse the view that it might require adoption of certain measures of an interim character. However, our considered view is that such measures should be carried out under the auspices of the United Nations on the basis of the well-known relevant Security Council resolutions.

An international conference on the Middle East could become an effective instrument for a just and comprehensive settlement of the crisis situation only through the securing of a fair balance of legitimate interests of all parties pertaining to the return of the occupied territories to Arab countries and the guaranteeing of the right of all States in the region to exist in peace and within secure boundaries.

(Mr. Dugersuren, Mongolia)

The United Nations is called upon to play a pivotal role in solving this long-standing problem by political means and it is incumbent upon all Member States to help the world Organization in this noble endeavour.

We should like to underscore the view that the vital interests of the Arab Palestinian people and peace in the Middle East call for the reconciliation and co-ordinated actions of all Arab countries in the first place and the international community at large.

The solemn declaration by the Palestine National Council on the commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the policies and principles of non-alignment is bound to rally mounting support for the practical establishment of the State of Palestine.

In conclusion, the Mongolian delegation would like to commend the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its active efforts in the implementation of its mandate.

Mr. ABBAS (United Republic of Tanzania): It is very regrettable that the General Assembly has had to move its venue from New York to Geneva for its consideration of the agenda item on the question of Palestine.

The circumstances and the reasons for our meeting here are well known. The United States, the host country to the United Nations, breached the Headquarters Agreement by refusing an entry visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO, which enjoys observer status with our Organization, has a crucial role to play in the item under consideration. Being the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO must and should be involved in any efforts to seek a permanent solution to the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Abbas, United Republic of  
Tanzania)

The denial by the United States of America of an entry visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat not only places in jeopardy the Headquarters Agreement between our Organization and the host country, but is also a disturbing and serious setback to the continuing efforts in search of a solution to the question of Palestine.

Last week, in New York, the General Assembly dealt with the item concerning the situation in the Middle East, which is closely interlinked with the question of Palestine. It is now generally acknowledged by the international community that in order to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East situation an equitable solution must be sought to the Palestinian question, which is the core of the whole problem. And this can come about only by according the Palestinian people their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

Unfortunately, the Government of Israel does not seem to have accepted that incontrovertible fact. We find in the report (A/43/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People vivid and horrifying documentation of a litany of atrocities and other forms of repression committed by the State of Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian population in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

(Mr. Abbas, United Republic  
of Tanzania)

From this documentation there emerges a picture of reckless misuse of military might; of a callous disregard and disdain for international public opinion and international law as well as acts of cruelty meted out to defenceless women and children. Israel, in its blind pursuit of occupation and expansionism, has not only committed acts of aggression against other countries in the region but has also violated international law, especially as expressed in the Fourth Geneva Convention, by failing to accord minimum physical and legal protection to the population in the occupied territories.

Force, coercion and brutality cannot solve the problem of Palestine: they can only perpetuate it. That is the sad story of the problem of Palestine. For one year now, the Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have chosen to resist continued Israeli occupation, repression and brutalization through their heroic uprising popularly known as the intifadah. Armed only with stones and wooden sticks they have withstood Israeli tanks and machine guns. Through the intifadah, the Palestinians have demonstrated their opposition to continued occupation and further annexation of Palestinian territories and to the violation of their basic human rights. In response to this heroic uprising of a courageous people, Israel has resorted to more force by unleashing its military machine against defenceless civilians, most of them women and children. Hundreds have been killed, while thousands have been wounded or maimed. That is in addition to mass detentions without trial and deportations of civilians from their homes. By perpetrating those cruelties, the Israeli Government erroneously believed that it would succeed in destabilizing the leadership of the uprising and create confusion within the Palestinian population in order to rule it more brutally.

(Mr. Abbas, United Republic  
of Tanzania)

Tanzania deplores these acts of brutality which have rightly earned Israel the wrath of the international community as evidenced by sanctions against it in various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Israel, however, continues with impunity to commit more atrocities. In view of this intransigence, it is now more than ever urgent for the international community to make it quite clear to Israel that the world cannot remain passive in the face of the Palestinian ordeal and the ruthless onslaught of the Israeli defence forces on the Palestinian people.

There is still time - though not a great deal - for Israel to reconsider its position on the burning issue of the right of the Palestinian people to have a complete say in its own destiny. Enforcing occupation with brute force of ever-more sophisticated arms and munitions against innocent, ill-equipped women, children and the aged is terrorism in its most naked form. Courageous resistance to such continuing inequity to the point of sacrificing one's life when no other option is left which can be remotely seen as honourable is the antithesis of terrorism. It is a supreme act of duty of safeguarding the honour of a whole society and its posterity. For Israel's leadership to show such blindness to this self-evident reality as to call it a manifestation of terrorism is to deny itself the lessons of Israel's own history - of its own existence as a nation.

Almost a month ago at Algiers, during the meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the Palestinians categorically and unequivocally stated their case to the world. The Palestinians, guided by their sole and authentic organization, the PLO, made a major contribution towards peace in the Middle East. The PNC called for the immediate convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. It further stated that that conference should be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which the PLO has accepted.

(Mr. Abbas, United Republic  
of Tanzania)

Tanzania, like other peace-loving nations of the world, warmly welcomes the declaration by the PNC in which the Palestinian people has stated its case for peaceful solution of the question of Palestine. We heartily congratulate the Palestinian people for this important and courageous step for peace. That historic Declaration should go a long way towards redressing the grave injustice which was perpetrated on the Palestinian people 40 years ago, when General Assembly resolution 181 (II) was adopted.

We believe that the Algiers declaration adopted by the PNC has all the basic ingredients for an international conference on Palestine to succeed. To ask for more than what has been stated and accepted in that Declaration is to lose sight of the historic opportunity before us to engage in a peaceful solution to the problem of Palestine. If this valuable opportunity is lost, the responsibility will not lie with the PLO or the Arab States in the region: it will lie squarely with Israel and its major protectors which encourage it on its path of defiance.

The ball is now in Israel's court to accept the challenge because the conference is considered by the international community as the only means for the attainment of a comprehensive peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East problem. The participation of all the parties, including the PLO, on an equal footing with others, is a prerequisite for the success of the conference. Only a comprehensive agreement can remove long-standing grievances and injustices and guarantee a durable peace based on justice for all the States and people of the region.

Mr. MUYUNDA (Zambia): While we are happy to be in this beautiful and scenic city of Geneva, my delegation deeply deplores the decision by the United States Government to deny a visa to the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Mr. Yasser Arafat, to enter the United States for the purpose

(Mr. Muyunda, Zambia)

of addressing the United Nations on the question of Palestine. That decision cuts across the host country obligations of the United States to the world body. We cannot over-emphasize the imperative necessity for the United States to adhere strictly to the international norms and traditions that regulate and govern the conduct of States in their international undertakings.

At this juncture, let me pay due tribute to the Secretary-General for the effective and elaborate manner in which he has organized this session, despite the short notice given him. Similarly, my delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Swiss Government and people for the excellent facilities placed at our disposal since our arrival in Geneva.

This meeting takes place in the wake of a historic and epoch-making decision by the Palestine National Council (PNC) at the extraordinary session in Algiers last month. Representatives are fully aware of the outcome of that meeting. I do not, therefore, have to go into details. Suffice it to mention that the decision taken by the PNC has opened an important chapter in the political history of Palestine.

(Mr. Muyunda, Zambia)

May I therefore take this opportunity to salute the Palestine National Council (PNC) and Chairman Arafat for the bold decision declaring the establishment of an independent State of Palestine and also for accepting Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The acceptance of the two-State resolution by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is a consecration of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 which partitioned Palestine into two States - one Arab and one Jewish - with special international status for the Holy City of Jerusalem. As we all know, it was only the Jewish State of Israel that came into being on 15 May 1948.

Furthermore, despite continued brutal attacks by Israel on defenceless men, women and children, the PLO has shown unprecedented magnanimity by publicly and categorically declaring its opposition to all forms of violence and terrorism, including State terrorism. The PLO has instead extended an olive branch.

In his most inspiring and important statement made to the General Assembly, the Chairman of the PLO, Mr. Yasser Arafat, carried a message of goodwill and peace in the Middle East. It is a message of hope for the future generations of both the States of Israel and Palestine to coexist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries. It is not necessary to add that this is a rare and timely opportunity which should be fully exploited by all the parties concerned if lasting peace is to be realized in the Middle East.

In this regard, Zambia calls upon Israel to seize the opportunity now obtaining by responding positively to the call for the convening of an international conference on the Palestine question where all the parties to the conflict, including the PLO, will participate.

It is my delegation's view and conviction that Chairman Arafat's statement, for which we most heartily congratulate him, was very clear and unambiguous,



(Mr. Muyunda, Zambia)

contrary to the sentiments expressed in certain circles. On the contrary, we believe that the PLO has made a giant breakthrough in the long and arduous peace process in the Palestinian question. It is now up to Israel to reciprocate this gesture by entering into meaningful, direct negotiations with the PLO, the sole and authentic representative of the Palestinian people.

Israel cannot forever rely on the instrumentality or use of brute force to subdue the Palestinians. Already, the Palestinians have shown that Israel's military might is not going to deter them from their cherished goal of national independence and a homeland they can rightly call their own. The advent of the intifadah over the past year in the occupied territories attests to this.

The Palestinian people has the right to shape its own destiny. It is known that the great are not always right, but that the right are always great.

It would be an act of shortsightedness to regard the Palestinian intifadah in the occupied territories as not truly representing the aspirations of all Palestinians for a homeland. The intifadah is a serious development requiring bold and courageous decisions by Israel on the need to coexist side by side and in peace with the new State of Palestine so that peace and tranquility can finally reign in the Middle East. We have repeatedly stated in the General Assembly and elsewhere that since the question of Palestine is the core of Middle East conflicts and tensions, there can be no comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East unless Palestinian rights are justly addressed. We believe that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problem can be achieved upon Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. Such a withdrawal would enable the Palestinians to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights to self-determination without external interference.

(Mr. Muyunda, Zambia)

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the road to peace and stability in the Middle East lies in a negotiated settlement. It is against this background that Zambia is fully supportive of the proposal to convene an international conference on the Middle East involving all parties concerned, including the PLO. Israel must, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, refrain from the threat or use of force against neighbouring and other States. Indeed, the time has come for Israel to rise to the occasion by accepting the historic decision taken recently by the PNC as a way of attaining lasting and durable peace in the region. Similarly, we hope that the allies of Israel will prevail upon it not to miss this golden opportunity for a peace process in the Middle East.

Zambia, however, welcomes the reported announcement by the United States of America to establish a direct dialogue with the PLO.

At this critical stage of the struggle by the Palestinian people against foreign occupation and domination, we salute them for their heroic resistance to Israel's inhuman policies. We commend them most sincerely for their undaunted bravery in facing the ruthless Israeli military machinery which has so far claimed innocent lives of hundreds of Palestinians, especially women and children - and some people have even been buried alive.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm Zambia's total support for, and solidarity with the Palestinians in their just struggle against foreign occupation and domination. I say to them that we are partners in a common struggle. The road ahead is quite long and tortuous, but I am confident that we shall finally win. It is only a question of time. After all, where there is a will there is always a way. In that connection, the realization of an independent and sovereign State on Palestinian soil is a noble goal to which we must all remain fully committed.

Mr. ADJOYI (Togo) (interpretation from French): Once again, we are meeting to consider the sad and tragic question whose continuation is a painful breach in United Nations efforts to promote respect for the right of peoples to self-determination and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

The question of Palestine, which has been considered for more than 40 years, since the second and third sessions of the General Assembly, has been without doubt, because of its complexity, acuteness and its impact on regional and international peace and security, of the greatest concern to the international community and one that has represented considerable expenditure of effort towards conciliation, political settlement, assistance and protection of the human rights of oppressed peoples. It is only right, therefore, that after a long hiatus, the General Assembly should have included the consideration of this major item on its agenda since its twenty-ninth session.

The exceptional circumstances that led to the holding of this debate at the Palais des Nations translates in a most tangible way the respect for the two basic requirements related to the credibility and capacity for action of this world Organization: the need for the Organization to remain faithful to its purposes and principles and to its commitments, on the one hand, and to ensure the strict application of its own decisions, on the other; and the promotion of a frank dialogue and direct negotiations among all interested parties to existing disputes.

At a time when improvement in international political relations favours efforts to extinguish hotbeds of tension throughout the world and when significant developments have occurred with regard to the question of Palestine, it is important to exploit rationally the precursors of a new impetus for peace in the Middle East - that is, the historical importance and timeliness of our current meetings.

It will be recalled that, following its establishment the United Nations endeavoured, in keeping with its noble principles and purposes, to repair a revolting and scandalous affront to universal morals and conscience, to human

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

dignity and to a breach of the conventions applicable in time of war - namely, the anti-semitic racial hatred that caused one of the most disgusting mass persecutions in human history. Indeed, in sponsoring the establishment of the State of Israel, the United Nations endeavoured to ensure to the Jewish people full enjoyment of its national identity in order to enable it to contribute its creative genius for building that world of peace and progress perceived by the founding fathers of the world Organization. Harmony and peace among all peoples of the region, as well as equity, required that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence, and therefore to a homeland, would also be respected.

It is therefore most fortunate that this requirement has been grasped by our Organization. General Assembly resolutions 3210 (XXIX), 3236 (XXIX) and 3237 (XXIX) are most significant. Pursuant to those resolutions, the General Assembly, at its twenty-ninth session, inter alia: invited the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), representing the Palestinian people, to participate in its deliberations on the question of Palestine in plenary meetings; reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, underscoring that their enjoyment was indispensable to a settlement of the question of Palestine; recognized that the Palestinian people was a participant in endeavours to establish peace in the Middle East and that it was entitled to recover its rights through all means, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter; and invited the PLO to participate, as an observer, in its meetings and work as well as in international conferences convened under United Nations auspices or those of other United Nations bodies.

General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX) is also of great significance. At its thirtieth session, the General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and gave it the mandate of

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

studying the question and recommending to the General Assembly a programme of implementation designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise the rights recognized in General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX), inter alia, the right to return to its homeland, self-determination without outside interference, independence and national sovereignty.

I wish to pay a very warm tribute to the Committee and, in particular, to its successive Chairmen for the considerable work accomplished in fulfilling its mandate. This work has produced increasing mobilization of world public opinion on behalf of the just Palestinian cause and has also brought about consolidation of the social and humanitarian assistance efforts and efforts for the protection of the human rights of the Palestinian people.

A historic event of great significance - the resumption of the consideration of the question of Palestine by the General Assembly - provided the Chairman of the PLO with the opportunity of delivering a three-fold message to the international community, namely: the faith of the Palestinian people in the ability and vocation of the United Nations to promote the right of peoples to self-determination; the unflagging commitment of the PLO to pursue consistently its just struggle for national liberation and solidarity with all other oppressed peoples throughout the world; and the resolute will of the Palestinian people to bring about the restoration of peace in the Middle East.

Indeed, Chairman Yasser Arafat stated to the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session:

"Even as today we address the General Assembly from what is before all else an international rostrum we are also expressing our faith in political and diplomatic struggle as complements, as enhancements of armed struggle. Furthermore we express our appreciation of the role the United Nations is

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

capable of playing in settling problems of international scope. But this capability ... became real only once the United Nations had accommodated itself to the living actuality of aspiring peoples, towards which an Organization of so truly international a dimension owes unique obligations."

(A/PV.2282; p. 16)

"Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.

"War flares up in Palestine and yet it is in Palestine that peace will be born." (ibid., p. 51)

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

This poignant appeal for dialogue has, unfortunately, not received the answer for which we had hoped. Therefore, we understand why Palestinian youth, thwarted and frustrated, unleashed a widespread uprising which expresses the determination of an entire people to break the status quo and rid itself of oppression. One can also understand why the Palestine National Council, at the end of its nineteenth special session held in Algiers, took the historic decision of proclaiming the establishment of the State of Palestine. Finally, one understands the scope of the keynote address made by Chairman Arafat to us on Tuesday in this Hall.

In my delegation's view, the support given to the intifadah by the Palestine National Council, together with the decision to establish the State of Palestine, is very clear and speaks for itself. The Palestinian people wants freedom and peace; that is why my country welcomed, with the spirit of responsibility in keeping with the event itself, that historic decision. Not doubting for an instant the good faith of the leaders of that people, who have been homeless for so long, on 30 November last Togo recognized the independent Palestinian State, and stated the following:

"The Togolese Government, which maintains excellent relations with the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, considers the establishment of the State of Palestine as an element falling within the process that must bring the parties to the conflict in the region to a negotiated solution of their problems.

"In view of the position of the Togolese Government, which has always advocated and defended the right of Israel and that of the Palestinian people to a territory with secure and internationally recognized boundaries in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Council of Ministers has decided to give official recognition as from this date, 30 November 1988, to the State of Palestine."



(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

This recognition was given in full awareness, in so far as the proclamation of the State of Palestine was made, in the view of my country, within the context of two fundamental principles established by the international community in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), namely, the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist in secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries, and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, with all that that implies, as stated, inter alia, in the Declaration of the Geneva Conference on Palestine in 1983.

Recognition of the independent State of Palestine by my country should also be viewed as an appeal to the PLO. Having extended its recognition, without any hesitation and in good faith, the Togolese Government expects from it that the message of peace delivered in Algiers will be followed as soon as possible with a peace plan in keeping with the United Nations Charter and the relevant resolutions on the situation in the Middle East. In this respect the statement made by Chairman Arafat is worthy of our consideration.

From the time Togo has been led by His Excellency General Gnassingbé Eyadema, it has based its foreign policy on dialogue, co-operation and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is this policy that has brought it to adopt a position on the Middle East which calls for dialogue among all the parties of the region. That is why it believes that in order to bring about a peaceful settlement that will enshrine the rights defined by the United Nations for every party, it is essential for dialogue to be established between the two parties. It is high time that each one, Israeli and Palestinian, take a step in the right direction and accept for the other party what it demands for itself. A new Palestinian step has just been taken.\*

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\* The President returned to the Chair.

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

In view of the will to make peace with Israel, as clearly expressed by the Palestinian leaders, it is necessary for the Israeli Government to grasp this historic opportunity to enter effectively into the process of the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The start of this process requires scrupulous respect by Israel of its obligations as an occupying Power, in keeping with the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, the withdrawal of its troops and the removal of its settlements, because in the long term this will be the decisive pre-condition for any overall lasting solution. It seems to us that, in any case, Israel was waiting for this step on the part of the Palestinians. Indeed, was it not His Excellency Shimon Peres, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, who stated on 28 September 1988, from the rostrum of the General Assembly, the following:

"We are prepared to conduct negotiations on the basis of the only framework, reaffirmed this week in the trilateral meeting chaired by President Reagan, with the participation of the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and accepted by Arab countries as well as by all permanent members of the Security Council - that is, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), calling for a territorial compromise and secure borders. They are the only existing common ground.

"As we stand ready to live up to these commitments, we shall be as clear in addressing our expectations of our neighbours." (A/43/PV.9, p. 86)

Has the PLO, through its Chairman, not been sufficiently clear in his statements to lead Israel to reconsider its position? All the conditions have now been met to allow Israel to begin negotiations.

(Mr. Adjoyi, Togo)

In the view of my delegation, the intermediary role of the international community and each of its members is to facilitate the establishment of that long-hoped-for dialogue. Any tactics to delay this dialogue to meet purely political internal considerations can only be harmful to the restoration of peace and security in the region.

The parties directly concerned - the Israelis and Palestinians - have recognized that it is high time to dispel yesterday's clouds and prevent new storms from once again clouding the horizon. Thus it is time for the procedure that has been outlined by the international community, namely the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, to become a reality rather than some vague incantation. This conference alone can provide an appropriate framework for the parties concerned to establish the necessary contacts on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions in which the PLO is recognized as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The successive numerous recognitions of the new Palestinian State confirm the emergence of a definite international consensus to promote the just cause of the Palestinian people. Therefore, we have come to a turning-point in history which requires that the heartfelt and legitimate aspirations of this people to freedom and independence, as clearly stated in the decision of the Palestine National Council, be the point of departure for a just and lasting settlement of the question of the Middle East.

Intransigence and distrust are outdated, whereas the spirit of constructive dialogue, flexibility and realism will carry and bring into fruition the seeds of peace. The Togolese Government would like to make an urgent appeal to the Israeli Government and the leaders of the PLO to come together as soon as possible around

Mr. Adjoyi, Togo

a negotiating table, bearing in mind that their region, the Middle East, is the cradle of the three great monotheistic religions that preach love for one's neighbours.

Mr. RANA (Nepal): The General Assembly is meeting in Geneva this week to consider the question of Palestine. The circumstances which led to the change of venue were rather unfortunate. My delegation joins other Member States in expressing its displeasure over the decision of the United States in breach of international obligation and agreement. The Palestinian people constitute one of the major parties to the conflict and any attempt to tamper with their representation, especially at the highest level, cannot but jeopardize the peace process and prospects for peace in the Middle East.

My delegation need not emphasize the utmost importance of the subject under consideration. The question of Palestine has been an issue of central concern of the United Nations for the past four decades. This is not only because of the international support for the rights of the Palestinian people but also because of the continuing conflicts and tensions in the region.

This week marks the first anniversary of the ongoing popular uprising of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. Day after day, as we witness the heroic resistance on the one side and the ruthless repression on the other, it is only natural for all of us to ask how long such a tragic and troubled situation can continue without disastrous consequences.

The serious concern of the international community over the daily deteriorating situation in the occupied territories has become even greater as a result of the recent Israeli attack on Lebanon. We condemn such a blatant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Lebanese

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

territory, as envisaged in General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Israel's policy of suppression in the occupied territories and aggression abroad has added urgency to the quest for peace in the region.

It is a matter of record that all peace initiatives in the past have failed primarily because they did not take fully into account the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Peace in the Middle East will remain elusive as long as this basic reality is not acknowledged and addressed. It is clearer than ever before that the continuation of the status quo is neither feasible nor acceptable. The stalemate can only escalate the danger and multiply the human suffering.

It is in this context that my delegation deeply deplores the rigid Israeli attitude and, in particular, its continued reliance on brute force in dealing with the civilian uprising and protest. We take this opportunity to call on Israel once again to honour its obligations under the 1949 Geneva Convention. This is, however, a tentative, though necessary step. We remain convinced that peace in the Middle East cannot be established, much less ensured, without the Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since 1967.

Nepal has long held the view that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East has to incorporate three fundamental ingredients: withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied since 1967; unqualified respect for the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to an independent State; and recognition of the right of every State in the region, including Israel, to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats and acts of force.

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

The challenge before the international community is to reconcile the determination of Israel to ensure its right to exist with the equally determined rejection by the Palestinian people of life under continued Israeli occupation.

In this context, the recent declaration of the Palestine National Council in Algiers raised hopes for a just and lasting peace in the region. His Majesty's Government of Nepal has welcomed this historic declaration and believes that it offers fresh momentum for opening the process of negotiations to end the present no-war, no-peace situation. We fully agree that a just and lasting political settlement can be achieved only through negotiations undertaken in good faith and on the basis of the principles underlined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We are encouraged to note that the Algiers Declaration is not only based on the historic resolution of the General Assembly which created two States in Palestine, but that it also calls for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and for arrangements to ensure the peace and security of all States in the region.

Yesterday we had the opportunity to welcome in our midst Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Chairman Arafat symbolizes the indomitable spirit and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. We in Nepal hold him in high esteem for his dynamic leadership, courage and vision. It was therefore only natural that we should have listened to his address with keen interest and attention. His statement testifies to the readiness of the Palestinian people to enter into serious negotiations to end the conflict. My delegation believes that the time has now come to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations. Such a conference, with the participation of all parties to the conflict

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the permanent members of the Security Council, offers the best hope for peace in the Middle East. It is in our common interest, and in particular in the interest of peace and justice, that this unique opportunity not be allowed to falter or be frustrated.

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT**

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Before continuing the debate this morning, I should like to express my satisfaction - which, I am sure, is shared by everyone in this Hall - with regard to the decision of the Government of the United States of America to enter into direct dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is recognized by the General Assembly as the sole and authentic representative of the Palestinian people.

The decision by the Government of the United States of America represents a most important step forward in the search for a peaceful, negotiated and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and, in the final analysis, of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In expressing our satisfaction at this development, I cannot fail to mention the personal contribution of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and once more to express our thanks to him for his statements of the highest historic significance. The statement he made at the beginning of these meetings provided, I am sure, the impetus needed for the developments we are applauding today.

On the other hand, I believe it is no mere happenstance that all these positive developments should coincide with the debate on agenda item 37 of the forty-third session of the General Assembly. Once more, our Organization - the United Nations - has proved to be the catalyst for decisive steps forward in the search for a settlement of a major regional conflict. That, if nothing else,

(The President)

confirms the positive and key role of the United Nations in the international arena, for which, as President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session I cannot but express my deepest satisfaction.

In sum, it is our sincerest hope that, as of now, a new and definitive effort will begin to achieve a just solution of the question of Palestine, whose continuation places a heavy responsibility on the conscience of the entire international community.

I understand that there are a number of delegations wishing to take the floor and speak on aspects of the statement I have just made. There could be nothing more appropriate. However, what is certain is that we must make an effective contribution with regard to agenda item 37, and that effective contribution is to be able to conclude today, as scheduled, so that the General Assembly's resolution which transferred our work here in Geneva is duly implemented. I would therefore respectfully remind representatives that we shall try, as far as possible, to continue with the programme of work we have agreed upon.



Mr. YAVUZALP (Turkey): The present debate on the question of Palestine is, indeed, taking place under the most extraordinary circumstances. To begin with, it is the first United Nations General Assembly debate held on this issue since the crucial decision of the Palestine National Council to proclaim the independent State of Palestine. Secondly, it is the very first time in the history of the United Nations that the General Assembly has moved to Geneva to hold its deliberations on a particular agenda item.

We are pleased that Mr. Arafat could confirm once again in this important debate in Geneva, before the entire international community, the constructive and realistic decisions of the recent meeting of the Palestine National Council.

More than 40 years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its initial resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since that period, the question of Palestine has represented a continuous responsibility and the role of the United Nations became irreplaceable in the search for a solution to the problem. Over the years, the United Nations has drawn up the basic and widely supported principles on which a comprehensive, just and lasting solution should be based.

At the present time, when there are positive signs towards the reconciliation and resolution of some regional conflicts, unfortunately the situation in the Middle East continues to give rise to serious threats to regional security and world peace, primarily because the problem of Palestine remains unresolved and because at the core of this question lies the plight of the Palestinian people, most of whom live under occupation or exile.

Nevertheless, we cannot deny the existence at present of some encouraging and promising signs. Since last year's debate on this item in the General Assembly, we have witnessed a number of crucial developments. First, the uprising in the occupied territories, which erupted last December, continues to gain in intensity and to focus the attention of the entire world on the injustice suffered by all the

(Mr. Yavuzalp, Turkey)

Palestinian people. Secondly, the decision of Jordan to sever the administrative and legal ties between itself and the West Bank. And finally, the proclamation by the Palestine National Council of the independent State of Palestine at its recent meeting in Algiers, constitute two historic steps.

In this context, we also welcome and highly appreciate the important statement made in this forum on Tuesday by Mr. Arafat, when he reiterated once again and further clarified the positive decisions adopted at the Palestine National Council with a view to dispelling any remaining doubts and hesitations that might exist about their real intentions. It is evident that the major events of the past few months call for careful consideration by the international community.

Israel's persistence in pursuing its well-known policies remains the fundamental impediment to the initiation of an effective peace process in the Middle East. Therefore, it came as no surprise to us when in December last year the situation in the Arab territories under Israeli occupation markedly deteriorated and the Palestinian civilian population rose in protest against the Israeli occupation.

Since that time, we have been following with concern the developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Secretary-General's recent report (A/43/805) and the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East draw our attention to the sufferings and the growing despair of the Palestinians.

In view of the tragic loss of life and human suffering, the Government of Turkey has repeatedly denounced the arbitrary Israeli measures and practices in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and has called on Israel to refrain from all acts of violence against the civilian population.

(Mr. Yavuzalp, Turkey)

My Government has stated on various occasions that it sees a close link between the sufferings of the Palestinians and the need for the political settlement of the Middle East problem. The political nature of this problem is also stressed in the Secretary-General's report (S/19443), where it is stated that priority has to be given to the negotiation of such a settlement and measures to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinian people should not be allowed to become a substitute for an urgent solution to the underlying political problems.

Under these circumstances, the proclamation of an independent State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council constitutes a historic milestone for efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East question. As we see it, from now on all the interested parties to the conflict have a new interlocutor in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to address, an interlocutor which favours the settlement of the issue through peaceful means and acts with the added maturity and responsibility of statehood. We regard this as an important development for the peace process.

The lack of a proper negotiating mechanism has for many years constituted one of the major obstacles to addressing in a meaningful manner the substantive questions in this field. In the absence of dialogue, suspicions among the parties have deepened, creating an atmosphere conducive to recurring conflagrations or unproductive rhetoric. Now it seems that circumstances are more appropriate for encouraging the peace process. In this connection, I should like to recall the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the situation in the Middle East where he rightly points out that:

"The recent session of the Palestine National Council ... has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process and ... it offers fresh opportunities for progress towards peace which should be seized". (A/43/867, para. 37)

(Mr. Yavuzalp, Turkey)

In this context, we welcome the recently announced decision of the United States Government to enter into a dialogue with the PLO and we hope that this wise and positive step will be instrumental in contributing to peace in the region. Turkey's policy regarding the Middle East question aims at establishing a just and lasting peace in the region and has always been clear-cut, determined and consistent.

In fact, within the framework of our attitude in this regard, we have always expressed the view that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East can only be achieved through the withdrawal of Israel from Arab territories occupied since 1967 and the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to establish an independent State of their own, on the one hand, and through the acknowledgement of the right of all sides in the region, including Israel, to live within secure and recognized boundaries, on the other.

Consequently, our recognition of the newly established State of Palestine is a natural outcome of our attitude in this regard. This recognition is not against any party in the region; on the contrary, it aims at facilitating the creation of the proper circumstances in which all sides in the region, including Israel, can live in peace, security and stability.

(Mr. Yavuzalp, Turkey)

With this understanding, we have also welcomed the recent constructive decisions taken by the PLO leadership to accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to reject terrorism. We regard these bold decisions, which also meet the requirements of the international community, as a clear expression of the desire of the Palestinians to live side by side with Israel in peace. That is why Turkey has found the recent decisions of the Palestinians, including the one to establish an independent State of their own, worth encouraging.

Turkey believes that for the realistic and constructive attitude taken by the PLO to be meaningful, it is equally important for Israel to take the steps expected of it by the international community and respond to the Palestinians in the same spirit. For that matter, it is the responsibility of all concerned to assess positively the opportunity created by the recent developments - including Mr. Arafat's positive statement in this forum on Tuesday and his further elaboration at the press conference yesterday - and do their share in this regard so that a new dynamism can be injected into the peace process with a view to achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

Turkey is ready to support all peace efforts to this end. Within this framework, my Government welcomes the convening of an international peace conference, provided that all parties concerned agree on it. Furthermore, Turkey believes that its historical ties in the region and its good relations and dialogue with all the parties concerned may permit it to assume a role in this regard, if requested by the parties concerned.

The present circumstances and rapid developments in the course of these meetings seem to open promising prospects for achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The search for peace must be pursued with wisdom,

(Mr. Yavuzalp, Turkey)

vision, courage and latitude. Furthermore, the present configuration of regional and global dynamics favours peace rather than confrontation.

Time is running out for those who do not respond to the call for peace and tranquillity in the region. Therefore, if one seriously wants peace in the region, one needs to act in full recognition of the recent realities. It is in this spirit that we appeal to Israel once again to reconsider its position and to choose reconciliation rather than confrontation so that the long-awaited just and lasting peace can eventually be reached in the Middle East, where all, including Israel, will be able to live side by side in peace, stability and security.

Before I conclude, I should like to commend the efforts made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has successfully promoted a wider awareness of the question of Palestine and gained stronger sympathy and support from the world community for the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people. I should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his commitment and untiring efforts to enable the Palestinian people to attain their inalienable right to self-determination.

#### PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to reiterate a clarification in respect to this afternoon's programme of work. We shall begin our work at 2 p.m., when we shall hear the last speakers in the debate on agenda item 37. It is expected that the debate will conclude at 3 p.m. at the latest. Consequently, at that time we shall begin the voting process, which will take us some time owing to the lack here of the mechanical voting equipment at our disposal in New York. I stress that the voting process will take several hours as a consequence of the procedure we shall be obliged to follow.

Mr. MOYA PALENCIA (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): In connection with recent developments in the Middle East, the Government of Mexico considers that the decision of the Palestine National Council of 15 November 1983 to declare the independence of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza is a significant step towards the achievement of a comprehensive solution to the conflict in the region.

Mexico has consistently maintained that peace in the region must be predicated upon the legitimate interests of all parties concerned, including the Palestinian people. Similarly, we have expressed our conviction that strict compliance with United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), is an essential pre-condition for the establishment of a lasting peace in the region.

In the course of the last 21 years our Organization has forthrightly stated that the solution to the Middle East crisis must include guarantee of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories, coexistence among all States in the area, and the exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Acceptance of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) implies recognition of the State of Israel, as that resolution points out that all States in the region have the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

Similarly, we are encouraged by the contacts established by the leader of the PLO with groups interested in finding a solution to the conflict, and in particular by the commitment to recognize the State of Israel and to renounce acts of violence that might undermine that State's right to exist.

(Mr. Moya Palencia, Mexico)

Mexico understands that in the Declaration adopted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commits itself to respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations, to reject the threat of the use of force and to resolve international conflicts by peaceful means.

Mexico cherishes the most fervent hope that the new situation based on respect for the rights of peoples to self-determination and on recognition of the relevant United Nations resolutions will be propitious to the solution of this serious conflict, which has been on the Organization's agenda virtually since the time of its founding. In this connection the Government of Mexico is convinced that the convening of a peace conference under United Nations auspices, with the consent of all parties involved and with proper preparation, will lead to the achievement of a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict.

This statement represents the official views of the Government of Mexico on the essence of item 37 on the Assembly's agenda, namely, the question of Palestine. Circumstances beyond the control of Member States and created by a breach of the treaty between the United Nations and the host country forced the Assembly to move from its Headquarters in New York to the hospitable Swiss city of Geneva in order to hear the historic message delivered the day before yesterday here in the Palais des Nations by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as important statements by some 100 other speakers who have overwhelmingly welcomed the advent of the new State of Palestine and expressed their best wishes for an international conference to achieve peace in the Middle East. The fact that the General Assembly has met here at Geneva has further enhanced this important agenda item and the interesting debate on it, which is now



(Mr. Moya Palencia, Mexico)

drawing to a close; it will certainly lead to the adoption of crucial draft resolutions reflecting these new developments.\*

The essential principle of the United Nations Charter that has been an underlying factor throughout the debate is the principle of the right of all peoples to self-determination, in this instance the Palestinian people.

As has been universally recognized, the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization, which has led to the emergence of dozens of new independent States in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, is today playing a signal role by welcoming the proclamation of the State of Palestine by its people in exercise of its historic and inalienable right to self-determination.

The vast majority of speakers have affirmed that the change in the political and legal status of the Palestinian people constitutes an important step towards the achievement of peace in the Middle East. As the President stated a few moments ago, the debate on this item has shown that the United Nations continues to be a valuable and effective catalyst for international action, and we are very pleased that the Organization's contribution to the solution of this conflict has occurred under the presidency of one distinguished Latin American and the stewardship of another, the Secretary-General Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar.

We are convinced that with respect for the rights of all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially those of Israel and the State of Palestine, it will be possible, with the help of the United Nations, to promote an international conference and to replace a conflict that has existed for thousands of years and that has found its most critical expression in the past 40 years with a just and lasting peace and the affirmation of another crucial principle of the Charter,

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\* Mr. Van Lierop (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Moya Palencia, Mexico)

namely, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, a principle to which Mexico has always given its unreserved support.

Mr. PEERTHUM (Mauritius): Last Sunday marked the fortieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While we celebrate that landmark document, which ushered the history of humanity into a new era of civilized behaviour among men, we must at the same time recall that to this day millions of people around the world, especially those who still live under domination, continue to struggle to achieve the full measure of human dignity that is our birthright.

Like our brothers and sisters in Namibia and South Africa living under the ostracized system of apartheid, our Palestinian brethren have been disenfranchised, dispossessed and dehumanized. No people can bear such indignities without eventually rising in revolt and armed struggle against domination. The heroic intifadah in the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which recently passed its first anniversary, reminds us once more of the inexorable historical march of subjugated peoples everywhere towards liberation.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, recent events in the Middle East show clearly that there is a now a tide in the situation in the region that must not be missed if we do not want to be condemned to perpetuate the miseries of the past four decades, a period notable for too many lives lost, for far too many opportunities lost and for too many faits accomplis created.

Notwithstanding certain assertions to the contrary, the recent developments at the Algiers meeting of the Palestine National Council, the latest declaration of Chairman Yasser Arafat at Stockholm and his address to this body on Tuesday last represent some of the most momentous moves towards peace in the Middle East. Armed struggle is no longer the only principal means of achieving political ends, since

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the Palestinian side has now accepted the holding of negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The existence of the State of Israel has now also been accepted.

It is therefore with great disappointment that we view the position of the Israeli side, which still considers those steps as insufficient. It is an ironic twist of logic to hear that it is those who have been dispossessed who are asked to give up more and more and that it is those without an army and facing a formidable military machine who are the ones who are threatening the security of their adversary.

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The logical conclusion at which we must arrive is that we are, in fact, facing a show of Israeli intransigence that is intended to buy more time to accomplish Israel's real objective of total annexation of the occupied territories with a view to realizing the grand dream of Eretz Israel. That anachronistic policy of occupation and recolonization poses a grave danger to peace in the region. We therefore urge the United States authorities to do their utmost to induce Israel to come to the bargaining table to work out a comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem on the basis of all relevant United Nations resolutions. This, we believe, is the only guarantee of the long-lasting peace and security of all States in the region, including Israel.

In a region where the roots of conflict are sometimes traced back to biblical times and where the righteousness of certain political causes is sometimes believed to have divine sanction no political solution to conflicts can be worked out if we continue to look backwards on an inflammable, multi-millennial mix of political, religious and tribal rivalries.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has come a long way since its Chairman, Mr. Yasser Arafat, declared, on his first visit to this body in 1974:

"I know well that many of you here today once stood in exactly the same resistance position as I now occupy and from which I must fight. You once had to convert dreams into reality by your struggle. Therefore you must now share my dream." (A/PV.2282, p. 46)

From New York to Algiers, and now to Geneva, the long trek of Chairman Yasser Arafat has been arduous and bloody. The dream, although still alive, is today somewhat truncated, but still acceptable. The Israeli side must therefore accept that it, too, must also move forward and not stick stubbornly to its own unrealistic dreams of a "greater Israel".

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The overwhelming majority of the United Nations community has recognized that the only viable, just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East situation must deal with its core: the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, in particular their right to self-determination and their right to establish their own independent sovereign State on their national territory. The international conference on the Middle East called for by this body to settle the issue must be held without further delay and must include the participation of the PLO, the sole and authentic representative of the Palestinian people.

More than 40 years after the United Nations partition plan for Palestine, only one State has been created and is a member of this body today. The other State should take its rightful place in the international community. We await the day when the flag of the new Palestinian State will finally be raised on First Avenue in New York.

In conclusion, may I express the hope of the delegation of Mauritius that the positive position adopted by the United States of America yesterday will help bring that day soon.

Mr. SHAH NAWAZ (Pakistan): Events are moving so fast with regard to the situation in Palestine, which is the agenda item for consideration by this session of the General Assembly, that what one has to say one day is overtaken and made out of date by developments the next. Any statement today must begin with an expression of deep satisfaction at the turn of events that has moved the United States Government to make a historic departure from its policy towards the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The announcement last night by Secretary of State George Shultz of the United States decision to open a direct dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization has been rightly interpreted as a most significant shift in United

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States policy towards the Palestine Liberation Organization in recent times. The entire international community was hoping for such a development in United States policy towards the Palestine question, but few expected it to take place overnight.

The statement made yesterday by Ambassador Vernon Walters, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, was forthright and hard hitting, and its most welcome feature was the even-handed pressure on the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel to acknowledge the realities of the situation and to move forward towards a solution of their problems by recognizing, on the part of Israel, the need to withdraw from occupied territory and, on the part of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the need to concede recognition of Israel.

That statement was perhaps the first indication to those participating in the present debate that a shift in United States policy towards the Palestine Liberation Organization might be in the offing. Last evening's announcement by Secretary of State Shultz should open a new chapter for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has defied solution for the past four decades. It is a great blow for peace and augurs well for a just settlement of the entire Middle East question.

We would wish to congratulate the United States Government for its timely and historic contribution to the movement for peace in the Middle East. Credit for that momentous development, however, must go first and foremost to Chairman Yasser Arafat and the Palestine National Council. It is they who blazed the trail for today's developments at the nineteenth extraordinary meeting of the Palestine National Council at Algiers on 12 to 15 November. It was Chairman Yasser Arafat who relentlessly pursued the goals set in Algiers in all his subsequent travels, meetings and announcements, culminating in his great address to the General Assembly and his press conference last evening.

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The time is past for recriminations with regard to the General Assembly's inability to hear Chairman Yasser Arafat in New York. If Chairman Yasser Arafat was not able to come to the United Nations in New York, the United Nations has come to Chairman Yasser Arafat in Geneva. The present debate on the question of Palestine is thus a unique occasion in the history of the struggle of the Palestinian people.

The Palestine National Council, meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Yasser Arafat in Algiers, proclaimed the independent State of Palestine on 15 November. That proclamation satisfied the requirements of international law, according to which the constituent elements of a State are a territory, a people and a Government. As such, the Government of Pakistan formally recognized that State on 16 November and notified the United Nations of its decision.

The references in the political resolution to the PLO's acceptance of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) clearly indicate that the PLO accepts those resolutions as the basis for an international peace conference on the Middle East. The new State declared at Algiers has thus committed itself to a policy of peace and equal security for all the States in that region.

For perennial skeptics and cynics the statement in Stockholm issued by the delegation of American Jews and a delegation led by Chairman Yasser Arafat on 7 December should have left no room for any doubt. It was a clear statement that the Palestine National Council's action at Algiers had established the independent State of Palestine and accepted the existence of Israel as a State in the region.

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In proclaiming an independent State of Palestine at Algiers, the Palestine National Council reaffirmed its commitment to the relevant United Nations resolutions and also reaffirmed its rejection of terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism. Addressing this session of the General Assembly in his capacity as Chairman of the PLO two days ago, Mr. Yasser Arafat once again declared: "I condemn terrorism in all its forms." He then proceeded to present the Palestinian peace initiative in three parts, which, in view of its contents, deserves the most serious attention of the Assembly and of the Security Council. The peace initiative aims at a comprehensive settlement to be reached among the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict within the framework of the international conference for peace in the Middle East and on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Chairman Yasser Arafat concluded his statement with a passionate appeal for peace and a direct message to Israel to come forward and make what he described as a peace of the bold.

The year 1988 is a historic year for the United Nations. It is a year during which most of the conflict situations in different regions of our globe have begun to yield to sustained efforts for peaceful solutions. The Geneva Accords laid the foundations for a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan. The long, drawn-out Iran-Iraq conflict was brought to a halt. The Kampuchean question also is moving towards a solution. The recent signing of the Brazzaville protocol holds the promise of complete independence for Namibia in the not-too-distant future. All those hopeful developments took place under the aegis of the United Nations and in the context of improved relations between the two super-Powers.

In this atmosphere of optimism and hope we have the right to expect that the resolution of the Palestinian question, too, is not far away. The people of Palestine and the leadership of the PLO have taken a giant stride towards the



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resolution of the age-old conflict in the Middle East and the creation of conditions in which all States of the region can live in peace and security. The intifadah, the recent Declaration and Political Communiqué adopted at Algiers, and the Palestinian peace initiative outlined in Chairman Yasser Arafat's address to this session of the Assembly contain historic messages that cannot be ignored by any country, including Israel.

The struggle of the people of Palestine for dignity and nationhood over the past four decades has demonstrated that a people born to freedom can make all the necessary sacrifices to regain its independence and sovereignty. It will not be denied the fruit of its just struggle. Delay in recognizing this reality will only bring further sufferings and misery to all the peoples of the region. It will not extinguish the flame of liberty that burns eternally.

It is time that the international community recognized its responsibilities towards the people of Palestine. It is time that United Nations machinery were used to end the festering conflict in the Middle East, the crux of which lies in the denial of the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and statehood. It is time that Israel, in its own interests and in the interests of peace in the Middle East region, recognized today's historic developments signifying that the process of peace in the Middle East region is irreversible.

The United States Government's decision to open a direct dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization was not a sad day for Israel, which is the first unfortunate reaction of the Foreign Minister of Israel. We hope that the realization will dawn upon the Government of Israel soon enough that the time has come for Israel, too, to say "Yes" to the process of peace that was initiated by Chairman Yasser Arafat in his historic statement two days ago from the rostrum of the General Assembly and in which all the other parties concerned have joined.

(Mr. Shah Nawaz, Pakistan)

We agree with the Secretary-General when he says:

"As the underlying problem can only be resolved through a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and taking fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, what is needed is an urgent effort by the international community, led by the Security Council, to promote an effective negotiating process towards a solution that will secure the interests of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples and enable them to live in peace with each other." (A/43/1, p. 4)

Pakistan's commitment to the just struggle of the Palestinian people is a part of its ideology that precedes its own existence as an independent nation. Its most recent reaffirmation came on the occasion of the very first press conference by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto after assuming office, when she described the Palestinian cause as "our own cause". Chairman Yasser Arafat and the indomitable people of Palestine may feel assured that, as always, Pakistan will be steadfast in its support to their just cause and will stand by them in their noble quest for self-determination and peace in their tormented land.

Mr. IACOVU (Cyprus): I would like to join those who spoke before me in extending a warm welcome to Chairman Yasser Arafat to this portion of the forty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly being held at Geneva. Chairman Arafat's address to us and other recent developments make the present debate on the Palestinian issue a truly historic occasion.

I speak on behalf of a country that has unfailingly and durably supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for the restoration of its inalienable rights, including its right to self-determination and the establishment of its own independent and sovereign State. The Government of Cyprus, in its consistent

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support for the realization of those rights of the Palestinian people, has welcomed the Algiers Declaration and the proclamation of the State of Palestine. The Algiers Declaration was considered by the Cyprus Government as a historic step that could lead to a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem in accordance with the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the declarations of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The Cyprus Government has extended recognition to the Palestinian State, a decision communicated to the Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat by our President George Vassiliou.

We are greatly encouraged by the historic address of Chairman Arafat, which offered ample evidence of the determination and sincerity of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to negotiate a lasting peace. Chairman Arafat delivered to us a peacemaker's address. We commend his peace initiative and congratulate him for making it. His proposals are imaginative and generous, honest and honourable. We believe that this initiative enables the peace process to start. Those who are laying down additional preconditions are stopping the peace process. We hope that this initiative will soon evoke - and the sooner the better - a constructive response, and that that genuine opportunity to establish a lasting peace in the Middle East will not be lost.

(Mr. Iacovou, Cyprus)

We express our satisfaction at the decision of the United States to enter into a direct dialogue with the PLO. We express the hope that that important decision will impart the necessary momentum to the nascent peace process.

The Government of Cyprus holds the position that, within the framework of an international conference, in which all the parties involved, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, will participate on an equal footing, it is possible to achieve a peaceful settlement safeguarding the rights of all States and peoples in the area, including their right to live within internationally recognized and secure borders.

We also commend the statements that further clarify the endorsement by the Palestine National Council of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms - a subject to which the international community is, for good reason, extremely sensitive.

The Palestinian people wants and deserves a lasting peace. Over the last year, the intifadah, the Palestinian national uprising in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has focused world attention on the drama of the people and on the urgency of a just settlement. My Government repeatedly expressed its conviction that the situation in the occupied territories is not sustainable and stood against the repressive measures adopted by the Israeli authorities in those territories.

The momentum maintained by the intifadah, despite the harsh policies and practices of the occupying Power that were deplored in Security Council resolutions 605 (1987), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988), and the unity demonstrated by the Palestinian people have underlined the particular significance of the uprising.

The Foreign Ministers of the non-aligned countries, at their Nicosia Conference last September, devoted a new section of their Political Declaration to

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the Palestinian uprising, which they describe as an irreversible historical event and tangible evidence of the Palestinian people's determination to have a State of its own.

In that same declaration, the non-aligned Foreign Ministers viewed the uprising as a legitimate action within the context of the just struggle of the Palestinian people for the restoration of its usurped rights and the attainment of full independence. As host country to the Conference and also as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, Cyprus fully and unwaveringly supported that position.

Cyprus, a country not at all unfamiliar with the evils of occupation, the expulsion of the indigenous population or with designs to change its demographic structure, has particular sympathy for the Palestinian plight and has been supportive of all actions for the reversal of such situations and such practices. We reiterate our position that the Israeli policy concerning the occupied territories is contrary to international law and cannot produce any legal effect. Military occupation cannot give the occupying force any right to extend its jurisdiction or administration in the occupied territories and, of course, no right to annex them. We are, naturally, fully against all violations of human rights and all efforts to change the demographic structure of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Our deep interest in the question of Palestine is based on the defence of principles, but also emanates from our geographical proximity and our historical links. For all those reasons, we have steadfastly supported the indomitable struggle of the Palestinian people. The pragmatism reflected in Chairman Arafat's proposals requires us to hail the untiring Palestinian efforts for peace.

Mr. THINLEY (Bhutan): Once again this enchanting city, in a country that is steeped in the tradition of peace and neutrality, has become a gracious host to an endeavour for peace. While my delegation is pleased to be in Geneva, we deeply regret the unfortunate circumstances that prevented deliberation on the question of Palestine in New York. Those circumstances have, however, served well to provide a singular international focus on a subject that has become increasingly critical to global peace. The unanimous decision to come to Geneva and the sheer number of delegations here today are clear expressions of the solidarity of the world body in the search for an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a durable and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine.

Against the blissful springtime of hope to which the world has recently awakened, the Middle East conflicts continue to cast a shadow of gloom. Shattered hopes and aspirations have created a legacy of hate, despair and an inevitable history of bloody struggle that has become an explosive stasis. The prolonged nature of that human tragedy has only added to it further dimensions and greater complexity, while the daily changes are kaleidoscopic and at times bewildering. Amid the endless confusion of tragic events and disputes, one indisputable truth stands out with resounding clarity, beyond any doubt or question - the indomitable will of the Palestinian people and the epic proportions in which it manifests itself.

We have shared some uplifting moments as we witnessed a sequence of momentous events in the past few weeks. Yet the situation in the Middle East remains basically unchanged. Therefore, lest we be swayed into a mood of complacency by the tide of recent developments, my delegation considers it necessary to reiterate Bhutan's position.

Once again, we call upon Israel to withdraw completely and unconditionally from all lands occupied since the 1967 war. We call upon Israel to halt its

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colonial settlement policy and to dismantle all of its existing settlements in the occupied territories. We uphold the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and property. We uphold their right to self-determination, including the right to an independent sovereign State. Furthermore, we wish to make clear the absolute necessity for peaceful co-existence and the right of all States, including Israel, to exist within secure and recognized boundaries. We believe that the basis for such a solution is contained in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

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The latest manifestation of the powerful and irrepressible will of the Palestinian people emerged in the form of a united and spontaneous uprising - the intifadah. In spite of more than 300 dead, thousands incarcerated, countless wounded, tortured and deported, whole neighbourhoods razed to the ground and numerous curfews imposed, the intifadah celebrates its victorious anniversary.

The day before yesterday, we heard Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), pay a tribute to the tolerant spirit of Judaism itself. He also mentioned that the growing world-wide awareness of the legitimate rights of the PLO has even reached Jewish groups within Israel. But there is also another factor that bears consideration in addition to the voice of conscience that is now being heard within Israel itself. I speak of the demographic changes. With the drop in Jewish immigration, the growth of the Jewish population has begun to peak while the large Arab population of the occupied territories in particular, with its higher birth rate, threatens the fragile equilibrium of Israeli society in a manner that could prove decisive and irreversible. Indeed, for Israel, it is not only conscience but common sense that dictate a more realistic perception of and reasonable attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A lasting solution to the question of Palestine can only emerge from a direct and comprehensive international negotiation on equal terms among all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, which is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In this connection, my delegation is convinced that the proposed international peace conference on the Middle East provides the best possible framework for fruitful negotiation. Our confidence in its efficacy has now been strengthened with the acceptance of Security Council resolutions



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242 (1967) and 338 (1973) by the two main parties to the conflict. The ground rules have, therefore, been set for the only alternative to the perpetuation of fear, hate and violence that have turned the Middle East into the stage of an apocalyptic drama.

We believe that the PLO leadership is now taking bold and courageous steps towards peace. We are encouraged by Mr. Arafat's statement of conciliation and urge all concerned parties to reciprocate in the same spirit without wavering any longer. We call upon all parties to seize the opportunities now before them and to commit themselves to the hard work of genuine negotiation in a language free of ambiguities, in a spirit of reasonable compromise and recognition of the inescapable necessity to co-exist and by shedding the shackles of historical and psychological prejudices that have shut out the goodness of humanity that is there on both sides.

In that connection, we welcome with deep satisfaction the decision by the United States Government to enter into direct negotiation with the PLO. The peace process has now begun.

In conclusion, I share with members the optimism of the eminent scholar Edward Said, who writes with poetic eloquence of the plight of his people, the Palestinians. He is convinced that:

"Two things are certain: the Jews of Israel will remain; the Palestinians will also remain."

In comparing Palestinian and Jewish history, he also discovers that they are "fundamentally reconcilable within a common historical perspective". But it is in the conclusion to his study on the question of Palestine that the profundity of the man's wisdom becomes inspirational if not prophetic. Referring to "Arabs and Jews - whose past and future tie them together", he declares that:

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"their encounter has yet to occur on any important scale. But it will occur, I know, and it will be to their mutual benefit".

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.