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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-fifth year

Letter dated 6 June 1990 from the Permanent Representative
of Czechoslovakia to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit a copy of a message dated 22 May 1990 from Mr. Václav Havel, President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, to Mr. Chedli Klibi, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

I would be most grateful if you could have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly session, under item 35 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eduard KUKAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/45/50.

ANNEX

Message dated 22 May 1990 from the President of Czechoslovakia
to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

Let me thank you for the letter you sent me towards the end of April which I received before my state visit to Israel. You will know that Czechoslovakia decided in February last to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Similar decisions have been taken or are likely to be taken soon also by other Eastern European countries that, after decades of oppression, have now set out along the path of freedom and democracy. My own country, in so doing, is following up on its earlier long-standing traditional friendship with Israel and the Jewish people. The past forced severance of diplomatic relations has always been regarded by our people as an unwise and foresightless action.

This, however, does certainly not mean that we would intend to make a complete volte-face in our foreign policy orientation in respect of the Middle East. From now on we wish to pursue a balanced policy both towards the Arab countries and towards Israel. We want to obtain a better knowledge of, and deeper insight into, all the world. We also want to maintain our traditional friendly relations with the Arab nations, including the Palestinian people.

It was with this end in view that I conducted in Israel and before that in Prague talks with the widest possible spectrum of the Israeli political circles in the course of which we always spent most of the time discussing the possibilities of making peace in the Middle East rather than - as one might expect - talking about our bilateral relationship. The latter's further development namely depends, in my opinion, on the attainment of peace in the region which is bound to come one day.

It was for the same reason that I invited Yasser Arafat to Prague and met in East Jerusalem with representatives of Palestinian political circles. I have tried to arrange also a brief meeting with President Mubarak of Egypt but we have been unable so far to find a convenient date.

I am well aware of the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East. It will take extensive joint efforts and a substantial amount of time to resolve all the accumulated problems. Yet, a number of issues should be tackled immediately. With this in mind, I have, for example, appealed to Israeli officials to reopen universities in the occupied territories. I have protested and I shall protest again if I learn about violence and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. Many times, both during my visit to Israel and in Prague, I have made statements to the effect that the Palestinians have to be granted the right to a home and that it is necessary to open dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians for which the so-called Baker Plan might serve as a good starting point.

On the other hand, however, I am convinced that - even with Yasser Arafat's commendable efforts in this direction - a certain step to this end should be made by the Arab side, too. It might consist, for example, in taking up a new position

on the United Nations resolution of 1975, mentioned in your letter, which likened zionism to racism. Personally, I cannot agree with the wording of that resolution as what it says is not true. By the same token, it is my opinion that the recent statements by the President of Iraq are not conducive towards peaceful settlement in the Middle East either.

You have also stated that Israel - in connection with the influx of Jews from the Soviet Union - is wilfully changing the demographic structure of the population in the occupied territories. This is an extremely sensitive issue relating both to the vital interests of the Palestinians and to the Israeli policy as has been pursued until now. Let me explain our attitude to this matter in a few words. Like other Eastern European countries, we, too, have been repeatedly asked to participate in the transit of Soviet Jews to Israel. In this connection, I have many times emphasized that we recognize everyone's right to emigration from any country as well as everyone's right to settle in any country and that it is our moral obligation to promote this right. Yet, I have also stressed a number of times that we are categorically opposed to any forced demographic changes, especially in occupied territories. Thus, it is our opinion that if we were to assist in the transit of the Soviet Jews our assistance should be accompanied by guarantees provided by the Israeli Government that the new immigrants would not be settled in the occupied territories.

I know that all these problems will be discussed at the forthcoming summit of the Arab countries. I also know that the atmosphere of your talks may be affected by the recent tragic multiple killing and the new wave of violence that has risen as a consequence thereof in Israel and particularly in Gaza. Nevertheless, I want to firmly believe that the Arab summit will become one of the momentous events that will guide your peoples and the people of Israel towards peace with, and respect for, one another which is the only possible solution to the crisis in that part of the world. From the bottom of my heart, I wish your talks success.
