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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, in which the Assembly called for the invitation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East which were held under the auspices of the United Nations, on an equal footing with other parties, on the basis of its resolution 3236 (XXIX). The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to inform the Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on the Middle East of the resolution and to take all necessary steps to secure the invitation of PLO to participate in the work of the Conference as well as in all other efforts for peace.
2. The implementation of that resolution is of course closely connected with the efforts undertaken within the framework of the United Nations towards a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. These efforts are described in a report which the Secretary-General submitted on 18 October 1976 in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 3414 (XXX) of 5 December 1975 (A/31/270-S/12210). In order to avoid duplication, references to that report will be made as briefly as possible and only in so far as they have a direct bearing on the subject-matter of Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX).
3. In accordance with the request contained in General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX), the Secretary-General addressed on 19 November 1975 identical letters to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Secretary of State of the United States of America, in their capacity as Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, to bring the resolution to their attention. In this connexion, the Secretary-General requested the Co-Chairmen to keep him informed of any action they might take in relation to the resolution. In his reply to the Secretary-General dated 9 January 1976 (A/31/44-S/11931, annex), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union advocated the speediest possible resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference with the full and equal participation of the representatives of PLO.

4. Shortly after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX), the Security Council met to consider the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). On 30 November, it adopted resolution 381 (1975) by which it renewed the mandate of UNDOF for another period of six months. In the same resolution, the Council also decided to reconvene on 12 January 1976 to continue the debate on the Middle East problem including the Palestinian question. In this connexion, the President of the Security Council made a statement to the effect that it was the understanding of the majority of the Council that when it convened on 12 January 1976 the representative of PLO would be invited to participate in the debate.

5. In the meantime, the Security Council met on 4 December 1975 to consider complaints submitted by Egypt and Lebanon concerning Israeli air attacks launched on 2 December against refugee camps and villages in Lebanon; it decided to invite the representative of PLO to participate in its debate on the basis that the invitation to that organization would confer on it the same rights of participation as were conferred when a Member State was invited to participate under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council. On this basis the representative of PLO made statements before the Security Council at its 1859th and 1862nd meetings, on 4 and 8 December. 1/

6. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report of 18 October 1976 (A/31/270-S/12210), the Security Council held four series of meetings on the Middle East in 1976, one on "the Middle East problem including the Palestinian question" from 12 to 26 January, another on the "request by the Libyan Arab Republic and Pakistan for consideration of the serious situation arising from recent developments in the occupied Arab territories" from 22 to 25 March, the third series on "the situation in the occupied Arab territories" from 4 to 26 May and the fourth series on "the question of the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights" from 9 to 29 June. 2/ On each of these occasions, the representative of PLO participated in the Council's debate under the same arrangements as during the Security Council meetings of December 1975. He made statements before the Council at its 1870th and 1879th meetings on 12 and 26 January on the first of these items, at its 1893rd, 1895th, 1897th and 1899th meetings from 22 to 25 March on the second item, at its 1917th, 1919th and 1922nd meetings on 5, 12 and 26 May on the third item and at its 1938th meeting on 29 June on the fourth item. 3/

7. Following the Security Council debate of January 1976 on the Middle East problem including the Palestinian question, the Secretary-General undertook a series of steps aimed at promoting the resumption of the negotiating process in the Middle East. Those steps are described in his report of 18 October 1976 and need not be

1/ See S/PV.1859, pp. 72-79, and S/PV.1862, pp. 101-109.

2/ See S/PV.1870-1879, 1893-1899, 1916-1922, 1924, 1928 and 1933-1938.

3/ See S/PV.1870, pp. 72-97; S/PV.1879, pp. 106-112; S/PV.1893, pp. 23-36; S/PV.1895, pp. 37-41; S/PV.1897, pp. 106-107; S/PV.1899, pp. 81-85; S/PV.1917, pp. 3-11 and 97-102; S/PV.1919, pp. 72-76; S/PV.1922, pp. 67-72; and S/PV.1938, pp. 36-45.

repeated in detail here. In carrying out each of these steps, due attention was given to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX) as shown below.

8. The Secretary-General's intention to undertake a new initiative was first conveyed to the Security Council in a statement made on 26 January 1976 at the conclusion of the Council's debate on the Middle East problem including the Palestinian question. In that statement the Secretary-General noted that the discussions of the Council had emphasized the Palestinian dimension of the Middle East problem and had reaffirmed the right of every State in the area to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

9. In identical letters addressed to the Co-Chairmen on 27 January, the Secretary-General requested them to let him know their thinking on ways of making progress towards a solution of the Middle East problem. In this connexion, the Secretary-General again drew particular attention to the Palestinian dimension of the Middle East problem as well as the right of all States in the area to live in secure and recognized boundaries.

10. As a follow-up to the communications addressed to the Co-Chairmen, the Secretary-General requested his Personal Representative for the Peace Conference on the Middle East, Under-Secretary-General Roberto E. Guyer, to undertake an exploratory mission to the Middle East from 25 February to 2 March 1976. During that exploratory mission and also during the subsequent talks which Mr. Guyer held in Moscow and Washington, the question of the participation of PLO in peace efforts was discussed. In this connexion, Mr. Guyer met with representatives of PLO at Damascus on 28 February 1976.

11. Following Mr. Guyer's exploratory mission, the Secretary-General addressed identical aide-mémoires to the parties concerned, including PLO, on 1 April 1976, requesting their views as to the action which might be taken by the United Nations in order to break the impasse in the peace efforts.

12. The replies of the parties concerned are set forth in the Secretary-General's report of 18 October 1976 (A/31/270-S/12210, para. 9). In brief, Egypt and the Soviet Union favoured the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference with full and equal participation of PLO. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasized that any international effort in which PLO did not take part on an equal footing as a main party would contravene the resolutions of the General Assembly. Jordan stated that it was essential that PLO be included in all efforts towards the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Israel advocated the reconvening of the Geneva Peace Conference with the original participants. The United States in its reply did not refer to the Geneva Peace Conference but emphasized that it was its intention actively to pursue contacts with the parties on efforts to bring about an agreement to end the state of war in the Middle East. As to PLO, it stated that the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People could serve as a starting point on the road to peace and that without the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights in its homeland, the prospect for peace remained unattainable.

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13. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report of 18 October 1976, it seems clear from the replies of the parties concerned that, while there is general agreement on the necessity of resuming negotiations for a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem, there are still important differences of view among the parties concerned, which must be resolved before the negotiating process can be usefully resumed. One of the unsettled questions is the participation of PLO in the Geneva Peace Conference. The Secretary-General wishes to reiterate here his determination to continue his efforts towards the resumption of the negotiating process.
