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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

later: Mr. CHOO (Malaysia)

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

AGENDA ITEM 76: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that Cuba had joined the sponsors of draft resolutions A/SPC/44/L.10 to L.17.

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

2. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Chairman of the Committee's Working Group on Questions relating to Information had informed him that at its first meeting the Working Group had decided to consider, in informal consultations under his chairmanship with the regional groups and China, the two non-papers prepared by the Chairman of the Committee on Information. The Group of 77 and the Western European Group on Information had concurrently held their own series of meetings. Extensive Working Group consultations had been conducted on the non-paper entitled "United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities", although no consensus had been reached; there had not been time to consider the other non-paper entitled "Information in the Service of Humankind". The Working Group had recommended that the Special Political Committee should return the first-mentioned non-paper, as amended in the negotiations, to the Chairman of the Committee on Information for action; and he had forwarded it to the Chairman the previous day.

AGENDA ITEM 75: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)

3. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that, after consultations with the Department of Conference Services, he had conveyed to the Chairman of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space the recommendation made by the Special Political Committee's Working Group on International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space regarding conference-servicing arrangements for the Sub-Committee in connection with draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.18.

AGENDA ITEM 77: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued) (A/44/81, 83, 117, 151, 152, 155, 167, 176, 182, 209, 227, 235, 259, 299, 309, 352, 354, 355, 361, 364, 365, 397, 409 and Corr.1 and 2, 489, 494, 515, 517, 551, 562-66, 570, 599, 610, 640, 643, 666, 687 and Corr.1, 689, 699 and Corr.1; A/SPC/44/L.19-25)

4. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that Cuba had joined the sponsors of draft resolutions A/SPC/44/L.20 to L.25.

5. Mr. WOLOSI (Afghanistan) said that the Israeli practices described in the report of the Special Committee (A/44/599) were undeniably infringing the human rights of the population of the occupied territories and the Syrian Arab Golan. In

(Mr. Wolosi, Afghanistan)

violation of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, moreover, the occupying Power was closing universities and schools and firing on defenceless students, and it was carrying out mass expulsions of increasing numbers from their own land. Afghanistan called upon Israel to stop such deportations.

6. His Government believed that Israel bore responsibility for all the atrocities and brutalities taking place in the occupied territories and that its growing repression and the violent provocations by Israeli settlers could only exacerbate the situation. It was Israel's long-standing policy of annexation that had given rise to the intifadah, a legitimate struggle by the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination and the right to create a Palestinian State on Palestinian soil, thus restoring Arab sovereignty over the occupied territories.

7. The solution lay not in repression but in peaceful negotiation. The historic opportunity created by the current favourable international climate must not be missed. Afghanistan strongly supported the convening of an international conference with the full participation on an equal footing of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict, including the State of Palestine.

8. Mr. BAEV (Bulgaria) said that the Middle East problem and its core, the question of Palestine, stood out in a particularly striking way in view of the improved international situation. Bulgaria was deeply concerned that in spite of the numerous relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions, the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories was worsening.

9. The Special Committee's report was particularly impressive for its data on casualties, human rights violations, collective punishment, deportations, the closing of schools in the occupied territories and the demographic transformation of the area. Those actions were flagrant violations of the norms of international law and the fourth Geneva Convention.

10. The continuing intifadah was proof that the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom and national independence could not be halted. Regardless of the casualties, the intifadah would continue until peace and justice were achieved in the Middle East.

11. The course of events in the Middle East and, particularly, the intifadah, demonstrated the urgency of seeking a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the problem. The United Nations had a particularly important role to play, as it had a special responsibility for the fate of the Palestinian people and for bringing peace to the troubled region. Bulgaria was encouraged by the growing prestige of the Organization, owing to its success in settling some of the most long-standing international conflicts. It was following with interest the actions under way in the Middle East, particularly the proposals and efforts to encourage the peace process. It was essential to identify the elements in the various initiatives and

(Mr. Baev, Bulgaria)

proposals that were acceptable to all parties to the conflict. The international community welcomed the realistic and constructive approach of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

12. A just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict could be achieved only through the collective and sincere efforts of all the States concerned, based on the principles of equality, equal security, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, political independence and sovereignty. The majority of Member States, including Bulgaria, supported such an approach, as confirmed by the broad international consensus on the relevant United Nations resolutions. The only way to achieve that goal was by convening an international conference on the Middle East with the participation of the PLO and the five permanent members of the Security Council. Bulgaria was convinced that the just cause of the Palestinian people would ultimately triumph.

13. Mr. RUDI (Albania) observed that the Israeli invaders had become more ruthless and aggressive as the Palestinian people intensified its struggle against them, thereby discrediting Israel in the eyes of the world. An entire people living for centuries in its own lands, with ancient traditions and culture, was being persecuted, denationalized and threatened with extermination; and that posed a threat to the whole region and beyond.

14. Albania had always adamantly condemned the inhumane Israeli practices, which should be seen not as a humanitarian problem but as the application of a political programme. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict stemmed from Israel's aggressive intent to eliminate the Palestinian people and annex its territory, on the one hand, and the staunch resistance of the Palestinians in defence of their lands and national identity on the other. His Government and people unreservedly supported the massive popular uprising of the Palestinian people: the intifadah was nothing other than an expression of its determination to make the most sublime sacrifices to liberate itself.

15. The Special Committee's report (A/44/599) detailed the heinous practices the Israelis were resorting to in order to achieve their strategy. With its war machine, Israel was not only violating the Palestinians' human rights but actually striving to annihilate them as a people. The deportation of Palestinians and their replacement by Jewish settlers, who were being encouraged by special government incentives, was a tactic of an Israeli expansionism that knew no bounds.

16. His delegation maintained that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must emerge from the countries of the region that were directly concerned, from the expressed will of their peoples themselves, and of the Palestinian people in particular. Any other plan that the super-Powers and reactionary forces might seek to impose on the Palestinian and other Arab peoples was bound to fail.

17. Mr. HALA (Czechoslovakia) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/44/599) contained proof that Israel continued to pursue a policy of violence and oppression in the illegally occupied Arab territories. But the Palestinians had shown, by their uprising, that they did not intend to resign themselves to Israel's disregard for their legitimate rights, including the right to establish their own State. The uprising was an appeal to all States Members of the United Nations to take immediate steps to secure the basic human rights of the Arab population of Palestine.

18. Czechoslovakia was convinced that active steps by the United Nations could help to persuade the Government of Israel to proceed in a more realistic, humane and non-violent way in response to the current situation. Even the Israeli public had seen the futility of attempting to solve the Palestinian question with violence. In the view of his delegation, a lasting and just settlement could only be found through compromise and on the basis of mutual respect for the interests of the States and peoples concerned. His Government therefore supported the call for an international conference on the Middle East. Czechoslovakia would continue to provide moral and material support to the Palestinian people in its struggle for basic human rights.

19. Mr. JALAL (Bangladesh) said that the problem of Palestine had persisted so long because of the unparalleled intransigence of Israel, whose continued occupation of illegally acquired territories had created an explosive situation. The valiant intifadah of the Palestinian people had served to mobilize world opinion against a brutal suppression of freedom.

20. The proclamation of the State of Palestine in 1988 had created fresh prospects for peace. Bangladesh was proud to have been one of the first to accord recognition to Palestine. No solution, however, would be viable without the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to return to its homeland, and there live in peace and security.

21. The list of the sufferings of the Palestinian people as narrated in the Special Committee's report was long. Israel, in defiance of world opinion, had been resorting to repression of the most savage and repugnant kind. It had been illegally and forcibly changing the demographic and institutional status of the occupied territories and trampling upon the human rights of the Palestinian people, displaying a callous disregard for ethics and civilized behaviour. The human rights situation in the occupied territories had worsened significantly since the beginning of the intifadah.

22. The continued Israeli defiance of the wishes of the international community posed a great threat to peace and security in the Middle East and in the world at large. Bangladesh was convinced that any meaningful effort to bring peace to the Middle East must be based on a comprehensive settlement which guaranteed the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. It

(Mr. Jalal, Bangladesh)

also reiterated its support for the early convening of an International Peace Conference, in which the PLO must be an equal and integral participant.

23. Mr. Choo (Malaysia) took the Chair.

24. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/44/599) clearly demonstrated that State terror and violence had become the current practice of the Israeli occupiers in their dealings with the peaceful inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli authorities had resorted to actions that aimed at the virtual annexation of the occupied territories. Israel was continuing its "creeping expansion" in the Golan Heights too, where the Israeli authorities not only had replaced local legislation with their own but had also been pressuring the local population to take on Israeli citizenship. Israeli armies also continued to be present in southern Lebanon.

25. In view of those circumstances, one could not but note the contradiction between the assurances of the Israeli Government as to its readiness to seek a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the actual policies of the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories.

26. An analysis of information received from various sources over the past year showed the non-constructive attitude of right-wing groups in Israel, which stubbornly refused to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and which attempted in every way possible to maintain under their control the lands they had seized, putting down with violence the struggle of the Palestinians to achieve their political and civil rights. A glaring example of that was the repressive measures taken against the participants in the intifadah, a non-violent movement that the population of the occupied territories had had no choice but to embrace.

27. The Soviet Union condemned the Israeli policy of violence in its relations with the population of the occupied Arab lands and the blatant and systematic violations of generally accepted norms of international law, in particular the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The USSR did not recognize the changes brought about by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories.

28. Lasting peace and security could only be achieved by removing the principle causes of the conflict while maintaining an equilibrium of the interests of all parties concerned, and not by using violence to control seized territories or seeking military predominance. By giving the population of the occupied territories the chance to achieve its basic human rights and by scrupulously observing the Fourth Geneva Convention, the norms of international law and the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, it would be possible to defuse the atmosphere of confrontation and to create more favourable conditions for starting the peace-making process.

(Mr. Smirnov, USSR)

29. The question of the situation in the West Bank and Gaza was one of the main focal points of the Organization's work. In 1989 alone, the Security Council had met 15 times to examine the question. In the view of his Government, the Security Council must step up its involvement, urge Tel Aviv to put an end to its illegal activities and seek an immediate settlement of the Middle East conflict. The Security Council's potential had not been fully realized. In the course of 1989, three draft resolutions before that body had been vetoed by one of its permanent members. It was unfortunate that, notwithstanding considerable agreement, the Security Council had been unable to work out a concrete position on the basic aspects involved in convening an international conference on the Middle East.

30. The current situation in the West Bank and Gaza made it urgently necessary for the United Nations to take decisive steps to implement the relevant resolutions as soon as possible in order to ensure the protection of the rights of the population of the occupied Arab territories and to put an end to the inhuman practices pursued by Israel. The USSR expressed its solidarity with the Palestinians, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in the courageous struggle against the Israeli occupation of their lands and the trampling underfoot of their rights and dignity. The Soviet Union was in favour of rapidly achieving a just political settlement of the Arab Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem in accordance with the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations. The road to such a settlement required an international conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all interested parties, including the United Nations and the five permanent members of the Security Council. The Soviet Union would continue to do all within its power to work towards the start of a dialogue on considering ways to begin the peace-making process in the Middle East and to promote the initiation of a dialogue among all parties immediately concerned with a view to preparing and convening an international conference. The USSR was convinced that such a conference would lead to a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question that would ensure peace and security for all the States of the region, including Israel, on the basis of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

31. Archbishop Renato R. MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See), underscoring the Church's general concern for the respect of the human rights of all peoples but especially of those living in the Holy Land, said that its policy had been to defend consistently and equally the rights of two peoples - Jews and Palestinians - to a homeland. The Christian spiritual heritage was rooted in that of the Jews. With the Palestinians, too, the Church felt a special kinship: first, with the Muslim majority, with whom Christians shared a belief in one God, and most especially with the Christian minority, who formed a very vital part of the Palestinian people and were a living link for all Christians to their own historical beginnings in the Holy Land. The land of Palestine, besides being the homeland for Jews and for Palestinians, was also the spiritual homeland for all Christians, all Jews and all Muslims.

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(Archbishop Martino, Observer, Holy See)

32. Greatly saddened by the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories, the Pope had in a speech the previous month expressed his deepest solidarity with the legitimate request of Palestinians to live in their own homeland, while respecting the right of every other people to enjoy the necessary security and tranquillity.

33. Regarding the crisis in Beit Sahur, his delegation, while not questioning the right of the occupying Power to collect taxes in conformity with international law or to punish fiscal evaders, questioned the severity of the penalties imposed on alleged tax delinquents and the denial to them of due process. One must ask whether it was opportune, at a time when violence was escalating throughout the Holy Land, to punish harshly villagers who had adopted a policy of non-violence.

34. Another unduly harsh Israeli reaction to the intifadah was the demolition of Palestinian homes. Many Israelis had themselves judged that the demolitions crossed the line that separated a legitimate concern for security from an immoral intrusion on basic human rights. Not only the foreign press but also the Israeli media had repeatedly denounced the demolitions, frequently carried out in haste and without due process and often without any real chance for redress. They were a human tragedy and, as a form of collective punishment, were outlawed by article 33 of the fourth Geneva Convention.

35. The forced closing of the universities in the occupied territories was another cause for concern. Among them was Bethlehem University, a Catholic institution which enrolled about 1,500 students, most of them Muslim and almost half of them women. The Holy See appealed once again to the Israeli authorities to reopen the universities. Their prolonged closing was inconsistent with the glorious Jewish tradition of learning. One positive development had been the reopening of the schools in Gaza and of most of those in the West Bank.

36. His delegation was well aware that violence was escalating. The Holy See always decried violence from whatever quarter it arose. It mourned with the Palestinian families who had buried more than 700 people during the intifadah, so many of them children and teenagers. It opposed the violent attacks on Israelis that had resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. It protested equally the growing number of brutal reprisals against alleged Palestinian collaborators by Palestinians themselves. Furthermore, the Church lamented the psychological violence that afflicted both sides, especially the young.

37. The Holy See had hoped that the creative initiative taken the previous year by one side would lead to dialogue in the search for peace; unfortunately, instead of progress in dialogue there was now talk of deterioration. Yet despite the current impasse, the Church must look with optimism towards that day when the Holy Land would be an international model of unity and peaceful coexistence among peoples. As a meeting place for spiritual and human solidarity among religions and peoples, the City of Jerusalem had a unique role. It was the policy of the Holy See that Jerusalem must enjoy a privileged status with international guarantees of two kinds: equality of rights and treatment for the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious communities, including freedom of worship, access to the Holy Places and

(Archbishop Martino, Observer, Holy See)

protection of the rights and privileges already enjoyed by those communities, within the context of the cultural and historical preservation of the Holy City; and their equal right to continue to exist and live in peace and pursue their religious, cultural, civil and economic activities.

38. Mr. TREIKI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that Zionist oppression, terrorism and violations of human rights in the occupied territories were increasing yearly. Houses were being demolished, schools closed, farms devastated and water resources diverted. Worst was the forced migration of Palestinians through the continued establishment of settlements and systematic intimidation. In the face of such crimes, well-intentioned United Nations efforts and resolutions had remained ineffective. The recent Security Council debate had been thrice thwarted by the use of the veto. The blockade of Beit Sahur had made that village a symbol of the struggle of the Palestinian people in its valient intifadah.

39. The Israeli occupier was intent on annihilating the Palestinian people and forcing it to migrate. Zionist acts were in violation of all international laws and conventions. The United Nations had a great moral responsibility in the creation of that artificial entity, which was heedless of the United Nations and its Charter and resolutions. Only the previous day, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister had reiterated Israel's intention to induce the collective migration of Palestinians. Jerusalem and the Golan had been formally annexed and the West Bank and Gaza had been annexed in practice by the settlements. Despite international condemnation of the Israeli racists and support for the intifadah, the adoption of resolutions could change nothing.

40. Generous Palestinian concessions in favour of peace had been met with murder, annihilation, expulsion and demolition. A heavy responsibility for that was borne by the international community, especially those who provided material support to the Zionist entity, thus encouraging the continued establishment of settlements. Both moral and material support must stop in order to prevent thousands of Palestinians from being made homeless and forced to migrate daily. Even in distant exile, they were being murdered, their property was being damaged, as had happened at Tunis, and they were being harassed.

41. No people had suffered greater indignity than the Palestinians. It was not enough to chronicle isolated violations; the problem must be seen in the context of an entire people. Resolutions of condemnation were not sufficient; practical steps must be taken to prevent such events from spreading, under the expansionist entity, with its long-range missiles and nuclear and chemical arsenals, to the entire region, from the Nile to the Euphrates. Israel was the only country in the world without official borders. There had been recent reports of nuclear weapons co-operation between the racist régimes in Israel and South Africa.

42. The 44-year-old Palestinian tragedy was nowhere near an end. It was significant that the Zionist entity had refused the Special Committee access to the occupied territories. Its criminal terrorist leaders had disdained all international calls for peace and were bent on ending the Palestinian presence in

(Mr. Treiki, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

the occupied territories, preventing all Arab progress, forcibly annexing the territories and depriving the Palestinians of their lands and right of return.

43. Urgent measures should be taken, including the implementation of Chapter VII of the Charter. With the coming independence of Namibia, the embargo imposed against South Africa had proved its usefulness. Events in Palestine were analagous to those in southern Africa. His delegation strongly condemned all the Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Arab territories, urged the strict application of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Jerusalem and the Golan, and appealed to the international community to assume its responsibilities and take the necessary steps to protect human rights there. He reiterated his country's full support for the Palestinian intifadah, which was the practical reaction to events in the occupied territories. He called for a halt to support for the Zionist entity.

44. The will of peoples would ultimately be victorious. His people had known and overcome Fascist oppression and inevitably, the Palestinian people would also triumph over it.

45. Mr. Oudovenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) resumed the Chair.

46. Mr. FARES (Democratic Yemen), speaking also on behalf of Yemen, said that the situation in the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, was extremely serious as a result of Israel's continued denial of the Palestinian people's legitimate national rights. There had been a dangerous escalation in the inhuman practices of the occupation authorities since the beginning of the heroic Palestinian uprising, which, however, would not be crushed, no matter how harsh the measures employed against it.

47. Israeli repressive practices could be compared only with the actions of Hitler's Nazis and those of the racist régime in South Africa. Israel, indeed, was flouting all international conventions and the provisions of international law by violating the most fundamental human rights of the population of the occupied Arab territories, in defiance of the fourth Geneva Convention. It also continued to disregard all the related resolutions of the United Nations. The two Governments reiterated their condemnation of the Israeli authorities' inhuman practices against the Palestinian people and reaffirmed that peace and security could be established in the region only when Israel withdrew from the occupied Arab territories and the Palestinian people was enabled to exercise all its legitimate national rights. The struggle would continue until victory was achieved.

48. Mr. PAOLI (France), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, said that the Twelve were seriously concerned that the situation in the occupied territories was continuing to deteriorate, that the inhabitants' living conditions were worsening and human rights were constantly being violated. As Israel had not allowed the members of the Special Committee to enter those territories, the Twelve had turned to other sources of information,

(Mr. Paoli, France)

inter alia, to those of their local representatives, in order to have as complete a picture as possible.

49. The European Community reaffirmed that the acquisition of territories by force was inadmissible. That principle, enshrined in the Charter, was binding on all. They also opposed practices designed to change the physical characteristics, demographic composition, institutional structure and status of the occupied territories. They thus deemed to be null and void the unilateral decisions taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem and to impose Israeli laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. They stressed the particular importance of Jerusalem for all of the parties concerned and reaffirmed that freedom of access to the Holy Places must be guaranteed under any settlement.

50. The Twelve also deemed to be illegal the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and called on Israel to put an end to such practices, which changed the demographic structure of the area in violation of international law. They stressed unequivocally that the Hague Convention of 1907 respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and the fourth Geneva Convention were applicable to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. They disapproved of the occupying Power's persistent refusal officially and fully to admit that fact in spite of numerous international appeals and, particularly, the relevant Security Council resolutions.

51. Any occupation could only lead to resistance and repression, as was the case in the Israeli-occupied territories. The Twelve noted the increased violence with concern and wished to highlight the excessive and frequently inappropriate nature of the means used by the occupation forces. In that regard, they condemned the wide-scale use of plastic bullets. They particularly condemned the destruction of homes, the imposition of curfews and economic sanctions and the repeated closing of schools, which could only have serious consequences for the future of young Palestinians. Moreover, the Twelve were opposed to the arbitrary arrests and detentions and to the expulsion measures which had repeatedly been condemned by the international community. It was shocking to deprive individuals of the right to reside in their own territory.

52. It was high time to break the chain of violence in the occupied territories. Partial measures could be taken to curb the deterioration of the Palestinians' living conditions. To that end, the European Community would increase its assistance to the population. In addition to its assistance through UNRWA, the Community would endeavour in particular to increase direct exports of products from the territories with preferential customs treatment. The Twelve trusted that the Palestinians would be able to avail themselves fully of those facilities.

53. However, only a comprehensive political settlement of the question of Palestine could put an end to the situation in the occupied territories. In that regard, the Twelve supported the right of all the States in the region, including Israel, to security and the right of all the peoples in the region to justice, including recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its

(Mr. Paoli, France)

right to self-determination. Those objectives must be achieved within the framework of an International Peace Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO. The Twelve were sparing no effort to promote a peaceful settlement and, to that end, were prepared to continue to make use of their good relations with all the parties. They called upon those parties to seize every opportunity to achieve such a settlement.

54. Mr. SEGUI (Côte d'Ivoire), recalling that the Middle East was the cradle of three great religions, regretted that a region with such profound historical and cultural links should be the scene of conflict.

55. The report of the Special Committee (A/44/599) gave cause for deep concern. It reflected the deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories and stressed numerous violations of human rights that were contrary to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It was regrettable that the relaxation of international tensions had had no positive impact in the Middle East.

56. The situation in the Middle East would continue to give cause for concern until a political solution was found for the Palestinian question, the crux of the problem. In any durable and viable peace settlement in the Middle East, it was essential to take into consideration both the Israeli and the Palestinian reality. Reciprocal recognition of those realities would create the climate of confidence needed for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. His Government supported the convening of an international conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, including the PLO. Such a conference would make it possible to achieve a comprehensive, just and durable settlement that would enable the Israeli troops to be withdrawn from the occupied Arab territories and would guarantee the right of all the States of the region to live in peace in secure and recognized borders. His delegation welcomed the recognition by the Palestine National Council of all United Nations resolutions on the Middle East, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and was pleased to note that the representative of Israel to the Special Committee had, in 1988, announced Israel's readiness to negotiate peace and the future legal status of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza District, as well as that of their Palestinian inhabitants. Such willingness should be brought to the attention of the international community, which must be made aware that the conditions were right for preparing an international conference on the Middle East.

57. Mr. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) said that the Special Committee's report was an indictment against Israel for its systematic liquidation and subjugation of the population of the occupied territories. He paid tribute to the Special Committee for its patience and devotion in view of the Israeli authorities' refusal to allow it to enter the territories.

58. It was only right that the international community should have broken its silence with regard to the occupation, as that silence had been interpreted as a

(Mr. Boukadoum, Algeria)

sign of encouragement for the policy of occupation. It had taken the intifadah to debunk the myth of the so-called "peaceful" occupation, to make the international community aware of the seriousness of the situation and acknowledge that the legitimate occupants would not consent to the acquisition of their territories by force.

59. Human rights in the territories, particularly the right to life, would not be respected until the occupation came to an end. Such rights were meaningless as long as the Arabs in the occupied territories were being driven from their lands, their property was being confiscated and they were being exiled and murdered. The dispossession of Palestinians and Arabs should be condemned as part of Israel's expansionist design, which constantly threatened regional peace and security.

60. The Zionist régime had pursued its inhumane practices for 21 years in spite of the heroic resistance of the Palestinians and the inhabitants of the Golan and the indignation of world opinion. Israel's campaign of horror and cruelty and its continued attempts to modify the physical and demographic characteristics of the territories highlighted its ambition to colonize all of the Palestinian and Arab lands. The decision to establish eight new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza had been taken by the so-called "coalition" Government, indicating that the Zionist régime would unanimously seek to implement the settlements policy. Moreover, the Israeli parliament continued to allocate considerable funds for establishing new settlements. While thousands of Palestinians lived in tent camps, Jewish settlers were provided with apartments. Moreover, Israel had adopted a set of measures to revive construction in the occupied territories, and the occupation forces expropriated Arab lands.

61. Israel's refusal to apply the fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories reflected its view that those territories were part of Eretz Yisrael and therefore not occupied.

62. Recent Security Council resolutions and the General Assembly debate indicated that the international community remained constantly alert to the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories and unanimously recognized the need to protect the civilian populations in accordance with international law, pending a solution to the question of Palestine. However, the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the civilians in the occupied territories could only be protected by negotiating a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, acceptable to all the parties concerned.

63. The proclamation of the State of Palestine and the peace initiative presented by the President of that State affirmed the readiness of the Palestinian people to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The universal consensus reached on the Palestinian peace initiative should be brought to bear on the proposal to convene an International Peace Conference with the participation of the PLO on an equal footing with the other parties concerned.

64. The Zionist régime was at the root of the tragedy which had led to the occupation of Palestine and the Golan. The United Nations, which shared

(Mr. Boukadoum, Algeria)

responsibility for the Palestinian tragedy, should take effective action to put an end to the repression against the Arab populations and to seek an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its rights to self-determination, to return and to establish a sovereign State in its homeland.

65. The General Assembly and the Security Council were responsible for ensuring that the fourth Geneva Convention was scrupulously respected pending the end of the occupation. Relevant measures should be taken to prepare the way for a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict.

66. Mr. MAKSOUD (Observer, League of Arab States) said that the Special Committee's report (A/44/599) gave a clear account of Israel's goals of annexation and expansion. The measures taken by Israel highlighted its contempt for the Fourth Geneva Convention, United Nations resolutions and public opinion. Israel's brutality in dealing with the resistance to the occupation, its systematic dismissal of charges, aversion to facts and racist prejudices were now clear. Israel intended to preoccupy the international community with the present so that no reference could be made to historical or ideological premises and no insight into its future plans was possible.

67. The leaders of the intifadah had realized that their lack of military power had to be offset by the moral power of Palestinian rights. The uprising had brought to light the true brutality and racism of revisionist Zionism. It had shown that Israel's practices stemmed from its commitment to that ideology. Israel was fulfilling that commitment in spite of legal, moral and political injunctions. It was on the basis of that ideology that Mr. Shamir had rejected the "land for peace" proposal, responding that the occupied lands were Israel's heritage. The international community should have no further illusions about the possibility of persuading Israel to negotiate.

68. The intifadah had also stirred Judaism's concern about human suffering, justice and freedom, which explained the outrage expressed by many Jews about the oppressive Israeli practices. Those individuals were described as "self-hating Jews" by the Zionist revisionist establishment.

69. The entire problem stemmed from the fact that Israel deemed itself to be a claimant Power, not an occupying Power. The Palestinians and the Syrians were treated as human obstacles to Eretz Yisrael. The alternatives available to the Palestinians were acceptance of colonization and annexation or massive transfer. The leaders of the intifadah insisted that Palestinians were equal human beings who were building their independent State and re-establishing the rule of law.

70. The efforts of the international community must lead to the expeditious convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices in order to salvage the Palestinian peace initiative. The Special Political Committee would then witness Palestinian and Arab contributions to human rights and peace.

71. Mr. WANG Shijie (China) said that the popular uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had shown convincingly that the Palestinian people would no longer tolerate the disregard for their basic right to exist. Their just struggle had won broad support from the international community. The brutal practices used by the Israeli authorities to suppress the uprising and Israel's continued gross violation of the human rights of the population in the occupied territories had met with world-wide condemnation.

72. In view of Israel's refusal, despite numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, to change its policy of aggression and expansion, the international community must strengthen its solidarity with the just struggle of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, adopt effective measures to compel Israel to comply with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and implement the relevant United Nations resolutions. In the final analysis, the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in the occupied territories would not be able to achieve true enjoyment of their human rights until a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East question was reached. To that end, his delegation wished to reiterate the proposal made by China in that regard: the Middle East question should be settled through political means, and all parties should refrain from using force; an International Peace Conference on the Middle East must be convened under the auspices of the United Nations and attended by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the various parties concerned; those parties must start a dialogue, and that must include direct talks between the PLO and Israel; Israel must stop oppressing the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied territories and withdraw; the security of Israel must also be guaranteed; the State of Palestine and the State of Israel must recognize each other's existence; and the Arab and Jewish peoples must coexist peacefully.

73. The PLO and the Arab countries had shown flexibility, which testified to the sincerity of their efforts to find a peaceful settlement of the Middle East question by political means. Regrettably, the Israeli Government had rejected that approach and was thus the main obstacle to a settlement. China called upon the Government of Israel to demonstrate a flexible attitude on the question. The United Nations was fully capable of playing a more active role in seeking a Middle East settlement and should give greater attention to mobilizing all the parties concerned so as to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East question as soon as possible.

74. Mr. AL-SALLAL (Kuwait) said that the desperate human rights situation in the occupied territories, as reported in the press and on the television screens of all countries, including those of the United States and Israel itself, was unprecedented in the late twentieth century. Even the most conservative accounts of that situation demonstrated the need for much more extensive and prompt action on the part of the international community. Any violation of fundamental human rights would inevitably lead to disorder and create instability: in a situation where children were killed every day simply for taking part in a demonstration or for leaving their homes during an unjustified and unending curfew, the potential for such instability was enormous.

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75. It would be interesting to know how the international community proposed to deal with those crimes and whether Western countries, which had shown such dedication to the causes of human rights and freedom and where condemnations of Israel had long been current in organizations enjoying official credibility, could justify the continuing flow of assistance and support to the occupying Power. The conditions under which detainees were held were indescribable; the expulsion and deportation of Palestinians in contravention of the Geneva Conventions and many United Nations resolutions continued; the farce of administrative detention was maintained; hundreds of Palestinian families were deprived of shelter as a result of the demolition of their homes; trials of Palestinians were mere charades, being entirely dictated by military orders; and Israelis accused of killing Palestinians were afforded a scandalous measure of leniency.

76. One way in which the population of the occupied territories was subjected to collective punishment was the imposition of economic sanctions. Apart from the demolition of homes, the denial of new building permits and the imposition of long curfews, measures included a ban on exports from the occupied territories, restrictions on the transfer of funds from abroad, the uprooting of olive-trees and the imposition of exorbitant taxes. Restrictions on crossings of the Jordan River had aroused objections even on the part of an Israeli civil rights organization.

77. Restrictions on freedom of worship, as well as desecrations of holy places and the Koran by Zionist criminals, should be vigorously condemned. His country's Head of State, as Chairman of the fifth session of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, deplored practices which provoked the feelings of 100 million Muslims and had recently urged the peoples and nations of the world and all international organizations, led by the United Nations, to take a firm stand against the Zionist régime's planned desecration of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which would have serious repercussions throughout the Arab and Islamic world at a time of intensive efforts to deal with the explosive situation in the occupied territories.

78. Just when great strides were being made in advancement of the right to free speech, it was regrettable that that right should remain inaccessible to the population of the occupied territories. Restrictions were imposed on their media, as well as on foreign newspapers covering their troubles, and a large number of Palestinian journalists had been imprisoned. Legitimate trade-union activities were also banned, enabling Israeli employers to continue paying Palestinian workers considerably less than the minimum wage. Educational establishments remained closed, depriving tens of thousands of students of their fundamental right to education, as affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even when their schools were open, they had been subject to restrictions whose purpose it was to thwart any progress on the part of the Arab population.

79. Despite the Israeli occupation authorities' manoeuvres to rid the territories of their Arab population, the will of the Palestinian people would not be broken: the heroes of the uprising would maintain their resistance and their leaders in the Palestine Liberation Organization would continue their battle for peace until

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victory was won and an independent State was established on Palestinian soil. The Palestinian people would, however, not be able to recover its inalienable right to self-determination without the assistance and solidarity of all peace-loving peoples. His delegation therefore urged all Member States to take a more decisive stand against Israel's human rights violations and to spare no effort in working towards a just solution of the question of Palestine.

80. Mr. AL-KHULAIFI (Qatar), noting that 21 years of work by the Special Committee had not in any way reduced the repression of the Palestinian population by the Israeli authorities, suggested that delegations should ask themselves whether the information contained in the Committee's report was intended to awaken consciences or simply to serve as material for ritual interventions. Although Israel continued to carry out the most abhorrent acts of terrorism and repression, certain Member States whose histories were filled with accounts of armed resistance were prepared to condone Israel's actions. In carrying out such actions, Israel was defying not only the will of the international community but also the teachings of revealed religions, including Judaism itself.

81. The fact that Israel had lost control of the situation in the occupied Arab territories was demonstrated by developments in Beit Sahur. The increasing level of violence and repression, annexation of land, seizure of property and adoption of harsh measures against strikes by Palestinian civilians, as well as the imposition of curfews and an escalation in the use of force by Israeli settlers against Palestinians had all served to feed the uprising. The hopes of Palestinian victims in the occupied territories were now fastened upon the United Nations once again. It was the earnest wish of the population of the occupied territories that the references in the Charter to the dignity of the human person and the equal rights of nations should be translated into practical reality for the Palestinian people as for all other persons and nations.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.