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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 1 December 2006, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. DE ALBA (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED "HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL" (agenda item 2) (*continued*)

d) FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (A/HRC/3/2)

1. The PRESIDENT invited delegations to consider the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon (A/HRC/3/2) pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1 of 11 August 2006.

2. Mr. PERRAKIS (Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon), introducing the report of the Commission (A/HRC/3/2), said that the members of the Commission had twice visited Lebanon, from 23 September to 7 October and from 17 to 21 October 2006. They had visited the areas most seriously affected by the conflict, namely Byblos, South Beirut, the Bekaa valley and southern Lebanon. They had met with the President and Prime Minister of Lebanon, members of the Government, parliamentarians, representatives of local and regional authorities, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and journalists. They had also met immediate victims of the conflict, whose accounts - some of which were particularly tragic - had lent support to their inquiry. The Commission regretted that it had been unable to benefit from the cooperation of the Israeli authorities.

3. The Commission was neither a tribunal nor a judicial body but an independent body charged with investigating the targeting and systematic murder of Lebanese civilians, the types of weapons used during the conflict and the lethal facts about the military operations carried out in Lebanon by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The Commission members had devoted particular attention to the damage suffered by civilians, the main victims of the conflict. During 33 days of hostilities, 1,191 people had been killed and 900,000 had been forced to flee their homes. IDF attacks had culminated in the destruction of 32 "vital points", 109 bridges, 137 roads, 127 factories and 30,000 houses, in addition to drinking-water supplies, communications, archaeological and cultural sites and agricultural land. The Commission had noted that the contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Military Observer Group had experienced 30 direct attacks, resulting in the death of four soldiers and destruction of the Khiyam base. IDF had used cluster munitions, 90 per cent of which had been fired during the last three days of conflict, turning large areas of agricultural land into "no-go" areas. Phosphorous shells had also been fired on several occasions. The Commission had further noted the devastating effects on the environment from the bombing of the Jiyeh power plant, which was apparently premeditated. It further noted that the conflict had been marked by repeated attacks on medical personnel and first-aid facilities, in particular ambulances of the Red Cross. Lastly, the Commission had noted the numerous allegations of civilians having been abducted and taken to Israel for detention.

4. In view of those observations, the Commission believed that Israel had acted in violation of the laws and customs of war, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Having made excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, Israel had violated the principle according to which parties to a conflict should always make a distinction between the civilian population and military objectives. Furthermore, the policy of classing all Lebanese as potential enemies who were open to attack violated the prohibition on all collective punishment. None of the weapons employed by Israel during the conflict was expressly prohibited by international law. However, the methods of use of certain types of weapon, such as cluster munitions, could be deemed contrary to international law. The Commission believed that the precautions taken by IDF to limit damage to persons in the context of its military operations failed to meet the requirements of international law. Given the lack of forewarning, civilians had had insufficient time to escape. The international responsibility of the Israeli State and the individual responsibility of IDF members were both implicated.

5. The Commission recommended that the Council should intensify its efforts to obtain compensation for victims of the conflict, which was the only means of ending impunity, and that it should seek to mobilize the international community in support of Lebanon's reconstruction. The effectiveness of humanitarian assistance should also be evaluated, taking into account the particular needs of child victims of the conflict. The Council should similarly appeal to the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, as well as call for the investigation of actions by FDI members. Furthermore, a procedure for monitoring human rights in Lebanon should be established.

6. The Commission recommended that the Council should draw the attention of the international community to the need for an explicit ban on the use of cluster weapons. The effects of certain types of weapons, such as phosphorous shells, should also be studied and the compatibility of those weapons with international law questioned. The Council should urge Israel to indicate the precise areas in which that type of weapon had been deployed. It should also seek to establish a commission for compensating victims of the conflict and support the Lebanese Parliamentary Human Rights Committee in its investigation into the assassinations committed during the course of the conflict. Lastly, a procedure for following up the situation of human rights in the post-conflict period should be established. The members of the Commission of Inquiry were of the view that the reconstruction of Lebanon would require a great deal of time and effort, in particular on the part of the international community. For the moment, it was essential to find immediate solutions to end the violations of the right to housing, the right to health and the right to work.

7. Mr. LEVANON (Observer for Israel) said that, in view of the terms of the mandate assigned to it by the Council, the Commission had not taken account in its inquiry of various factual realities and legal obligations. It had therefore produced a report rife with imbalances and misrepresentation. Neither had it taken account of Lebanon's failure with respect to its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly those of disarming Hezbollah and exercising full control over its territory. While the report emphasized international law obligations, it failed to make any reference to Lebanon's obligations to prevent the use of its territory for terrorist attacks. The Lebanon conflict was the direct consequence of a gratuitous attack by Hezbollah against which Israel had exercised its legitimate right of self-defence. Israel's dilemma could not be ignored; it was caught between Hezbollah's deliberate

wish to cause damage to Lebanese and Israeli civilians and to IDF, which had spared no effort to reduce the impact of their operations on civilians. Israel had never intended to inflict suffering on Lebanese civilians and it was untrue that the Israeli authorities had not done everything in their power to avoid loss of human life. Indeed, Israel's efforts to that end had gone beyond the requirements of international humanitarian law, as evidenced by the significant reduction in the amount of damage to civilians. In their attempt to rationalize, the Commission members had simply looked at the figures to assess the amount of damage inflicted on the Lebanese population as opposed to that suffered by Israel. They had neglected to assess the proportionality of Israel's response to the threat posed to its population by the 13,000 missiles aimed at it. The number of Israeli victims was admittedly lower than would otherwise have been expected owing to the fact that most Israeli homes had shelters. Israel should not be reproached for protecting its civilian population. The Commission was not therefore above criticism in making no distinction between the two parties to the conflict, one of which engaged in relentless efforts to protect its civilian population and the other providing its civilian population with missiles.

8. Israel remained firmly committed to respect for the rules of international law and was aware of the moral and practical difficulties posed by application of the principles of international law. The report under consideration undermined the credibility of international law by addressing some of its recommendations to Hezbollah, a known terrorist organization. It was consequently disturbing that the State of Israel should be placed on an equal footing with an entity that aimed to destroy it. In conclusion, he said that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch had criticized the Council resolution establishing the Commission for its failure to mention violations committed by one of the parties to the conflict. That silence divested the report under consideration of all credibility and legitimacy and also called its relevance and worth into question.

9. Mr. SOUFAN (Observer for Lebanon) said that Israel had launched an all-out war on Lebanon following an attack by Hezbollah on 12 July 2006 at the Israel-Lebanon border - an attack which the Lebanese Government had never condoned or approved. The aspects of international humanitarian and human rights law addressed by the Commission boiled down to the single question of whether, in the context of the circumstances set forth in the report, a State was justified in suppressing another State, violating the rights of its people, flouting the basic principles of international law within the framework of its military operations, inflicting collective punishment on its population and carrying out offensives outside any legal framework, or, in short, scorning human life and dignity for questionable motives. The reply was evidently no.

10. The report provided a sound and well-documented analysis of the serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed by Israel. The Commission had been cautious to state that it had been unable to constitute a full and final account of Israel's alleged violations of the rules of international law. Its report none the less offered an analysis, unprecedented in the history of international law, of the sudden transformation from a simple military riposte to a border incident into a full attack on the entire Lebanese territory, which constituted a grave violation of the laws and customs of war.

11. The report rightly emphasized that the actions of IDF were in fact part of a wider strategy aimed at the collective punishment of the Lebanese people, at inciting and provoking violence among the country's religious communities and at sowing discord among the population by

distributing insidious pamphlets and messages, while also interfering in the country's internal affairs. On the pretext of fighting terrorism, IDF had attacked the Christian village of Qauzah close to the Blue Line, using its Maronite Christian church as its operations base. Lebanon wished to point out that such deliberate acts were regarded as war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

12. The Commission of Inquiry had carefully scrutinized the Israeli military campaign, the devastating effects of which would continue to be felt for many years. Fifteen years of progress had been wiped out. The report contained a number of conclusions and recommendations that went in the right direction. Nevertheless, the Commission had apparently overstepped its mandate in certain respects. The recommendation for the Council to establish a follow-up procedure to monitor the human rights situation in Lebanon, for instance, went beyond the stated objectives of the Commission. The problems did not stem from the relationship between Lebanon and its citizens but from the offensive conducted by Israel. The reported information on the religious make-up of Lebanese society and the statement that no census had been carried out since 1932 were misplaced. The priority for Lebanon was to ensure that it remained a land of welcome for all and that it promoted diversity and the ideal of freedom, without consideration as to the religious beliefs of its population.

13. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that the conclusions contained in the report of the Commission were edifying and that the Commission members were to be commended for their impartiality and the courage which they had displayed during the course of their inquiry. The report showed that Israel and IDF had acted with impunity, having made excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilian objects. The Commission had formed a clear view that the deliberate and lethal attacks by IDF amounted to collective punishment and it had found no evidence regarding the use of human shields by Hezbollah. It had also found that the bombing of the Jiyyeh power plant was premeditated and that IDF had made excessive and unjustified use of cluster munitions.

14. When the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference had requested a special session of the Council on the situation in Lebanon, some had asked what violations were involved. The answer was in the report, where it was specifically stated that the gross and systematic human rights violations committed during the conflict constituted a very negative State practice that was disturbing for contemporary legal culture. Given such assertions, the Commission's recommendations were diffident and fell short of the expectations of Council members. He wished to know why the Commission members had not gone all the way and drawn the full conclusions from their observations. Nevertheless, the Council's willingness to adopt the practice of responding to a human rights crisis through independent inquiry missions on the ground was to be welcomed.

15. Mr. DUMONT (Argentina) said that his country had voted in favour of the resolution setting up a commission of inquiry on Lebanon. He none the less emphasized the need to consider the violations of international humanitarian law committed by both parties. In applying its mandate, the Commission had limited its inquiry to IDF military operations and failed to take into account the considerable damage suffered by the Israeli population as a result of the indiscriminate attacks by Hezbollah. All parties to the conflict were required to respect international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the principles of humanity applicable to the settlement of conflicts.

16. The establishment of commissions of inquiry to ascertain facts of an extremely serious nature was a mark of progress in the universal promotion and protection of human rights. The Council, however, should now endeavour to fine-tune the mandate of such mechanisms with a view to their consideration of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by all parties to a conflict and in all circumstances. Argentina was convinced that such an objective could be achieved through the effort of all countries that were resolved to promote the protection of human rights and to end selectivity and politicization.

17. Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) thanked the members of the Commission of Inquiry for their serious, impartial and in-depth assessment of the 33-day conflict that had devastated Lebanon. Three particular aspects of its report were essential to a better understanding of the issue under consideration. First, the Commission of Inquiry had limited its analysis of the conflict to Lebanese territory, in accordance with its mandate. Secondly, it had characterized the conflict as a legally cognizable international armed conflict to which international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law were applicable. Moreover, the Commission of Inquiry had highlighted in paragraph 9 of its report the fact that hostilities had taken place in the main only between Hezbollah and IDF, from which it could be inferred that the conflict did not have an inter-State character. Thirdly, the report appropriately stressed the need to include cluster munitions on the list of weapons banned under international law.

18. Mr. ATTAR (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that he associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Commission of Inquiry had examined the serious Israeli violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law committed during the military operations of IDF and believed, moreover, that war crimes had been perpetrated (para. 342 of the report). Israel's vile attack on Lebanon was undoubtedly part of a deliberate policy aimed at interfering in the internal affairs of Lebanon and sowing discord among the country's various religious communities. The Commission's recommendations deserved support. However, the establishment of a follow-up procedure to monitor the human rights situation in Lebanon did not appear justified insofar as the problems in Lebanon did not stem from the relationship between the Lebanese State and its people.

19. Mr. ALFARAGI (League of Arab States) said that the Commission's report took stock of the violations of international law by Israel, leading to the view that IDF had committed war crimes during the conflict. Those violations, which were now being followed up, had been specifically aimed at fuelling hate among Lebanon's religious communities. The report also underlined the fact that military operations had targeted civil objects. He endorsed the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, the implementation of which should be monitored, but found it regrettable that aggressor and victim were placed on an equal footing in some of those recommendations. In addition, the recommendation to establish a follow-up procedure to monitor the human rights situation in Lebanon gave the impression that the crisis had originated in the relationship between the Lebanese State and its people, as if the Israeli aggression had not taken place. He welcomed, however, the recommendations concerning assistance for the reconstruction of Lebanon and the establishment of mechanisms for the reparation of victims of the conflict.

20. Mr. KIVELA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the acceding countries of Bulgaria and Romania, expressed support for the democratically elected

Government of Lebanon. He was concerned by the human suffering and the destruction of infrastructure in Lebanon and Israel, as well as by the large number of women and children who had been victims of the conflict. The European Union had provided financial and technical assistance for the reconstruction and stabilization of Lebanon, a commitment that remained intact. Furthermore, the international community had a duty to assist the demining. It was regrettable that the Commission's mandate had not permitted it to examine all aspects of the conflict. He would like to know what were the most efficient means, in human rights terms, of alleviating the suffering of children and what measures could be taken to ensure that international law was better applied.

21. Mr. RIPERT (France) said that he aligned himself with the statement made by the previous speaker on behalf of the European Union and commended the courageous action of the Lebanese Government in promoting the establishment of an international tribunal to find and bring to justice those responsible for the attack which had killed Rafik Hariri. He reaffirmed his support for that Government and thanked the Commission of Inquiry for its report but regretted that the Commission had been unable to visit Israeli territory to investigate the consequences of the Hezbollah rocket attacks. France had done its utmost to bring about an immediate halt to the violence by drafting proposals for a settlement that provided the parties with the political guarantees needed to ensure Israel's security and Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and unity. He noted with serious concern the violation of international humanitarian law committed during the offensive, which had caused over 1,110 deaths and over 4,400 injuries. It was disturbing that violations had been committed by both sides, that children had paid a heavy toll in the conflict and that unexploded cluster bombs continued to pose a serious danger to children. The special rapporteurs played a useful role and should be able to work anywhere in full freedom, independence and impartiality. France would continue to support their work.

22. Mr. VELLANO (Observer for Italy) said that his country remained actively involved in the efforts to reconstruct and stabilize Lebanon and the surrounding region. Since the start of the crisis, Italy had guaranteed its cooperation and support to all parties wishing to promote stability in the region. Concerning the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon, he first asked whether there had been any progress in the situation of displaced persons and about the exact difficulties which they faced. Secondly, what was the most effective way of improving access for the population to basic services?

23. Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and commended the Commission for its impartial analysis, which correctly qualified the lethal Israeli attacks as collective punishment of the Lebanese people. The report showed that Israel pursued a policy of armed aggression throughout the Middle East, once again demonstrating that it had no respect for the norms of international law.

24. Mr. MOAIYERI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he associated himself with the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Some of the observations by the Commission of Inquiry were particularly alarming, not least the direct attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel, the use of cluster munitions and the fact that an estimated one third of victims had been children. He called on the Council to condemn the gross and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed by the Israelis. Although generally positive, the report in some respects overstepped the mandate of the

Commission and failed to meet expectations with respect to the Council's responsibility to address the crimes committed by Israel.

25. Ms. HSU King Bee (Malaysia) said that she endorsed the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and that the Commission's report merited the full attention of the Council, which should undertake appropriate follow-up actions. The events which had taken place between 12 July and 14 August 2006 constituted a devastating military attack on Lebanon by Israel. In common with other relevant mechanisms of the United Nations and of the international community as a whole, the Council had numerous challenges to take on board with regard to violations of international humanitarian law, human rights and international law. It should implement the recommendations of the Commission and the international community should oppose the practice of a State that was extremely disturbing for contemporary legal culture. Everything should be done to obtain justice for Lebanese victims and end the impunity of those responsible. In that regard, however, there were inconsistencies between the analysis and recommendations of the Commission.

26. Mr. VERROS (Observer for Greece) said that he supported the Finnish statement made on behalf of the European Union and commended the spirit of objectivity and impartiality shown by the members of the Commission of Inquiry. He appreciated the high quality of the expert legal analysis but regretted that the limitations imposed on the Commission by its mandate had prevented it from looking into the conduct of all parties to the conflict. His country was gravely concerned by the human suffering and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Lebanon and Israel. The damage to Lebanon's archaeological sites was also worrying. From the outset, Greece had provided substantial humanitarian assistance to Lebanon and remained fully committed in that regard. It attached particular importance to the Commission's recommendations on the mobilization and coordination of the international community to assist the country and its people. He asked what role the Human Rights Council could play in helping victims to obtain reparation and compensation.

27. Mr. BITAR (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that he associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and with that made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. He believed that the flagrant violations of human rights, international law and humanitarian law committed by Israel were deliberate and systematic and that civilians and infrastructure had been specifically targeted. On the subject of the report, he was critical of the Commission for having exceeded its mandate and made no issue of the repeated violations of Lebanese sovereignty. On the other hand, he supported its recommendations concerning the reconstruction of infrastructure, the compensation of victims and the inclusion of cluster munitions on the list of weapons proscribed under international law.

28. Mr. HAMAIMA (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and that made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. It was regrettable that the Commission had overstepped its mandate by interfering in the internal affairs of Lebanon. None the less, he subscribed to those of its recommendations which fell within that mandate. He concurred with the content of paragraph 331 of the report concerning the attacks on civilians and their property, on medical personnel and personnel of the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as well as with the conclusions of the report concerning the need to mobilize the international community to assist the Lebanese population. He underlined the gaps in international humanitarian law on the subject of civilian reparations, which the Council should address in further depth.

29. Mr. OUVRY (Observer for Belgium) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union and that he was particularly concerned by the human suffering and destruction of infrastructure in Lebanon and Israel. Together with its European partners, Belgium was committed to helping the reconstruction of Lebanon and promoting the country's stability. It endorsed the Commission's recommendation for the Council to promote and monitor the obligation to respect and ensure respect of international humanitarian law by all parties to a conflict, including non-State actors. He asked what means the Council should employ to ensure the implementation of that recommendation and whether the Commission's mandate should be broadened to cover the entire conflict zone. Could other international organizations also be usefully involved in that issue?

30. Mr. AL-BADER (Observer for Kuwait) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and that made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. He supported those of the Commission's recommendations that fell within its mandate and concurred with paragraph 331 of the report and with the conclusions of the Commission, in particular concerning the need to mobilize the international community to assist the reconstruction of Lebanon. He underlined the gaps in international humanitarian law with regard to reparations for victims. He welcomed the positive character of the report but regretted that the Commission had exceeded its mandate by touching on internal problems in Lebanon.

31. Mr. DE ARISTEGUI LABORDE (Observer for Spain) said that he endorsed the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union and supported all efforts for the reconstruction of Lebanon and a return to normal living conditions. He asked which short-term measures the Commission regarded as a priority for settling the housing issue. On the subject of the environment and fish resources, he noted that the oil spill had adversely affected the marine ecosystem and asked whether the Commission members had obtained information and drawn preliminary conclusions on the short- and long-term effects of that black tide.

32. Mr. MACEDO (Mexico) drew attention to the effects of the use and abuse of cluster munitions. In the context of the Third Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, his country had proposed the establishment of an expert group to draft a legally binding instrument on that type of weapon. It was regrettable that those who used such weapons had blocked that initiative and that only one very limited mandate had been adopted, thus precluding examination of the inhumane impact of those weapons and their use. Insofar as minimum humanitarian concerns had not been addressed, Mexico had disassociated itself from that proposal but hoped that it would be possible within the framework of the Council to promote a ban on that type of weapon, which contravened international humanitarian law.

33. Mr. ABDULLA (Bahrain) said that he associated himself with the Pakistani statement made on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Saudi Arabian statement made on behalf of the Group of Arab States. He welcomed the positive nature of the

Commission's report, which condemned the numerous violations committed by Israel against civilians, violations that were tantamount to war crimes. It was regrettable, however, that the Commission members had made no distinction between aggressor and victim and that they had exceeded their mandate. He called on the international community to provide the assistance needed for the compensation of victims and the reconstruction of Lebanon.

34. Mr. JAZAÏRY (Algeria) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and that by representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. The report showed that the holding of a special session of the Council on the violations committed by Israel against Lebanon did not signal a lack of impartiality and had in fact been extremely timely. It contained a long list of atrocities perpetrated by Israel in Lebanon and it was regrettable that the recommendations which it also contained were not commensurate with the Commission's findings. That being so, it was difficult for independent experts to talk explicitly about Israel's human rights violations other than by making politically correct statements that dismissed both the Israeli aggressor and any Arab victims, without pronouncing in favour of either, as soon as the latter took it upon themselves to resist aggression or colonization.

35. Mr. SOEMARNO (Indonesia) said that the Council must essentially ensure that its decisions and resolutions were duly implemented in full. He joined previous speakers in positively welcoming the manner whereby the Commission had fulfilled its mandate, in which regard he endorsed the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. He himself believed that the Commission had remained within its mandate. He said that Indonesia shared the pain of the Lebanese people and that the discussions of the Council should reflect the views of Lebanon, it being the country which had suffered most. The Council had a duty to assist Lebanon in re-establishing and protecting the fundamental rights of its people and Indonesia would support any efforts which it made to that end.

36. Mr. BRAAD (Observer for Denmark) said that he aligned himself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union and asked what concrete measures could be taken by the Council to oblige non-State actors to respect international humanitarian law.

37. Ms. AL QASSIMI (Observer for the United Arab Emirates) said that she endorsed the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as that made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and commended the authors of the report for their impartiality. The report set out the grave human rights violations committed by the Israelis, which constituted collective punishment and war crimes, in addition to an assault on the environment. Israel's use of cluster munitions, including after the cease-fire, had endangered the lives of future generations and she hoped that the Commission's recommendations would be implemented and help the Lebanese people to resume normal life. Pressure should be placed on Israel to provide exact details of the places where cluster munitions had been dropped and in that connection she counted on the cooperation of the Israeli Government.

38. Mr. LOULICHKI (Morocco) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and that made

by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. He thanked the Commission of Inquiry for its report, which gave a precise, although incomplete, picture of the tragedy suffered by Lebanon as a result of the campaign waged by Israeli forces in July and August 2006. Referring to some of the report's conclusions, particularly concerning Israel's failure to make a distinction between civilian and military targets and the fact that its acts constituted a collective punishment that was part of a deliberate plan, he called on the Council to condemn such attacks in the interest of avoiding any repetition. Those responsible should now be held accountable for their acts and the Lebanese people should be supported in the reconstruction of their country so that it could resume its place in the family of nations.

39. Mr. SHOUKRY (Observer for Egypt) said that he associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and that made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. The Commission's report indicated an indiscriminate use of force that went well beyond any argument involving military need and proportionality. The success of the Commission's work and the immediate application of resolution S-2/1 would strengthen the Council's mandate to protect human rights worldwide and enhance its credibility. He commended the Lebanese Government for its cooperation with the Commission of Inquiry and hoped that Council members would examine the Commission's report without regard to political considerations, as well as acknowledge the devastating effects of the violations of the fundamental rights of the Lebanese people and seek to remedy that situation. The overall impression from the report and its findings reflected both the seriousness of the violations of international humanitarian law and the exceedingly high number of Lebanese civilians who had been affected. He hoped that the Council would demonstrate its capacity to act decisively to end the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for human rights violations in the Middle East.

40. Mr. FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) expressed regret that only two minutes should be devoted to a subject as important as the report of the Commission of Inquiry. His first comment was that Cuba had supported the request for a special session to consider the grave human rights situation in Lebanon resulting from Israeli military operations and had voted in favour of resolution S-2/1. Secondly, the report confirmed the devastating nature of the Israeli aggression. During the course of a violent military campaign in which thousands of civilians had been killed and injured, Israeli forces had made disproportionate use of force. Thirdly, Cuba expressed its solidarity with the Lebanese people and called for the measures needed in order to avoid any repetition of such acts, bring to justice those responsible for the offending acts, as well as those protecting them, and oblige them to redress the wrongs to victims.

41. Mr. TICHENOR (Observer for the United States) said that the suffering of populations on either side of the Israeli-Lebanese border had been a tragedy and remained a source of concern for the United States. Hezbollah had dragged the Lebanese people into a conflict, with dramatic consequences for the whole region. He was actively concerned that Hezbollah and its allies, the Syrian and Iranian Governments, were still pursuing their tactics to destabilize Lebanon and he called on them to cease their activities and observe the embargo on illegal weapons imposed by Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

42. The United States continued to support the democratically elected Government of Lebanon. The resolution adopted against Israel at the Council's special session on the situation

in Lebanon was biased and failed to condemn the grave acts committed by Hezbollah, in particular the armed attacks which had triggered the crisis and the targeting of civilians.

43. The mandate of the Commission of Inquiry had also conspicuously lacked objectivity; far from allowing examination of the actions of both parties to the conflict, it had rewarded the Hezbollah tactics of targeting densely populated regions and endangering civilians. Furthermore, the Commission had blurred the distinction between international humanitarian law and human rights law. He urged the Council to take into account all aspects of the situation and to act constructively to end the suffering inflicted on both sides.

44. Mr. LARENAS SERRANO (Ecuador) said that he was disturbed by the violations of international law mentioned in the report, by the deaths from all the attacks and by the suffering of victims, in particular displaced persons. Citing the first sentence of the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, he asked how much more suffering would there be before the only possible path - that of negotiations between the parties - was taken. He supported the work of the Commission of Inquiry, whose report could not go without comment or be refuted by factual arguments, since the real question which it raised over and above facts was that of respect for international humanitarian law. He condemned the use of prohibited weapons and the resort to human shields, in particular the use to that end of such United Nations bodies as UNIFIL, and called on both parties to show their willingness to engage in negotiations.

45. Mr. CAVALLO VALENCIA (Observer for Venezuela) said that the Commission's report provided a good account of the dramatic human rights situation in Lebanon and the humanitarian situation resulting from the attacks by Israeli military forces. Consequently, the whole world already had clear evidence of the lack of respect for the principle of humanitarian considerations at the time of those attacks, the systematic and indiscriminate use of excessive force and the fallacious arguments used by the aggressors to justify their actions. The "vital points" targeted by strikes had proved to be part of the basic infrastructure, such as water treatment plants and schools.

46. Concerning the recommendations of the Commission, he favoured the establishment of a follow-up procedure on the measures to be taken for the rebuilding of Lebanon and reparations for victims. A more thorough inquiry into the conduct of Israeli military forces was also necessary. He believed that paragraph 9 of the report was relevant to follow-up of the human rights situation resulting from the Israeli aggression and supported the call for other treaty bodies to examine the legitimacy of recourse to weapons of mass destruction.

47. Mr. BAENA SOARES (Commission of Inquiry for Lebanon), replying to the question of how international humanitarian law could be better applied, mentioned the need to disseminate legal instruments and educate military officials. First and foremost, however, it was vital to implement what had been agreed.

48. Concerning the real suffering inflicted on children, not only in Lebanon but in all conflicts, he said that the international legal instruments on the situation of children in armed conflict should be improved and implemented. The concern to safeguard childhood and innocence was paramount and the Council should work to benefit the child victims of such conflicts.

49. The issue of cluster bombs and munitions was particularly disquieting. The Commission had seen for itself the consequences and destruction caused by those weapons, which should be prohibited.

50. Mr. CHANDE OTHMAN (Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon) said that he had three comments to make. First, the Commission of Inquiry had from the outset been aware of the various issues relating to the elements of its mandate and the fact that it was unqualified to call into question or seek implementation of the Council's resolution, or to extend its own mandate. Secondly, the sanctity of civilian life had not been respected as it should under customary law in particular. The Commission therefore urged the adoption of specific measures in that regard. On the subject of humanitarian assistance, it had raised the issue of the very clear distinction between "notification" and "request". A request could be rejected or its approval delayed, whereas a notification did not have the same effects. Thirdly, concerning the recommendations, it was not true that the Commission had been ineffectual. On the contrary, it had unambiguously allocated responsibility. In its conclusions, it had addressed the question of international responsibility and qualified the acts committed as war crimes and violations of the customs of war. It was true, however, that the work of the Commission had not culminated in traditional recommendations. It had not, for example, sought the establishment of an international tribunal, since mechanisms to that effect already existed within the framework of the International Criminal Court. Lastly, replying to the question of what the Council should do to determine responsibility in such situations, he stressed its possibility of recourse to a fact-finding mission, which was a very effective tool.

51. Mr. PERRAKIS (Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon) said that he was astonished by the criticism that the Commission had not qualified the facts and that its recommendations were inconsistent with its conclusions. On the contrary, it had clearly qualified some of the violations of human rights and humanitarian law as war crimes and as serious violations of the laws and customs of war.

52. In its recommendations, the Commission of Inquiry had emphasized monitoring of the situation and it was perhaps there that the misunderstanding lay. In its conclusions, the Commission had, on the one hand, clearly responded to the question of who had committed violations. On the other hand, it had recommended that the Council should establish a follow-up procedure to monitor the human rights situation in Lebanon, in particular violations of the right to life, to education and to housing. There was no question of interference in the internal affairs of Lebanon. The violations had not been committed by Lebanon but by IDF.

53. In order to settle matters in Lebanon and also in the future interest, it was essential for the Council to devote all due attention to the question of reparations. Lastly, in order to bridge the existing gap in international humanitarian and human rights law, the Council should make provision for the establishment of monitoring procedures whenever violations were committed in such situations.

54. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that, at its special session on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Council had urged Israel to end its military operations in that Territory and demanded the immediate release of ministers, parliamentarians and civilians held captive. It had also decided to dispatch a fact-finding mission led by John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the

situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. The fact that there had been no follow-up on any of those matters was regrettable. First, Mr. Dugard had not been allowed to visit the region. Secondly, the situation in the Gaza Strip had deteriorated and the number of military operations conducted in northern Gaza had increased. Thirdly, those detained had not been released. Fourthly, the High Commissioner's visit to the region was no substitute for a visit by Mr. Dugard and did not constitute implementation of the Council's resolution. Neither did it prejudice the outcome of the high-level mission to investigate the human rights situation in the Gaza Strip and Beit Hanoun.

55. The failure to implement a resolution adopted during a special session of the Council called into question the credibility and effectiveness of the Council. Resolutions adopted by a clear majority of Council members representing different regions, and not only members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which, contrary to claims, did not have an automatic majority in the Council, were being called one-sided.

56. Pakistan urged the Council to remain seized of the extremely grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to continue its efforts to establish the facts. He hoped that the High-level Fact-finding Mission, headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, would examine the gross and systematic violations of the rights of Palestinians committed in that Territory. The international community should engage in a dual process combining measures aimed at ending the human rights violations and stepping up efforts to establish peace in the Middle East.

57. The PRESIDENT said that he had followed up the decisions of the Council, particularly those from its first special session, and that he would continue to make every effort to ensure their implementation.

58. Ms. HSU King Bee (Malaysia) said that she aligned herself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and expressed consternation over the long delay in implementing resolution S-1/1, in particular the dispatch of an urgent fact-finding mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She welcomed the constitution of the High-level Fact-finding Mission in accordance with resolution S-3/1 and stressed the need for both missions to commence their work without further delay.

59. It was extremely regrettable that some persisted in dealing with the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in a manner which they qualified as balanced and impartial by equating the actions of the victim with those of the foreign aggressor. For 60 years, the human rights of Palestinians had been systematically violated on a daily basis by the occupying Power. It was unwarranted to regard the two special sessions devoted to that issue as an attempt to monopolize the Council's work.

60. Malaysia welcomed the Israeli side's acceptance of the Palestinian truce initiative and hoped that it would lead to genuine negotiations. All concerned parties should now double their efforts to resolve the conflict by ending the foreign occupation and establishing a sovereign and independent Palestinian State that existed side-by-side in peace with Israel and within secure and internationally recognized borders.

61. Mr. GUEVARA (Mexico) said that one of the shortcomings of the former Commission had been its inability to follow up its decisions. He asked what progress had been achieved in

establishing the High-level Fact-finding Mission approved at the third special session of the Council.

62. He was also disappointed that the Third Committee of the General Assembly had decided to postpone consideration of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples approved by the Council. The Council had a role to play in taking stock of best practices, in accordance with the provisions of that Declaration. It should also consider the possibility of formulating, in the context of cooperation between States and indigenous peoples, a draft programme of action listing concrete measures that could be taken to implement the Declaration.

63. Mr. NEYRA (Peru) expressed dismay that the Council's recommendation for the General Assembly to approve the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had not yet been implemented. Sadness, frustration and disappointment were some of the resulting sentiments felt by his delegation and undoubtedly also by the representatives of indigenous peoples. To postpone adoption of the Declaration was an extremely hard blow for the cause of indigenous peoples, which were one of the groups most vulnerable to human rights violations. It was also regrettable that delegations which had vigorously advocated reform of the United Nations in order to bring it closer to victims were behind that postponement. He hoped that the countries represented by those delegations and the regional group which had supported them would not turn their backs on indigenous peoples.

64. Mr. SOEMARNO (Indonesia) expressed concern that the recommendations contained in resolution S-1/1 had still not been implemented. Financial difficulties had been cited as the reason for the delay. However, the seriousness of the situation in the region and the emphasis on the urgency of the mission should have been enough to overcome the potential obstacles to rapid mobilization of the required logistical and financial resources. Under no circumstances should the High Commissioner's visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory be regarded as a substitute for a fact-finding mission prescribed by a resolution of the Council. With regard to the implementation of resolution S-3/1, adopted by the Council at its third special session, Indonesia awaited with interest confirmation of the forthcoming departure of the High-level Fact-finding Mission to Beit Hanoun which, in accordance with the provisions of that resolution, should report to the Council no later than mid-December 2006. At this crucial stage of building the Council, it was essential to take account of factors that could subsequently impede its functioning and to establish an effective and viable Council that did not disappoint the hopes placed in it by victims of human rights violations.

65. Mr. LARENAS SERRANO (Ecuador) said that his delegation had been very much taken aback by the Third Committee's decision to postpone its consideration of the Declaration on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Council had devoted priority attention to that issue and, together with the countries which had voted in favour of the text, had undertaken to ensure that it was not neglected. The importance of that text for indigenous peoples should be recognized and its consideration could not be postponed *sine die*. His country counted on the collaboration and loyalty of all countries which had supported the Council's first resolution on the subject in pursuing, together with the President, their efforts in that connection.

66. Mr. ABDULLA (Bahrain) said that he endorsed the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and noted that, despite the Council's request, Israel had failed to release Palestinian ministers and members of the

Palestinian Legislative Council. Israel's implementation of resolutions by the Council was imperative; its failure in that regard would simply call into question its credibility. He appealed to the international community to urge not only the Council but also the General Assembly to work for the protection of human rights, particularly in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He welcomed the visit by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to the occupied Arab territories and stressed the urgent need to report to the Council on the human rights situation in the region.

67. Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said that Israel's refusal to allow the first fact-finding mission to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory was regrettable and raised questions about the credibility of the Council's decisions. The situation in the occupied territories had continued to worsen since the first special session and he hoped that the second mission, headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, would be able to investigate the gross and systematic violations of human rights in those territories.

68. Mr. KAZEM SAJJADPOUR (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and expressed regret that the Special Rapporteur, John Dugard, had been unable to visit the region to report on the situation in Gaza. Israeli terrorist actions continued and Israel enjoyed the impunity assured by its main supporter, the United States of America. The entire population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was clearly victim to collective punishment, genocide and crimes against humanity committed in the name of a State policy. He urged the Council to ensure the due implementation of resolution S-1/1. He also welcomed the establishment of the fact-finding mission headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and awaited with interest the results of his visit to Gaza and Beit Hanoun, where he was to assess the situation of victims, address the needs of survivors and make recommendations on ways and means to protect Palestinian civilians from any further Israeli assaults.

69. Mr. LEVANON (Observer for Israel), recalling a statement made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said that the Council was required to examine the human rights results of all countries and that when discussions were focused on the Israeli-Palestinian issue and Darfur was not even mentioned, questions were asked about what the Council did and whether it had any sense of fairness. There was a feeling of iniquity and unease underlying the conduct of the Council. The issue under consideration, namely, follow-up to the resolution adopted at the first special session, was intended to draw the Council's attention back to Israel and away from the real challenges facing the international community. It was a shameful attempt to subvert any noble aspirations that the Council might have. Six months after its inauguration, the Council had already been obliged to request additional funds from the General Assembly and the holding of three consecutive special sessions on one country had undoubtedly contributed to that financial deficit. The one-sided nature of those sessions had done nothing to improve the situation, which was multifaceted and should clearly be examined in a much wider context. He asked why, within the framework of a special session, there was so much insistence on sending the Special Rapporteur, John Dugard, to Gaza. His usual work was not hampered by Israel; Mr. Dugard visited Israel twice a year and he was there at the present time. Undoubtedly, he would return with a new unbalanced and one-sided report that was legitimized by his unbalanced and one-sided mandate. Had the three special sessions in any way helped to create the type of dialogue that was so often called for? He asked his colleagues to desist from undermining the Council for futile political ends and to have the courage to confront those who wished to take the Council hostage and impose their own views.

70. Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine) stated that John Dugard was indeed currently in Palestine but in an individual capacity and that he had not obtained official permission from the Israeli authorities for the mission which he headed to enter Palestine. He emphasized that the supporters of Palestine had no power over the Human Rights Council, adding that Israel, on the other hand, benefited from the support of the United States, the representative of Canada and the High Commissioner. Palestine was a test case for the work of the Council. As long as double standards persisted, Palestine would continue to bring its problem to the Council. Palestine appealed to Israel to leave the Occupied Territory and thus bring to an end the discussions on Palestine. Palestinians judged Israel by its actions over the previous 60 years and in Lebanon.

71. Ms. ZERBO (Observer for Burkina Faso) said that she was extremely concerned by the follow-up of the report on the human rights of migrants presented at the first session of the Council. She urged the Council to establish a mechanism for follow-up of the various reports submitted to it.

72. Mr. CHOE Myong Nam (Observer for the People's Democratic Republic of Korea) said that the start of the third session of the Council had coincided with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Thus far, the Council had failed in its efforts to resolve the problems of Palestine. Unless Israel was willing to stop committing violations, the issue to be settled by the Council would not disappear. Israel benefited from the support of the United States and its allies and the United States had vetoed over 30 Security Council resolutions on Palestine. The question of Palestine should remain a major concern of the Human Rights Council insofar as it related to the right to life. He affirmed his country's full support for and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people. All crimes committed by Israel should be thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice. His country had always supported the joint efforts of the countries in the Middle East to find a peaceful solution to such issues as Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Golan. That position would remain unchanged.

73. Mr. MARTABIT (Observer for Chile) expressed satisfaction that, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 1/5, adopted on 30 June 2006, the High Commissioner, in consultation with regional groups, had appointed five distinguished experts to produce a basic document containing concrete recommendations on means and avenues to bridge the gaps in the existing international instruments to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. He hoped that those experts would present their study to the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which he chaired, and that thereafter they would make further progress in elaborating additional institutional norms, in accordance with their mandate.

74. Mr. LACK (International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists) said that the deliberate attacks carried out on 12 July 2006 against the territory of Israel by Hezbollah, with the implicit authority of the Lebanese Government, constituted an act of aggression against Israel, in violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, six years after Israel's full withdrawal from Lebanese territory, as certified by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Israel had consequently exercised its inherent right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter. Hezbollah's premeditated aggression had undoubtedly triggered the 34-day conflict, during which Hezbollah militias had fired over 4,200 missiles on Israel - a serious violation of international humanitarian law that constituted a war crime. He cited paragraph 6 of the report of the Commission of Inquiry, which stated that: "A fundamental point in relation to

the conflict and the Commission's mandate as defined by the Council is the conduct of Hezbollah. The Commission considers that any independent, impartial and objective investigation into a particular conduct during the course of hostilities must of necessity be with reference to all the belligerents involved. Thus an inquiry into the conformity with international humanitarian law of the specific acts of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in Lebanon requires that account also be taken of the conduct of the opponent." Since the mandate of the Commission in fact excluded that impartial approach, the conclusion to be drawn was that the mandate had no validity and that the Commission itself had abandoned all pretension to legality, independence and impartiality.

75. Ms. ENAV (Women's International Zionist Organization) said that, in view of its one-sided mandate, the Commission had made no comment in its report on the suffering of hundreds and thousands of displaced persons in Israel. Hezbollah had rained thousands of rockets on Israel, deliberately targeting the civilian population and forcing it to take refuge in shelters or to flee. Even hospitals had been targeted. If those people had not been mentioned in the international media, it was because Israeli civil society was able to mobilize itself effectively and react appropriately to situations of crisis. Throughout the country, people had opened their homes to persons displaced from the north. The Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) had made all of its facilities available to displaced persons. It had sheltered over 5,000 evacuees, half of them children. Hundreds of those evacuees, moreover, were from Arab and Druze villages. In addition to shelter, food and clothing, it had offered psychological help from specialists in family and child trauma, as the children suffered nightmares and sleep problems and the adults were also stressed and anxious. After the cessation of hostilities, many people had found themselves without work or shelter on returning to their villages. WIZO volunteers continued to work for a return to normality and WIZO ran several programmes offering help for post-traumatic stress problems to people of all ages.

76. Mr. NEUER (United Nations Watch) said that, in paragraph 5 of its report, the Commission had recognized that it was unable to examine fully all aspects of the conflict. The report was not therefore credible. The resolution establishing the Commission had been sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, both of which looked after Hezbollah. The verdict of Israel's guilt had been decided in advance and the Commission had simply ratified it. The Commission had taken no account of documents submitted by Amnesty International, United Nations Watch and other NGOs on violations committed by Hezbollah. It had affirmed its lack of proof that Hezbollah had used human shields, yet the document provided to the Commission by United Nations Watch in October 2006 had contained such proof, as well as testimonies to the effect that Hezbollah had sought to encourage suicide attacks.

77. Mr. NETTER (B'nai B'rith International and Coordination Board of Jewish Organizations) said that the Commission of Inquiry had admitted that its mandate had limited its examination of actions by the Israeli military and its purview to actions on Lebanese territory. He could not congratulate the Commission members for having accepted such a mandate. Indeed, a special rapporteur on Palestine had resigned on account of the biased mandate assigned to him. The Commission's report contrasted strongly with the report by four Special Rapporteurs (A/HRC/2/7), dated 2 October 2006, and the preamble of Security Council 1701 (2006), which unequivocally stressed that the conflict had been triggered by a violation of the international border by Hezbollah that had resulted in the abduction of two Israeli soldiers and the killing of

eight others. The attacks by various representatives was a reflection of their Governments' wish to inspire in the Council a sense of hatred towards Israel, rather than to fight human rights violations. Nowhere did the report mention Hezbollah's official objective, namely, the full destruction of the State of Israel, which was a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Neither did it mention the right of legitimate defence under the Charter, a principle cited during the previous week by the High Commissioner. B'nai B'rith therefore called for rejection of the Commission's report.

78. Mr. KHOURI (Union of Arab Jurists) said that the annual meeting of the Bureau of the Union of Arab Jurists, held in Amman on 5 and 6 November, had been attended by 16 unions, representing 16 Arab countries, which had reaffirmed their solidarity with Lebanon and the resistance to Israeli attacks, as well as the right of the Palestinian people to create their own independent State. They had condemned the violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, together with the pressures on and threats against the Syrian Arab Republic by certain superpowers. They had also underlined the importance of the independence and territorial integrity of Iraq and expressed the hope that the United Nations would not be subjected to the law of force but would instead observe the force of law. Israel's actions against Lebanon were war crimes and crimes against humanity. Rather than ending those violations, however, the permanent members of the Security Council had given Israel an extra month in which to pursue its aggression, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, under which Member States were obliged to respect the Geneva Conventions.

79. Mr. ALAIEE (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, in accusing his country of destabilizing Lebanon, the United States had attempted to distract the attention of the international community from the military, material and financial support which it provided to Israel and which enabled that country to pursue its policy of occupation, expansion and aggression. In the 60 years since Arab territories had been occupied, innocent people, children and women had been killed, thousands of people had been obliged to leave their land and thousands of homes had been destroyed on account of the weapons and unlimited financial support provided to the Israeli occupation forces.

80. Mr. LEVANON (Observer for Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was clear from the earlier discussion who supported Hezbollah and who did not. The Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran had supplied lethal weapons to Hezbollah, helped it to build bunkers and provided it with military advice and real-time training, all with the sole aim of destabilizing the region and distracting world attention from their own gross violations. Calling as witness his Lebanese counterpart, he said that if the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic had not armed Hezbollah and incited it to violate Israeli territory, the hostilities would not have taken place. He therefore urged Lebanon not to allow those countries to interfere in its internal affairs.

81. Mr. BITAR (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his country was an ally of all Lebanese people, who had been placed under occupation by the Israeli army. It had opened its doors to Lebanese civilians fleeing the Israeli aggression, which had occurred as a result of the support provided to Israel by the United States. He called on the United States to end its support to the aggressor and to put pressure on Israel to respect international legitimacy and eliminate the causes of destabilization in the region.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.
