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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
48th meeting
held on
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at 10.30 a.m.
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)

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AGENDA ITEM 77: ISRAEL'S DECISION TO BUILD A CANAL LINKING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE DEAD SEA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: ISRAEL'S DECISION TO BUILD A CANAL LINKING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE DEAD SEA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/142)

1. Mr. ALMAIL (United Arab Emirates) said that Israel's decision to build a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea was a reaffirmation of zionism's policy of aggression and occupation. Zionist authors such as Theodor Herzl and Walter C. Lowdermilk had long been recommending the construction of such a canal in order to increase the water resources of the area. The canal would facilitate the establishment of Jewish settlers and would deprive the Arabs of the use of water ways. Building the canal would have adverse demographic, economic, agricultural and ecological effects; for example, the lands of the inhabitants of the West Bank would be flooded, the potassium production of the Dead Sea would be affected, Christian Holy Places would be under water and many people would be displaced.
2. Israel could not carry out its plans without direct or indirect help from certain States. Israel hoped to gain time by conciliatory words but had shown its intransigence by its refusal to receive the team of experts. The problem of the canal was one among many others which were hampering the solution of the Middle East question. Measures should be adopted to prevent the implementation of Israel's project, and the international community should boycott Israel and deny it any type of assistance.
3. Mr. ABOUCHAER (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he wished to place on record that, in his country's opinion, Israel's decision to build a canal between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea was an integral part of the plan to Judaize and occupy the Arab territories. The Israeli project violated the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the United Nations resolutions on the rights of the Palestinian people.
4. By refusing to allow the visit of the team of experts because it would serve "no useful purpose" (A/39/142, para. 5), the Israeli authorities had shown that they were prejudging the work of the group. Such an attitude confirmed what had already been stated in connection with the consideration of agenda item 72, namely, that Israel refused to co-operate with any United Nations mission.
5. The report of the team of experts provided new data on the adverse effects of the Israeli project. He was particularly concerned by the contents of paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 22, 26 and 27. He was afraid that the damage done to the Palestinian and Jordanian villages could not be remedied in the future. It was, moreover, regrettable that, in its report, the team of experts had not studied the political aspects of the question despite the request by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of resolution 38/85.
6. Among other things, Israel's decision would strengthen its presence in the Gaza Strip, give it a pretext for occupying more territory, help it to establish additional nuclear reactors, increase the Judaization of the Arab territories and enable it to act as if it had a right to the land on which the canal was built and would represent a violation of various international instruments and aggravate the problems of the region.

(Mr. Abouchaer, Syrian Arab Republic)

7. His delegation urged the international community to express clearly its determination not to allow Israel to persist in its decision to build the canal. The Security Council must adopt the measures set forth in the Charter to ensure that Israel immediately stopped the implementation of the project.

8. Mr. AL-HASSANI (Kuwait) said that the negative attitude of the Israeli authorities in refusing to receive the team of experts was nothing new, but was a masterpiece of eloquence and arrogance. In the letter reproduced in annex III of document A/39/142, the Israeli authorities had deliberately omitted any reply to the request of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Technical Co-operation for Development to provide information which might be relevant in the light of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 38/85. Moreover, by affirming the "constructive approach" of the Israeli project, the Israelis were not only stating that they intended to forge ahead with their plans but also seemed to be claiming that they knew better than the Arabs what was good for them. They were also telling the 146 nations which had voted for General Assembly resolution 38/85 that their assessment was worthless and that only the Israeli assessment counted.

9. Israel's negative attitude should not be allowed to interfere with the functions of United Nations missions. Kuwait did not understand why it was not deemed necessary to continue monitoring what took place in the occupied territory concerning the matter under discussion despite Israel's refusal to allow the team of experts to visit it. For example, there seemed to have been no effort to verify the "press reports" referred to in paragraph 3 of the report through official contacts with the Israeli authorities or through independent sources. Inaction on the part of the international community in the face of Israel's lack of co-operation would grant the latter both the impunity and the immunity it needed to achieve its purposes.

10. The building of the canal was not an isolated case, but rather one more link in the chain of Israeli practices aimed at expanding its territory and in its strategy of reorganizing the demographic composition of the occupied territories and redistributing their natural resources in order to achieve complete integration with Israel. An example was the case of the Ramallah Water Board which, after being denied the right to create an autonomous water supply, had eventually been forced to accept water from an Israeli water carrier system. Such practices had been continuing for several years in various parts of the occupied territories and, although they were not directly related to the building of the canal, the final objective was the same: to give Israel a free hand to rearrange and redistribute the water and other natural resources of the occupied territories.

11. His delegation had noted with interest the adverse effects which the building of the canal would have on various aspects of life in Jordan. Although the material damage would be great and irreparable, the greatest damage would be done to the prestige of the United Nations which, in two consecutive years, had adopted resolutions against the building of that canal.

12. It was necessary to prevent Israel from imposing one fait accompli after another. The needed information about the project must be gathered in order that the United Nations might adopt appropriate measures. It was also necessary to

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(Mr. Al-Hassani, Kuwait)

convince the Israelis that it was not possible to be a Member of the United Nations and yet feel free to violate its resolutions. His delegation associated itself with the speakers who had described the dangers of the construction of the canal, and it appealed to the United Nations to support the attempt to halt that new Israeli aggression.

13. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the Zionist régime had reached an advanced stage in the planning of the canal project and had prevented the entry into occupied Palestine of the team of experts responsible for monitoring and assessing aspects of the adverse effects of the projects. Everything therefore indicated that the Zionist authorities were ready to carry out their project, which had been conceived a century earlier.

14. The report of the team of experts submitted to the General Assembly the preceding year confirmed the legal irregularities in the Zionist project that the Special Political Committee had already pointed out and its serious consequences. It was questionable whether it was still necessary to point out that the Zionist decision constituted a serious violation of the provisions of the Conventions of Geneva and The Hague and the fundamental principles of international law. The report to which the team of experts had drawn the General Assembly's attention at the current session again confirmed all the misgivings expressed by many delegations concerning the effects the plan would have on Jordan's agriculture, mineral production, tourism and health care facilities.

15. Israel, with its policy of expropriation, establishment of new settlements, plundering of natural resources and acts of violence against Arab citizens designed to force them to choose the course of exile, was hoping to de-Arabize the occupied territories and consolidate the Zionist presence there. Israel was obviously not going to heed the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Decisive intervention by the Security Council was the only thing which might breach the vicious circle of defiance and aggression on the part of the Zionist régime.

16. Mr. MOUDAN (Saudi Arabia) said that Israel's project was no less serious than others whereby it had previously imposed its presence in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories. It did not differ much from the project of establishing the Zionist entity itself, which had been devised by British imperialists with the purpose of finding the shortest route to the Indian Ocean. The "two seas" project was another link in the chain of projects aimed at annexing Arab territories and expelling their population.

17. The project also represented a flagrant violation of Jordan's rights in the Dead Sea, since raising its water-level unilaterally constituted an act of aggression that was prohibited by international agreements, apart from the damage which it would cause to Jordan's economy. The Zionist authorities had listed the benefits that Israel would obtain from the project: they wished to obtain alternative energy resources and would carry out other projects to achieve that purpose.

(Mr. Moudan, Saudi Arabia)

18. In reality, the most important goal of those who had drawn up the project was to use it to transform Israel into a nuclear State. The installation in the area of nuclear reactors for military purposes was envisaged. Given the water supply crisis from which Israel was suffering, especially in the Negev, it needed to procure sources of water to cool the secret nuclear reactors at Dimona and Nahal Surik.

19. The "two seas" canal project represented a flagrant violation of the norms of international law, especially the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which defined the principles and rules applicable to military occupation. According to those Conventions, occupation was of a temporary nature and could not last indefinitely. Nor could it entail adverse consequences for the continued existence of a State or result, from a legal point of view, in the transfer of sovereignty from one country to another, since sovereignty belonged to the population which, for the period of the occupation, had the right to repel and resist invasion or annexation. The United Nations should therefore stop Israel immediately from implementing measures and plans relating to the project. Member States, governmental and non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations and specialized agencies should refrain from assisting in the preparation and implementation of the project.

20. His delegation requested the Secretary-General to reveal the names of governmental and non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies, transnational corporations and national enterprises which were co-operating with Israel in implementing the canal project, in violation of United Nations resolutions and international law.

21. Mr. XU Shangwei (China) recalled that a resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session had declared the Israeli decision to build a canal linking the Mediterranean and Dead Seas to be in violation of international law and had requested the Security Council to consider the possibility of taking measures to halt implementation of the project. Resolutions subsequently adopted by the Assembly had not only reiterated that basic position, but had also expressed dismay at the fact that the Israeli authorities had refused to abide by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The Chinese delegation believed that the United Nations resolutions embodied the just opposition of the entire international community to the project.

22. Regrettably, the attitude of the Israeli authorities towards the question, like their position on the Middle East and other issues, was characterized by open defiance of the will of the international community. Israel refused to abide by the relevant United Nations resolutions. In annex I to the report submitted by the Secretary-General (A/39/142), it was pointed out that, according to press reports, some \$US 24 million had been allocated for preparatory work on the project for the period 1983-1985, and construction had already been started on a tunnel.

23. The Israeli authorities' plan to build the canal and the establishment of settlements in the occupied territories formed part of the Israeli policy of perpetuating the occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories and

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(Mr. Xu Shangwei, China)

establishing a Greater Israel. The struggle waged by the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples and the peoples of other Arab States against the project therefore formed part of their struggle against Israeli aggression and expansion and was aimed at restoring and preserving their national rights and interests. Their cause therefore deserved strong international solidarity and support.

24. Consequently, the current session of the General Assembly should take further action to call upon all States, specialized agencies and bodies, including the companies of all countries and all transnational corporations to unite in orchestrated opposition to the Israeli Government's project. Furthermore, the Security Council should consider the possibility of taking the necessary steps in case the Israeli authorities persisted in their attitude.

25. Mr. BARROMI (Israel) said that his delegation had been somewhat surprised to hear statements from the Arab delegations to the effect that the Israeli authorities' plan to build a canal linking the Mediterranean and Dead Seas was aimed at depriving the Arab countries of their water resources.

26. It had to be pointed out unambiguously that it was the Arab States who had tried to use the shortage of water characteristic of the Middle East region as an instrument of political and military pressure. At a summit meeting of Arab countries held in 1964, a plan to divert the course of the River Jordan had been approved which would have literally throttled Israel. That plan, which had been partially applied in conjunction with a terrorist campaign, had been one of the central elements of the aggressive strategy which had led to the co-ordinated confrontation of the Arab countries with Israel in 1967.

27. In any case, the question of the management of drinking water resources had nothing to do with the plan to build the canal, i.e., to shunt salt water into a lake like the Dead Sea which already contained salt water. Consequently, the statements made constituted an obvious and repetitious attempt to confuse the issue.

28. Many speakers had criticized Israel for not having accepted the visit of a group of United Nations experts. In fact, the Government of Israel had refused to receive it because the mandate of the group of experts had not been to study the project but to determine its harmful effects. Mandates of that kind were basically illicit, since they represented an attempt to use the United Nations for political and warlike purposes, which contradicted the purposes and principles of the Organization.

29. Mr. CHAMMAS (Lebanon) welcomed the fact that the Israeli representative's statement had been made within the United Nations system. That system was also known as the Charter system, since it was the instrument which the international community had adopted to govern its activities, together with other principles of international law. According to those principles, Israel could not undertake such activities as the construction of the canal. The Israeli representative's objections were purely formal and did not alter the substance of the issue.

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(Mr. Chammas, Lebanon)

30. The fact was that, according to the system of the United Nations Charter, Israel did not have the right to undertake a project affecting the occupied territories. Israel's basic attitude derived from the fact that it did not consider those territories to be occupied, contrary to the unanimous opinion of the international community. So long as Israel did not recognize the territories to be occupied, it would be operating outside the provisions of the Charter, and it would therefore be possible to impose those sanctions provided for in the Charter which the international community considered it necessary to apply.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.