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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/2178)	1
Adoption of the agenda	1
Letter dated 25 November 1979 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/13646)	1

NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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2178th MEETING

Held in New York on Tuesday, 4 December 1979, at 4 p.m.

President: Mr. CHEN Chu (China).

Present: The representatives of the following States: Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Gabon, Jamaica, Kuwait, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Zambia.

Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/2178)

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Letter dated 25 November 1979 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/13646)

The meeting was called to order at 4.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 25 November 1979 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/13646)

1. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): In accordance with decisions taken at previous meetings [2172nd and 2175th to 2177th meetings], I invite the representatives of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Panama, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Yugoslavia and Zaire to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Anderson (Australia), Mr. Bauer (Austria), Mr. Elliott (Belgium), Mr. Barton (Canada), Mr. Abdel Meguid (Egypt), Mr. von Wechmar (Federal Republic of Germany), Mr. La Rocca (Italy), Mr. Nisibori (Japan), Mr. Tubman (Liberia), Mr. Muwamba (Malawi), Mr. Ramphul (Mauritius), Mr. Scheltema (Netherlands), Mr. Illueca (Panama), Mr. de Piniés (Spain), Mr. Fernando (Sri Lanka), Mr. Malinga (Swaziland), Mr. Komatina (Yugoslavia) and Mr. Kamanda wa Kamanda (Zaire) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

2. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to inform the members of the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Greece in which he asks to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite

that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Katapodis (Greece) took the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

3. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): Members of the Council have before them document S/13677, containing the text of a draft resolution which has been prepared in the course of consultations among members of the Council. I should also like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following documents: S/13673, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 December from the Permanent Representative of the Ivory Coast addressed to the President of the Council; and S/13675, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 December from the Permanent Representative of Saint Lucia addressed to the President of the Council.

4. Mr. FUTSCHER PEREIRA (Portugal): Very briefly, I should like to bring to the attention of the Council the statement which was issued on 22 November by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, over which Portugal currently presides:

"The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe expresses its deep concern at the hostage-taking at the United States Embassy in Teheran, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the most elementary rules of international law, and in particular of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, to which Iran is a party. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 21 member States of the Council of Europe, an organization firmly committed to the defence of human rights and the rule of law, make an urgent appeal to the Iranian authorities to release the hostages and put an end to a situation which dangerously impairs international relations."

5. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): The next speaker is the representative of Greece. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make a statement.

6. Mr. KATAPODIS (Greece): Mr. President, I should like first of all to thank you and, through you, the other members of the Council, for giving me the opportunity to express the views of my delegation on the item under consideration.

7. The Security Council is seized of a question of utmost importance and of far-reaching implications on future rela-

tions between two, and possibly more, members of the international community. The facts are well known, and so is the reaction of practically all Member States. All the statements heard so far in the course of this debate have underlined two aspects of the problem: that the occupation of the premises of the United States Embassy at Teheran and the taking of its diplomatic personnel as hostages contravene elementary principles of international law, and that whatever differences may exist between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran must be settled through peaceful means.

8. My delegation wholeheartedly supports both these views. We believe that the protection of persons serving in a diplomatic capacity in any given country is of primordial importance for keeping open the channels of communication between States, and therefore is a fundamental prerequisite for safeguarding international peace. This practice dates from the first periods of known civilization. It was one of the basic principles governing relations among the cities of classical Greece. It was adhered to uninterruptedly during succeeding historical eras. It has been embodied in a long series of treaties, conventions and agreements, both bilateral and multilateral, the last of which is the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961, to which Iran is a party.

9. There has been in the past, especially in the post-war years, a great number of cases where persons enjoying diplomatic immunity were taken hostage, deprived of their freedom, ill-treated and even killed. Running such risks has become an occupational hazard for diplomats all over the world. But at least they were assured that the authorities of the host country would do their utmost to ensure their safety and to provide them with the necessary peace of mind for carrying out their duties. The sanctity of the diplomatic envoy—not because his life and safety are of greater value than that of his fellow human beings but because the protection of his person is an essential prerequisite for the conduct of international life—resides in a long tradition. It would be both sad and dangerous if this tradition were to be broken. The consequences might be incalculable for peace in the world, as the Secretary-General has pointed out in his letter in which he asked for the urgent convening of the Security Council.

10. Therefore, we feel that we should join the delegations which have already spoken and, for that matter, practically all the members of the international community, in appealing to the Government of Iran to free the hostages without further ado and without pre-conditions. My Government has already conveyed this view to the appropriate authorities at Teheran. In so doing, we are acting on two premises: first of all, because we believe that respect for international law and, in this particular case, for the Vienna Convention is an absolute necessity if we want to preserve international order, and, secondly, on humanitarian grounds as well.

11. We are confident that the authorities in Iran will heed this appeal of world public opinion and choose the path of negotiation for settling whatever differences they have with the United States. For his part, the United States representative has clearly indicated in his opening statement in this debate [2175th meeting] the willingness of his Government to reciprocate such a desire.

12. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote now on the draft resolution before it. Since there is no objection, I put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/13677.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

The draft resolution was adopted unanimously.¹

13. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): I now call on the Secretary-General.

14. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Mr. President, I should like first of all to express my appreciation to you and all the other members of the Security Council for the positive and understanding response to my letter of 25 November requesting an urgent meeting of the Council to consider the very serious crisis in the relations between Iran and the United States.

15. The extensive consultations which the Council has held since that time, as well as its public meetings, have been conducted in a most responsible and constructive spirit and without polemics. That not only testifies to the seriousness of the crisis but also does great credit to the Security Council as the world institution with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

16. In the past weeks we have all recognized that we have been dealing with a situation which is as unusual as it is dangerous. We have all recognized that the release of the hostages is of primary and urgent importance. We have also recognized that there are many other aspects of this problem which need to be seriously considered. The resolution which the Council has just adopted unanimously reflects the concern of the Council for the immediate demands of the situation as well as for the points of view of the parties concerned. I earnestly hope that this unanimous decision of the Council will provide the basis on which we may proceed towards the peaceful solution which is unquestionably in the interests of all concerned.

17. The resolution requests the Secretary-General to lend his good offices for its immediate implementation and to take all appropriate measures to this end. I need hardly say that I take this broad mandate with the utmost seriousness and that I shall devote all my efforts to carrying it out as expeditiously and effectively as possible.

18. As members of the Council are aware, I have tried to maintain contact with all concerned during this period of crisis, and I shall continue to do so. I am sure that I may also feel free to call upon Member States for their assistance and advice when this may seem to be likely to help in achieving the objective which we all seek.

19. I shall explore intensively the various modalities which might prove useful in resolving the present crisis. I am aware that there are few, if any, precedents for the present situation and that innovation may well be necessary. At the present time I wish only to say that, in carrying out my mandate, I shall be guided first and foremost by what is best

¹ See resolution 457 (1979).

for the achievement of the objectives we all have in mind. I shall of course not fail to keep the Council informed of all developments.

20. In conclusion, may I reiterate the appeal contained in the resolution for the exercise of the utmost restraint in the prevailing situation. The Council has addressed itself to this situation in a spirit of the highest responsibility and understanding. It has articulated very clearly the concerns of the international community and its unanimous wish to find acceptable solutions and to reduce the present very dangerous level of tension. I earnestly hope that this spirit will be communicated to, and understood by, all concerned in the coming days. If the spirit and intentions of the Council guide the parties concerned, I am confident that, with patience and determination, we can resolve the present crisis and remove the threat to peace.

21. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America): The 15 members of the Security Council in their action today have given unanimous expression once more to their urgent call on the Government of Iran for the immediate and unconditional release of the American Embassy personnel being held hostage in our embassy at Teheran. They have called on the Government of Iran to provide the hostages protection and to allow them to leave the country. It is clear from this vote and from the debate of the last four days, in which representatives from all parts of the world have participated, that the family of nations speaks with one voice in calling for the immediate release of the hostages, and we are deeply appreciative.

22. We hope that this call by the Security Council will be heeded and carried out by the Government of Iran in a matter of hours. Whatever the time required, we urge the Secretary-General, in the exercise of his good offices, to provide all humanitarian support possible to those being detained against their will. We remain deeply concerned for their safety, their well-being and their health on this, their thirtieth day of suffering and isolation.

23. The United States wishes to place on record that the adoption of this resolution by the Security Council clearly is

not intended to displace peaceful efforts in other organs of the United Nations. Neither the United States nor, I believe, any other member intends that the adoption of this resolution should have any prejudicial impact whatever on the request of the United States for the indication of provisional measures of protection by the International Court of Justice.

24. With the hostages released, the resolution calls on the Governments of Iran and the United States to take urgent measures to resolve peacefully the remaining issues between them in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The United States is fully prepared to co-operate with this call.

25. Many speakers in this debate have also referred to the grievances of the people of Iran. I myself did so when I remarked that:

“None of us is deaf to the passionate voices that speak of injustice, that cry out against past wrongs and that ask for understanding. There is not a single grievance in this situation, alleged or spoken, that could not be heard in an appropriate forum.” [2175th meeting, para. 17].

The Security Council has now also noted those grievances in its acknowledgement of the Iranian letter of 13 November [S/13626].

26. Neither the United States nor any other member of the community of nations has a desire to isolate Iran or to intervene in its internal affairs. We are all Members of the United Nations and of the community of nations. Let us then, all of us, be true to the purposes and principles which we have pledged ourselves to honour.

27. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

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