



General Assembly

PROVISIONAL

A/44/PV.67
8 December 1989

ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 29 November 1989, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. GARBA (Nigeria)

later: Mr. ABDOUN (Sudan)
(Vice-President)

later: Mr. HURST (Antigua and Barbuda)
(Vice-President)

- Tentative programme of work
- 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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform delegations of the tentative programme of work for the latter part of this week and the early part of next week.

On Friday 1 December, in the afternoon, the Assembly will take a decision on the three draft resolutions on agenda item 37, "The situation in the Middle East".

On Monday 4 December, in the morning, the Assembly will consider the reports of the Sixth Committee. The same day it will begin consideration of agenda item 18, "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". On Tuesday 5 December, in the afternoon, it will take up reports of the Fourth Committee.

On Wednesday 6 December, in the morning, the Assembly will consider agenda item 26, "Judgment of the International Court of Justice of 27 June 1986 concerning military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua: need for immediate compliance". The same day, under agenda item 39, "Question of Palestine", the Assembly will take a decision on the draft resolutions on this question.

I hope to inform delegations tomorrow of the remainder of our programme of work.

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)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate be closed tomorrow at 12 noon. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Senegal, who will speak in her capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mrs. DIALLO (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (interpretation from French): It is an honour and a privilege for me to speak once again in the General Assembly in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to introduce the very important item, "Question of Palestine".

Fifteen years ago this item was included in the agenda of the General Assembly at the request of 56 countries, among them my own, Senegal. They felt that it was of fundamental importance for the Assembly to address the question of the status and fate of the people of Palestine, which had been ignored for more than 25 years even though the Assembly itself, the Security Council and other United Nations organs had had to deal with the violent consequences and ramifications of the displacement since 1947 of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the denial of their fundamental inalienable right to exist as a people.

In agreeing to place the item on its agenda the Assembly not only recognized its historic, political and juridical responsibility regarding the question of Palestine, but also provided a dispossessed people with an international forum within which to give expression to its national existence and aspirations and to strive for recognition of its right to self-determination and to participate as an equal, through its representatives, in the deliberations of the community of nations. With the subsequent creation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the General Assembly established the institutional mechanism for directing international action and efforts towards the

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achievement of a just solution to the question of Palestine, based on the realization of Palestinian rights.

Certain countries voted against the resolutions through which the General Assembly, fundamentally changed not only international approaches to the question but also the perceptions and opinion at all levels, governmental as well as non-governmental, on which policy and action are based. In the intervening years many things have happened and the wisdom of the approach developed 15 years ago has come to be recognized by the overwhelming majority of the international community. This is proved by the fact that resolution 43/176, in which the Assembly defined the principles for the establishment of comprehensive peace in the Middle East was adopted by 138 votes to 2 with 2 abstentions. Early in this session resolution 44/2, in which the Assembly demanded that Israel desist from its policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory and that measures be taken to provide international protection to the Palestinians living under occupation, was adopted by 140 votes to 2, with 6 abstentions.

Through its courageous intifadah, which has been going on for almost two years now, the Palestinian people have demonstrated conclusively their firm determination to continue to exist and to establish themselves as a nation, unified by common objectives and by social, economic and political institutions of their own creation. The intifadah is more than an uprising; it is the expression of a nation-State in the making, for which the people have always been ready to accept the greatest sacrifices.

The intifadah and other major developments, notably the proclamation of the independent Palestinian State at the meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers in November 1988 and the historic statement by President Yasser Arafat at

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the meeting of the General Assembly in Geneva in December 1988, have generated unprecedented, massive international support. A great many - even those who had previously hesitated - have now joined the international consensus and call for the effective realization of the Palestinian right to self-determination and sovereignty.

The declaration of independence and the proclamation of the Palestinian State have now been recognized by more than 110 countries. The Palestinian peace initiative was endorsed by the Extraordinary Arab summit Conference held at Casablanca in June 1989 and by the Madrid summit meeting of the members of the European Community, also in June 1989. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries have all declared their recognition of and support for the independent Palestinian State.

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During the past year, therefore, the issue of the attainment and exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people has acquired the prominence that the Assembly has untiringly sought to give it for the past 15 years. All those who are sincerely interested in promoting a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine now recognize that the Palestinian people and its representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), are at the very centre of the equation on how to achieve peace in the region and must be involved on an equal footing in any effort to bring about a negotiating process. The opening of a substantive dialogue between the Government of the United States of America and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the subsequent efforts from many sides to bring the parties together have been significant steps in this direction although it is clear that much more needs to be done in order to achieve progress.

Our Committee deeply regrets that the Government of Israel has so far failed to respond positively to the Palestinian peace initiative and that it has continued to refuse to acknowledge the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people. On behalf of the Committee, I should like from this rostrum to urge the leaders of Israel to rise to the historic occasion presented by recent developments and by the favourable international climate, and to join the international consensus on how to solve this conflict. Too much blood has already been shed, too many people - men, women and children - have had to endure lives of hardship, humiliation and hopelessness. Military occupation and armed repression are an affront to the human dignity not only of the victims but also of the occupier. Does Israel truly wish its next generation to grow up inured to, and accepting, the

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kind of brutalities and inhumanities that are necessary to perpetuate the occupation?

However, as our Committee found in its work during the course of the year, many sectors of Israeli public opinion are far ahead of their Government in this regard. There has been a significant increase in participation by Israeli non-governmental organizations and individuals, including well-known personalities from the mainstream of Israeli politics, in seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations organized by the Committee. The same can be said of Jewish organizations in North America and Western Europe. The theme "Two peoples, two States" was meaningfully addressed in a panel discussion by two prominent Palestinians and two Israelis at the International NGO Meeting held in Vienna under the auspices of our Committee last August. The Israeli panelists pointed how the destinies of Israelis and Palestinians are inextricably intertwined and how perceptions in Israel had begun to change. For example, a team of senior researchers, including retired generals and academics, had prepared a study for the Jaffe Institute of Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, Israel's major think-tank, in which all options were compared and it was concluded that the two-States solution was the best option from the perspective of Israel's fundamental security and economic needs. It was also stated that the majority of high-ranking officers in the Israeli Defence Force reserves believe that Israeli's security is no longer dependent on holding the occupied territories and that a political solution is necessary. Many other sectors of Israeli public opinion are moving in this direction.

In the past year, joint activities between Palestinians, including PLO representatives, and Israelis have multiplied. There have been "friendly visits"

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by Israelis, including Knesset members, to villages in the occupied territories, as well as efforts by Israeli peace activists to break through sieges and curfews in order to bring support and assistance. Conferences at which politicians and personalities from the two sides have come together to discuss their problems and differences and to develop ways to solve them have been held in Jerusalem itself, as well as in Prague, Paris, The Hague, Oxford and at Columbia University in New York. Our Committee has been proud to be able to contribute to this growing dialogue through its programme of seminars and non-governmental organizations meetings and has been much encouraged by the commitment, seriousness of purpose and unflinching determination of all participants to continue on this road.

The intensification of contacts between the two sides on so many different levels, regardless of the unbending position still espoused by the Israeli Government, clearly shows that an irreversible turning-point has been reached in the history of this conflict and that a negotiating process is indeed possible, if the Israeli authorities can finally muster the necessary political will and abandon their maximalist and exclusionary ideologies in favour of a peace with justice and appropriate security guarantees for all.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People covering its work during the past year will be introduced by our Rapporteur, Ambassador Borg Olivier of Malta, and I will therefore not dwell on it in detail. I should like, however, to stress the main concerns and objectives of the Committee in the implementation of the mandate given to it by the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

First and more urgently, the Committee has been distressed and alarmed at the continued intensification by Israeli, the occupying Power, of its brutal repression

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in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particularly the increased targeting of children. Casualties have continued to mount, reaching a total of 782 Palestinians killed by the occupying forces by the end of October. Through my letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, and in my statements in the Security Council and the General Assembly, I have stressed, on behalf of the Committee, the imperative necessity to obtain that Israel respect its obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention as well as to promote the adoption of all appropriate measures for the protection of Palestinian civilians under occupation and the provision of emergency assistance. Regrettably, and despite the valiant work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and of many non-governmental organizations and others in the field, the international community has not yet been able to adopt the required measures in this regard. Particularly disturbing, in our view, is the fact that those High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention which could prevail upon Israel to abide by its provisions have thus far not used their leverage as effectively as they could.

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However, protection and assistance, while urgently necessary, are not, of course, ends in themselves. The military occupation and all its tragic consequences have been universally rejected as a violation of the fundamental principles of international relations. It must come to an end. The Security Council, as the United Nations organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, must initiate and oversee the peace process in the region. In our opinion, the United Nations has now, more than ever before, the duty and the responsibility to promote the establishment of peace and coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. The Committee has accordingly multiplied its efforts to encourage the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/176. That Conference remains the most widely accepted framework for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on recognition of the rights and aspirations of all the parties. In this regard, I should like to express the Committee's appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his tireless efforts and to pledge once again our full co-operation and support for his further endeavours to facilitate the convening of the Conference.

Finally, the Committee believes the time has come for the United Nations to address concretely the present and future socio-economic needs of the Palestinian people and to render all assistance necessary to promote the autonomous development of the occupied Palestinian territory, in preparation for the attainment of independence. The Committee accordingly has reiterated its call on the United Nations system, as well as on Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to sustain and increase their assistance, in close co-operation with the PLO.

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The simple courage of the children of the intifadah, who are not afraid to confront the soldiers' guns with their stones, has been an inspiration for all of us. Let us not forget that it is ultimately for their sake, and for the sake of the Israeli children - all our children - that we must not fail, so that they may be able, finally, to enjoy the more peaceful and just world that is called for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly in November.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, who will introduce the Committee's report in document A/44/35.

Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: It is an honour and a privilege for me to present to the General Assembly the 1989 report (A/44/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

In 1989, as in previous years, the Committee diligently carried out its mandate on the basis of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It continued to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to exert all efforts to promote the implementation of its recommendations for the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It also continued to give the highest priority to the early convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/176.

In chapter I of the report the Committee has stressed its concern at the grave deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the urgent

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need to take measures for the safety and protection of the Palestinian people and to intensify efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Committee has also affirmed its support for the intifadah, for the proclamation of a Palestinian State and for the Palestinian peace initiative, and it has called on the Security Council to take urgent action towards the convening of the International Conference.

Chapters II and III, which are procedural, summarize the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Department of Public Information, and they provide information on the organization of the Committee's work.

The action taken by the Committee during 1989 is described in chapter IV of the report. In section A.1, reviewing the situation, the Committee expresses its alarm at the serious deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the increasing resort by Israel to armed force, in an effort to suppress the popular intifadah, which began in early December 1987, against the continued occupation and gradual annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory, and against the Israeli policies and practices violating the rights of the Palestinian people. The Committee has monitored the situation, on an ongoing basis, through the media, through the reports of United Nations organs and agencies, as well as of non-governmental organizations, individual experts and Governments, and through other sources. As the Chairman of the Committee mentioned, from the beginning of the intifadah until 31 October the total number of Palestinians shot to death by Israeli armed forces or killed by beatings, tear-gas inhalation, or other means related to actions by Israeli armed forces and Israeli

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settlers has reached 782. The Committee expresses alarm at what appears to be the deliberate targeting of children - at least 20 per cent of the fatalities, and a staggering 46 per cent last August. Moreover, thousands of Palestinians have been wounded by Israeli soldiers.

In this section the Committee also takes note, with deep concern, of other actions of the Israeli authorities, such as mass arrests, the imposition of administrative detention without charges or trial, deportations, and the banning of popular organizations, in its efforts to eradicate the leadership of the intifadah.

Section A.2 (a) refers to the letters addressed by the Chairman of the Committee to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council drawing attention to specific incidents of particular gravity. Since these letters have been circulated as documents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, they have not been summarized here, in order to make the report more concise. Instead, all the documents symbols are given for easy reference.

In addition, the Committee has followed closely the activities of the Security Council on matters related to the Committee's mandate, and participated in Council debates as necessary, as reflected in section A.2 (b).

The Security Council met, at the request of the Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of June 1989, to consider the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory - in particular, the deportation of Palestinian civilians. On 6 July 1989 the Security Council, by 14 votes to none, with 1 abstention, adopted resolution 636 (1989).

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By that resolution, the Council, inter alia, deeply regretted the continuing deportation by Israel, the occupying Power, of Palestinian civilians and called upon Israel to ensure the safe and immediate return of those deported and to desist forthwith from deporting any other Palestinian civilians.

On 29 August 1989, at the request of the Chairman of the Group of Arab States, the Security Council met again to consider the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and in particular the deportation of Palestinian civilians. On 30 August 1989 the Security Council adopted resolution 641 (1989) by 14 votes in favour and with 1 abstention. By that resolution the Council deplored the continued deportation by Israel, the occupying Power, of Palestinian civilians and called upon Israel to ensure their safe and immediate return and to desist from deporting any other Palestinian civilians. It reaffirmed that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, was applicable to the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.

The Council also held meetings in February, June and November 1989 to consider the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. In view of the negative vote of a permanent member, however, the Council was unable to act on those occasions.

Section A.2 C covers action taken by the General Assembly. The Assembly considered the question of Palestine from 13 to 15 December 1988 at the United Nations Office in Geneva. On 13 December 1988 the Assembly heard a historic statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). On 14 December 1988 the United States Government announced its decision to open a substantive dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization. This positive development was welcomed by all States participating

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in the deliberations of the General Assembly. The Assembly adopted five resolutions on the question of Palestine - resolutions 43/175 A, B and C, 43/176 and 43/177 - and in view of the importance of the item decided to retain it on the agenda of its forty-fourth session. In fact the Assembly resumed its consideration of the question of Palestine on 18 April 1989. Resolution 43/233 was adopted at the resumed session. It called on the Security Council to provide measures of protection for the Palestinians under occupation.

As I have already mentioned, in 1989 the Committee continued to give the highest priority to promoting the convening of the proposed International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/176. Its efforts in this regard are detailed in section A.3 of chapter IV. The Committee expresses appreciation for the support given by the international community to the Conference and notes that the Secretary-General's efforts in this regard have so far remained inconclusive.

The Committee expresses the view that the continuation of the intifadah and the intensification of repressive measures by Israel, the occupying Power, have created a critical situation which makes it imperative to advance towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. At the same time, events during the year have also created a new international momentum towards a negotiated settlement under the auspices of the United Nations. The Committee has therefore continued to stress the urgent need for the Security Council and the parties directly concerned to seize this opportunity to take positive action towards the convening of the Conference.

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The rest of that section contains a list of international conferences and meetings at which the Committee was represented, because of their particular relevance to its work, and a list of documents relating to action on the question of Palestine taken by United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations. The documents give an indication of the intensity of international concern regarding the current situation and of support for the Committee's recommendations to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Section B.1, describes the activities organized by the Committee in its continuing efforts to expand its contacts with non-governmental organizations and to co-operate with them in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine. Three regional symposia for non-governmental organizations were held in Africa, North America and Europe, and also an international meeting of those organizations was held in Vienna. Two preparatory meetings were also held. The meetings were attended by a larger number of non-governmental organizations than in previous years and they included several from the occupied territories and Israel itself.

The Committee notes that the various declarations adopted at those meetings supported the Palestinian peace initiative and the proclamation of the State of Palestine. They called upon the Governments of the United States and Israel to accept the Palestinian peace initiative and to agree to the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with resolution 43/176. The meetings also welcomed the opening of a dialogue between the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

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As indicated in section B.2, seminars were held in Africa and North America. In the conclusions and recommendations adopted at those seminars the participants expressed their conviction that recent developments regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core, the question of Palestine, had created a new momentum for bringing about a solution on the basis of United Nations resolutions and within its framework and fully supported resolution 43/176 as a basis for the achievement of a comprehensive peace. The United States was urged to continue its contacts with the PLO and to broaden the political scope of the dialogue.

Section B.3 contains information on the activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights in the field of studies, research and the collection of information, and on the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Chapter V of the report details the activities of the Department of Public Information, which has continued its information programme on the question of Palestine with a view to furthering the world-wide dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information on the question. The information programme includes dissemination of press releases, publications and audio-visual material and the organization of fact-finding news missions and regional and national encounters for journalists.

The recommendations of the Committee, contained in chapter VI, were drafted taking into account developments since the last session of the General Assembly. The chapter recapitulates the significant events of the past year - the second year of the intifadah - in particular the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State, the Palestinian peace initiative, and the growing deterioration of the situation in the occupied territory. It stresses the moral duty of the United

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Nations and the international community as a whole to redouble its efforts to bring about a settlement and to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian people under occupation. The Committee reaffirms its original recommendations, which are annexed once again to the report, and calls on the Security Council to act upon them. It also reaffirms the validity of the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983 and reiterates that the recognition, attainment and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are indispensable conditions for the solution of the question of Palestine, and that the evacuation of the occupied territory by Israel is a conditio sine qua non for the exercise of those rights.

The Committee reaffirms the international consensus that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and that its participation, on an equal footing, is indispensable in any efforts and deliberations aimed at the achievement of peace. It welcomes the Declaration of Independence of 15 November 1988, which is in fulfilment of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, and it considers that the Palestinian State should be accorded its rightful place within the international community and the United Nations.

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The Committee also calls on Israel to reverse its position and to join in the international consensus. The Committee calls on the Security Council to take positive action towards the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East on the basis of the framework and elements set out in General Assembly resolution 43/176, of 15 December 1988, and reaffirms the principles for the achievement of a comprehensive peace contained in that resolution.

The Committee also recommends to the General Assembly that it call once again on the Security Council, in particular the permanent members, to consider measures needed to convene the Conference, including the establishment of a preparatory committee, and to consider guarantees for security measures in accordance with resolution 43/176. The General Assembly is also called upon to renew the mandate of the Secretary-General in this regard.

The Committee protests the intensification of repression by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory and calls for appropriate international action to provide protection and relieve the suffering. It also calls for the provision of necessary assistance to promote the autonomous development of the occupied Palestinian territory in preparation for the attainment of independence.

The report of the Committee, the main elements of which I have just outlined, covers the period since the last session of the General Assembly and has been brought up to date as far as possible in order to enable the Assembly to have an accurate picture of the current situation.

As the Assembly knows, at the beginning of the current session, in view of the extreme urgency of developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, the agenda item on the question of Palestine was briefly considered, at a time when the Committee was still completing consideration of its report to the forty-fourth

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session. On 5 October 1989 the Permanent Representative of Libya, on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States, requested that special consideration be given immediately by the General Assembly to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, in view of its gravity.

The Assembly considered the question the next day and adopted resolution 44/2 by an overwhelming majority of 140 votes to 2, with 6 abstentions. By the resolution, entitled "The uprising (intifadah) of the Palestinian people", the General Assembly condemned the policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; demanded that Israel abide scrupulously by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War; called upon all the High Contracting Parties to the Convention to ensure respect by Israel, the occupying Power for the Convention, in all circumstances; strongly deplored Israel's continuing disregard of the relevant decisions of the Security Council; reaffirmed that the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Jerusalem, since 1967, in no way changes their legal status; requested the Security Council to examine the situation with urgency with a view to considering measures needed to provide international protection to the Palestinians under occupation; invited States, the United Nations and other organizations and the mass media to continue and enhance their support for the Palestinian people; and, finally, requested the Secretary-General to examine the present situation in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, by all means available to him and to submit periodic reports thereon, and the first such report as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the Observer of Palestine, in accordance with resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, and 43/177, of 15 December 1988.

Mr. KADDOUNI (Palestine) (interpretation from Arabic): I wish to extend to you once again, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly. This is testimony to the confidence in your wisdom and your ability to conduct the business of this session with success.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation of the important and constructive role played by the United Nations and of the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, in dealing with international issues and disputes. The momentum that his efforts give to mankind's progress towards peace is greatly appreciated.

The General Assembly has before it once again the question of Palestine, which it has been considering for decades. The Palestinian intifadah is approaching its third year. It has brought new dimensions to the debate and to United Nations efforts to bring about an early political settlement that satisfies the national aspirations of the Palestinian people and leads to a just peace in the Middle East.

In his report of 22 November 1989, the Secretary-General states the following: "the message of the intifadah is direct and unequivocal, namely, that the Israeli occupation ... will continue to be rejected, and that the Palestinian people will remain committed to the exercise of their legitimate political rights, including self-determination". (A/44/737, para. 36)

The Palestinian intifadah has demonstrated the impossibility of perpetuating the Israeli occupation and maintaining the status quo in the region. It has proved that the Palestinian people are determined not to surrender their rights or relinquish their national identity. The world has recognized this as a fact that cannot be overlooked in the quest for peace in the region. The international

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community expressed this conviction in the resolution adopted by consensus at the forty-third session during its meetings in Geneva last December by welcoming as a sound basis for a just political settlement the Palestinian peace initiative approved by the Palestine National Council.

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The Assembly's decision at this time last year to move the debate on the question of Palestine from New York to Geneva was undoubtedly an event of great political significance as an expression of comprehensive international support for the Palestinian position and as a response to the wishes of the international community. The General Assembly also welcomed the declaration of the political independence of Palestine.

The broad international support for the Palestinian peace initiative is clearly shown by the position of the European Community as set forth in the Madrid Declaration; the Bucharest summit statement of the socialist countries; the statement of the latest summit meeting of non-aligned countries in Belgrade; the fundamental African and Islamic support; the full Arab endorsement of the Casablanca summit initiative, and the positions taken by numerous friendly States, such as China, Japan, Austria, the Scandinavian countries and others. That support indicates the total harmony between the substance of the Palestinian initiative and the international position. Israel, on the other hand, continues to reject all peaceful Palestinian and international efforts and persists in its oppressive and terrorist policies against our people in the occupied Palestinian territories; it continues to tighten its iron fist against the struggle of our people. The forces of occupation use every possible means of repression and oppression: the demolition of hundreds of houses; the deportation of scores of citizens; and the imprisonment of tens of thousands of people in gaols and detention camps, where they are subjected to the most brutal forms of torture. Israeli soldiers use live ammunition and rubber and plastic bullets to kill hundreds of unarmed Palestinian men, women and children.

Israeli practices have been carried even further and include sacking houses and shops and stealing and confiscating their contents. An example is the town of

(Mr. Kaddoumi, Palestine)

Beit Sahur, near the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the messenger of peace and love. There Israel deliberately disrupted all aspects of life by the closure of schools, institutions and universities; by imposing an overall economic blockade of the occupied territories; preventing the arrival of aid and supplies for besieged villages and cities; imposing excessive fines, even on women and children; restricting the movement of the Palestinian population; and refusing freedom of the press and of culture. It even attacked hospitals and assaulted the wounded.

These Israeli practices constitute a desperate attempt to end the intifadah, perpetuate the occupation and block the march towards peace. The United Nations and the world public have repeatedly condemned these racist practices, which call to mind those of the Nazis against the Jews themselves, and the methods employed by the apartheid régime in South Africa. None the less, the intifadah of our people is continuing and Israel should understand that it will not be able to put it down no matter what terrorist means and Fascist methods it may use, because our Palestinian people are determined to pay the price of their freedom and independence regardless of the magnitude of the sacrifices involved. Our people will continue their just national struggle until victory.

Israel has shown through its own practices that it is a racist and aggressive entity. The fallacy of its claim that it is a democratic State has been exposed to all. Therefore, it deserves the international condemnation and denunciation it has received. This has reflected on the Israeli society, resulting in further political and social contradictions and differences and causing numerous Israeli groups and personalities to demand that the occupation be ended and that Israel sit at the negotiating table with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Several Jewish groups throughout the world have joined in the campaign of condemnation and denunciation. Moreover, the United States has sharply criticized the collaboration between Israel and South Africa in the military and nuclear fields.

(Mr. Raddoumi, Palestine)

The world is witnessing a notable development in international relations - a movement towards détente, understanding, nuclear disarmament and the settlement of regional disputes by peaceful means. This policy has had considerable success in several areas of conflict. The door between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe has opened wide and peoples meet in love and peace. Israel alone continues to fan the flames of war and to create through its policies and practices the most dangerous hotbed of tension and aggression in the world. This situation shall not continue, no matter how long the United States continues its all-out biased support of Israel. The world is moving towards a future in which the existence of racist régimes and military domination, as in Israel and South Africa, will not be acceptable. Such régimes will always be a source of concern and tension in the world; hence the need to tighten the siege of those régimes. The United Nations is called upon to take practical steps and urgent measures to ensure the protection of oppressed peoples and help them rid to themselves of foreign occupation and racist division and to achieve freedom and independence.

The United States of America has declared that it would be willing to start a dialogue with the PLO. In fact, the dialogue started last January. We were sincere in our efforts to find an acceptable formula for a political settlement. We hoped that the United States would develop its position in order to give momentum to the march towards peace. But the United States was marking time. It continued to introduce secondary and procedural matters, as well as other matters of an extraneous nature, avoiding the discussion of the essence and substance of the required political settlement. It even went so far as to adopt the Israeli proposals for elections in the occupied Palestinian territories, as put forward by Shamir during his visit to the United States last May.*

* Mr. Abdoun (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Kaddouni, Palestine)

The United States came to us to discuss those proposals, although they were not formally presented to us, as though the issue was one of democracy to be resolved by elections rather than one, first and foremost, of ending the Israeli occupation. The objective of those Israeli proposals is to hold pro forma elections that would legitimize the occupation as a first step towards the ultimate annexation of the Palestinian territories. Another aim of those proposals is to divide the Palestinian people into those inside and those outside the Palestinian territories, so as to circumvent its right to self-determination and to isolate the PLO, its sole and legitimate representative.

Sisterly Egypt has attempted to give momentum to the peace process. It addressed 10 questions to Israel regarding the nature of the elections and the steps that were to follow them. Israel rejected those questions and refused to answer them. Another development followed. The United States Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker, introduced his five points on procedural issues alone, without touching upon the substantive issues concerning the comprehensive settlement, its conditions and successive stages.

Yet the Israeli position was intransigent and negative, as can be seen clearly in the letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations from Minister Moshe Arens, in which Israel insisted that the dialogue be limited to one item - the elections as set forth in the Shamir plan - and that Israel should take part in the selection of the members of the Palestinian delegation. Israel also rejected international auspices, the principle of land for peace, and any role for the PLO in the dialogue or the negotiations.

We in the PLO accept a preliminary Palestinian-Israeli dialogue, provided that each party nominates the members of its own delegation without interference from any other side; that the agenda of the dialogue be open; that the dialogue be held under the auspices of the five permanent members of the Security Council; and that

(Mr. Kaddumi, Palestine)

the dialogue be a preparatory step towards convening the envisaged international conference.

I should like to draw attention to the facts set forth in the Secretary-General's report on the Middle East:

"I fully share the concern of the Security Council which, while taking note of the positive steps and initiatives undertaken in the past year, remains preoccupied by the continuing lack of progress in achieving peace in the Middle East and by the increasingly serious situation in the occupied territories. Moreover, I am deeply worried by the fact that time is passing and that opportunities that have emerged in the past 12 months might slip away". (A/44/731, para. 7)

There is no doubt that Israel should bear total responsibility for the obstacles to the peace efforts. The United States shares that responsibility in view of its support for the intransigent Israeli position. The international community is therefore called upon to take a firm stand in order not to lose the existing peace prospects and to avoid returning the Middle East region to the brink of violence and war.

We in the PLO are not opposed to holding free and democratic elections outside of the Israeli occupation and under international supervision as a step towards a comprehensive political settlement. On the basis of that understanding, we welcomed the principles and steps approved by the United Nations for the resolution of the Namibian question. The International Peace Conference on the Middle East is the appropriate framework in which to hold the negotiations necessary to working out a just settlement, provided that the Conference is attended by the five permanent members of the Security Council, together with the parties to the conflict, including Israel and the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Kaddouni, Palestine)

President Bush stated that achieving peace in the Middle East requires an end to the Israeli occupation of the occupied territories. Furthermore, the Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, called on Israel to abandon its dream of Greater Israel and allow the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate political rights.

Mr. Shultz said the same thing. We believe that the United States can play a positive and effective role in reaching a peaceful solution, but that would require the translation of its ideas into actual policy and real, concrete measures.

We said that an international consensus had been achieved in General Assembly resolution 43/176, which contained the basis and principles for a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The General Assembly at its last session welcomed the declaration of the State of Palestine and the Palestinian peace initiative adopted by the Palestine National Council. Recognition of the State of Palestine was firmly established as a result of the exchange of diplomatic representation with over 80 States Members of the United Nations. We therefore believe that it is time for the General Assembly to take further steps to confirm that recognition and to accord the State of Palestine its normal status as an observer in the General Assembly.

(Mr. Kaddoumi, Palestine)

In this regard I should like to express our appreciation of the excellent work done by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and of the important recommendations contained in the report of that Committee.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), have given great support to efforts to alleviate the suffering of our people in these difficult circumstances. We believe that the United Nations should continue its efforts to provide adequate means of protection for the Palestinian people under occupation, in accordance with its Charter and resolutions and with international conventions relating to the protection of human rights and freedoms. This requires that the Security Council find effective practical means of deterring Israel and preventing it from pursuing its oppressive, terrorist policies against the Palestinian people. The Council should impose sanctions against Israel for its violation of the United Nations Charter and the threat it poses to international peace and security.

The primary prerequisite for peace in the Middle East region is the ending of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories and action to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. We therefore place our hope in the United Nations and its role in the achievement of peace. At the same time, we shall continue by all legitimate means our national struggle to end the occupation and enable our people to exercise sovereignty over the land of our independent State. Our search for a just peace will not cease, but we shall not compromise and we shall not surrender our inalienable national rights established by international law.

It gives me pleasure to salute and express our appreciation to all those who have supported our people in their just struggle. We salute His Holiness the Pope,

(Mr. Kaddoumi, Palestine)

who made a resounding call for freedom for the Palestinian people. We also salute all those among the States of Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America that have supported our struggle.

I take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt congratulations to our brothers and sisters in Namibia as they stand at the threshold of their great independence.

I should like to assure the General Assembly that we have dedicated ourselves to the service of the cause of peace and freedom not just in Palestine but in the whole world. We believe in the peaceful coexistence of peoples, without hegemony and domination. In spite of the long suffering of our people we shall be true to these principles and loyal to the cause of peace not only for our people but for all peoples in our region and throughout the world.

I had intended to end my statement here had it not been for the American statement.

(spoke in English)

The day before yesterday the United States announced that it would cut its financial contribution to the United Nations if the General Assembly voted for the Palestinian draft resolution on defining the designation of Palestine - unfortunately. The United States is trying to exert undue pressure on the United Nations and its Members.

We are not asking for full membership. All we are asking for is a precise designation of Palestine. The United States claims to uphold democracy and free choice but, besides denying the Palestinian people that right, it now seeks to deny it to the Members of the United Nations. It tries to impose on and dictate to the United Nations. It is up to the United Nations to prove its integrity. I have full confidence in this body's voting with free will on this issue.

Mr. SALAH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): The climate of détente between East and West has given rise to a spirit of optimism about the possibility of bringing about genuine understanding among the peoples of the planet. This positive situation has been affirmed by leaders and representatives of States and by many strategists. From this rostrum only a few weeks ago many Heads of State and Ministers expressed their optimism about this new climate of understanding before their colleagues in the Assembly and all the peoples of the earth. They declared their determination to work as one to confront aggression and to address the injustice, conflicts and suffering faced by numerous peoples, in particular those under foreign occupation. Statements brimming with hope and confidence about peace, together with solemn commitments to eradicate aggression, certainly arouse the emotions of all those that yearn for security and coexistence.

Expectations have been fulfilled in many parts of the world. A few days ago we saw the notorious Berlin Wall come down, and there is now talk of the unification of the German people in a single State - something that would have been unthinkable a few months ago.

Like others, we, the Arabs, felt a flicker of hope when we heard the confident tone of the repeated undertaking to preserve and enshrine that new spirit in relations among nations and peoples, so that we almost forgot our bleeding wounds. For a moment we thought that there was a definite intention and determination to overcome the various obstacles that continue to block the process of peace in many regions, foremost among which is the Middle East. We actually believed that conflicting wills would be reconciled in such a way as to end the sufferings of the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For a moment we thought it impossible for the world to move in the direction of peace and understanding and the Middle East region and the Palestinian problem to move in the opposite direction.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Seeing the German people come together across the Berlin Wall and other peoples throng freely to the ballot boxes to decide their future, the Palestinian people must have had a vivid example of the meaning of détente. The Palestinians must have had reason to hope that the nightmare of occupation and their dispersal would end, enabling them to be reunited in the land of their ancestors.

Although our bitter experience of Israel leads us to expect the opposite of what we long for and what the world awaits, we agreed to entertain some hope so as not to be accused of pessimism and thus lose a valuable opportunity.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

We did not have to wait long. As expected, Israel showed that it will not allow this new spirit of understanding to reach Palestine and its surroundings. Events in the occupied Arab territories, Israel's posture vis-à-vis the Palestinian uprising and all that has ensued from that stance have demonstrated what we have known to be true since the beginning of the Palestinian problem, namely: that Israel's intention is to live at the expense of the Palestinians and not to coexist with them, and that its policy is based on denial and rejection and not on favourable response and recognition.

Therefore, its practices and measures against the Palestinians have been an archetypal example of all that a foreign occupier can do when the occupier is bent on settlement and expansion. The same can be said of Israel's response to every peace effort or initiative by any party, even its closest friends.

In pursuance of that policy, Israel has exploited the new détente to consolidate further the status quo, entrench its occupation of the Arab territories and proceed towards their annexation, once having, if possible, broken the will of the Palestinian people. The most telling example of this is Israel's frantic démarches with the two super-Powers, to ensure an influx of Jewish immigrants to expand the settlement of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With this in view, Israel has intensified its repressive measures and thus forced the General Assembly on 6 October 1989 - in the midst of an atmosphere of hope and optimism - to interrupt its general debate in order to address the brutal repression and tyrannical high-handedness of the Israelis in dealing with the Palestinians. It is now a fact of life, however, that any censure of Israel by the General Assembly and every call urging Israel to mend its ways and change its policies fall on deaf ears in Tel Aviv. A few weeks later, the Security Council met to discuss the selfsame Israeli illegal acts and brutal measures. In both cases there was international

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

consensus on the necessity to condemn Israel's policies and call for an end to its continued occupation of the Arab territories. Only one major Power, however, dissented and, by means of its negative vote, prevented the Council from adopting a resolution condemning those practices. This Israeli conduct is a destabilizing factor that undermines the process of détente and puts its very future in question. Israel's friends seem to be obliged to put it above the law and to resort to a selective approach in protecting it from censure and sanction. Meanwhile Israel's leaders like to interpret this forbearance as implicit support for its extremism and intransigence.

I do not exaggerate when I say that the Palestinians as a people live in hell. Since the beginning of its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in June 1967, Israel has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and arrested, imprisoned and expelled hundreds of thousands after subjecting them to the most atrocious forms of torture and abuse in its prisons and concentration camps.

The fact is that we witness every day more acts of repression, injustice and brutality against the Palestinians. With every new day, new atrocities are added to the overflowing cup of the Palestinians. As a result, with so many injuries and injustices, and such a huge number of individuals newly detained and expelled from one day to the other, the constant deterioration of the situation and the escalation of Israeli activities, we have neither the space nor the time to recall all that Israel has done in the recent past. Thus the enormity of Israel's current actions overshadow its atrocities of yesterday. It may shock representatives to learn that there is not a single clause of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has not been violated in the most flagrant manner by Israel in the occupied territories. More alarming, however, is the fact that there is not a single Palestinian whose life and future have not been put in jeopardy by Israel's

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

policy of driving the Palestinian people to lose hope of ever being able to exercise their legitimate human and national rights and thus facing them with a bitter Hobson's choice of emigration or subjugation. The horrible nature of the occupation has even eroded the fabric of the occupiers' society itself, to the extent that Israeli voices have begun to be raised in warning against the effect the occupation is having on the Israelis themselves.

Time does not permit me to speak in detail of Israel's brutal practices against the Palestinians, which include the killing of civilians, destruction of the system of education and economic pillage, as has been happening for weeks in the town of Beit Sahur. However, I must emphasize the horrendous nature of the crimes being committed by Israel against the unarmed Palestinian civilians. Palestinian children have been chosen as a special target for Israel's brutal drive to crush the Palestinian intifadah. Israel's practices against the civilians wounded at the hands of its forces and against hospitals have not been less brutal than the treatment it metes out to Palestinian children. Its army makes a practice of preventing ambulances and medical teams from entering the sites of carnage in towns, villages and refugee camps to evacuate the wounded.

As one researcher has noted, the brutality of the methods of the occupying army "shows that those actions are not individual acts but part and parcel of a systematic campaign of extermination that is being waged under orders from the commanders of the Israeli army".

With the same degree of malice and determination to kill Palestinians and destroy the Palestinian as a human being, Israel also seeks to fragment Palestinian society, obliterate the Palestinian identity and destroy the economy of the occupied territories by using those territories as a market for its goods and

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

products and as a source of cheap labour, thus creating a dependent economy. The balance-of-trade deficit between Israel and the territories, in 1988, has been in excess of half a billion dollars.

Israel's authorities - and Israeli settlers supported by those authorities - do not hesitate to desecrate places of worship, violate the sanctity of Holy Places and interfere with the conduct by believers of religious ceremonies.

Besides destroying the individual and annihilating Palestinian society and economy, Israel, through its practices, works for another political objective that complements its programme, namely, demonstrating to the Palestinians, and the world at large, that it is pointless to oppose any action by the occupying authority and prove to all and sundry that it is futile not to acquiesce in Tel Aviv's wishes and that the right and reasonable thing is to surrender and obey. Israel has waged effective propaganda campaigns to drum in this concept and, at the same time, promote the myth that the Arabs reject peace.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

It is a well-known fact that Israel, in furthering its expansionist and aggressive political goals, does not depend only on its massive military capability, which is supported from abroad but also on an extensive and effective propaganda machine which combines the clout and expertise of countless Zionist and Jewish organizations the world over.

It has been the strategy of this propaganda machine to disinform the world and persuade world public opinion that Israel's disgraceful and brutal acts are but a reluctant reaction to "Arab rejection" and not what they are in reality: the inevitable and logical outcome of Israel's policies of aggression that are based on rejection and denial. Anyone who wishes to understand Israel's practices against the Palestinian people must carefully examine Israel's true objectives and policies vis-à-vis that people.

The quintessence of that policy is the absolute denial of the existence of the Palestinian people and, consequently, the denial of its human and political rights.

From the very beginning of the Zionist enterprise, the Zionist movement has consistently denied the existence of the Palestinian people and acted on the premise that Palestine was "a land without a people". From that, it moved on to implement its settler-colonialist design by building settlements in the context of a totalitarian process of encirclement and exploitation of labour, production and culture. It has denied the Palestinians the right to work in their own land. Hence the first practical translation of that policy into concrete reality has taken the shape of barefaced exploitation and naked racism.

The other face of the coin of denying the very existence of the Palestinian people has been the Judaization of Palestine by changing the Arab identity as well as the demographic character of the territory. In translating this policy into reality, Israel's leaders have resorted to deportation, expulsion and all the other documented practices of which the Assembly is well aware.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Meanwhile, the Jewish propaganda machine went into full swing and portrayed the role of the Zionist movement in Palestine as a lofty endeavour to "bring civilization" to that "backward" part of the world and bring the blessings of social justice, economic development and prosperity to the whole region and its inhabitants. At the same time, Jewish real-estate agencies were busy acquiring Arab land by every devious means at hand, including extortion, fraud and any other illegal method.

As a case in point, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was being portrayed, before the outbreak of the intifadah, as an "enlightened and open-minded" occupation while in reality Israel was guilty of the most repugnant forms of exploitation and the most illegal acts of brutality. It now tries to describe its repressive measures against Palestinian civilians as a matter of necessity and not of choice, and claims that they are being carried out with the utmost degree of self-restraint. We all know, however, that Israel does whatever it is doing by choice and that it is dealing with the situation vengefully, arbitrarily and without justification.

One of the most notable examples of the policy of denial that has been pursued by Israel is its denial of the right of return to those Palestinian refugees who were driven from their homes in 1948 and to the displaced Arabs who were forced to leave their homes in 1967, as well as its denial of the right of self-determination to the Palestinian people and its refusal to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Israeli propaganda machine had tried, at the beginning, to portray the legitimate Arab resistance to those policies as the work of a small handful of elites and feudal landowners who were seeking influence and power. When the Palestinian resistance movement first emerged in the early 1960s, Israel described

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

it as a plot hatched by a group of terrorists. It now tries to portray the intifadah as the work of a few extremist fundamentalists. As for the International Conference, Israel, vigorously opposes it on a number of grounds. In the past, one of the most notable Israeli pretexts was that such a conference would lead to an expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East and give the Soviets a say in the peace process. However, now that this argument has probably lost its credibility and there no longer seems to be any reasonable basis for any such pretext, Shamir has had to admit openly that Israel refuses to attend such a conference because its outcome will be Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories.

The core issue of the question of Palestine is Israel's refusal to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination in the land of its forefathers: Palestine. Israel is therefore constantly seeking other sources of Arab hostility towards it to justify the policy of rejection which it pursues vis-à-vis the Palestinians. In addition, since Israel's leaders do not want to acknowledge the reaction among Palestinians and Arabs in general caused by Israel's policies and practices, they are always searching for other reasons by which to explain the natural Arab reaction to the policy of denial and repression pursued by Israel.

As part of their attempt to establish a reality for Israel, Israel's leaders have striven to deny the reality of the Palestinian people. They have also striven to create a number of myths and false concepts about Palestinians and Arabs while attempting to transform other myths about Israel into facts. A saying suggests itself here: in times of war and destruction, truth is always the first casualty. Since Israel fears the truth, namely, the fact of the existence of the Palestinian people and Arab moderation, it is natural that we should see it doing its utmost to perpetuate a situation of unending violence and destruction so that it may be able to continue its denial of such a fact.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

It is by now clear that the Palestinian people has not fallen victim to the policy which was designed to drive it to despair. Its will has not been broken by Israel's brutal practices. Driven by a natural yearning for freedom and impelled by the justice of its cause and the legitimacy of its struggle, it has risen in its noble intifadah which has continued since December 1987.

From the outset the leaders of the intifadah have called for coexistence and understanding on the basis of mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinian people. The intifadah has been a peaceful protest movement designed to highlight the true nature of Israel's inhuman practices while calling for national liberation. Thus, the intifadah has destroyed the myth of the "beneficial and enlightened" occupation and given the lie to the myth of the Arab rejection of peace. It has demonstrated the vitality of the Palestinian people and that its existence is a fact that cannot be hidden or disputed. It has shown that it is not possible to continue the occupation or return to the status quo ante.

The intifadah has also demonstrated that a political option is the only one open to all parties. Just as it has given new momentum to the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations, the intifadah has ushered in a new Palestinian realism in the shape of the uprising's peace programme and the subsequent initiatives by the Palestine Liberation Organization, chief among which was Chairman Arafat's move at the end of last year to recognize Israel, to renounce terrorism and to accept Security Council resolution 242 (1967), thus fulfilling the conditions required for the initiation of the peace process. Jordan's decision to sever its legal and administrative ties with the West Bank had paved the way for such a development. The peaceful stance of the Palestine Liberation Organization has been complemented by unanimous Arab support. But how did Israel respond to all this?

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

The Israeli authorities have persisted in their policy of denial and rejection. The most outstanding example of this is their refusal to engage in dialogue with representatives of the Palestinian people before crushing the intifadah and their determination to eliminate peaceful Palestinian resistance by military means. Shamir does not want to talk to the leaders of the intifadah because, as he puts it, they would come to the negotiating table as victors. He has also ignored the peace initiatives by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In the past, he and other Israeli officials paid no attention to Arab and Palestinian calls for peace on the grounds that the Palestinians in the occupied territories were weak and acquiesced in the occupation. Thus, Israel does not accept to negotiate when there is resistance and does not see any reason to negotiate when the situation is calm.

This brief review of the realities of the Palestinian problem leads me to a number of conclusions, which I wish to put before the Assembly:

First, Israel has no wish to deal positively with the political, diplomatic and human aspects of the question of Palestine. Its posture vis-à-vis the Palestinians has been based on rejection and denial from the very beginning of the conflict in Palestine. The Israeli Government's four "No's" - no to the international conference, no to dialogue with the PLO, no to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and no to the exchange of land for peace - are ample proof of this rejection and denial.

Some may be taken in by Shamir's so-called proposed election in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, the reasons which impelled Shamir to declare his acceptance of the idea of elections and the conditions which Israel has imposed show the initiative for what it is: a futile exercise. The idea was originally forced upon Shamir. Later, he began to make use of it as a means of aborting the

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

intifadah, sowing division in the Palestinian ranks and perpetuating the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. There has been talk for six months now of an American plan or proposals to crystallize Egyptian proposals which aim at implementing Shamir's plan for the election which he himself is trying so hard to abort.

Thus, Israel has lured various parties into discussions and procedural arguments in the hope of agreeing on other procedural steps which may in turn lead to initiating discussions on a plan for the election which Shamir has stripped of any sense or content through the conditions he has imposed.

Nevertheless, attempts to appease the Israeli Prime Minister and collaborate with him continue, on the assumption that to win acceptance from Shamir and the other hard-liners in his party is the only feasible and reasonable approach. Meanwhile, Shamir is seeking to wreck the very initiative he proposed under pressure last May. I think everyone is now aware that what Shamir wants to do is to make a lot of noise and create an illusion of movement, rather than make any real progress towards a solution to the Palestinian problem. This is the view of many observers. It was voiced most recently by the well-known commentator Anthony Lewis, who wrote:

(spoke in English)

"After rejecting the Mubarak invitation, Mr. Shamir said there could still be other ideas to follow up. But such talk is a familiar tactic. It is designed to create an illusion of hope that covers the reality of Mr. Shamir's determination to do nothing." (The New York Times, 8 October 1989, sect. 4, p. 21)

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

(continued in Arabic)

Secondly, it is not possible for the Israeli occupation to continue, nor is it admissible for the present situation to continue or for there to be a return to the status quo ante. Everyone must be aware of the fact that the political option is the only possible option for resolving the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. While the existence of Israel is considered a fact, it must be recognized that the existence of the Palestinian people is also a fact. Whether there is to be war or peace is in the hands of both parties: the Israelis and the Palestinians. Israel wrongly believes that it has the option of war and that, consequently, it has a monopoly on the right to act as it wishes. Forty years of suffering have shown that a political settlement cannot be achieved through the acquisition by either party of a single option: war may bring victory but it does not bring peace. The peaceful uprising, the intifadah, has shown that the option of war is not a monopoly of Israel's and that the Palestinians have the option of peace. Both parties must therefore work together to ensure the exercise of the option that is open to both, namely, the peaceful settlement for which the Palestinians and the Arabs have opted.

Thirdly, there is an international consensus that such a settlement can be achieved only through the exchange of the occupied Arab territories for the security and recognition of both parties. Naturally, this would culminate in respect for the Palestinian people's national rights, first and foremost among which is the right to self-determination on its native soil in Palestine. The appropriate framework for the conclusion of such a settlement would be an international conference that should be convened under the auspices of the United Nations and attended by all the parties concerned, including the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

There are essential moral and political reasons why such an international gathering should take place.

Preparations must be made for the conference and the necessary international guarantees must be provided through the Security Council. It is therefore appropriate, and even essential, that the Security Council, in response to the deteriorating situation in the occupied Arab territories, should discuss ways of bringing about the comprehensive peace settlement whose basis the Council laid down more than 20 years ago, when it adopted resolution 242 (1967), and emphasized its international context some six years later with resolution 338 (1973). Each of these two resolutions was adopted after an Arab-Israeli war which almost led to a confrontation between the two super-Powers, quite apart from the tribulations and losses which these two wars caused in the region and elsewhere.

It might be appropriate for the Security Council to reaffirm its adherence to its two above-mentioned resolutions as has been proposed by the Secretary-General in his report in document A/44/737 of 22 November 1989, with a view to bring about their implementation.

Fourthly, the situation in the occupied Arab territories provides us with an opportunity to test on the ground both the new tendency to solve chronic regional conflicts and the call to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations. This call has been translated into reality by the new joint step taken by the United States and the Soviet Union to adopt General Assembly resolution 44/23 of 17 November 1989, on the maintenance of international peace and security and strengthening the role of the United Nations.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

This is a step we all welcome, just as we welcome the new détente. It is our earnest wish that our hopes today will not evaporate, and that we shall not see the United Nations unable to adopt a decisive and earnest position in respect of the developments in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip under the influence of a biased attitude, limited interests or short-sightedness.

In conclusion, I must stress that the choice is not between moving forward towards a just peace or perpetuating the occupation. The movement forward and consequently the attainment of peace are inevitable. The choice is whether this should take place peacefully and in accordance with our collective wishes, or in the wake of an upheaval or convulsion as has happened in the past. Shamir cannot maintain the occupation indefinitely or prevent the advent of peace. However, he can either cause a catastrophe in the region or prevent it. It is here that the role of his friends and those with good intentions assumes great importance, because they can persuade him to avoid the first alternative and see the benefits of the second. We trust in the far-sightedness and faith in peace of members of the Security Council, as well as in the momentum of the new détente between the two super-Powers.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): I take pleasure in addressing the Assembly on behalf of the Arab Group in the United Nations, which I have the honour to chair this month.

There is no doubt that the question of Palestine, which is being considered at present, is the Arab Group's most important concern. It is a question that has a direct impact on the destiny of the Arab countries and is a matter of national commitment. The parties to this issue are the Arab people of Palestine in the first instance, whose historical existence in and legitimate right to the land of Palestine, the cradle of many civilizations and religions is beyond question, and

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

Israel, the State that was implanted in the region and whose very existence is based on a settler-expansionist ethos that knows no bounds in its dependence on naked force and contempt for every right, law and convention.

The General Assembly's yearly consideration of the question of Palestine has become a test not only of the political will of the international community but also of the very credibility of the United Nations and the effectiveness of its resolutions.

The international community's political will to deal with the question of Palestine and solve it has intensified. That political will has been manifested in various shapes and forms. Pivotal to all such manifestations has been the awareness of the fact that the Palestinian people, like any other people in the world, has the right to the unshackled exercise of self-determination, as a stage that should lead to the establishment of an independent state, with holy Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of the refugees to their homes.

Only Israel, the occupying Power which pursues an expansionist policy, and the United States, the Power that makes it possible for Israel to pursue such a policy and nurtures its greed and penchant for aggression, are acting contrary to the position taken by the family of nations.

The test of the United Nation's credibility and the effectiveness of its resolutions has shown that that political will of the international community has been unable to compel Israel to respond to those resolutions. That is why the Palestinian people which has endured occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, was compelled to shoulder its national responsibilities. In doing so, it rose by means of the intifadah, which is now in its third year, to the challenge that the General Assembly has faced year after year. The intifadah is spreading and intensifying. Its ranks have attracted the sons of the Palestinian people inside and outside the occupied Arab territories. The secret of the strength and effectiveness of the

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intifadah is that its fountainhead is the very humanness of the Palestinian people and the inalienable right to life and survival that is the birthright of every other people in the world. The weapon of the intifadah is the very human attachment of man to his land and the resolve and faith that that attachment to the land entails.

Concomittantly with the intifadah, the Palestine Liberation Organization rose to the challenge with an active and positive political move that took the form of resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council in November 1988 and the proclamation of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Subsequently, the General Assembly adopted its resolution 43/177 relating to the recognition of the proclamation of the State of Palestine.

The intifadah has pushed the cause of the Palestinian people to the forefront of political concerns. This has resulted from the brutal way in which Israel, the occupying Power, has dealt with the intifadah, and Israel's obvious intent to exterminate the Palestinian people and thus rid itself of that people's strivings after its aspirations. For instance, the annual report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories shows that the level of Israeli violence and repression against the Palestinians is escalating and that Israel persists in practising its policy of annexation which it implements through the building of settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian lands and properties, the implanting of Israeli settlers and expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland by every possible means. That report stresses in its conclusions the fact that the Israeli authorities are trampling underfoot the fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian citizens of the occupied territories by repeatedly imposing curfews and seriously hampering education through the closing down of schools, universities and even kindergartens.

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The horror of the Israeli practices in the occupied territories has prompted Amnesty International, whose influence on public opinion and official circles is well known, to advocate the establishment of an independent commission to investigate the serious events that have been caused by the Israeli practices in the occupied territories. We are all the more surprised to see that a force exists that can resort to such barbarous practices towards the end of the twentieth century, at a time when there has been an opening of vistas, a strengthening of freedoms, détente, and religious and ethnic tolerance. We are all the more astonished when such inhuman practices are extended to sacred values, to places of worship and holy books, which are desecrated by Israeli soldiers, thereby violating their sacred nature.

This odious and provocative situation led the acting President of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al Sabah, to issue a declaration in which he vigorously condemned such practices, in particular the attempts by Zionist settlers, with the support of the Israeli authorities, to demolish al Al-Aqsa mosque and lay the first stone for the construction of their temple. The Group of Arab States in the United Nations, in supporting that declaration, has appealed, on behalf of 100 million Muslims, on all States and institutions to deal with this criminal Zionist hatred and to redouble their efforts to compel Israel to respect the religious feelings of the population of the occupied territories and those of one fourth of the world's population.

The international community today wonders, more than ever before, what will happen to the situation in the occupied territories, including the question of Palestine - the very core of the Middle East conflict - while Israel is pursuing unchecked its savage practices and its Zionist acts of aggression, and while we see the flexibility and political courage demonstrated by the resolutions adopted by

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the Palestinians and the practical and moderate attitude of the Palestinian leadership, advocating peaceful coexistence and a just settlement of the conflict. Everything is happening as if all the peaceful positions of the Palestinians were meaningless, while a minority of the Western countries immediately seized the occasion, of Israel's announcement of its "initiative" with respect to the elections - an "initiative" which the majority of States and experts closely following the question of Palestine knew to be a formal, meaningless enterprise. It refers to the whole question as if it were a subsidiary matter that had nothing in common with the aspirations of the Palestinian people and its right to existence.

The glaring truth is that the Israelis want to create a kind of unfounded political façade in the form of negotiations with partners of their own choosing - which means practically speaking that the elements of their "initiative" and the conditions posed in it radically undermine and contradict any feasible peace process. What kind of logic is it that gives one party to negotiations between two parties to a conflict the right to choose its partners? Can history show us any precedent for this? To this one must add conditions which are impossible to fulfil and whose sole purpose is to destroy peace even before it is born - grotesque conditions by which Israel would choose certain categories of Palestinians who, alone, would have the right to take part in the elections, conditions that would define a priori, the situation that would prevail in the occupied territories after the "elections" so as not to attain the minimum for a just and equitable settlement.

For many years the Western countries have called on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), asking it to deal realistically with the question of Palestine. That is exactly what the Palestinian leadership did last year, because it is seeking peace and hopes to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement.

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The question that faces us today is: what will the Western countries and the influential forces in the West do in order to react to this historic response by the Palestinians? Or is this just a matter of wrenching concessions gradually and endlessly from the Palestinians and Arabs, with the Israeli position becoming increasingly rigid - a position, marked by insatiable greed and escalating oppression? Why should the elections not be accompanied by acceptable guarantees that would allow them to be one of the elements, one of the stages in a comprehensive settlement process. Why should there not be a balanced dialogue as preliminary action preparing the way for the holding of the International Peace Conference, as required by international legitimacy? Why does Israel not commit itself to respecting at least those principles of the United States policy in the Middle East: Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a basis of a settlement and a guarantee of security for all countries in the region; recognition of the inalienable political rights of the Palestinian people; and acceptance of the principle of land in exchange for peace?

The world recognizes today that the Palestinian leadership has shown utmost flexibility and realism of the highest order in regard to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question and the establishment of peace in the Middle East, whereas the Israeli leadership is condemned and criticized by both Western and Eastern countries; we need not demonstrate that here. Thus the elements of the Palestinian problem are becoming ever clearer; there can no longer be any doubt about this. It is urgent for all the institutions and all the States Members of our Organization, in conformity with the laws of the heavens, international legislation, and national constitutions, to exert every possible effort to lead Israel towards a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement based on the inalienable rights of the

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Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination - recognized by the international community as a sacred right that cannot be thwarted by any force. We know that the will of a people derives from the will of God.

Mr. BADAWI (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): For more than 40 years since the founding of the Organization, this great Hall has witnessed extremely important and diverse historic events. Perhaps the most important characteristic common to all debates, regardless of the speaker or the item under discussion has been the fact that they have been a true expression of the aspiration of peoples to freedom and a life of dignity.

Today the General Assembly is meeting to consider the agenda item on the question of Palestine - a year after the proclamation of the State of Palestine and two years after the beginning of the Palestinian intifadah, which is the genuine popular outcry of the heroic Palestinian people, a people that still lives under the yoke of Israeli occupation and struggles for the most precious and dearest of human rights, its right to freedom and independence.

While the Palestinian intifadah has commanded the attention of world public opinion, its causes and motives won the world's sympathy and appreciation. It has continued in spite of the conditions of harsh Israeli oppression and the suffering to which the sons and daughters of that people are subjected daily. In fact, the intifadah is a nationalist movement, a mass rebellion against the occupation authorities. It is a popular movement with which the Palestinian people of all categories, inside and outside the occupied territories, are linked. It is led by civilians, including women and children, who, because of their belief in the justice of their cause, made noble sacrifices and stood their ground with rare courage and heroism against the occupation authorities.

The bloody confrontations we have witnessed over the past months between the Palestinians and the forces of the Israeli occupation in various parts of the occupied Arab territories, in particular the oppressive measures of the occupation authorities in the city of Beit Sahur, are an indication that the confrontation

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between the powers of right and those of tyranny is escalating. I can assure the Assembly that that heroic people's persistence in resisting the occupation and continuing its march has compelled the occupation authorities to retreat.

History has proved that violence, arbitrary measures and the practices of oppression and expulsion will not provide security or realize the aims of the aggressor, regardless of the brutality of its measures. Violence can never extinguish the torch of freedom. Brutality and inhuman practices will only generate more hatred, the result of which will be the frustration of any hope of breaking the cycle of violence in the Middle East, or of settling the conflict by peaceful means in a manner capable of guaranteeing the Palestinian people its national rights, and the Israeli and Arab peoples an honourable life in peace and security.

I wish frankly to reiterate at this point what has been said repeatedly by the people and the Government of Egypt in denunciation of Israel's practices in the occupied territories and its continuing policies of oppression and occupation.

During the debate on the question of Palestine in Geneva last year, my country said that we were at an historic turning-point, that the question of Palestine was going through a very important phase of transformation. In this context, we did mention the support of the majority of the States of the world for the superior Palestinian proposal, as outlined in the documents of the special session of the Palestine National Council from 13 to 15 November 1988, as well as their backing for the courageous and wise positions adopted by the Palestinian leadership following that session.

Today, almost a year after that important and historic transformation, and two years after the beginning of the intifadah, the Palestinian people in the occupied territories are still struggling to rid themselves of the Israeli occupation in order that they may exercise their inalienable national rights on an equal footing

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with the other peoples of the Middle East and the peoples of the world. Two years have gone by since the beginning of that honourable struggle, which was met with a brutal campaign in which innocent civilians, including women and children, were not spared. Has the time not come for the international community to seize this opportunity to give momentum to the peace process? The parties to the conflict have a unique opportunity to conduct a free and comprehensive dialogue, in mutual respect, to achieve the common objective of the establishment of peace.

A few weeks ago President Hosni Mubarak affirmed that:

"The Middle East problem has undergone several developments that have brought the Palestinian question to the fore and demonstrated the importance of dealing with it in all its aspects if the objective is to reach a historic comprehensive reconciliation between the Arabs and the Israelis. Such a reconciliation would put an end to war, conflict and devastation. It would also pave the way for a creative coexistence between two parties which are not alienated by historical enmity or by theories based on racist or ethnic considerations. The two parties are bound by the same interest in consolidating peace, stability and development in favour of all the peoples of the region." (A/44/PV.12, pp. 14-15)

President Mubarak added:

"Therefore, we have insisted that the Palestinian people participate directly in the settlement efforts through the initiation of a Palestinian-Israeli dialogue supported by all peace-loving forces. Such dialogue is aimed at bridging the existing gap in positions, exploring the way to eliminate the conflict once and for all on the basis of applying the principle of land for peace and attaining coexistence and co-operation among

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all the peoples of the region. The Palestine Liberation Organization, as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, has taken positive positions that will help to achieve those goals. This deserves the full support of the international community." (ibid., p. 16)

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Since President Mubarak stated that approach before the Assembly, Egypt has continued its efforts to start the dialogue without any pre-conditions. It has engaged in intense contacts, in close co-ordination with the Palestinian leadership, in the hope of finding a common approach to the steps that could lead to peace, and in order to reach an integrated agreement on the provisions of a comprehensive settlement, on the basis of resolutions and positions with international legitimacy, the foremost of which are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and recognition of the national inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Such dialogue should be followed by steps in which broader international participation would be required, in the context of the International Peace Conference. In that way a comprehensive and final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict could be achieved.

Egypt considered the Israeli proposals, irrespective of their details, as an indication of Israel's preparedness to understand the gravity of the situation and its recognition that the situation in the occupied territories and the situation of the peace process cannot remain as they are. However, we thought that those proposals contained what could be interpreted as a mere attempt to contain the situation in the occupied territories and to deal with its deterioration, without giving adequate weight to equal rights of and commitments by the parties to the conflict - the Palestinians and the Israelis - within the context of a comprehensive peaceful settlement. Egypt therefore believes it to be its duty to continue to make its contribution to the current process. Egypt has rationalized the framework of the process and emphasized some of its points; it has submitted the 10 points in order to complement the documents under consideration within that process. Those documents are based on a consensus in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the elements of the peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

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Egypt has proposed a Palestinian-Israeli dialogue in Cairo between two delegations, an Israeli Government delegation and a Palestinian delegation. In this context it is important to mention the following points:

First, the role played by Egypt in the current process is a joint role of assistance. Egypt does not regard itself as a substitute for the Palestinian party, either in making decisions or in selecting the participants in the Palestinian delegation: the Palestinians and their legitimate representatives are the only ones who can do that.

Second, we believe that the Palestinian delegation should be composed of members from inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territories, as a guarantee of adequate and true representation of the Palestinian people.

Third, either party should of course have the right to raise or request the consideration of any aspect of the settlement, including the Israeli proposal to hold elections.

Fourth, within the context of the preparations for the dialogue, the United States has submitted a five-point proposal which is being deliberated upon currently between the parties in order to define positions and explore how to benefit from and give impetus to the peace process. In this connection I express my appreciation to the Palestinian leadership and commend it for its determination to deal with these proposals positively.

Fifth, needless to say these efforts are at a very delicate stage, in which all the participating parties should contribute to the peace efforts, that would ensure that there would be no secret guarantees, or guarantees for only one party, which would hinder the peace process at any of its stages or lead to the failure by any direct or concerned party to contribute positively to this complex and difficult process, at present or in the future.

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Sixth, the proposed Palestinian-Israeli dialogue, which we hope will start as soon as possible, does not in our view represent a substitute for the International Peace Conference and does not block the possibility of the contribution at a subsequent stage of any other parties, within the United Nations context or directly among the concerned parties.

Seventh, Egypt welcomes, as it has always done, all positive contributions to the peace process, and in particular the international guarantees which are the responsibility of the whole of the international community.

In conclusion, I should like to assure all members of the Assembly that Egypt will continue its tireless efforts to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to ensure to the Palestinian people the exercise of its national legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination. But peace will not be established in the area in the absence of a positive contribution by all the parties. Peace in the Middle East can be established only on the basis of justice and equality among the peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people as a whole. Peace will not be established in the region until Israel deals with the Palestinian people in a way that Israel would claim for itself and that would be acceptable to Israel itself. The heroic Palestinian people will continue its struggle until its efforts have been crowned with what it strives for and is worthy of, the realization of its aspirations to self-determination and the establishment of its own State, where it may live in peace, security and fraternity with all the peoples of the Middle East.

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia): The consideration of the question of Palestine at last year's session of the General Assembly in Geneva will be remembered for the major political decisions that were taken or initiated there. The developments that followed, unfortunately, did not justify the expectations and hopes of the international community that after decades of conflict and tension, at the core of which has been the denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people,

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conditions had at last been established for the beginning of a substantial dialogue aimed at opening up a process for the political solution of the question of Palestine.

Instead we have witnessed the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the continuation and intensification of Israel's repressive policies and measures, directed at suppressing the intifadah, the uprising of the Palestinian people against foreign occupation and domination. The goals of the intifadah are clear. The two-year-long uprising of the Palestinian people is an expression of their resolute refusal to tolerate any longer the continuation of foreign domination and the denial of their legitimate rights. The resistance of the Palestinian people to foreign domination, which has for years occupied the attention and been met with the broadest sympathy of the international community, is thus telling proof that the situation created by years-long Israeli occupation is untenable.

The tense situation in the occupied territories, which continues to be on the verge of causing the outbreak of a broader conflict in the region, compels us to note again with regret that the orientation towards dialogue and negotiations in the solution of outstanding international problems that have burdened international relations for years has not so far been adequately reflected with respect to opening up the prospects for speedily overcoming the Middle East crisis and the problem of Palestine which is at its core.*

* Mr. Hurst (Antigua and Barbuda), Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

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At the same time, it is difficult to think of more lasting consolidation of the current positive trends in international relations if determined efforts are not made to achieve a political solution of the question of Palestine based on realization of the inalienable and legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people, whereby probably the most dangerous source of international instability and conflict would finally be removed.

Together with most of the non-aligned countries, Yugoslavia has pointed out for years that the Middle East crisis and the question of Palestine cannot be resolved by a policy of *fait accompli*, diktat and repression. A solution can be achieved only by political means, with full respect for the authentic interests and rights of all peoples and countries in the region, and by creating conditions for peaceful coexistence and security for all.

The evolution in the position of some major parties in the crisis has greatly helped to remove some important psychological and political obstacles and burdensome legacies from the past that used to hamper the efforts to reach a political solution of this exceptionally complex and dangerous problem. In particular, we have in mind the far-reaching, historic decisions adopted by the Palestine National Council, among which are those on the proclamation of the Palestinian State - which Yugoslavia, together with the majority of United Nations Member States, has recognized - and on the establishment of the United States-Palestinian dialogue.

However, it is a matter of great concern that those in some very influential circles in Israel continue to flout or attach conditions to the efforts aimed at finding a basis for the opening of a process for the political solution of the question of Palestine. It is particularly difficult to understand the continuing

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refusal of Israel to engage in a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which is considered by the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and in the diaspora to be its sole, legitimate representative.

Yugoslavia and, I believe, the vast majority of non-aligned countries rightfully expect that this year's session of the General Assembly will be a watershed in the efforts to open a process leading to a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine. We believe that some of the most important parties in the crisis will reconsider their current position and enable the United Nations and its main organs, in particular the Security Council, to fulfil the role entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations in the solution of this question, which without doubt represents the most serious threat to international peace and security.

A lasting and just solution of this international problem requires Israel's withdrawal from all the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since June 1967, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO to self-determination and a State of their own, and respect for the right of all countries and peoples of the region, including Israel, to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

In that context the international community, at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, supported almost unanimously the initiative concerning the early convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as other relevant United Nations resolutions, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all directly interested parties, including the PLO, on an equal footing. At the summit Conference in Belgrade the non-aligned countries reaffirmed their position that the convening of the

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International Conference as conceived is at the present time the most realistic and acceptable way of ensuring a just and lasting solution of the Middle East crisis and the problem of Palestine. In line with this, Yugoslavia is in favour of an early start on the active involvement of the Security Council in finding the most suitable basis for the opening of a process leading to the convening of the International Conference and supports the efforts made by the Secretary-General towards that end.

We consider that it is high time to take resolute steps to remove all the remaining obstacles that stand in the way of the solution of the question of Palestine. In view of the current explosive situation in the occupied territories this brooks no further delay. An urgent solution to the question of Palestine has been, and must remain, one of the main preoccupations of the world Organization. It owes it to the Palestinian people to enable them to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights and fulfil their aspirations. As Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Yugoslavia will continue to give its full support and make its active contribution to the speedy attainment of this goal. In this we proceed from our assessment that each and every delay in addressing this question is fraught with new risks for international peace and security, which we must jointly forestall.

Mr. HUCKE (German Democratic Republic): On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the German Democratic Republic wishes to re-emphasize its firm support for the Palestinian people's efforts to exercise its inalienable rights.

The struggle which the people of Palestine has waged to win recognition of those rights has been long and arduous. The life of that people is characterized by unbearable hardships; it is exposed to inhuman conditions in refugee camps, occupation and repression, as well as human rights violations perpetrated by the

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occupying authorities. So far the Palestinian people has been denied a life in freedom and deprived of the exercise of the right to self-determination. The most recent developments illustrate graphically that Israel is determined to continue its settlement policy in the occupied territories, thus further eroding the living conditions of the Palestinian population. This leads to an exacerbation of the already explosive situation, while at the same time scuttling the possibilities that have emerged for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict, of which the question of Palestine is the core.

However, with the intifadah now about to enter its third year, the Palestinians have demonstrated quite eloquently that the beginning of a process leading to a settlement of the conflict can no longer be delayed.

The German Democratic Republic calls emphatically for an early solution of all conflicts and the removal of all conflict situations by political means. The Government of the German Democratic Republic shares the view expressed in a number of international documents that a stable peace in the region will be achieved only if and when the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is realized and Israel's right to exist within secure borders is fully recognized. The popular uprising has definitely created new conditions and possibilities for joint international action in the search for a solution to the question of Palestine.

While it is true that in the past the settlement of that conflict without the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, was hardly conceivable, that is even less imaginable today. That is all the more true since the reasonable and realistic proposal on entering into a dialogue which the PLO leadership addressed to Israel represents a constructive peace initiative and has found much international acclaim.

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Over the last few months the PLO has constructively pursued this realistic policy on the basis of the historic decisions adopted by the nineteenth session of the Palestine National Council. The PLO has shown a readiness for compromise and the political will for a just accommodation of interests. The recent proposal on entering into direct talks with Israel under international auspices is a case in point. This approach, which is essential for real moves towards a solution, met with unanimous support at the Arab States' summit conference at Casablanca.

Today, Israel should display a similarly constructive posture. Continued rejection of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East which the international community has been calling for would be in stark contrast to the aspirations of the peoples in the region to a life in peace and secure borders; and it would make the tense situation even worse.

The General Assembly, the Security Council, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and other bodies within or outside the United Nations framework have made major efforts to bring about an early settlement of the Middle East conflict because of the adverse repercussions it has on international peace and security. In numerous documents, resolutions and decisions there is - by and large - a concurrence of views as to the key elements of a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict and the question of Palestine. These elements include Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to self-determination, and the right of all States in the region - including the State of Israel and the State of Palestine - to a secure existence and sustainable development. It is only in that context that such problems as that concerning the refugees can be solved.

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Like a mirror, the question of Palestine reflects the complexity and intertwinement, as well as the interdependence and intricacies, of the problems that have accumulated in the Middle East. They can be solved only through a comprehensive approach and joint action to be taken by all sides involved. Of enormous significance for successfully tackling these highly complex tasks is the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Here we wish to commend the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, Mrs. Absa Claude Diallo, for her tireless efforts in the Chair of the Committee.

As a long-standing member of that Committee, the German Democratic Republic has been anxious to make its contribution to the efforts to bring about a generally accepted, negotiated settlement so that at long last the Palestinian people will be able to exercise its sovereign rights. My country will continue in the future to support the Committee's work in pursuit of these objectives.

The convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East is certainly the most appropriate way to solve the multifaceted problems in the region. Such a conference would assemble all sides directly involved - including the PLO, Israel and the permanent members of the Security Council - as equals around the negotiating table. In this way a constructive solution could be produced that would take account of the legitimate interests of all sides involved.

The German Democratic Republic supports all endeavours designed to ensure the holding of that Conference. To that end the world Organization's potential should be used to the full, as called for in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which states:

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"In the past year, the international consensus in favour of the convening of the Conference has clearly been further consolidated. The Committee accordingly urges the Secretary-General to do everything in his power to ensure that active consultations are undertaken within the framework of the Security Council for that purpose. The Committee intends to continue to intensify its efforts towards this objective ...". (A/44/35, para. 114)

These endeavours must produce concrete results for the sake of peace and stability in the Middle East, as well as in the interests of the Palestinian people and the people of Israel.

Mr. DAMODARAN (India): It was exactly 42 years ago, on 29 November 1947, that the General Assembly adopted its historic resolution 181 (II) on the question of Palestine. Four decades and four wars later the situation in the Middle East remains one of the greatest unravelled tragedies of our time.

At the meetings of the forty-third session of the General Assembly in Geneva last December, and in the preceding weeks, a series of developments of unparalleled significance had given rise to cautious optimism for progress towards at least a serious search for a solution to the question of Palestine. The proclamation of the State of Palestine, the prompt recognition of that State by a preponderance of States, and the acknowledgement by the United Nations, in General Assembly resolution 43/177, of the proclamation, were all momentous events. Yasser Arafat, the President of Palestine and Chairman of the Palestine National Council, launched a peace process when he addressed the General Assembly. In the words of Bassam Abu-Sharif, his Political Adviser, as reported in The New York Times of 8 November, Chairman Arafat advanced one solitary point - namely, that

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"the Palestinian people, heeding the counsel of those who believe that Palestinian rights are more easily secured through peaceful rather than violent means, are seeking a negotiated solution that would lead to a free Palestine living at peace with a secure Israel". (The New York Times, 8 November 1989 p. A31)

The establishment of direct contacts and the beginning of a dialogue between the United States of America and the PLO augmented the hope that at long last the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine would be addressed with realism and pragmatism. These contacts have been widely welcomed.

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Following the new political peace process for settlement initiated by President Arafat, various proposals have been put forward by different parties. Some of them were undoubtedly made in earnest pursuit of a just and lasting settlement. For such a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East, certain essential elements must be acknowledged. They have been stressed often enough by an overwhelming majority of Governments and non-governmental organizations.

The central reality is that the question of Palestine is at the core of the situation in the Middle East. Any settlement must take fully into cognizance the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its rights to return to its homes and property, to self-determination, to national independence and the exercise of sovereignty in an independent State of Palestine, as well as the recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to live in peace within internationally recognized and secure boundaries.

Another reality is that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Israel must withdraw from all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories. The solution must be found on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). All the relevant issues can best be dealt with and resolved at the proposed international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation on an equal footing of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the five permanent members of the Security Council. Those elements and the framework are clearly set out in last year's General Assembly resolution 43/176.

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As long as Israel continues to deny to others the rights that it claims for itself, the Middle East will not enjoy the secure and lasting peace that would enable all States in the region, including Israel itself, to live in peace and prosperity.

The world is passing through a historic phase in international relations. A wind is blowing that is clearing away many cobwebs of mistrust and misunderstanding. There is renewed hope for a shared future. Several regional conflicts are giving way to concord and co-existence. Today, the last remaining vestiges of colonialism are crumbling and Namibia is on the verge of independence. The one tragic exception is the Palestinian people, who continue to live the life of refugees, within Palestine and without. The present juncture of history beckons us to bring that sad and unjust chapter of Palestine to an early and peaceful end. It is time that the international community, as represented in the United Nations, discharged its historical obligation to that people.

The Palestinian people has waged a valiant struggle. The intifadah is a glorious demonstration of its inextinguishable fervour and unflinching determination to win its rights and homeland through sacrifice and non-co-operation. The Palestinian uprising will soon be two years old - two years marked by untold sufferings. Beit Sahur is just one example; Naharia is another. But nothing has succeeded in breaking the spirit of freedom and liberty manifest in the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people. What we are witnessing here is nothing less than the martyrdom of a whole people, which demands from all of us a response of admiration, sympathy and support.

We in India feel strong bonds of sympathy for the Palestinian people and extend it our full support in seeking the early attainment of its rights, including the right to a homeland of its own.

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In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General has observed that:

"The situation in the Middle East remains a source of profound and intense concern, not only because of the political principles and issues at stake, but also because of the widespread human suffering caused by the failure to resolve those issues... My constant attempts to pave the way to an effective negotiating process... have also until now proved frustratingly inconclusive...

"Meanwhile, 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... Despite the appeals of the international community, widespread violation of human rights persists. However, it is the political aspects of the problem that have to be addressed if an end is to be put to the confrontation... I would, therefore, remind all concerned of 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". (A/44/1, pp. 7-8)

My delegation fully shares those sentiments of the Secretary-General and agrees with his prescription for solution.

The ninth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement at Belgrade also once again reaffirmed the principles for the achievement of comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

My delegation wishes to commend the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under the leadership of the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Diallo, for its performance of the tasks entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The Committee has exerted

(Mr. Damodaran, India)

considerable efforts to promote and implement its recommendations, including measures to heighten international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine. The Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information have also continued ably to discharge their corresponding responsibilities.

This morning, the United Nations observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I should like to conclude with the message sent by the Prime Minister of India on this occasion:

"India has a special relationship with the Palestinian people. Our commitment to the Palestinian cause has been constant and unequivocal. We are confident that it will soon attain its cherished and legitimate goals of self-determination and an independent State."

Mr. SOTIROV (Bulgaria): The Bulgarian delegation presented in detail its position on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, during the discussion of agenda item 37. The debate once again demonstrated convincingly that the Palestinian problem is at the very core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that lasting peace in that region is unthinkable without a just solution.

The world is currently going through an unprecedented period in its development. This is a time when the right of nations to free choice is being steadily consolidated as a vehicle of the positive processes in international relations. Unconditional respect for that right translated into practice would undoubtedly assist to resolve existing regional conflicts and prevent new ones from emerging. We believe that the Arab people of Palestine has told the world in no uncertain terms of its choice of self-determination and independence. The uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that has been going on for almost two years now is vivid proof of the determination of the Palestinian people to win its freedom.

(Mr. Sotirov, Bulgaria)

It causes considerable concern that as a result of the repressive actions of the occupying Power most casualties are civilians, many of them young people and children. We are also concerned by the fact, which is emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, that since the beginning of the intifadah the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories has grown steadily worse, with hundreds of people being killed and thousands wounded or detained, despite the appeals of the international community and the repeated calls of the Security Council for Israel to abide by its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The historic decisions of the Palestine National Council of 15 November 1988 once again emphasize the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole, legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. The decisions of the Council have created broad opportunities for real dialogue on the just and lasting solution of the Middle East problem through an effective negotiating process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with due regard to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination.

Regrettably, we must note that the positive potential of the Algiers decisions of the Palestine National Council and the constructive steps and initiatives of a number of Arab States have not led to dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. That is mainly due to Israel's unwillingness to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization and to withdraw its forces from the occupied Arab territories. There can be no justification for its intransigence since the Palestine Liberation Organization has explicitly recognized the right of Israel to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries and has denounced terrorism. It is our deep conviction that the Israeli Government should examine soberly the changing realities in the region and in the world as a whole.

(Mr. Sotirov, Bulgaria)

The People's Republic of Bulgaria shares the overwhelming political will of the world community for a comprehensive, peaceful and lasting solution to the Middle East problem. We believe that the United Nations should play an increasingly important role in this respect, particularly in enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate and inalienable rights. This would correspond to the world Organization's growing involvement in the efforts to find peaceful solutions to regional conflicts. In this context the People's Republic of Bulgaria again expresses its support for the idea of convening an international peace conference on peace in the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on behalf of the State of Palestine, and the five permanent members of the Security Council.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the States involved in one way or another in the Middle East conflict will demonstrate political will, wisdom and realism in the search for mutually acceptable solutions based on a balance of interests and to the benefit of the peaceful future, security and co-operation of all States in the region.

Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly is considering the question of Palestine while the Palestinian people are on the eve of the commemoration of the second anniversary of their heroic intifadah against Israeli occupation. That uprising can be considered a rare phenomenon because of its continuity and the steadfastness it reveals. It is the expression of a deep determination to reject occupation, an effort to cling to national identity and to insist on regaining legitimate national rights.

At a time when the international community is witnessing transformations that until now were unimaginable, and the material, political and ideological barriers,

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

set up in the aftermath of the Second World War are collapsing, the question of Palestine is still with us, with all its tragedies and sufferings, which for more than 40 years have been untouched by the rising tide of freedom that has swept other parts of the world.

The climate of détente that has prevailed in international relations for some time now has made possible the containment of regional conflicts created a movement towards their peaceful settlement and consolidated the role of the United Nations in finding solutions for such conflicts. The latest such solution concerned the question of Namibia, which has entered a new era since the victory of the nationalist South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in constitutional elections.

In spite of that, the question of Palestine remains apart from the positive developments which have heartened the world public and rekindled a feeling of security and tranquillity. The Palestinian people continue to confront the forces of brutality and tyranny, armed with their patriotism and their stones and shielded by the strength of their determination, their resolve and their faith in a dignified life. They are beset by the most vicious, harsh form of colonialism, a settler colonialism based on deportations, expulsions and expansion. The Palestinian people have been uprooted from their land and have had their properties confiscated. Their livelihood has been taken from them and whole areas have been depopulated and then resettled by Jews from various parts of the world.

It is not surprising that the Palestinian people should revolt against these conditions, the purpose of which is to liquidate them, using all available means, and to implement Zionist plans based on expansion and aggression. However hard Israel tries to cover up the painful situation obtaining among the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially over the past two years,

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

and however strictly it imposes a blackout on information about its brutal practices, it has been exposed for what it is and the truth is now clear. Its system is based on violation of human rights, non-recognition of ethical considerations and no scruples in pursuing their purposes and schemes. The occupation forces do not hesitate to kill children, demolish houses, desecrate Islamic and Christian Holy Places and distort the characteristics of Holy Jerusalem.

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

We find them breaking the bones of youths. They bury people alive. We find them profaning the privacy of homes. They demolish homes on mere suspicion, using the principle of collective punishment, thus reminding us of the Dark Ages. Israel should derive a lesson from the disastrous consequences of those Dark Ages.

The relentless continuation of the intifadah for a period of more than 24 months, in spite of the crimes committed by the Israeli Army and the settler militias, an arm of that Army, in the form of repression, persecution and arbitrary action, is but an expression of the rejection of the fait accompli which Israel tries to legitimize by all possible methods. Hence the continuation of the intifadah reflects the reaffirmation of national unity and the rallying round the PLO.

Israel has tried to portray the intifadah as terrorist action. However, this ploy does not fool anyone - not even its closest friends. The reality belies these falsehoods and provides evidence that the only weapon is the weapon of stones in resisting the Israeli war machine, which possesses the most sophisticated and lethal weapons. If there is terrorism, it is State terrorism, which is committed daily by Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in southern Lebanon and on the outskirts of Beirut, in the Golan, and even in countries far removed from Palestine, when Israel breaches the security of Tunisia, Libya and Iraq. While the Lebanese people last week were mourning the death of President Moawad, Israel did not even respect the solemnity of the occasion but chose those very circumstances to terrorize Palestinian and Lebanese refugees in their camps in Lebanon, using them as targets for its air raids.

While the intifadah is a rejection of the policy of fait accompli, it also shows that the Palestinian people have attained political maturity. This is

(Mr. Abdallah, Tunisia)

manifest in all the initiatives of the Palestinian leadership. During the past year we have witnessed the declaration of the Palestinian State by the Palestine National Council in Algeria, the statement by President Arafat to the General Assembly in Geneva, and also the positions he so clearly expressed on that occasion - all of which is proof of the Palestinian leadership's moderation and realism and a sign of its responsible conduct and readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of just and lasting peace.

These decisions and positions have had wide repercussions all over the world: recognition of the Palestinian State has been forthcoming and the United States has engaged in dialogue with the PLO in Tunisia. They represent initiatives that have proved the sincerity of the Palestinian leadership in its peaceful orientation. The only skeptic is Israel, which merely wishes to procrastinate and exclude any solution.

The Palestine National Council in Algeria adopted international legitimacy as a basis for the settlement of the problem, a legitimacy which is reflected in United Nations resolutions - from General Assembly resolution 181 (II) on partition, to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), not to mention other relevant resolutions.

The Palestine National Council in Algeria agreed to consider the international conference as the ideal framework for the realization of peace in the Middle East. The Arab Summit Meeting convened at Casablanca last May endorsed those options and reaffirmed the Fez Arab peace plan, as well as the commitment to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and supported the convening of an international peace conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, including the PLO, on an equal footing.

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

What was Israel's response to all these initiatives? Israel's reply was totally negative: it said no to the international conference, no to the Palestinian State, no to the right to self-determination, no to the PLO, no to the initiative of "land for peace".

There can be no justification for such absolute negativism; it can only be ascribed to Israel's concealed intention to pursue its expansionist ambitions, thereby scorning international resolutions and defying the will of the international community. One is entitled to ask whether Israel does not cast doubts on the legitimacy of its own existence by rejecting resolution 181 (II) - which stipulates the establishment of two States, an Arab State and an Israeli State, in Palestine - as a basis for a solution.

As usual, Israel has resorted to procrastination and delaying tactics to gain time while the international community awaited a decisive, positive response and a sincere endeavour to implement United Nations resolutions. Most regrettably, its purpose was limited to finding ways and means of ending the intifadah rather than achieving just and lasting peace guaranteeing security and stability for all the Palestinian people and for all the peoples of the region.

The international community considers the Palestinian-American dialogue as an encouraging sign. Tunisia has spared no effort in providing propitious conditions for bringing about such a dialogue and sustaining it. The news concerning direct contacts at the highest level within that framework gives us cause for optimism. We hope that this dialogue will put matters on the right track and provide the necessary impetus for the peace process.

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

In the same context, I must pay a tribute to the efforts made by the European Community, which is linked to the people of the Middle East by common interests in all fields. The virtually unanimous support for the Palestinian cause all over the world is indeed the best guarantee that the peace process will go forward.

We wish also to praise the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, for his persistent efforts in this field, as well as the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under the able leadership of Mrs. Diallo, Permanent Representative of Senegal, and that Committee's important role in sensitizing international public opinion with regard to the legitimate Palestinian rights and securing the widest possible support for and assistance to that cause.

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

The international community is aware of the various positive and negative aspects that I have mentioned. This is reflected in the President of the Security Council's letter addressed to the Secretary-General on 7 November 1989, in which he stated:

"While members of the Council have noted with appreciation some positive steps and initiatives undertaken in the past year, they remain preoccupied by the continuing lack of progress in achieving peace in the Middle East and by the increasingly serious situation in the occupied territories. They are therefore convinced that efforts must be continued on an urgent basis to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the situation in the Middle East, particularly a solution to the Palestinian problem in all its aspects." (S/20 968, para. 3)

This stance reflects a realistic view of developments and a deep sense of responsibility concerning the peoples of the region, above all the struggling Palestinian people. We call on the Security Council, in particular its permanent members to seize this auspicious opportunity to achieve tangible progress towards fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people and the international community and banishing the spectre of war from a region that has for years known nothing but the ravages and ruin of conflict.

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali stated when he addressed the General Assembly on 13 November 1989:

"The resurgence of confidence within the international community regarding United Nations action gives us cause for optimism and strengthens our conviction that international problems can be solved only by applying the principles set out in the United Nations Charter, which all countries are pledged to respect." (A/44/PV.53, pp. 3-5)

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

We hope that the Palestinian cause and the Middle East question will benefit from these constructive trends and that the Security Council will shoulder its responsibilities with determination and courage so as to provide the necessary protection to the Palestinian people and end the long historical injustice of which they have been the victim.

Mr. LI Luye (China) (interpretation from Chinese): Since the General Assembly considered the question of Palestine at its forty-third session there have been important and positive changes in the Middle East situation. A political settlement of the Middle East question has increasingly been in the mainstream of the development of events and the parties concerned have made unremitting efforts to bring peace to the region. In particular, since the establishment of the State of Palestine last November, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has adopted a series of flexible and realistic policies and taken some practical steps to promote the peace process, thus instilling new vitality into the Middle East peace process and winning extensive commendation and support in the international community.

The uprising against the Israeli occupation by the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is now entering its third year. Faced with heavy-handed suppression by the Israeli occupying authorities, the Palestinian people have persevered in the struggle without fear of the brutal forces, demonstrating their militant and dauntless spirit and their strong aspiration to regain their legitimate rights. They have thus won extensive international sympathy and support. Their struggle has made the international community realize more clearly the urgent need for a Middle East settlement. It has also brought the world to recognize even more clearly that without the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and without a fair settlement of the

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

Palestinian question, there can be no Middle East peace and tranquillity to speak of. To our regret, however, the Israeli authorities have continued to pursue their policies of suppression and starvation against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, disregarding the just call of the international community and the peace efforts of the PLO and have stuck to their refusal to recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. This obstinate stand on the part of Israel has naturally met with ever stronger condemnation by the international community and all the countries in the world that uphold justice.

The Chinese Government and people have followed the Middle East situation very closely. We have always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people and the unremitting efforts of the PLO and Arab countries in their attempts to bring about a peaceful solution to the Middle East question. We are of the view that a political settlement is the best way to arrive at a fair, reasonable and comprehensive solution to the Middle East question and we hope that all parties will refrain from the use of force. This is not only a conclusion drawn from more than 40 years of experience of the history of the Middle East conflict, it is also in conformity with the prevailing trend of international relaxation and the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts.

We support the convening of an international conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the five permanent members of the Security Council. We also support the opening of dialogue in all the forms that the parties deem appropriate. We demand that Israel stop its oppression of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and recognize the national rights of the Palestinian people. Only in this way can there be corresponding guarantees of the security of Israel. We hope that the

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

State of Palestine and the State of Israel will recognize each other and that the Arab and the Jewish nations will coexist in peace.

We believe that the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East would not only meet the fundamental interests and wishes of the people in all the Middle Eastern countries, but also contribute favourably to peace and stability in the world at large. We call upon the Israeli Government to face up to reality, go along with the tide of the times, change its rigid position and, proceeding on the basis of the interests of all the peoples in the Middle East, including the Israeli people, adopt a positive and flexible attitude so as to help bring about a fair and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question that will promise peace and tranquillity for the peoples in all the Middle East countries.

We maintain that the international community should focus greater attention on the Middle East question. We are convinced that the United Nations is capable of playing an even greater role in promoting a peaceful political settlement of the Middle East question. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China is ready to make its own contribution, together with all the parties to the Middle East question and all the countries in the world that cherish peace and uphold justice, towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): My delegation spoke yesterday and presented its views with regard to the situation in the Middle East. Most speakers, however, did not. Instead of addressing the many inter-Arab upheavals in the region, they preferred once again to direct and divert attention only to Israel and the Palestinians. This practice is being repeated in today's debate. In this connection, let me remind the Assembly that the Palestinian problem is the direct consequence of the instability and violence still reigning in many parts of the Middle East. The problem of the Palestinians is a direct outcome of the situation in the Middle East and the ongoing belligerency of the Arab States towards Israel.

We live in the middle of a historical era which will be remembered for generations to come. For the first time, mankind is placing its very survival at stake. We are altering the physical structure of the planet, the genetic composition of plants and animals, and the very ecosystem upon which all life is dependent. Modern science is now compelled to find immediate solutions to these man-made dangers. We are confident that solutions will be found, and in our time, as our generation has spawned more scientists than have been spawned in all human history put together. Yet scientists alone will not redeem us. As we are all aware, effective solutions can be found and applied only through close and vigorous co-operation.

Paralleling these environmental and scientific challenges, political opportunities of historic dimensions lie at our doorstep. The aspiration to democracy is asserting itself in the most impervious corners of the world. Physical and ideological walls are crumbling. The information revolution has dwarfed the globe, and the message of democracy is spreading over physical and political boundaries. Since democracy is characterized by an open exchange of views, the stronger and more widespread democracy becomes, the higher the probability of peaceful interaction between peoples and nations. Indeed, in

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

addressing political conflicts in this emerging democratic era, dialogue and negotiations are beginning to replace recourse to coercion, threats and belligerency. The virtue of democracies is to be found in their deep conviction that even when the process of negotiation is loaded with dangers, the risks entailed in dialogue and compromise are smaller by far than those of violence, terror and war.

The unfortunate reality in the Middle East is that Israel is still a democratic minority in that region. The winds of change and political progress, which are engulfing whole regions of the world at a dizzying pace, have left the Middle East relatively untouched; there has been no change to date. The continued repudiation of Israel by the Arab States is a product of the intolerance and the rejectionism which still reign in most Middle Eastern countries. To this, Israel is an exception. For decades, and since its rebirth, this young democracy has urged its neighbours to coexist peacefully with it. We have continuously called upon the Arab States to demilitarize the conflict and to democratize the solution.

This concept has failed to take root in much of the region surrounding Israel. The assassination of Mr. René Moawad, the newly elected President of Lebanon, served to remind us once again of the true character of the region we live in, where the only stable factor is that of instability. Bitter recriminations, political assassinations and mass murders of dissidents remain the accepted norms. These norms have been reinforced by the PLO, which has the copyright to the systematic targeting of civilians by hijacking, hostage-taking, car bombs and mid-air bombs, as well as the indiscriminate murder of uninvolved civilians at airports, on cruise ships and in schools, synagogues and mosques.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Here at the United Nations we have witnessed a trend in which the debates on many issues, particularly those pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict, are held as if within hermetic glass walls: all too often the debates here are completely divorced from the reality in the Middle East. The responsibility for this bleak record lies squarely on the shoulders of the Arab bloc, for, instead of using the United Nations to further mutual tolerance, understanding and dialogue, the United Nations, today as in the past, is being used by the Arab group as an additional weapon, a war by other means, in their ongoing struggle against Israel. An absurd phenomenon has thus emerged: the resolutions of an organization dedicated to the pursuit of peace are made to identify fully with the most bellicose and intransigent of the Arab positions.

It is thus here at the Assembly that we have witnessed not the condemnation of acts of war by the Arab States, but a castigation of the only peace treaty achieved in the region. On 29 November 1979, at its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly endorsed resolution 34/65 B, which strongly condemned all so-called "partial agreements and separate treaties", and declared that the Camp David accords had no validity. The United Nations was made to denounce the peace agreement signed between Egypt and Israel, the most comprehensive and only peace treaty ever signed between parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Nothing is more indicative of this detachment from reality than the continued presence of UNTSO observers on the defunct 1975 interim buffer zone line. Following the withdrawal of Israeli troops 11 years ago, UNTSO observers are today situated hundreds of kilometres deep into Egypt. Evidently the shifting border did not affect its observers. The border moved; its observers did not.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

It is here at the Assembly that we have witnessed another blunder orchestrated by the radical Arab States and the PLO: since 1971 the General Assembly has been made to condemn Israel's efforts to rehabilitate the Palestinian refugee camps. That same year, Israel embarked on a monumental effort aimed at a comprehensive and costly rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees in the Gaza district. In a commitment which continues to this day, over 22,000 families, some 150,000 refugees benefiting from the programme, have left the camps of their own volition; they are domiciled today in modern neighbourhoods outside, but in close proximity to, the camps.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Israel has thus not only rehabilitated the 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, but has been the only party actively engaged in rehabilitating Palestinian refugees. The Arab Group on the other hand, today as in the past, continues to work for the perpetuation of the refugee problem. The human suffering continues to be exploited by them as a spearhead in their struggle against Israel.

The Arab Group has, therefore, initiated annual resolutions of the General Assembly which from 1971 to 1978 not only condemned this humanitarian effort but, for example, called on Israel to:

"take effective steps immediately for the return of the refugees concerned to the camps from which they were removed ...". (resolution 33/112 E, para. 1)

These annual resolutions continue to this very day in various formulations, and beg the question: is this really the way to achieve peace, to further solutions?

It was here in the Assembly that we witnessed how nations were coaxed by the Arab Group to vote on the infamous equation of zionism with racism, when those who voted in favour of that resolution knew only too well, even as their votes were being cast, that this was a gross lie, that the very mention of the two in the same breath was an oxymoron, a statement of totally contradicting concepts which defied all logic.

But the ominous significance of that shameful resolution ran much deeper. The very labelling of zionism as racism was in itself racist, portending a grave threat not only to Jews everywhere, but to many others as well. For while Jews are often the first group to be attacked on racist grounds, they are never the last. For this reason, Andrei Sakharov, among many other voices of human conscience, called this resolution "an abomination".

It is here in this Organization that among all the endeavours of Arab propaganda, the practice of the double standard has been especially perfected. We

(Mr. Bain, Israel)

have thus grown accustomed to seeing how tyrants condemn tyranny, racists attack racism, and some members of the Commission on Human Rights are among the chief human rights transgressors themselves. And worst of all, some of the enlightened States that genuinely support freedom and democracy acquiesce in the hypocritical process of double standards, and themselves become part of that process.

It is only here at the United Nations that we could witness continuous denunciations of Israel's lone efforts in combatting international terrorism, with never even a mention, let alone a condemnation, of the multitude of heinous terror attacks perpetrated against Israeli and Jewish civilians around the world. The massacre of Israeli athletes during the Munich Olympics, the massacre of Israeli high-school children at the Ma'alot high school, the 1977 bus massacre on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road are but a few among many, many bloody outrages never condemned here. Instigators of violence escape condemnation, while their targets are condemned.

It is only here that we could have witnessed the audacity of those Arab States, aiders and abettors of international terrorism, responsible for killing hundreds of innocent victims of countless nationalities, shamelessly castigating Israel for the Entebbe operation in which 103 innocent civilians were rescued from bloodthirsty international terrorists.

It is only here at the General Assembly that we could witness sweeping condemnations of Israel for its purported use of violent measures, when in reality Israel is trying to stem the violence with the utmost restraint, violence which is funded, supported, encouraged and perpetrated by the PLO and some of the Arab States.

Over 150 Palestinian Arabs, one quarter of all those killed in the violence of the last two years, were slain in cold blood by the PLO in the most brutal way

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

imaginable. Orders for those 150 murders of Palestinians by Palestinians were sent directly from PLO headquarters in Tunis and Jordan. Only here could those Palestinian victims be so callously ignored by those who are purportedly concerned about the plight of the Palestinians.

We did not have to wait for the report of Amnesty International to learn that it is Israel's responsibility to protect the local residents. We did not have to wait for that report to be convinced that it is Israel's obligation under international law to track down and prosecute the PLO murderers. We know that, and we act accordingly.

It is only here in the General Assembly that Israel could be blamed for being the aggressive party, whereas the aggression stems from some of the Arab States and the PLO. Over 40 terrorist attacks, aided and abetted by Syria and Iran, have been launched into Israel since Arafat, with his "caduc", purportedly renounced his terrorism in December 1988.

It is only here that Israel could be impugned for the use of tear-gas in its efforts to quell mass rioting, when the condemnation comes from countries such as Iraq, which slaughtered with lethal chemical gas over 5,000 of its own Kurdish civilians in two bloody days.

It is only here that spokesmen could denounce vociferously Israel's expulsion of individuals accused of active instigation and terror while mass deportations of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in their own countries and regions are ignored.

And it is only here at this Assembly that countries who supply 90 per cent of the oil that fuels the apartheid system could find the audacity to castigate Israel for its alleged support of apartheid, whereas we have stated tirelessly, again and

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

again, and as recently as 9 November 1989 from this very podium, that Israel and the Jewish people condemn and reject apartheid in the most categorical and unequivocal manner, both as an ideology and as a political system.

All present here, I am convinced, are aware that Israel, a multiracial society, composed of some 100 ethnic groups of all shades and all colours, is the most colour-blind nation in the world. Yet none of those facts restrains those who join in these assaults against Israel. None of those facts temper their voting patterns.

It is only here at the United Nations that we witness the manipulation of summoning special sessions of the General Assembly and Security Council on predetermined and special dates significant only to the Arab bloc, when nothing on the ground justifies them.

Only here do we observe the obsessive efforts aimed at isolating Israel at all costs, exemplified by systematic attempts by the Arab Group to block Israeli sponsorship of resolutions of any nature, including the most politically innocuous such as those pertaining to the elderly or youth.

It is only here that we could witness such an unabashed demonstration of Arab belligerency during every general debate when the delegates of all Arab States, with the exception of one, collectively march out of the Hall when the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister of Israel make his annual call on the Arab States to commence direct negotiations and conclude peace.

Only in these halls could the ritual of contesting the credentials of the delegation of Israel, aimed at expelling Israel from this Organization, repeat itself annually.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

And only here could the same States, in glaring hypocrisy, sponsor resolutions calling for an international conference under the auspices of the very Organization from which they seek to expel Israel.

This is hardly the way to achieve peace, to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, to improve the lot of those caught in the middle or to find a solution to the problem of the Palestinian residents of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The fruitless repetition of clichés and slogans by the spokesmen of Arab States and others at best dampens prospects for any solution and at worse exacerbates hatred and deepens the conflict.

None the less, the debate on the question of Palestine continues to be one-sided, biased and governed by moral double standards. Israel is confronted with repeated hostile and bellicose statements by representatives of over 20 Arab States and others. They represent Governments which do nothing to further dialogue, negotiations or peace. Instead, they repeat extreme demands, spiced with outrageous name-calling and false accusations and coupled with ambiguous statements of intent.

All this does nothing to encourage the parties to the conflict to advance the cause of peace. This debate, and the subsequent resolutions, will fail to encourage political dialogue or direct negotiations between Israel, its neighbouring States and the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Instead, these deliberations succumb to the most truculent and intransigent of Arab positions. Such positions disclose the deeply ingrained all-or-nothing stance so common to radical Arab tradition in which only the most utopian solutions will be accepted, irrespective of the amount of blood shed in the process.

The grave mistake and tragedy of the Arab Palestinians has been their proclivity always to adopt the extreme option and exclude any compromise. They did

(Mr. Bein; Israel)

so as early as the 1930s when they identified with Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, who from his base in Nazi Germany called for the liquidation of the Jewish communities in Europe and Palestine.

They rejected the decisions of the Peel Commission in 1936, which recommended allotting them 80 per cent of the area west of the Jordan River. They rejected the Chamberlain White Paper in 1938. They rejected the United Nations partition plan in 1947. They rejected the pre-1967 boundaries. They rejected Security Council resolution 242 (1967). They rejected the rehabilitation of their own refugees and they rejected the Camp David Accords, which called for negotiations over the future status of Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

If the history of this conflict teaches anything, it is the folly of rejection. Israel and the Jewish people have always held that if a document is 30 per cent in your favour, accept it as a basis for negotiations. Arab rejectionists have always held that if a document is even 80 per cent in your favour, throw the thing out.

Unfortunately, some Palestinian Arabs are repeating the same old mistake. Instead of choosing the route of dialogue, negotiations and compromise, they continue to identify with and resort to the extreme only. Sadly, the deliberations here are heir to this extremist legacy.

In this era of global thaw, it behooves us to adopt a constructive approach not only to ecological problems or to the crumbling cold-war world order but to the Arab-Israeli conflict as well.

There are a number of fundamental facts that must be repeated in this context: Israel never declared war on the Arab States; it was the Arab States which not only declared war on Israel in 1948 but had the gall to inform the United Nations officially of their aggression.

(Mr. Begin, Israel)

Forty-one years of belligerency and five wars, tens of thousands of war dead on both sides, 600,000 Arab and 800,000 Jewish refugees - these are the bitter fruits of this unceasing aggression. Forty-one years of repeated calls by Israel to its warring neighbours to accept its existence once and for all, to terminate the state of belligerency and to normalize relations. Forty-one years of one-sided calls for peace.

Twenty Arab States are still in a formal state of war with Israel. On our eastern front alone we face massive Arab armies with over 1 million men under arms, over 10,000 tanks, 1,500 fighter planes, and hundreds of missiles, some armed with chemical warheads - all aimed at Israel's dense population centres.

Only one Arab State had the courage to depart from this course. Egypt, the largest and most prominent of the Arab States, under the guidance of its great statesman, President Anwar Sadat, reached the conclusion that it was Israel that needed assurances that it was welcome in the Middle East and that the only solution to the conflict was through direct negotiations. The people of Israel welcomed the courageous step taken by President Sadat when he came to Jerusalem. His declaration of "no more war", the Camp David Accords and the final peace treaty - all based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - were the natural outcome.

The road travelled by President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, with the creative and constructive help of United States mediation, proved that there are ways out of the cycle of belligerency, provided that the aspiration for a negotiated peace exists on both sides of the border.

These historic developments, which held in them a promise and a vision for a better future, occurred 11 years ago.

Since then, various diplomatic moves have taken place, primarily between Egypt, Jordan and Israel. Contacts between Israel and some other Arab States have

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

been initiated and an agreement was signed between Israel and Lebanon and ratified by the Lebanese Parliament only to be abrogated under Syrian duress.

Yet, the 20 Arab States still in a formal state of war with Israel continue to ignore Israel's repeated calls to terminate the conflict. This impasse can be resolved only when the Arab States join in efforts to unravel the tangled web of the protracted conflict in our region and subscribe to the prevailing international atmosphere of dialogue, rapprochement and normalization of relations. The hostile atmosphere which continues still to resonate in these halls only proves that it is not here that the solution will be found. It can and will be found only through dialogue and direct negotiations - not by repetitious, one-sided and extreme resolutions.

The 14 May 1989 peace initiative of the Government of Israel has resuscitated the peace process, and new hopes now reign in the region. The initiative is aimed at resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and achieving peace with a pragmatic, realistic and comprehensive approach.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

Its four points call for: strengthening the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel; ending the state of war between the Arab States and Israel; rehabilitating the Palestinian refugee camps; and holding elections among the Palestinian inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. These four points are mutually reinforcing; progress in one facilitates progress in each of the others. For that reason we believe that all four points should be pursued in parallel, and with equal vigour.

None of these points is beyond the pale for anyone but the radical Arab States. The first, which calls for the strengthening of the peace treaty, is already being acted upon; the third, aimed at rehabilitating the refugee camps, is widely recognized as crucial; the fourth - that of the concept of elections - is strongly endorsed by the Palestinians in the territories. Only the second, which urges peace with our Arab neighbours, has remained out of reach. Yet that point is most crucial. For an end to the state of belligerency is the linchpin of any peace process. Peace in our region is clearly contingent upon the normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Despite all the obstacles, our goal remains to move as quickly as possible towards elections in the territories of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. These elections will enable the Palestinians, for the first time in their history, to choose their legitimate representatives freely and openly. This is the true meaning of self-determination: to enable the people to exercise their choice and freely elect their representatives. No one has the right to claim representation of a people except its elected representatives. Precisely for that reason, the Palestinians' self-nominated "sole legitimate representatives" are terrified by these elections, by this genuine expression of self-determination. Echoing Arafat's infamous threat to pump 10 bullets into the chest of any Palestinian opposing him, Arafat's deputy, Abu Iyad, issued the following statement only five days ago:

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

"I warn every Palestinian who participates in any meeting, dialogue or negotiation with Israel which is not approved by the PLO." (Shark el Ausat, Saudi Arabia, 24 November 1989)

So fearful is the PLO - an amalgamation of terrorists who are neither the sole nor the legitimate nor the representatives of the Palestinians - that it has murdered over 150 Palestinian opponents. And that is all in the name of self-determination.

The PLO chieftains commit acts of terror and murder while, with the same breath, claiming to be the legitimate representatives of their victims and, supposedly, willing to negotiate on their behalf. This destructive force is opposed, in principle, to the democratic process, and applies force to block the emergence, through free elections, of genuine representatives.

Israel is determined to implement the 14 May peace initiative. The campaign of internal Palestinian terrorism will fail, and the elections in Judea, Samaria and Gaza will take place. With the elected Palestinian representatives Israel intends quickly to conclude negotiations for a five-year period of Palestinian self-rule, which will give the Palestinians effective control over most aspects of their daily lives. We are committed to beginning negotiations on a permanent settlement within three years of the commencement of the period of self-rule.

This is a genuine and practical initiative aimed at bridging the gaps, untangling the web of mistrust, and reaching an agreement on the first attainable step towards a comprehensive peace. There is no rationality in further rejection. The time is ripe to put an end to the cycle of violence and the deeply embedded hatred, and to cast away the fossilized and ossified slogans used here, which only serve as additional stumbling-blocks on the road to accommodation.

In order to advance the peace process, it behoves us to overcome the many pitfalls along the way. The more we avoid mottoes pertaining to ultimate

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

aspirations and to the permanent settlement, the better will be the prospects for achieving agreement on elections and the interim settlement.

Avoiding such slogans will enhance our ability to reach an agreement on interim arrangements regarding elections and self-rule. If, at that point, joint efforts aimed at building confidence and normalizing relations continue, there is a very good chance that the long-sought permanent settlement and true peace will be achieved.

There are no magic solutions. The peace process in the Middle East requires not only courage but patience and perseverance. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had to make 27 visits to Damascus just to secure the disengagement agreement. By the same token, peace with Egypt was achieved through interim stages, which stretched over a period of five years. The peace process opened with the disengagement agreement in January 1974, followed by the interim agreement in 1975. The Camp David accords were signed three years later, followed by the peace treaty in 1979.

Political platforms are often based on security concepts founded on past and present experience. However, friendly relations and true peace must be developed in the minds of people. Israel has proposed, therefore, to attempt to achieve that which is possible now, through free and democratic elections leading to a transitional period of self-rule. During this period we should all dedicate ourselves to furthering the process of confidence-building in the region. It is our hope that the dynamism, the momentum of negotiations, will do the rest. Negotiations on a permanent solution will follow. All proposed visions, options and plans for an agreed permanent settlement will be discussed then. If the atmosphere in the area, before and during the transitional period, can be changed from one of belligerency, terrorism and violence to one of confidence, dialogue and peace, permanent solutions can and will be negotiated and agreed upon.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

To the peoples of the region this is the best peaceful alternative . It is achievable now. It is within our reach. Let us give it a chance.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call on the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. ANSAY (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on an issue of such extreme importance to my organization, especially on this very day, which is being celebrated by all of us as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

For the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the entire Ummah the question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East problem, and at the heart of the Palestinian question lies the problem of Al Quds Al Sharif; the continued aggravation of that problem constitutes a grave threat not only to the stability of the region but to the peace and security of the world at large.

For the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the cause of Palestine and holy Jerusalem is the prime cause of the entire Muslim Ummah, not only because of its justness but also because of the fact that Al Quds Al Sharif is the first Qibla and the third holiest place for all Muslims.

(Mr. Ansary, Organization of
the Islamic Conference)

For more than four decades Israel's policies of expansionist aggression, ruthless oppression of the Palestinian people, provocative defiance of the will of the international community and intransigent flouting of all norms of international law have been the single source of unabated violence, tension and war in the Middle East. The ultimate designs of these policies are as transparent as they are futile, namely, the permanent usurpation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinians and the liquidation of the Palestinian cause.

The question of Palestine concerns not only the Muslim Ummah or the Organization of the Islamic Conference but is a question of basic concern to the international community, because it involves certain fundamental principles of international law and norms of behaviour without which the international community cannot coexist. The international community must therefore fight the dangerous doctrine according to which any State may commit aggression against its neighbours and occupy their land under the pretext of seeking enhanced security, which in effect is tantamount to the principle of might being right.

The United Nations has a historic and special responsibility towards the people of Palestine. The eviction of the Palestinians from their homes and from their land, their immense sufferings and travails, all originated from the decision taken by the General Assembly some 40-odd years ago; yet for decades, the international community has ignored the national aspiration and identity of the Palestinian people, treating their tragedy as merely a question of refugees. Twenty-two years after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip a new generation of Palestinians, who had seen nothing but the overweening arrogance of Israeli occupying forces and colonial settlers, has come of age. No amount of terror and intimidation can extinguish the flame of liberty and freedom which their

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of
the Islamic Conference)

youthful spirits yearn for. Thus on 8 December 1987 Palestinians threw the first stone against the armed might of the Israeli occupying forces; thus the glorious intifadah had at least jolted the conscience of the international community.

The courageous Palestinian uprising in the occupied Palestinian territory approaches the advent of its third year now, during which more than 1,000 Palestinian martyrs have fallen with honour.

The political leadership of the Palestinian people has reinforced the intifadah by the historic Declaration of the Palestine National Council at its nineteenth session, held in Algiers on 15 November 1988, proclaiming the birth of the Palestinian State, which constitutes a landmark in the search for a peaceful solution of the Middle East problem. The affirmation by the Palestine National Council of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the acceptance of all relevant United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine is a clear demonstration of the commitment of the Palestinians to achieve a lasting and durable peace. Indeed, the historic decision taken at the Palestine National Council meeting and the message of peace brought by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to the December 1988 meetings of the General Assembly in Geneva have met with universal acclaim by the international community. Since then, President Arafat, with admirable courage and wisdom, has multiplied the peace initiatives which are irrefutable proof of the peaceful desires of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The world-wide reaction to those Palestinian initiatives has been very positive. In this context the Islamic world welcomed the decision of the United States of America to initiate discussions with the PLO even though that dialogue has not progressed much because of certain hesitations entertained by the United States.

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of
the Islamic Conference)

I should like to report to the Assembly that the Co-ordination Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 4 October 1989, saluted the blessed intifadah and reaffirmed its full support for it.

The meeting condemned Israeli policies and practices aimed at continuing the occupation and liquidating the intifadah, which has resulted in the martyrdom of over 1,000 Palestinians and injuries to and arrests of tens of thousands, in addition to deportations and the destruction of Palestinian properties.

The meeting reaffirmed that the Palestinian cause is the core of the Middle East conflict and that a just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved unless the Palestinian issue is settled on the basis of the immediate total and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied since 1967 as well as without enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable national rights, including the right to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on their own territory, with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital, under the leadership of the PLO, their sole, legitimate representative.

The meeting called for the urgent convening of the International Conference on Peace in the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/176, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties concerned in the conflict, including the PLO, on an equal footing.

Before ending my statement I must express the appreciation and gratitude of the Organization of the Islamic Conference for the contribution made to the Palestinian cause by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of
the Islamic Conference)

Palestinian People, under the able and wise guidance of its Chairman. Its latest report before us speaks for itself.

History has shown that aggression, domination and the use of force have never been able to quell the legitimate aspirations and demands of people for freedom, independence and self-determination. The legitimate and just struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve those noble goals is no exception.

The PRESIDENT: I shall now call upon those delegations which have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members of the Assembly that in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401 statements in exercise of right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): It has become clear to us all that the representative of the Zionist entity in occupied Palestine has lost touch with reality. It is not my intention here to attach any importance to his oft-repeated fabrications or to dignify them by trying to refute them. I shall merely state a few simple facts in the plainest of terms, so that even the representative of world zionism can grasp what I shall say. Having demonstrated his inability to understand even the simplest of procedural matters, how can he aspire to speak of matters that have to do with international peace and security?

First, in his verbose statement, he spoke of democracy claiming that the entity he represents is one of the few democracies in the Middle East. I wish only to draw attention to John Brinkley's article in The New York Times of 21 November 1989 so that the Assembly may see for itself the sort of democracy he claims to represent.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian
Arab Republic)

Members will find that this bogus democracy works in the complete absence of any law that may ensure for the inhabitants of occupied Palestine the most elemental of human rights, or any law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion and ethnic origin, or any law that guarantees freedom of expression and equality under the law. Indeed, members will find a unique case of a democracy without a constitution.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

Secondly, he referred once again to General Assembly resolution 3379 (XXX), which rightly branded zionism as racism. That resolution was adopted in the wake of the challenge to international law by the racist régimes in Tel Aviv and Pretoria when they refused to comply with the United Nations resolutions calling for the elimination of all forms of discrimination. The resolution was the expression of the common outrage at the grave threat posed by the unholy and suspect alliance between Tel Aviv and Pretoria and their inhuman practices. Suffice it to say that the representative of the Zionist entity could only tear up the resolution in this very Hall before all the delegations of Member States. That gives some idea of the mentality that characterizes his racist attitude.

Thirdly, he spoke of peace. He did that, of course, from the standpoint of Zionist aggression.

We have been affirming for years that we are on the side of peace, that we seek a just and lasting peace in the region, based on United Nations resolutions which we and the entire international community support. Any talk of peace outside this context is nothing but deceit and an attempt to hoodwink international public opinion.

History has proved conclusively that zionism is a racist expansionist movement. That movement has not been content with the planting of a parasite entity in Palestine at the expense of the indigenous people of that country and within boundaries that are not those defined by the United Nations in 1947. It has expanded the area it acquired at the expense of the Arab countries in 1948, with total contempt for the truce and resolution adopted by the Security Council, every resolution adopted by the Organization and its Charter.

That movement further expanded the area under occupation in 1952 and again through the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956. Zionist expansionism

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

reached its zenith in June 1967 with the annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan, the installation of Zionist settlements in the occupied territories and the occupation of a large part of Lebanon's territory.

The Zionist entity still practises its traditional blackmail. It persists in clinging to its declared annexationist-expansionist policy at the expense of the Arab nation, in its drive to establish its mythical State from the Nile to the Euphrates. Talk of peace by the representative of zionism deceives no one.

Mr. HOSSEINI (Islamic Republic of Iran): The representative of the Zionist base of terror occupying Palestine has, as usual, in order to conceal its deception, lied and made allegations without foundation against the countries of the Middle East, including my country. Of course, we are not surprised by those lies. This is the Zionist's usual manner. I categorically deny all those monstrous allegations.

As I said yesterday when speaking in exercise of my right of reply to the Zionist representative, it is our conviction that the Zionist base was created by force, by terror, and that its very existence in the area is illegal. It is an illegitimate State which through its illegal activities is trying to gain the title of a State. This, of course, is not possible because they are acting against the will of the people of Palestine and against Muslims all over the world. I assure them that they will not attain their dirty goal.

As members are aware, the Zionist régime has a record of four decades of occupation and of the most inhuman and brutal behaviour and policies against the inhabitants of Palestine. Members must also all remember the crimes that Zionist non-entity committed in the Sabra and Shatila camps and what they are now doing in Beit Sahur. The same criminals are committing the same crimes.

(Mr. Hossaini, Islamic Republic
of Iran)

Our position on the issue of Palestine is well-known. We have always supported the just and heroic struggle of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Muslim combatants to exercise their inalienable right to establish an independent State in the entire land of Palestine. We do not recognize any non-Palestinian State in the holy land of Palestine.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): The right of reply is meant to be used by representatives of States which have been attacked by previous speakers. Since I did not impugn the integrity of any Member State and only called for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, I fail to see any justification for the exercise of the right of reply by the representatives of Syria and Iran, unless they meant it as a declaration that they oppose, in principle, the peaceful resolution of conflicts. As a matter of fact, the representative of Iran called openly for the liquidation of Israel.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

These outbursts, in which Israel is not even called by its name, serve only to demonstrate what the Arab-Israeli conflict is all about. Once again Israel appeals for peace - and this is a good enough reason for it to be attacked by its Arab neighbours.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): I shall be extremely brief. Since the representative of the racist Zionist entity in occupied Palestine spoke about peace from the Zionist perspective of peace, I wish to present the Assembly with our concept of peace. Those who seek peace should find its components -

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Israel on a point of order.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): Countries in the United Nations have names. Israel definitely does not mind being called Zionist. We are very proud of it. Members know that zionism is one of the liberation movements of which a country can be proud. But I was not called by my name, and I think that the President should rule that countries in the United Nations have denominations; they should be called by their names and not be called entities. I too could resort to this kind of thing: I could call the Syrian Arab Republic a terrorist entity. But I would rather not.

The PRESIDENT: The Israeli request is noted, and I ask the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to proceed in accordance therewith.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): I am not going to answer the allegations of the representative of the Zionist entity who interrupted me under the pretext of a point of order. I shall not do so for a simple reason: out of respect especially for you -

The PRESIDENT: I call again on the representative of Israel on a point of order.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): Mr. President, if I understood correctly, you have just asked the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to use the right denominations of States as they are used in the United Nations. He did not. He ignored your request.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to refer to what I have already said. I regret that the representative of Israel had to interrupt the debate again. I suppose that delegations are aware of the practice established in the United Nations with regard to the names of States. In the interest of a substantive discussion, I hope that there will not be another interruption of the debate.

I ask the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to continue his statement.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): Once more I wish to confirm that out of my respect for you, Sir, I am not going to comment on the points of order which the representative of the Zionist entity in occupied Palestine claimed he had the right to speak on. Out of my respect for you, Sir, and for those attending this meeting, I shall not answer him.

Allow me to continue my statement in order to present my country's concept of peace, which is in complete opposition to the Zionist racist concept. We have always rejected and shall always reject that concept because it is not based on the principles of right or justice and does not restore the rights of those whose land was usurped.

Those who seek to achieve peace should find its components. Those who wish to establish peace should have all the factors leading to peace. None of these factors is expansion, destruction and the denial of the peoples' rights. Peace has its objective factors. If they are established, then peace, in turn, will be established. Otherwise, to speak of peace would be futile. Until these objective

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

factors are established, to speak of peace would be nothing but falsification and deception. Foremost among these objective factors is the elimination of all forms of aggression and commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and international norms. The developments -

The PRESIDENT: The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has used up his five minutes.

I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. HOSSEINI (Islamic Republic of Iran): We think that the presence of the cancerous Zionist régime goes against peace in our region. The main cause of instability and trouble in the region is the existence of the Zionist occupiers. That is the main reason. That régime, which was created by force and has sent thousands of Palestinians into refugee camps, is now asking for peace and talking about peace. This reminds us of a situation where a burglar breaks into a house by force and then says, "Well, let's share the property." That is the exact logic of the Zionist non-entity representatives.

I think the Zionist base is a danger to peace and security not only in the Middle East but in the world. As I said earlier, we believe that peace can be restored to the Middle East only by the recognition of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to establish their own independent State in the entire land of Palestine.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. BEIN (Israel): I want only to reiterate this: I hope you have listened, Sir, to the representative of Iran. He just called for the liquidation of the State of Israel so that another State can be established in the whole territory of Palestine. That is, in a nutshell, what we have in the Middle East; that is the conflict: we are calling for peace; they are calling for liquidation.

The meeting rose at 8.10 p.m.