



General Assembly

PROVISIONAL

A/44/PV.70
13 December 1989

ENGLISH

Forty-fourth session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SEVENTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 1 December 1989, at 10 a.m.

President:

Mr. FEYDER
(Vice-President)

(Luxembourg)

- Question of Palestine [39] (continued)
 - (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General
 - (c) Draft resolutions

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, within one week, to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Feyder (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 39 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/44/35)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/44/731)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (A/44/L. 43 to A/44/L. 45, A/44/L. 50, A/44/L. 51)

Mr. BUDAI (Hungary): The past year has witnessed many positive changes in international politics. The general trend of these changes points to the creation of a safer world with the renunciation of the use or threat of force as a means for settling disputes and with a growing awareness of the need for dialogue, negotiation and co-operation instead of confrontation. This trend has already brought about tangible progress towards the solution of most of the regional conflicts in the world. One of the striking exceptions is the Arab-Israeli conflict, which continues to be a source of tension and instability for the nations of the Middle East and threatens international peace and security in general.

The international community has accepted and reaffirmed in numerous United Nations resolutions that the core issue of the conflict is the question of Palestine, which cannot be solved until Israel withdraws from the territories occupied since 1967 and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own, sovereign and independent State, are recognized.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has dramatically emphasized the need to make progress towards attaining those objectives. The

(Mr. Budai, Hungary)

Intensification of efforts by Israel to suppress the Palestinian intifadah and the increasing resort to armed force and other violent action have not achieved their purported results. They have only aggravated the plight and suffering of the Palestinian people by bringing upon them even harsher and more cruel forms of repression. The uprising of the Palestinian people has continued and it will soon enter its third year despite overwhelming odds, the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israeli troops, and the punishment and intimidation of the Arab population resulting in an extensive and wide range of violations of human rights.

Even a partial list of the atrocities and wrongdoings committed by the occupying army against the unarmed population would go beyond the limits of our statement. The killing and wounding of defenceless Palestinian civilians, the beating, the breaking of bones, the deportations, the imposition of restrictive economic measures, the demolition of houses, the ransacking of real and personal properties, the collective punishments and detentions, are all part of a long and sad record reflected in the reports issued under the present item. These measures were condemned as recently as 6 October in resolution 44/2 in which the General Assembly demanded also that Israel abide scrupulously by the Fourth Geneva Convention and desist immediately from policies and practices which were in violation of the provisions of the Convention.

Hungary reaffirms its solidarity with the just struggle of the Palestinian people for its right to self-determination and the establishment of its own independent homeland. Dr. Matyas Szuros, President ad interim of the Republic of Hungary, in his message sent to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, underlined our firm position that

(Mr. Budai, Hungary)

" ... a comprehensive solution should be sought for the Middle-East crisis, the central element of which is the Palestinian question. We support the idea of convening an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, which would, with the participation of all interested parties and the co-operation of the permanent member States of the Security Council, elaborate the ways and means of the settlement of the crisis, guaranteeing the peace and security of all States in the region. We highly appreciate that the Palestine Liberation Organization, having accepted the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, makes efforts to settle the Middle-East crisis through political means."

Resort to force and violence cannot lead to the results Israel hopes for: it will not ensure peace in the occupied territories; on the contrary it will further increase hatred and suspicion and stiffen the resistance of the Palestinian population. A realistic and viable solution has to be political. It should involve the recognition of both the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people and the rights of Israel to live in peace within secure and recognized borders.

The conditions for a peaceful, negotiated settlement now seem to be more favourable than before. We believe that in these circumstances the world needs more open and more flexible approaches. The maximum use of compromises, the rejection of extremist actions and policies, the avoidance of ostracisms and self-exclusions from the process are the fundamental requirements for the promotion of new initiatives and new possibilities for solving the crisis and the core issue of it, the question of Palestine.

Mr. PHOFOLO (Lesotho): The General Assembly discusses the question of Palestine this year against the background of important and positive world-wide developments that hold out unique prospects of breaking the impasse in the Middle East, which in the past 40 years has become one of the most dangerous and sensitive focal points of conflict in contemporary international relations.

To the emerging trends in international relations towards the reduction of tension, the halting of the arms race, and the increasing recognition that all regional conflicts can be settled through dialogue and co-operation, must be added the declaration in November last year of an independent State of Palestine and the historic acceptance by the Palestine National Council of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the basis for reaching a comprehensive settlement and peace in the region.

The overwhelming majority of Member States in the Assembly returned from our memorable meetings in Geneva last year with raised hopes and expectations, unanimous in the belief that the new developments had opened up new opportunities for peace and were a significant contribution to the search for a comprehensive and final solution to the Middle East problem.

However, the continuing explosive situation in the region remains intractable and still runs counter to the direction of these positive changes in the attitudes and overall climate in international political relations. No other conflict in the world today poses greater threats to international peace and security than the situation in the Middle East, and no other cries out more loudly to the international community for a peaceful settlement.

Ever so central to the Arab-Israeli conflict is the question of Palestine, the question of a people deprived of its independence and statehood, struggling to defend its dignity and basic human rights, including their basic right to life,

(Mr. Phoofofo, Lesotho)

in the face of an occupying military Power that persists in trampling upon their aspirations and inalienable rights, contrary to the successive decisions and resolutions of the United Nations and in blatant violation of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The Kingdom of Lesotho believes that, if humanity is at one in its quest for peace and justice on Earth, and if commitment to the principles of the Charter of our Organization is genuine and universal, then we must continue to raise our voices in defence of the rights of the Palestinian people to national dignity and self-determination and for the realization of their aspirations for peace and development.

The urgency of adopting decisive measures to protect the lives of the Palestinians, who for years now have suffered degradation and persecution under foreign occupation, and the need to redouble our efforts towards finding a lasting solution to the Palestinian conflict, leave no room for rhetoric or procrastination.

The Kingdom of Lesotho continues to attach great importance to the indispensable role that is being played by the United Nations in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question. The General Assembly, having partitioned the land of Palestine four decades ago into two States - one Jewish and one Palestinian - through its resolution 181 (II), still bears the responsibility of fulfilling the remaining part of its mandate to restore the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to statehood on the basis of justice and the accepted principles of international law, which is the central element to the settlement of the prolonged conflict in the Middle East.

From the time of its political independence, when it first assumed membership of the United Nations, the Kingdom of Lesotho has supported scores of Assembly resolutions aimed at achieving peace in Palestine. That there is still no peace in

(Mr. Phoofolo, Lesotho)

that region of the world today is because the parties directly concerned in the conflict paid little or no heed to the repeated calls and demands of the international community regarding the essential framework for a peaceful settlement.

There can be no condition more crucial to a lasting solution to the Middle East conflict than the withdrawal of Israel's troops from the territories it has occupied since 1967. The determination of the Palestinian people has shown beyond any doubt that peace will remain an illusive goal until they have finally rid themselves completely of the degradation and brutality of foreign occupation. At issue here is the basic principle of international law that no territorial acquisition by force can be recognized as a *fait accompli*.

Of equal importance is for the State of Israel to cease its programme of mushrooming Jewish settlements on the Arab territories it occupied during the 1967 war and urgently to dismantle those settlements that have already been erected, because such practices are bound to create yet more obstacles to peace that may turn out to be difficult to remove in the long run.

While military occupation itself constitutes a violation of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Israel's policies towards the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories - which are characterized by the excessive use of force, the deportation of indigenous inhabitants, the demolition of houses, torture and other forms of violence - are incompatible with its responsibilities as an occupying Power under the 1949 Geneva Convention, are to be deplored and must be urgently brought to an end.

The Kingdom of Lesotho has consistently adhered to the view that any comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem is possible only if it is founded on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the essential elements of which are the restoration of the inalienable rights of the

(Mr. Phoofolo, Lesotho)

Palestinian people to statehood, the return of the occupied Arab territories, and the recognition of the right of all States in the area to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

It is for this reason that the Kingdom of Lesotho continues to believe that, owing to the multiplicity of interests involved and the international character which the Middle East conflict has assumed since its inception, the modalities for a comprehensive solution can best be handled within the framework of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the equal participation of all parties concerned, including the authentic leadership of the people of Palestine. It goes without saying, however, that nothing can be achieved by way of peace if some basic attitudes, the essential elements of which are goodwill, flexibility and political commitment, do not become part of the behaviour of the parties.

The Palestine National Council Declaration adopted in Algiers in November last year has already opened up a new vista to new opportunities for peace. By endorsing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a basis for negotiation in the framework of an international conference, and by accepting the right to the existence and security of all States in the region, as well as by renouncing the option of violence, the Palestine National Council has demonstrated a requisite attitude and a genuine desire to participate in the process of dialogue leading to a lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

It is now vital for Israel to respond with a similar gesture and open up negotiations preliminary to the holding of the international conference on the Middle East. Peace is urgent. Our generation cannot afford to be associated with an era of lost opportunities.

(Mr. Phoofolo, Lesotho)

The Kingdom of Lesotho welcomes the decision by the Government of the United States of America to open up direct dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization as a constructive step that contributes immensely to the collective efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Phoofofo, Lesotho)

It is also a demonstration of realism that goes well with the historic responsibilities for international peace and security which the international community has placed on the United States of America as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

The Kingdom of Lesotho is convinced that any alternative peace plans for the settlement of the question of Palestine, outside the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), are destined to fail and can lead only to further deterioration of the already violent situation in the Middle East so long as they come short of addressing in full the issue that is central to the Middle East conflict, which is the total restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence and the return of the Arab territories occupied since the 1967 war.

We are equally convinced that any credible and genuine negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question necessarily have to accommodate the direct participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has long been recognized by the General Assembly as the sole and legitimate representative of the people of Palestine. That is the reality that all the parties to the Middle East conflict can neither change nor escape. Obviously any negotiation process that is intended to bring about justice must itself be based on justice, and it is surely within the rights of the Palestinian people to determine whom they should entrust with the guardianship of their aspirations and whom they should not.

The Palestinian people in the occupied territories, through their popular uprising, the intifadah, have clearly demonstrated that their resolve to pursue to the end the implementation of their legitimate right to self-determination can no longer be ignored; nor can it be undermined by the use of force, however brutal.

(Mr. Phoofole, Lesotho)

This has emphasized emphatically the urgency of an active search for a genuinely negotiated and peaceful settlement.

The Kingdom of Lesotho remains committed and, through the Organization, ready to contribute to this process.

Mr. BELONOGOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): A few days ago in this Hall the Soviet delegation set out in detail the Soviet Union's approach to ways and means of settling the Middle East problem, and its core: the question of Palestine. The question of Palestine is being discussed at this session at a time of great significance for the fate of the Palestinian people and the whole of the Middle East. The direction that that region takes, how and whether the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved, will determine the future of the Palestinians and other Arab peoples, and of the Israelis.

The United Nations, which has historically borne particular responsibility for the course of affairs in the Middle East, has from the very beginning taken as the basis of its approach to the question of Palestine what seems to us to be the true principle: one land, two peoples, two States. It has been clear that coexistence in the territory of historical Palestine has the characteristic of interdependence and that justice and civilized development cannot be ensured for one people until the same conditions are ensured for the other.

We are convinced that the primary reason for the failure of the frequent attempts to restore calm to the Middle East lies in the tragic underestimation, in actual policies, of the close interrelationship between the peaceful coexistence of peoples and the consistent observance of fundamental human rights and, above all, the freedom of choice, the right of each people to decide its own future. The failure of those involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict to give priority to this postulate has frequently thrown the Middle East into a state of bloody warfare and

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

has placed it in a vicious circle of permanent confrontation. Today, once again, we must note with deep regret that Israel's failure to recognize common human values when the Palestinian people are concerned, its refusal to agree to an unconditional guarantee of human rights, and its failure to ensure the right of self-determination for the Palestinians and the right to create their own independent State block the way to a genuine and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem, and thus of the entire Arab-Israeli conflict.

We sincerely share the profound concern that exists in the world about the situation of human rights in the Arab territories occupied by Israel - above all in the West Bank of Jordan and including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The gross trampling under foot of the Palestinians' rights has gone so far as the institution of a system of punitive measures aimed at undermining the very basis of existence of the Palestinian Arab people as a cultural, economic and ethnic community.

Frequent mass arrests of those who are dissatisfied with the occupation and destruction of the homes of Palestinians, confiscation of land and property, the designation of water resources for the use of Israeli settlements, constant militarization of the occupied areas, harsh restrictions on exit from and return to the territory - all these are causing great damage to the social and cultural development of the Palestinian population. Another example of this is the periodic closures of Arab educational establishments, including establishments of higher learning.

The peaceful uprising of the Palestinian people, the intifadah, reflecting the nation-wide consensus of Palestinians concerning their rejection of the Israeli occupation, has caused the occupying Power to engage in repressive actions, such as Israel has resorted to before, but unprecedented in scale. No one can remain

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

unmoved by the scenes of violence occurring daily in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The number of peaceful inhabitants of the territory killed at the hands of the occupiers now stands in the thousands. Such actions cannot be regarded as anything but cold-blooded mass murder with the aim of intimidation. Of particular concern is the fact that among those dead and among the 48,000 injured a significant number were minors, old people and women, including pregnant ones.

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

Can you justify by any considerations of security the death of children, the mutilation of elderly people or the inducing of respiratory illnesses in children through the use by troops of high concentrations of tear gas? More than 60,000 persons who have been fighting against the Israeli occupation are being held in concentration camps or under administrative arrest. There is ample evidence of the torture of Palestinians in prisons and of severe beatings of detainees, often to death. One of the most flagrant violations of human rights has been the deportation of many Palestinians. The chief accusation against them was that they had taken an active part in demonstrations against the occupation. There is another problem also in the occupied territories: the oppression or persecution to which the Muslim and Christian communities are being subjected. The civilized world cannot but condemn these acts of provocation, acts such as the recent blockade of the Christian village of Beit-Sahur or the attempts of Israeli religious extremists to lay the foundation-stone for the restoration of the Temple of Solomon near a place sacred to the entire Muslim world - the Al Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem. All these acts are in direct violation of international treaties, above all the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907 and other international legal instruments.

The demand that Israel should desist from its illegal actions in the territories it occupies is clearly set forth in the resolution on the uprising of the Palestinian people adopted by the General Assembly on 6 October by 140 votes to 2. The Soviet Union is in solidarity with the self-sacrificing struggle of the Palestinian people and is duty bound to declare that the continuation of the inhumane practices by the Israeli authorities is intolerable, not only from an

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

ethical point of view but also from the point of view of the negative impact it has on the cause of peace in the Middle East.

We call on the United Nations to take decisive measures to implement the resolutions it has adopted on the question of Palestine and to ensure a halt to the Israeli terror and repression.

In the last year and a half a sufficiently broad political basis has been laid for a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Its key elements are the readiness of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to enter into negotiations with Israel within the framework of an international conference in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and in accordance with the desire of the Palestinian people to coexist with Israel in conditions of peace and security; the condemnation by the PLO of terrorism in all its forms; and finally the broadest support by the international community for the proposals concerning the early convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned. One of the positive points to be noted is the dialogue between the United States Administration and the PLO, which is increasing the possibility of finding an answer, through compromise solutions, to the complicated problems and of confirming the existing understanding throughout the world that the PLO is a truly reliable, equal and essential partner in a future settlement, one without whose participation no stable and long-lasting agreement can be achieved.

We must note, of course, that the path to a settlement cannot be one-way. To give priority only to one's own interests - as is being done by the Israeli leadership - or to see the main goal only as imposing its own vision of a solution

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

to those thorny problems is only, in fact, to keep on creating new obstacles to peace and ultimately to jeopardize not only the interests of others, but one's own interests as well.

In the year that is now drawing to a close, although we have not seen the breakthrough we desired, it has been demonstrated that the new situation as regards a settlement is largely due to the intifadah or the constructive and realistic positions which evolved from the nineteenth session of the Palestine National Council and which have given a serious and positive impetus for the promotion of efforts within the international community and the Middle East towards peace. It is not surprising therefore that many ideas and proposals have been put forward, including ideas of an organizational and procedural nature, for initiating the peace process. We consider that each of these proposals should be closely discussed and studied in detail. The criteria for an acceptable proposal include the possibility, through its implementation, of promoting a settlement and of continuing to take practical steps to that end. These initiatives can and must have a rational core and must be subject to consultations and agreement by the interested parties, and must be a part of the multifaceted task of preparing for the International Peace Conference and be built into the process of drafting and achieving a final settlement.

One common point in the proposals and initiatives made recently is the idea of elections, an idea which was expressed first by the Palestinians themselves, especially in the second statement of the united national leadership of the Palestinian uprising in December 1987. We consider that there is sufficient potential in this idea to help plan the settlement on a practical level. Therefore we propose that discussions on this matter be initiated by the five permanent members of the Security Council and then that the parties directly interested be

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

involved in the dialogue. Of course, there may be other options but we must never lose sight of the main question: To what extent does the path chosen serve the aim of achieving a comprehensive settlement and of convening the International Conference. In the last few months, much has been said about the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. As is well known, at its recent session in Baghdad the Central Council of the PLO adopted a decision on opening a dialogue with Israel under international auspices to move the peace initiatives a step further. We support that idea and will of course do everything we can to promote its realization. As an important step towards reducing the confrontation and creating an atmosphere of trust, Mr. Schevardnadze proposed that a meeting be organized between the PLO and Israel on Soviet territory with the participation of the Soviet Union and the United States. As reported in Pravda on 14 November 1989 Yasser Arafat stated that the PLO leadership agreed with those proposals by the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs and is prepared to make efforts towards that end. As a whole, we consider it a positive step and believe that the dialogue could make a constructive contribution to improving the situation in the Middle East, particularly if it is carried out on an international scale. The main thing, in our view, that is hindering major progress in this question of a settlement is the continuing hard line and uncompromising stance of the ruling circles of Israel. We cannot fail to see that the process of rethinking old approaches or outmoded plans is still moving slowly in this country. The main point is that it has not spilled over into a review of practical policy, and has not led to a start of the negotiating process. We need a review of practical policies in order to move forward and begin the negotiation process.

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

The refusal to enter into dialogue with the PLO, the desire to find alternative partners, and the reluctance to listen to the just demands of the Palestinians: these approaches will not solve the problem but only worsen the situation in the region. The stubborn pursuit of that course will be very dangerous and counterproductive, even from the point of view of the interests of the Israeli people and the State of Israel itself.

It seems to us that the urgent task today is to keep constantly in mind the opportunities now opening before us, not to take a step backward in the search for mutually acceptable solutions, to display realism and an honest desire to move from confrontation to interaction, taking into account each other's interests and seeking a balance of those interests.

The United Nations, in our view, has all the necessary potential to make a valuable contribution to solving the Palestinian problem. Our proposals in this respect are well known. In a word, the international community now has a broad field for diplomatic work to find a just solution to the Palestinian problem. The existing approaches must be interwoven into a full and practical line to unblock the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core: the Palestinian problem.

The Soviet Union is sincere in its desire to help the people of the Middle East to overcome the trials which have befallen them. It is high time for well-thought-out and decisive action, realism, political wisdom and courage.

Mr. BLANC (France) (interpretation from French): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community.

I need hardly recall in this Hall the cultural, political and economic ties woven throughout history between the peoples of the European Community and those of

(Mr. Blanc, France)

the Middle East. The Twelve cannot be indifferent to events that affect that region, which is near to us in so many ways and which have an inevitable impact on peace and security on either side of the Mediterranean.

The past year has been marked by hope aroused by several positive developments, in particular by the efforts exerted as a result of the important decision by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to abandon terrorism. The extraordinary Arab summit meeting in Casablanca supported that decision. The year has also been marked by the opening of a dialogue between the PLO and the United States, as well as by various peace initiatives that have made appreciable contributions to the attempts to solve the Palestinian problem.

However, we are compelled to note that those development have not produced all the expected effects on the peace process, and that the situation in the occupied territories, where the cycle of violence and repression continues, has further deteriorated.

The Twelve have never spared any effort to reach a solution of the conflicts that divide the Middle East, and in particular to reach a lasting, just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine. They consider that the quest for an overall solution to that question is the political and moral responsibility of the international community. The United Nations and the parties concerned must not cease to work in that direction.

The position of the Twelve is based on the purposes and principles set forth in the United Nations Charter and on the principles of international law, in particular, the non-use of force or the threat of force, and the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force or altering the status of occupied territories.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

The position of the Twelve on the settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict is well known. It was defined in the Venice Declaration of June 1980 and in the Madrid Declaration of last June. It is based on two fundamental principles which in our view are indivisible: the right of all the States in the region, including Israel, to security - that is to say, to live within secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries; and the right of all the peoples in the region to justice, which includes recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, among them its right to self-determination, with all that this entails.

The Twelve are convinced that it is in the framework of the International Peace Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, that a peaceful solution based on those principles must be sought. Such a conference would in their view be an appropriate forum for direct negotiations between the parties concerned with a view to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement. The Twelve reaffirm that the PLO must participate in that process.

The Twelve support all efforts, and in particular those of the permanent members of the Security Council, to bring the parties together and to create a climate of confidence between them that might make it easier to convene the International Peace Conference.

The situation in the occupied territories is a tragic illustration of what happens when there is no progress in the quest for a settlement. Any occupation is bound sooner or later to create a fatal cycle of resistance and repression. The situation in the territories occupied by Israel is no exception to that rule.

The Twelve note with disquiet the rising violence in the occupied territories, which has already claimed all too many victims. They want to stress that the occupation forces are going to excesses in the means they are using. This cannot but stir up resentment and perpetuate the chain reaction of violence, which the Twelve deplore, whatever its origin.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

The military occupation can only be considered temporary and does not give the occupying Power the right to annex the occupied territories or to extend its jurisdiction or its administration to them. That is why the Twelve consider null and void the unilateral decision taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem, a city sacred to three religions, whose importance for all the parties concerned has to be taken into account. They reaffirm that freedom of access to the Holy Places should be guaranteed in any settlement.

In the same spirit, they reiterate that they consider the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories to be illegal. They call on Israel, as they have always done, to put an end to such practices, whose effect is to change the demographic structure of those territories, in violation of international law.

Finally, the Twelve wish to recall without ambiguity that the 1907 Hague Convention and the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War are applicable to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. They deplore the fact that Israel persists in refusing to comply with those Conventions.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

The uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories has demonstrated the fact that without recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people there is not, and there cannot be, for Israel or for the other countries of the region any peace or security or future. Likewise, the right of the Palestinians to self-determination cannot be exercised without acceptance of the right of Israel to existence and security.

During recent months efforts have been concentrated on the Israeli proposal for the holding of elections in the occupied territories. The Twelve consider that if those elections are to have an effective impact they should be part and parcel of an overall settlement process and should take place in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, with appropriate guarantees of freedom. No solution should be set aside and the final negotiations should take place on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which are founded on the principle of the exchange of occupied territories for peace.

Based on those principles the Twelve have welcomed Egypt's contribution to the advancement of the peace process, as expressed in the 10-point proposal of President Mubarak. The Twelve today encourage the efforts that are under way. They feel that those efforts should constitute a useful stage on the way towards convening an international conference.

The member countries of the European Community have constantly stressed the need for all parties to show moderation and to strive to be constructive. They will continue to follow with the greatest attention the evolution of the Palestinian question and they will spare no effort to encourage a peaceful settlement of that question, particularly through the close contacts they intend to maintain and develop with all parties concerned.

Mr. BHATTI (Pakistan): It was only last month that the General Assembly adopted a resolution, with the support of 140 Members of the United Nations, condemning Israel's persistent policies and practices violating the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and demanding that Israel abide scrupulously by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

Nevertheless Israel has continued in its attempt to crush the intifadah with the most violent measures available, earning for itself the condemnation of the international community. The people of Palestine have, however, refused to be cowed by the Israeli tactics, and their determination to achieve their goal of independence remains resolute as the intifadah enters its third year.

What the international community has witnessed over the past two years is basically a contrast between Palestinian moderation and Israeli intransigence. On the Palestinian side there is the peace initiative launched by President Yasser Arafat last year, while Israel persists in its efforts to deny the people of Palestine their national rights.

The Palestine National Council, meeting under the chairmanship of President Yasser Arafat, at its Nineteenth Extraordinary Session in Algiers proclaimed the independent State of Palestine. The proclamation of independence carried a message of peace and conciliation. It proclaimed Palestine's commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration rejects the threat or use of force, violence and terrorism - against Palestine as against the territorial integrity of other States.

The political resolution adopted by the Palestine National Council confirmed the determination of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to reach a comprehensive peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its essence, the

(Mr. Bhatti, Pakistan)

Palestinian question. This solution would be worked out within the framework of the United Nations Charter, the principles and provisions of international legitimacy, the rules of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations. That would be done in a manner that would ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to establish its independent national State on its national territory, as well as create arrangements of security and peace for all the States of the region.

The political resolution recognized the pivotal role of the United Nations in achieving this objective. It underlined the necessity of holding an international peace conference on the Middle East and the Palestinian issue, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the struggle in the region, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing.

The people of Palestine and the leadership of the PLO have taken a giant stride towards the resolution of the age-old conflict in the Middle East and the creation of conditions in which all the States in the region may live in peace and security. The proclamation and political resolution adopted at Algiers contain historic messages which cannot be ignored by any country, including Israel.

The Secretary-General presents a poignant picture of the Palestine uprising, when he says in his report of 8 September 1989 that

"the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories grows steadily worse, with hundreds of people killed and thousands wounded or detained since the beginning of the intifadah nearly two years ago. The Security Council has repeatedly called on Israel to abide by its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and I have voiced my deep concern that, despite the appeals of the international community, widespread violation of human rights persists." (A/44/1, p. 8)

(Mr. Bhatti, Pakistan)

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the statement of the Chairman of that Committee contain horrifying details of the growing deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, where hundreds of Palestinians have been killed and tens of thousands wounded, maimed and detained since the beginning of the intifadah. In their attempt to break the will of the Palestinian people the Israeli authorities have imposed collective punishments, economic coercion and curfews; they have demolished houses, closed educational institutions, destroyed crops and trees and resorted to deportations. What we are witnessing in the occupied territories is an example of the Israeli occupying forces declaring war on the defenceless Palestinian people.

However, the struggle of the people of Palestine for dignity and nationhood over the past four decades has demonstrated that a people committed to freedom and independence cannot be subjugated for long. Delay in recognizing that reality will only aggravate instability and insecurity in the region and increase the sufferings and misery of all the peoples of the region, without extinguishing the flame of liberty which burns eternally.

Israel has shown by its repressive actions its utter contempt for the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. It is time for the international community, and in particular the Security Council, to take firm action to ensure protection of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. It is time that the United Nations machinery was used to end the festering conflict in the Middle East, the crux of which lies in the denial of the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and statehood. We agree with the Secretary-General, when he reminds all concerned of

(Mr. Bhatti, Pakistan)

"the urgent need for an effective negotiating process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and taking fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including that of self-determination. The longer such a process is delayed, the greater will be the difficulties in initiating it and the more explosive the situation can become". (A/44/1, p. 8)

(Mr. Bhatti, Pakistan)

The quest for peace in the Middle East has a long history of missed opportunities. Now more than ever the Security Council, particularly the permanent members, have an opportunity to seize a historic moment. Now is the time to resolve the question of Palestine and end the suffering of its people by enabling them to assume their rightful place in the comity of nations.

Unfortunately Palestinian moderation has been met with increasing Israeli intransigence and resort to violence. It is time Israel heeded the universal condemnation of its policy of the use of force. The fundamental grievances behind the Palestine uprising are political and can be addressed only through a political solution, not by military force. The so-called peace initiatives of the Israeli authorities are part of their attempt to evade the basic issue, which is the restoration of the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and nationhood. Israel's manoeuvres merely exhibit its intention to avoid discussing the real issues and to continue its occupation of Palestine.

We in Pakistan are committed to the just struggle of the Palestinian people and look forward to the day when Palestine can assume its rightful place in the comity of nations. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has said,

"In the struggle for freedom of the Palestinians, the people of Pakistan will continue to march shoulder to shoulder with their Palestinian brethren."

I wish to take this opportunity, therefore, of expressing to the people of Palestine our unflinching support for their just cause and their struggle for independence.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish at the outset to pay a tribute to all those who have been martyred by the Zionist régime in occupied Palestine, particularly since the inception of the heroic intifadah.

The international community is about to put behind it another decade of the twentieth century. It will, however, bear on its shoulders into the next decade

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

the burden of the tragic problem of Palestine, still unresolved and a source of worry, particularly for Muslims, and a sign of the futility of the efforts to find a just solution. The history of years of occupation of this sacred land leaves no doubt of the necessity for the international community to take measures to deal in a definitive way with the root cause of the crisis.

There is no need to prove where the root cause lies and who is responsible for the agony of so many people. A territory in the heart of the Islamic world has been occupied in the name of Jewish people and the occupiers have killed or displaced a large number of innocent people. The repressive practices and criminal acts of the occupying régime of Al Quds since the occupation of Palestine have not decreased in intensity; on the contrary, they assume greater severity with each day that passes. This demonstrates clearly that a régime that is based on massive violation of all international norms and regulations and has occupied a territory by resort to violence and coercion cannot continue to survive without the use of the same violent policies of force. This is exactly why every year we witness further crimes by the Zionist régime in the occupied territories.

The occupation of Palestine by the Zionist régime and the continuation of the criminal acts in that land are a source of great pain and concern to the people in Palestine and the entire Islamic world. Unfortunately, the international community has not been able to find a remedy for the suffering of the Palestinians. As a result of this inability on the part of the international community, the oppressed Palestinians had no alternative but to resort to force, in self-defence and to regain their legitimate rights. Every time the people of Palestine intensify their struggle to liberate their motherland from occupation by the Zionists, the

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

Zionist régime suppresses their uprising with the greatest severity, causing the death, injury or detention of thousands of people. Some of these crimes are reflected in the reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories. As these reports have been distributed in documents A/44/352 and A/44/599, there is no need for me to go into further detail.

In addition to its widespread suppression of the uprising, for the purpose of consolidating its foundations, the Zionist régime has embarked on an alteration of the cultural and socio-economic structure of that land. These measures have consistently met with the strong opposition and condemnation of Muslims throughout the world, as well as the international community. They include the destruction of homes and public places, especially mosques - above all, Al Aqsa mosque, the first Kiblah of Muslims, which was set on fire, and inside which excavations were carried out. Also, the Zionist régime recently laid, near Al Aqsa mosque, the foundation-stone of what it calls the rebuilt Solomon's Temple. This action has caused great anger among Muslims throughout the world. By erecting Solomon's Temple on this sacred site, the Zionist occupiers are seeking to fulfil their long-held aspirations in the region and to counter the uprising of the people, which is the natural consequence of the occupation of the territory and the heinous crimes of the Zionists.

This recent action by the Zionists is, in fact, designed to expand zionism and change the Muslims' confrontation of the Zionist régime into a confrontation between Muslims and Jews, so that, by setting the members of the two divine religions against one another, they can give effect to their ominous plans.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

The increasing crimes of the Zionist régime in occupied Palestine against people who have risen up to confront with their bare hands and their strong faith the most modern weapons and the efforts of that régime to alter the basic structures of Palestine to suit its own illegitimate interests demonstrate that fabricated, artificial régime's growing fear of the struggle of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

The Palestinian people have clearly shown throughout the time that their land has been occupied, and recently by the all-out intifadah in the occupied territories, the way to resolve the Palestinian crisis. All the evidence points to the fact that they are resolved to find a solution through attaining their freedom and liberating all of Palestine from the claws of the régime occupying Al Quds. If it were not for the influence of the supporters of the Zionists in the United States, the Organization would have taken positive steps towards the solution of the Palestinian problem; and if it were not for the assistance given the occupying régime by some countries, including the United States, the oppressed people of Palestine would have been able to gain their rights.

The Zionist régime could not have been created without the assistance of certain Western countries. It still needs their help in order to stay on its feet. It is exactly because of this support that the occupying régime dares to intensify its crimes without fearing their international consequences. By launching all-out aggression in southern Lebanon, bombing Palestinian refugee camps and killing innocent Palestinian refugees, the Zionist régime not only ignores all humanitarian principles but also insults the resolve of the international community.

We made our position on the Palestinian problem clear from the very beginning of the Islamic revolution. For our people, Palestine is an Islamic heritage. The presence of the occupying Zionist régime in this holy land is intolerable to us. Thus the presence of that régime in Palestine deserves the special attention of the international community not only because of the threat it poses to the peace and security of the region, but also because it is very important from the Islamic standpoint. Our principled approach towards the régime occupying Al Quds is based on non-recognition of that régime, the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people and the formation of an independent Palestinian State in the entire land

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic
Republic of Iran)

of Palestine. We condemn the policies and practices of the Zionist régime and emphasize that, in the process of finding a solution to the Palestinian problem, any plan that will lead to recognition of the occupying régime will not be able to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people and will therefore not be acceptable to the Muslim people.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to be on the side of the Muslim and combatant Palestinian people and hopes that the people of Palestine will soon be able to rid themselves of the oppression and occupation of the Zionist régime, take their destiny into their own hands and rescue the region from the root cause of the crisis.

Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic):

During its last session the General Assembly held meetings in Geneva devoted to the question of Palestine. That was perhaps the first time it had met away from Headquarters, and it did so because of the refusal by the United States to respond to General Assembly resolution 43/48, of 30 November 1988, in which the Assembly called on the United States to grant an entry visa to the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, to enable him to participate in the General Assembly's deliberations.

All Member States, with the exception of the United States and Israel, supported the Assembly's decision to transfer its meetings to Geneva. The basis of that overwhelming support was the keen desire of Member States to uphold the credibility of the United Nations and to ensure that it would not be held hostage to the policies of any country, however great and mighty it might be.

We see two major factors in the developments before, during and after the Geneva experience. The first is the virtually unanimous international support for the rights of the Palestinian people. The second - which might be called the

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

antithesis of the first - is the lengths to which the United States has gone in its declared political war against the Palestinian people, a war that has greatly escalated in the past year in the wake of the qualitative changes in the national Palestinian struggle, especially the civilian intifadah in the occupied territories and the resolution adopted by the Palestine National Council last November - developments that have met with a broad positive response and support in the world. We can only interpret this United States reaction as stemming from an unjustified feeling of provocation because of the progress made by the Palestinian cause.

In spite of all that, achievements and decisions have resulted from the Geneva meetings and concomitant political events - developments that have clearly revealed the true nature of the conflict in the Middle East and in particular the truth underlying Israel's stance vis-à-vis the peace process.

In November last year - in spite of difficult and complex circumstances - in response to international efforts and in confirmation of the true and sincere Palestinian desire for peace, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) launched its political initiative at meetings of the Palestine National Council in Algeria. A year has passed since that initiative was taken. The hopes it inspired are gradually evaporating; they are shrinking day by day. Previously it was claimed that the only road to peace was for the PLO to recognize Israel's right to exist. Today it is claimed that the PLO can never be a party to a settlement. We are at a loss to understand this paradox. We are unable to understand, not what Israel wishes, but what those who represent Israeli interests want.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab
Emirates)

The Palestinian initiative and the question of Palestine have a historical background. It is a flight from reality to abridge that entire question by reducing it to its present phase, however important it may be - and we do believe it is important.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

A whole generation of those who lived with this issue since its inception in the United Nations has now been replaced by a new and younger generation.

Since the beginning of Jewish emigration to Palestine, the Palestinian people has exercised its natural right to defend its native soil and its national identity. That is the right of every people on Earth. It is the foundation of the United Nations Charter: the right to self-determination without which many of the countries represented at the United Nations would not be in this Hall today.

The Palestinians have also exercised the right of armed struggle. That again is a right that every people whose native soil has been invaded and occupied has exercised throughout history. However, in the case of the Palestinian people, the monolithic Western political and propaganda machine found it expedient to strip this struggle of its objective justification, its patriotic motives, and moral and legal foundations. In so doing, individual incidents were seized upon, exploited and used to smear the Palestinian resistance with the charge of terrorism. This propaganda machine has totally disregarded the daily systematic Israeli acts of terror.

When the Palestinian intifadah erupted as an all-out civilian response to the Israeli military occupation, political institutions, leaders of public opinion and politicians in the United States were quick to offer advice to the Israeli authorities on how to crush the uprising, which they considered to be the most serious challenge yet to Israeli occupation. Officially, Israel was promptly supplied with the necessary equipment and arms for that purpose. All forms of pressure were brought to bear on the media to prevent the truthful reporting of the situation, on the assumption that the intifadah was only a television event that would fade away once the television camera stopped reporting it to the world

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

public. Suddenly the media fell silent; yet, the intifadah continued and has now entered its third year.

On the political level, the same tactic was deployed. The Palestinian-American dialogue began one year after the intifadah had started. Regrettably, this happened only when it became clear that every attempt at crushing the revolution of stones had failed. It is not true that the problem with Israel is that of individual or governmental attitudes. The problem with Israel is one of method. The method adopted by Israel since its inception and throughout its existence has been racist. It considers the other to be a direct opposite. It is the method of people who cannot set their mind at rest without creating instability in their immediate vicinity through military superiority. This type of posture considers stability and peace the gravest of perils.

Past and present history has taught us that once countries or groups adopt such a racist stance, they tend to narrow down their options because their attitude is in direct contradiction to proper human behaviour which promotes coexistence, tolerance and equity. In a few days, the General Assembly will hold a special session to discuss the destructive consequences of apartheid in South Africa. We shall then see how the glove fits the hand and how all the aspects of apartheid apply to the conditions in Palestine.

After more than 40 years of practical experience, we can understand why Israel abhors peace and why it cannot live with it. That the world has just recently begun to comprehend this fact does not mean that the fact was not there all along.

In all sincerity and objectivity we fail to understand the attitude of certain countries which bear the moral guilt and legal responsibility for the tragedy of the Palestinian people. Above all, we cannot understand the motives which make a

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

super-Power like the United States, with its long anti-colonialist and anti-racist history, marshal all its military, economic, propaganda and political potential against a small nation such as the Palestinian people, a people that demands nothing more than to exercise its right to live in freedom and independence in its homeland.

Why should anyone wish to deprive the Palestinians, of all the world's peoples, of the right to self-determination?

This is a question we pose to the countries which continue to oppose the exercise by the Palestinian people of that right. Why, of all the countries of the world, should Israel have the exclusive right to trample upon with impunity every international covenant, resolution and commitment? That is another question we wish to ask the supporters of Israel.

On 29 November 1947 the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which called for the partition of Palestine against the will of its population and in the face of all the reports and recommendations of the various commissions which had visited the region and reported in detail on the situation there. I state this fact because a whole new generation has come to the United Nations and is probably unaware of the background of the Palestinian question.

Regardless of the magnitude of the injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people by that resolution, it embodies today an important lesson for the Assembly, namely that, notwithstanding the might and dominant position enjoyed by the pro-Israeli colonialist Powers and their influence over the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly at the time, the Assembly could still not disregard the right of the Palestinian people to its homeland and its right to self-determination.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

This leads us directly to a discussion of the situation today. The American Administration has tried to exploit a decision by the Congress to threaten the States Members of the United Nations, despite the lack of any legal or political relationship between that decision and the proposal to change the way the designation "Palestine" is construed, it now having observer status at the United Nations.

Regardless of the action of the United States Administration, which flies in the face of the concepts and principles on which the Organization was founded, Member States have to make a choice between preserving the Assembly's democratic decision-making process and granting the right of veto to certain countries which make large contributions to the United Nations budget. There are many countries that make large contributions.

The General Assembly's credibility is today being tested. It must represent either the interests of the peoples of the world or those of certain countries, regardless of the nature of the question before it. If this threat were applied to simple procedural matters, it could eventually include all questions and issues under consideration by the Assembly and might even condition the right of members to speak in the Assembly. Frankly, we have to make our choice: whether to preserve the exclusive prerogative of the General Assembly in adopting its resolutions and decisions or to delegate that responsibility to others - perhaps to the United States Congress or the national parliaments of Member States.

In the present climate of détente small and oppressed nations are required to lick their wounds, forget their hopes and forgive and absolve their killers. In this day and age we are called upon to confine ourselves to discussing the problems of the ozone layer and to forget the thousands of Palestinian children who are

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

butchered daily on the altar of the Israeli war machine. We are asked to turn a blind eye to the inhuman farce of the racist minority régime in South Africa and concentrate on the problems of the environment. While not overlooking the importance of the environment, we believe that the third world countries are being asked to change their most urgent priorities and are thus obliged to place their destiny once again in the hands of powerful States.

We in the United Arab Emirates unreservedly support the struggle of the Palestinian people to defend its legitimate national rights, including its right to self-determination and to establish its own independent State in Palestine. Our support stems from objective facts, ethical norms and firm principles and is independent of the nature of the relations between East and West or North and South.

Following 40 years of war, in which billions of dollars in financial assistance and economic aid have been provided - not to mention the formidable military arsenal that has been built up, the acts of repression and terror, the destruction of cities and villages, and the occupation of territories and expulsion of their populations - Israel has failed to buy peace for itself. The attainment of peace is not a military operation but a political, humanitarian and cultural process. The oppressed and the persecuted cannot ensure security for their oppressors. Therefore we are confident that peace is the only feasible option in our region and that it will ultimately prevail. But peace, to be lasting, must be just and comprehensive.

Mr. OULD MOHAMED MAHMOUD (Mauritania) (interpretation from French): For four decades now the main concern of the international community has been the question of Palestine; four decades during which the suffering of this martyred people has increased day by day and taken unprecedented forms, including even

(Mr. Ould Mohamed Mahmoud,
Mauritania)

participation by civilians in the physical annihilation of children. Since the beginning of this tragedy we have been witnessing the attempted genocide of an entire people and the progressive annexation of all its land and even that of its neighbours.

The dates of major acts of aggression, followed by invasions, and the places where populations have been massacred or Palestinian leaders killed can no longer be counted - 1947, 1967, 1982, in particular, and Deir Yassin, Kafr Kassem, Sabra and Shatila, Tunis. Yet despite the seriousness of this record of tragedy for the Palestinian people, hounded on all sides, and the intolerable tension permanently imposed on the whole region, peace in the Middle East, and even peace between Palestinians and Israelis, is not impossible. It would be sufficient to work sincerely and seriously and not to confuse wishes and reality. The inescapable prerequisite for peace in the Middle East is recognition of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to establish their own State in their homeland, with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.

The intifadah, which is entering its third year and the proclamation by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988 in Algiers, of the independent State of Palestine, followed immediately by the peace initiative that President Yasser Arafat presented to the forty-third session of the General Assembly at its meetings in Geneva, have shown the path to be followed. Now it is for the Israeli authorities to make a decision without beating about the bush.

The causes of the tragedy being experienced by the Palestinian people are known to us all. The way to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict has also been known for many years.

(Mr. Ould Mohamed Mahmoud,
Mauritania)

The General Assembly has already defined the appropriate framework for a just, comprehensive and final settlement of these problems. Our last session, by its resolution 43/176 of 15 December 1988, recalled that that framework should be an international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council.

If we do not want to go against the course of history, if we do not want coming generations to be indignant at the moral and political heritage we leave them, and if we want to remain faithful to the ideals of the Charter of our Organization, we should make new efforts to find ways and means that will put an end to the crisis in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine. In so doing, we would be responding to President Yasser Arafat's peace initiative and to the glorious intifadah, which is the expression of a people determined to put an end to occupation and the denial of its rights.

Let no one be mistaken: the intifadah is more than just a passing phase; it is a reaction to humiliation imposed on a whole people. It is the combat of an angry generation refusing to submit. It is the fight of those who are condemned to make the supreme sacrifice to affirm their existence. All peoples have understood this, except for Israel which persists in disregarding its message and confining itself within an anachronistic policy of violence and blind repression. Yet history shows many examples that prove - if we need such proof - that one cannot indefinitely maintain any system merely by recourse to force.

Our Assembly is once again called on to make a new contribution to the settlement of the Palestinian question at a particular time that is marked not only by a striking détente in relations among States and different political systems

(Mr. Ould Mohamed Mahmoud,
Mauritania)

but also by the determination of the international community to preserve and develop that détente.

It is clear that our Organization cannot go against this movement, and even less against this timely determination, and it is up to the Organization to take advantage of this favourable climate and convene as soon as possible the international peace conference on the Middle East, for which the international community has been calling constantly.

Our Assembly should take advantage of this exceptional set of circumstances and profit from the moderation and sense of responsibility that the Palestinian leaders have been displaying in order to discharge its obligations. It is time that concrete measures to protect the populations daily subjected to arbitrary actions be taken in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is time that equally concrete provisions be agreed to ensure the convening of this long-awaited peace conference.

Finally, in this regard, my delegation extends warm congratulations to our Secretary-General for the efforts he has been courageously exerting to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and to ensure peace throughout the world. In our view, his words two days ago on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People are a source of inspiration and cause for pride for the United Nations.

Mr. VASILYEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): The United Nations has done a great deal of work in seeking ways and means of solving the question of Palestine. As a result of its peace efforts, a whole set of resolutions have been adopted, which have worked out and defined the juridical, political and humanitarian basis for the settlement of the Middle East

(Mr. Vasilyev, Byelorussian SSR)

conflict, taking into account the legitimate interests of the people of Palestine and other States involved in the conflict.

Thus, in resolution 43/176, the General Assembly affirms, inter alia, the urgent need to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine, and again calls for the convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council.

The many years of experience gained by the international community in its efforts to achieve a comprehensive Middle East settlement convincingly testifies to the need for strict observance of such an important principle as the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force.

Genuine progress in establishing peace in this region is impossible through infringing on the rights of other peoples, and particularly the right of each people to self-determination. The security of any State cannot be stable if it is built to the detriment of the interests of another party. Given the present realities and the interdependent and integral world in which we live, it has become imperative to ensure the practice of the implementation of the concept of freedom of choice.

We cannot reconcile ourselves to the fact that the problem of Palestine still remains outside today's positive trends and outside the framework of the peace process. The convening of an international conference on the Middle East is being blocked artificially and the rights of the Palestinian people are being trampled upon by the occupiers. The illegal actions against this people - which started on 9 December 1967 when the peaceful uprising, the intifadah, was begun in

(Mr. Vasilyev, Byelorussian SSR)

order to put an end to the occupation - are still increasing. Attempts are made to suppress the peaceful uprising through harsh measures. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed, thousands of innocent peaceful inhabitants have sustained gunshot wounds, been traumatized and harshly beaten. Schools and other educational establishments have been closed. In the illegally occupied Palestinian lands new military Israeli settlements are being created; settlers carry out predatory attacks on the local population and create lawlessness, terror and repression.

The policy pursued by Tel Aviv against the Arab populations of the occupied territories gives rise to just indignation in the world. It is in clear contravention of generally recognized norms of international law, and above all, of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It is seriously complicating the situation in the Middle East and is seriously jeopardizing international security.

The peaceful uprising of the Palestinians in the occupied territories urgently raises the question of an immediate move towards practical steps for beginning the process of a Middle East settlement, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Vasilyev, Byelorussian SSR)

Attaching great importance to discussion of the question of Palestine in the General Assembly, we believe that the action taken at this session must correspond fully with the new political thinking and action of States and take fully into account the interests of the parties to the conflict, in the hope of finding a generally acceptable solution based on the balance of interests.

Today there are more grounds for a new and realistic approach to solving the question of Palestine. We have in mind here the existing situation, in which the parties directly concerned in the conflict are proceeding on the basis of an understanding and recognition of the fact that the path to peace and to the peaceful coexistence of Arabs and Israelis lies through negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Favourable conditions for a move to practical steps for resolving the Middle East conflict have been created by a set of instruments adopted at the extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council, demonstrating the readiness of the PLO for dialogue and for finding mutually acceptable compromise solutions.

All this gives us the possibility of moving without delay to action-oriented multilateral contacts to begin the peace process and to convene an international conference to discuss the key aspects of a settlement, which should provide for the complete withdrawal of Israel's troops from all territories occupied by it since 1967, the exercise by the Arab people of Palestine of their inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State, and the guarantee of the rights of all States of the region, including Israel, to free development and a secure existence.

(Mr. Vasilyev, Byelorussian SSR)

We must not lose this unique opportunity to start a peace process in the Middle East. We must speedily establish a mechanism for settlement. We feel that the United Nations must assist in doing so now.

Mr. SUAREZ (Philippines): When the Assembly suspended its forty-third session last year, our spirits were buoyed by a sense of optimism that the two-decade-old question of Palestine was finally on the way to a solution.

There was much to justify our optimism. There was, first of all, the historic declaration of the Palestine National Council in Algiers of 15 November 1988, which in proclaiming an independent State of Palestine, also accepted all relevant United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1983), which recognize Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

There was, in addition, the statement made by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Mr. Arafat, before the Assembly at a meeting in Geneva last December, outlining the PLO peace initiative and affirming the readiness and willingness of the PLO to negotiate with Israel on an equal footing.

Finally, we could point to the near-unanimous adoption of resolution 43/176 at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, in Geneva, on 15 December 1989. That resolution, which the Philippines supported, called once again for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

(Mr. Suarez, Philippines)

Resolution 43/176 also cited the principles which could provide the framework for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East: first, the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem; secondly, arrangements guaranteeing the security of all States in the region, including the State of Palestine and Israel; thirdly, the solution of the problem of Palestine refugees; fourthly, the dismantling of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories; and fifthly, the guaranteeing of freedom of access to holy places.

As we meet today, almost a year after the General Assembly met in Geneva to consider the question of Palestine, much of our early optimism has evaporated. The Secretary-General quite correctly points out in his report on the work of the Organization that

"Hopes for early progress in the peace process, which were encouraged by the diplomatic momentum following the decisions taken by the Palestine National Council at Algiers in November 1988, and at Geneva a month later, have sadly given way to mistrust and doubt among the parties concerned". (A/44/1, p. 7)

He adds, with a discernible tone of regret:

"Bilateral efforts to promote a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians have thus far been unsuccessful". (ibid.)

This singular lack of success has meant the sad prolongation of the intifadah of the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories and the death and maiming of many more Palestinians, and of Israelis as well, as a result of Israeli efforts to contain and suppress the popular uprising. The report (A/44/13) of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the report (A/44/599) of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the

(Mr. Suarez, Philippines)

Occupied Territories starkly describe the abuse and harsh treatment visited on the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Israel must heed the international community's repeated calls that it abide by the terms of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Its devotion to its own historical past surely cannot but engender a recognition and understanding of the fact that other peoples too have an equal measure of devotion to their past which leads them to seek the dignity of winning their just and rightful place in the present.

The seemingly permanent condition of violence and widespread human suffering in the occupied territories serves only to underscore the urgency of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. Therefore we appeal to all the parties concerned to assist the Secretary-General in his efforts to convene that Conference at the earliest possible time, for it is our firm belief that the question of Palestine can best be resolved through a peace conference. We also take the view that in the search for that elusive peace in the Middle East no initiative, solution or proposal that does not take into account the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and lead to the exercise of those rights can provide a sound basis for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. These rights include the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to establish their own independent State on their national soil, under the leadership of their sole, legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Finally, the parties concerned must recognize the fact that any dialogue which ignores the PLO or denies its rightful place as a full partner in the quest for peace in the region will be an exercise in futility.

(Mr. Suarez, Philippines)

My delegation expresses the hope that all parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict will find ways to compromise. A great statesman once said that compromise does not always mean concession. In our view, the framework for the needed compromise has been set by the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and they remain the guidelines for solving once and for all a problem which, if left unresolved, will continue to bear grave implications for world peace.

Miss MONCADA BERMUDEZ (Nicaragua) (interpretation from Spanish): Despite the current relaxation in international relations, some States are unfortunately still pursuing policies that undermine and disregard the authority of the United Nations, ignoring decisions and resolutions of the Organization, thereby hindering the functioning of the multilateral system and jeopardizing international peace and security. Lasting peace, harmony among nations and the solution of conflicts by peaceful means represent goals yet to be achieved in many parts of the world. One of these is the Middle East.

Recent events that have occurred in the territories occupied by Israel and the central problem there - the question of Palestine - which concerns us in this debate have taken a new turn of considerable significance for the solution of the conflict. Hence we have witnessed the heroic and determined uprising of the Palestinian people, the intifadah, which began two years ago. We consider it a just struggle aimed at restoring to the suffering Palestinian people its inalienable rights: its right to self-determination and its right to national independence and sovereignty.

The Palestinian people has already suffered 20 years of Israeli occupation and oppression, which is reflected in brutal repression, torture, the uprooting of people and the suffering imposed by the occupying Power. Nicaragua cannot fail to

(Miss Moncada Bernudez,
Nicaragua)

join in the international outcry and vehemently condemn the policy of violence and terror practised by Israel.

Israel has responded by intensifying its repression, increasing its indiscriminate use of war matériel and massive detentions, administrative arrests, deportations, collective punishment and violent acts committed by the settlers. Children and young Palestinians are deprived of their right to education, their right to have a decent life - in a word, their longing for their right to peace and justice. The State of Israel continues to violate the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War adopted in August 1949. This brutal and irrational policy carried out by the Israeli State only renders the situation in the region more tense and serious. The persistence of acts of aggression by Israel, even against neighbouring States, in particular Lebanon, is jeopardizing the security of the region.

It is a priority task to protect the Palestinian populations under occupation, to guarantee their security and their legal and human rights. We must end the suffering of thousands of families, women and children. We must adopt urgent measures. The Palestinian people continues to write glorious pages that will form part of its history. It is a history written in blood of a struggle full of courage and valour. The cause of the Palestinian people deserves our most sincere recognition and all our solidarity. It proves that people will struggle to free themselves of their chains, however heavy those chains may be.

Nicaragua welcomes and supports the determination of the Palestinian people and its legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in its quest for national liberation and the establishment of its own national sovereignty and independent State. We consider that the peace proposal adopted by

(Miss Moncada Bermudez,
Nicaragua)

the Palestine National Council at its nineteenth extraordinary session, held last November in Algiers, is a realistic project in that it lays the foundation for promoting the basis for negotiations. At the same time, we urge the United Nations to work to create the conditions that would guarantee protection and security for the Palestinian people and proceed to dismantle and evacuate the settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We must work hard to ensure the prompt convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. To this end we must unite our efforts to overcome the obstacles that still exist.

The present international climate, which is characterized by the promotion and achievement of increasing co-operation and by a political will to resolve the regional conflicts by peaceful means through negotiations should lead us to seek a broad, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and not to sacrifice its just cause. In this regard, any effort towards a dialogue among the parties concerned is constructive since this will eliminate the obstacles that persist and that have prevented the holding of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, which should among other things ensure the full exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights.

If the contacts between the PLO and the United Nations continue, they will, without doubt, lead to concrete results that will pave the way to a broad and equitable solution to the conflict. We should work consistently to promote a wide-ranging and open dialogue with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the parties to the conflict to prepare the convening of the International Conference.

The Palestinian people has demonstrated to the international community its unswerving determination to resist the unjust Israeli occupation, to reject that

(Miss Moncada Bermudez,
Nicaragua)

occupation and to put an end to it. The peace initiatives that have been adopted by the Palestinian leaders and the recent proclamation of the independent State of Palestine, supported by a large number of Member States, have made a contribution to world peace.

We believe, however, that the time has come for Israel to abandon its intransigence. We fully share the view that any peace proposal must include provisional measures for the protection of the population of the occupied territories and should, in addition, provide for measures to permit the Palestinians fully to exercise their right to self-determination. So long as Israel persists in its intransigent policy of not recognizing the rights of others while it persists in implementing the policy and practice of war, oppression and terror, we shall continue to reap their harvest of human distress and suffering.

We are convinced that genuine and spontaneous rebellion as a form of struggle is only a response to suffering and oppression that is imposed on peoples. This is the case of the Palestinian people and the case of the people of El Salvador. Mankind seeks ways to remedy injustice and will continue to do so. Today more than ever, it is necessary that our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human beings, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small should lead us to take effective measures to put an end to the dire situation of the Palestinian people - measures that will be commensurate with this vast commitment.

My delegation once again is addressing the Assembly with the desire to say that we must demonstrate that we are capable of adopting effective measures to curb once and for all this kind of conduct which violates the international legal order and infringes the most sacred rights of peoples to enjoy peace, development,

(Miss Moncada Bermudez,
Nicaragua)

self-determination and independence. If the international community continues to accept that might should prevail over right with impunity, we shall continue to contribute to a process of inevitable self-destruction of the human race.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to announce that it has joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/44/L.50. We consider that this draft resolution should be supported not only because it renders justice to the Palestinian people but also because the United Nations cannot exclude peoples and countries simply because a great Power opposes their entry and carries out aggressive and obstructive policies in the farthest corners of the world.

Mr. PITARKA (Albania): The Palestinian people and, indeed, the world public have quite justifiably been expecting to see a turn for the better in the prolonged Middle East crisis, in the form of a solution to the Palestinian question, especially after the warm approval accorded by the international community, at the meetings of the General Assembly in Geneva last December, to the just and heroic struggle of the Palestinian people and the political platform that the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, presented on behalf of the new State of Palestine. But unfortunately the situation has been intentionally complicated by those that take a direct or indirect interest in the continuation of this conflict. Their multiple interests in this oil-rich region require that the Palestinian question remain unsolved, so that they can use it as a permanent pretext for their continued presence there. This attitude has encouraged the Israeli occupiers, and their anti-Palestinian war has escalated, thus representing a challenge to the international community to translate its political support for the Palestinian people into real steps towards solutions. At the same time, it bears witness to the arrogance and intransigence regarding the new State of Palestine and the insistence on blocking every peace initiative in the region.

The Israeli-Arab conflict and the Middle East crisis, at the core of which is the Palestinian question, weigh heavily on international relations and have increased the concern of the world public. Developments in this region are running contrary to the mainstream efforts of the international community and of the United Nations to find solutions and end regional conflicts in various parts of the world. The iron-fist policy that Israel has adopted against the Palestinian population under the slogan "Force, Power, Blows" has added a new and even more explosive dimension to the situation, particularly in the occupied Arab territories. This policy is characterized by a degree of violence, terror and

(Mr. Pitarka, Albania)

reprisal against the martyred Palestinian people unprecedented in the 22 years of Israeli occupation and has been called, with good reason, "the genocide of pariah States". During the two years of the intifadah the Zionist occupiers have resorted to all the means available, to savage military violence and political machinations as well, to force the Palestinian people to give up their massive revolt. This is clear from the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories. Over this period, the Israelis have killed over 600 Palestinians, injured over 10,000 and arrested over 35,000 others. The Zionist occupiers have not hesitated to commit the most horrible crimes, even against Palestinian children, to cripple the nation's future; during the two-year period they have killed 118 children under 15 years of age.

Every realistic human being in the world realizes that what the Israelis seek is finally to strip the Palestinian people of their legitimate national rights and deprive them of their lands, which will lead to the transformation of this autochthonous people of the region, with an ancient history and culture, into a refugee people, and to the denial of its existence as a nation. The Israelis have been trying systematically since 1967 to attain this goal by physical elimination of the Palestinians, by their forced deportation from their own territories, and by Jewish settlements. Thus, Israel has established 41 settlements in the Golan Heights, 181 in the West Bank and 22 in Gaza, which at the same time represents military occupation.

The Israeli Zionists thought that, through the use of multifarious weapons, including weapons of mass extermination, and by ignoring the fact that a nation fighting, like the Palestinians, for a just cause, cannot be conquered, they would by now have ensured the assimilation of the Palestinians. But all attempts to

(Mr. Pitarka, Albania)

legitimize this colonial occupation are but delusions of the hot-heads in Tel-Aviv and in Zionist circles wherever they operate. The massive popular uprising of the Palestinians which began on 7 December 1987 proves that there can be no peace or stability in the Middle East for as long as the Palestinian people's interests and aspirations to freedom, independence and recognition of their national rights are trampled under foot. At the same time, it sends a message to all regressive forces in the world that refuse to take account of the progressive and freedom-loving nature of peoples, nations and nationalities and still believe that justice is on the side of the mighty and the strongest. History proves, however, that not even two decades of occupation, or even dozens of decades of occupation, can quell the lofty national and freedom-loving aspirations of a nation; nor can a nation be conquered by the use of weapons.

The popular Palestinian uprising - the intifadah - is a people's movement against occupation; it is the ultimate form of that nation's resistance for the purpose of bringing the Palestinian people's claim of their right to existence and independence out of the backwater into which Zionist and imperialist plots have for decades attempted to thrust it. The purpose of their uprising is not to occupy and annex what is not theirs but to fight against foreign aggression and occupation for their national liberation. It is for this reason and because of these motives and their very nature that the struggle of the Palestinian people has won the sympathy and support of world public opinion as a whole.

The new situation created in the occupied Arab territories brought about - and it is the purpose of every liberation movement to arouse interest in its cause - a greater awareness of the political forces in the Palestinian movement, which in turn led to the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine. The decisions of the Palestine National Council enshrined in the declaration on the State of

(Mr. Pitarka, Albania)

Palestine and in the political resolution, were the political crowning of the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people. This is a step forward and a contribution to the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestine question.

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania, which has always been a strong supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people in its struggle for freedom and self-determination against Israeli and imperialist aggression, and of its right to its own independent State, has from the outset welcomed and given recognition to the new State of Palestine. This historic decision of the Palestine National Council responds to the legitimate claims and aspirations of the valiant Palestinian people. It is at the same time a contribution to a settlement of the Middle East conflict, as well as to peace and security in the region, the Mediterranean and beyond.

It is regrettable that, despite the realistic and constructive determination of the Palestinian leadership to solve the Palestinian problem within the context of current developments in the region and the world, which demonstrate signs of a relaxation of tension and the subsidence or even extinction of certain conflicts, the Middle East crisis persists, and is thus one of the most prolonged conflicts of our time. The reason for this is not only the obstructive attitude the Israelis adopt to Palestinian peace initiatives but also the policies and intrigues in the region of the two super-Powers. The close ties of the one and the covert and discreet flirtations of the other with the Israeli Zionists are expressions of an inter-imperialist consensus, which is most harmful and does not serve the desire for and the efforts to bring about genuine peace in the area.

(Mr. Pitarka, Albania)

The Middle East crisis has seen an influx of numerous plans from different directions, especially from the enemies of the Arab peoples. However, every one of them has in essence been about the liquidation of the question of Palestine, which is the key to the solution of the Middle East crisis, and the plans have therefore aborted. At present one hears of plans and counter-plans put forward on the solution of the questions of Palestine and the Middle East and still more may be produced in the future; hence it is necessary to emphasize that all negotiations and plans should primarily consider the interests of the Palestinian people and the other Arab peoples that are victimized by the aggression. Furthermore, all plans and solutions must be provided by the countries of the region that are directly interested in peace and security there. Every specific role that the super-Powers accord to themselves regarding the handling and solving of this problem is fraught with the risk that those Powers will only look after their own interests and, as previous experience has shown, leave the conflict open.

The interests of peace and security demand that the problem of Palestine and the entire Middle East crisis be judged with political realism within the context of the current international developments. As a long-time friend of the Palestinian people and the other Arab peoples, and also as a Mediterranean country, Albania sincerely wishes the Arab peoples to be left alone to determine their own destiny and restore justice in that important strategic area, renowned since antiquity for its rich culture and civilization, which have enriched world civilization. Let that region and its peoples advance and progress freely and independently.

In conclusion we should like to emphasize that history proves - and it is unwise not to draw the appropriate lessons - that violence and terror can never

(Mr. Pitarka, Albania)

break down and vanquish a people determined to fight for its national freedom and their rights. Its just cause will end in victory.

Mr. PICKERING (United States of America): Today I want to address the general and continuing aspects of the question of Palestine and the paramount issue of peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The United States has in recent days made clear its strong views on another, related issue which is now before the Assembly and on which I shall have nothing further to add at this time.

This year's debate on the question of Palestine occurs against the backdrop of events that hold both great promise and risk for a just and equitable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The tragic cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza continues to carry with it the bitter legacy of confrontation and mistrust that will make an accommodation difficult to achieve. However, at the same time there is a process under way that offers the hope of breaking that cycle of confrontation and replacing it with a practical pathway to a durable settlement. Indeed, what is most encouraging is that Israelis and Palestinians are intensely focused on that process and are looking for ways to make it succeed.

It should come as no surprise that the United States stands in the forefront of efforts to support this process and to make it succeed. For two decades my Government has been intimately involved in the search for an equitable and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Now as then the United States approach to negotiations is a practical one, designed to help the parties find ways to bridge their differences, and now as then, the United States approach is based on key principles that we believe can provide a solid foundation for an equitable settlement.

(Mr. Pickering, United States)

These are: First, the aim of negotiations is a comprehensive settlement achieved through negotiations based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). These negotiations should involve territory for peace, security and recognition for Israel and for all States in the region, and legitimate political rights for the Palestinian people. Secondly, before moving directly to a final status settlement a transitional period will be required so that the parties can adjust to one another and build the confidence and trust required for a durable settlement. Thirdly, the shape of a final settlement will flow from negotiations between the parties and cannot be dictated by any party in advance. In this regard the United States does not support the creation of an independent Palestinian State, nor can we support annexation or permanent Israeli occupation or control of the West Bank and Gaza.

Principles alone, however, are not enough to move the parties forward and to create the conditions necessary to sustain negotiations. At present the gaps that separate the parties are too wide and the mistrust too deep. To deal with this situation an approach is required that will break the current confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians and replace it with a political process that will transform the situation in the territories and thus change the parties' views of one another.

We believe that the idea of free and fair elections, articulated as part of the Government of Israel's initiative of May 1989, offers a practical pathway for doing that. Elections are not the end of the road; they offer a way to launch a political process that will lead to negotiations for a durable settlement.

(Mr. Pickering, United States)

Democratic forces are stirring in Eastern Europe. The Middle East should not be immune from this process. Elections are the quintessential political act which could break down the walls of mistrust, transform the current environment, allow Palestinians an opportunity to engage in political activity, and facilitate a process in which Israelis and Palestinians might talk about the structure of peace.

Towards that end the United States has in recent months been working intensively with the Governments of Israel and Egypt and with Palestinians to facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue to discuss elections and the negotiating process that would follow. That dialogue would represent a revolutionary development. For the first time in the history of this conflict Israelis and Palestinians would be directly engaged in an authoritative dialogue about their political future.

This process has shown great potential and is filled with promise, but to realize that potential the parties need to make important choices and decisions.

For Palestinians the choice is clear. The process at hand offers enormous opportunities to expand their political horizons and break out of the current tragic stalemate. Indeed, the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people can be achieved only through a process of political dialogue and mutual accommodation. The key now is to realize the promise inherent in this process and respond positively to make it a reality.

For Israel, having proposed its peace initiative, the challenge is to do everything possible to realize its potential. Israel could do that by approaching the process with the openmindedness and flexibility necessary to overcome the problems that need to be solved and by reaching out to Palestinians as political partners in this process.

(Mr. Pickering, United States)

The Arab States also have a key role to play in supporting this process and in creating a favourable environment for progress. Key Arab States can play their part not only by encouraging Palestinians to respond creatively but also by reaching out to Israel. Indeed, the time has come for the Arab world to follow the lead of Egypt and of the Palestinians, to recognize Israel and move towards mutual accommodation.

(Mr. Pickering, United States)

Those outside the Middle East can also play an important role by helping the parties focus on the tough decisions at hand and by encouraging them to respond practically and creatively. Now is the time for constructive decision-making, not for posturing, and now is the time to keep the focus on a practical process that can work, not on unhelpful and provocative symbols.

My Government is determined to do everything it can to promote this process and to see it through to a comprehensive peace. I hope that the international community will support us in these efforts. The stakes of continued confrontation are too high to do otherwise, and the potential benefits of Arab-Israeli accommodation are too great not to seize the opportunity at hand.

We stand at an important junction on the road to the search for peace in the Middle East. Join with us as we move forward to attain the comprehensive and durable peace that all of us seek.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.