



Security Council

Fiftieth Year

3505th Meeting

Tuesday, 28 February 1995, 3.30 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Legwaila	(Botswana)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mr. Zawels
	China	Mr. Li Zhaoxing
	Czech Republic	Mr. Kovanda
	France	Mr. Mérimée
	Germany	Mr. Graf zu Rantzau
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wisnumurti
	Italy	Mr. Fulci
	Nigeria	Mr. Gambari
	Oman	Mr. Al-Khussaiby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sidorov
	Rwanda	Mr. Ubalijoro
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir David Hannay
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 22 February 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1995/151)

The meeting was resumed at 4 p.m.

Mr. Graf zu Rantzau (Germany): The representative of France, in his capacity as representative of the presidency of the European Union, will express the concern of the European Union about the difficulties the Middle East peace process is currently encountering. We fully subscribe to his statement. Like our European partners, we too attach utmost importance to the necessity of re-establishing the momentum of the peace process.

It is obvious that the peace process cannot be interrupted for too long without the risk of its being harmed. Both sides have to understand the other's concerns and fears. For the Israeli side, the increase in terrorist attacks on its citizens and the resulting security concerns are of paramount importance. For the Palestinian side, Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories are one of the major obstacles to the peace process.

The German Government condemns the brutal and indiscriminate acts of terrorism against Israeli citizens. We fully understand that these attacks raise serious and legitimate questions of security. They must be addressed by the Palestinian Authority. Recent steps taken by the Authority indicate its increasing understanding of how important it is to make every effort possible in the attempt to stem such terrorist attacks. The enemies of the peace process must not be allowed to succeed in their efforts to derail the process by violent acts.

At the same time, we are concerned at seeing a growing feeling of disenchantment within the Palestinian population. People are disappointed at how little their living conditions have improved as a result of the peace process. The repeated closures of the territories have in fact contributed to a deterioration in the economic situations of many Palestinian families. Moreover, the confirmation of Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories is a major concern for many Palestinians.

Germany and its European partners have declared, on numerous occasions — most recently through the statement of the European Union of 5 January 1995 — that a cessation of settlement activities is vital to the smooth functioning of the peace process.

In view of these worrisome developments, it is encouraging that both parties remain committed to the peace process. There is no credible alternative.

We call upon Israel and the Palestinian Authority to redouble their efforts to reach agreement on the most important and pressing issues of security, redeployment of Israeli troops, elections, settlements and the question of the transfer of authority to the Palestinians. The bilateral negotiations are the appropriate channel for solving these urgent questions.

Germany, together with its partners in the European Union, remains committed to supporting the peace process fully.

Mr. Sidorov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation has consistently pursued a policy of promoting progress in the Middle East peace process. Our country actively worked for agreement between the parties on conditions that made possible the Madrid peace conference and enabled direct Arab-Israeli talks to be begun. In particular, an understanding was reached that the most complex and sensitive issues for a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, including the question of Jerusalem and the settlements, would be held over to a subsequent stage, namely, until the talks on the final status of the Palestinian territories.

At the time, the international community took a very favourable view of the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles, which marked a long-awaited breakthrough in the Middle East settlement process. The Russian sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East believes in the importance of timely and complete compliance, in good faith, with the letter and the spirit of this fundamental document.

In this context, we have learned with regret of the recent exacerbation of the differences between the Palestinians and the Israelis over the question of the expansion of settlements, primarily those around Jerusalem. There can be no doubt that this problem has had an adverse effect on the talks, which were already fraught with difficulties without that, on further steps towards implementing the Declaration of Principles.

In the terms of that document, as members are aware, it is considered desirable to avoid bringing up the sort of particularly sensitive problem that would simply add fuel to the fire to discuss and lead to an escalation of tension, all to the detriment of the atmosphere of trust at the talks.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our condemnation of the violations of human rights in the

occupied territories and also of the terrorist methods employed by certain extremist groups. If an end is to be put to the acts of terrorism and violence in the Middle East, which are dangerously destabilizing the situation and imperilling the entire peace process, drastic steps must be taken, and by joint effort.

We favour timely and effective measures to maintain the impetus of the peace process and to ensure that it continues to make progress. We are certain that a continuation of concentrated efforts towards implementing the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles in full and towards establishing reliable machinery for coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples would be in the interests of the whole Middle East region. We believe that it is essential for the parties to refrain from any acts that would prejudice a Palestinian-Israeli settlement and disturb the status quo. Avoidance both of practical measures and public statements that could undermine the atmosphere of businesslike cooperation between the parties should be studiously avoided.

We believe that the best way of resolving the problems that have arisen is through direct dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians using the machinery that has been set up in the course of the peace process. For its part, Russia, as a sponsor of the Middle East peace process, intends to go on actively promoting a settlement in every detail, in the interests of establishing a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East and establishing wide-ranging international cooperation in the region.

Mr. Al-Khussaiby (Oman): At the outset, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement of the current Chairman of the Arab Group, Ambassador Olhaye of Djibouti, which he delivered on behalf of the Group, and, moreover, to echo my delegation's full support for the position of the Arab Group outlined in that statement.

The primary purpose of convening this open debate today is to address a critical and urgent issue regarding the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, which are undoubtedly impeding the efforts that have been made to restore peace and security through the ongoing peace process in the Middle East.

Israel's policy and practice of building and expanding the settlements in the occupied Arab territories will have negative consequences for the ongoing peace process and undermine Israel's credibility in meeting its obligations. It

is true that there are some stumbling blocks in the Israeli-Palestinian track, but we would like to emphasize the fact that the continued construction of such settlements by the Government of Israel will not only jeopardize this track, but also threaten and jeopardize the overall peace process in the region. In our view, there can be no potential breakthrough in the course of the peace negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel, nor in the course of other tracks, unless Israel brings these practices to an immediate end and resorts to resolving the question of the existing settlements through peaceful negotiations.

The Government of Israel, as an occupying Power, is required today, more than ever before, to take positive steps towards peace by refraining from constructing new settlements anywhere in the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and by complying with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We are of the view that these matters should be resolved through bilateral negotiations and within the context of the ongoing peace process. However, and in accordance with the peace efforts exerted in this regard, my delegation believes that the Council can play an effective role in enhancing the ongoing peace process in the region, particularly given that the Madrid process is based on the very relevant resolutions of this Council.

In conclusion, my delegation calls upon the Government of Israel and the Government of Palestine to accelerate the implementation of the Declaration of Principles signed by the two parties on 13 September 1993, and to abide by its pertinent provisions.

Mr. Gambari (Nigeria): The Security Council is deliberating on the situation in the Middle East at a particularly important and sensitive time in the peace process. Fully conscious of the sensitivity of the issue before us today, my delegation none the less remains convinced that this formal meeting of the Security Council, by reflecting the objective views and considerations of all sides in the Middle East, will help provide the necessary impetus and momentum to the Middle East peace process. We share the view that the peace process is the only realistic path towards long-term security and cooperation in the Middle East, and therefore deserves the continuing support of the international community.

During the past few years, we have witnessed historic progress in efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, starting with the

Madrid initiative. During the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, my delegation welcomed the historic signing in Washington of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), confident that the agreement would pave the way for more substantive transformations in the Middle East.

Since then, events have tended generally to confirm our optimism that, at long last, the region is on the threshold of peace and stability. Consequently, within the framework of the peace process, Israel and the PLO signed the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area in Cairo on 4 May 1994, and an Agreement on early empowerment on 29 August, both of which have enabled the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, which is a crucially important first step in the fulfilment of the historic aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination and nationhood.

Furthermore, on 26 October 1994, another historic peace treaty between Israel and Jordan was signed which, aside from opening a new phase in bilateral relations between the two countries, also enhanced the possibilities for progress in the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks of the peace process.

Regretfully, however, the progress towards peace in the Middle East has not been entirely hitch-free. Indeed, the extremists who perpetrated the dreadful and totally unacceptable bombing incidents at Hebron, Afula, Tel Aviv, Buenos Aires, London and, very recently, in Gaza, attest to how far the tiny minority opposed to peace will go in the bid to reverse the gains of the overwhelming majority committed to the peace process in the Middle East. Nigeria commends the vision, courage and determination of the leaderships of Israel and the PLO, and of the other States in the region, that have maintained their commitment to peace regardless of the tragedies that threaten to derail the peace process.

The Declaration of Principles signed in Washington, on 13 September 1993 and the Gaza-Jericho Agreement — which enjoy the full support of the international community — set out a clear timetable for the negotiations towards the permanent status of Palestine. They also indicate the particular rules and modes of behaviour which should guide all parties in the course of the transition. It is in this connection that my delegation views with concern the continued building of new settlements in the occupied West Bank in recent months. We believe that such activities

not only undermine the spirit of the peace process, but could lead to the entrenchment of extremist views within radical sections of Middle East society. It is vital, at this delicate stage of the peace process, that nothing be done to undermine the climate of confidence that is badly needed in order to build and sustain peace in the Middle East. In this connection, both parties should utilize fully the bilateral framework in order to resolve these new and potentially dangerous problems.

Thus far, Israelis and Palestinians have overcome formidable obstacles in their collective search for peace. The other parties in the region have also shown courage and a willingness to work towards peace in the region. In spite of the fact that some of the most divisive and potent difficulties involved in the peace process have yet to be addressed, we hope that the overriding goal of peace will ultimately transcend the destructive course of warfare and regional instability. In this connection, the international community, in particular the United Nations — which has always played a critical role — will continue to be relied upon greatly to assist the parties in moving the peace process forward. The challenges may be great and the stakes high, but so too are the rewards of peace and the attendant social and economic development that should follow for the people of the region — all of them.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Middle East question — i.e., the most prolonged regional conflict since the Second World War — has been a worldwide concern. Recent years have witnessed the settlement of some regional conflicts, a trend that has been reflected in the Middle East too. The Declaration of Principles signed by the PLO and Israel at the end of 1993 marked a breakthrough in the Middle East peace process. It was an important step towards a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East and towards harmonious coexistence between the Arab and Jewish nations. It has paved the way for a final, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

There have been some new developments in the Middle East peace process since then. Four Middle East countries held a summit meeting in Egypt not long ago. The Chinese delegation welcomes and is grateful for these positive developments, and for the wise and pragmatic approach adopted by the Palestinian and Israeli leaders in their search for peace in the region.

It should be pointed out that the Middle East peace process has recently suffered another setback. The discord

between the parties concerned over Israeli settlements in the occupied territories has suddenly sharpened. The Chinese delegation is very much concerned over this development. The Middle East peace process is now at a very sensitive and critical moment. We hope that the parties concerned will exercise restraint, be calm and reasonable and try their best to create appropriate conditions to continue to promote the Middle East peace process rather than undermine it.

At present it is essential for Palestine and Israel to build mutual trust and persist in settling disputes through consultation and negotiation. The leaders of the two sides should, proceeding from consideration of the long-term interests of all nations in the region, continue to remove obstructions and work together to promote the peace process in the Middle East. As a Chinese saying goes, the road to success is strewn with setbacks, and long is the road to accomplish an arduous task. There will certainly be many a challenge in the efforts to achieve a comprehensive and fair settlement of the Middle East question, which has been with us for several decades. As long as we bear in mind the philosophy that peace is the most precious thing and persist in working for peace, it is possible to overcome all difficulties, setbacks and contradictions. The international community should make the best of the situation and work to maintain the momentum of the Middle East peace process.

China has throughout supported the Middle East peace process and has stood for the political settlement of the Middle East question on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. We will, as always, continue, together with the international community, to promote the Middle East peace process and make our due contribution to a happy life of lasting peace for the people of the region at an early date.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic wishes to reaffirm its attachment to a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question and of the entire Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and within the agreed framework of international law. This includes the necessity of applying the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

In recent years, efforts towards attaining a settlement of the conflict have resulted in the ongoing peace process. The Czech Republic accepts and supports it without reservation. We are heartened by the progress it has attained since the Washington Declaration of Principles was signed more than two years ago.

Important steps followed last year: the Gaza-Jericho Agreement of last May, the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities of last August and, of course, the Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan of last October.

The issue of Israeli settlements in occupied territories is a difficult and emotionally charged one. The Czech Government considers settlements to be illegal and not conducive to the peace process. And yet the Israeli Government has effected important changes in this policy, and, whatever reservations one might have about the current shape of this policy, these changes should be noted. Even more importantly, though, this issue is just one aspect of the exceedingly complex web of Israeli-Palestinian relations, and we believe that this entire web would be best left to the continuation of bilateral negotiations, however difficult these are turning out to be, outside the spotlight of international attention.

We feel that some of the difficulties in the progress of bilateral negotiations stem from recent acts of brutal violence. A year ago, in March, the Council strongly condemned the slaughter in Hebron. Today it is worth reiterating that the Czech Republic condemns all terrorism, whatever its motivation, under any circumstances.

Mr. Zawels (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Today, in circumstances that are obviously very different from those in which it has usually considered this question in the past, the Security Council is considering the situation in the occupied territories, in particular the matter of the Israeli settlements in those territories.

In October 1991, this conflict began to be dealt with comprehensively, involving all of the parties and the various and essential bilateral and multilateral frameworks. The peace process begun in Madrid at that time has now begun to bear fruit. The first significant result was the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September 1993. The other, more recent, was the signing on 26 October 1994 of the Peace Treaty between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel.

This process is extremely complicated and necessarily difficult, with its many actors, issues and variables. However, the international community and, in

particular, the United States and the Russian Federation, sponsors of the peace process, strongly support this effort, because they know that a lasting and just solution will spring only from dialogue and the firm belief of the concerned parties themselves. More than 40 years of searching for other means managed only to keep the conflict alive and, unfortunately, frustrated several generations in the Middle East. Today, however, we are walking the path of peace.

The situation created by Israeli settlements in the occupied territories is a source of concern for my Government. We believe that the Government of Israel and the Palestinian authorities should speed up the joint quest for a solution to this sensitive question. In recent months there have been some mixed signals; these have confused and disturbed the Palestinian people, which we find understandable. I wish to reiterate that the framework for this action is that stipulated in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

This problem is undoubtedly serious. However, it is but one of the problems still unresolved and requiring an active solution by the parties.

The repeated terrorist attacks against both parties, but especially against Israel, are the barbaric acts of those who reject peace and seek only destruction and grief, using the excuse of hatred, the veil of fanaticism or the drug of resentment. My country has twice been the object of terrorist attacks related to the Middle East conflict, most recently in Buenos Aires, on 18 July 1994, when many Argentines, including, of course, some of Jewish origin, were killed or wounded. As a result, we are keenly aware of this scourge and believe that this subject requires the urgent attention not only of the parties, but also of the international community in general.

This debate in the Security Council is a good opportunity to express firm support for the peace process that began in Madrid in 1991 and to repeat the need for the parties, with the support of the sponsors and the international community as a whole, to redouble their efforts to continue making progress together in this historic process, which opens up the clear prospect of a time of peace and prosperity for the Middle East as a whole.

The Argentine Republic, which has a long-standing relationship of friendship with the Governments and peoples of the region, supports this peace process strongly and firmly and believes that it is the right framework, chosen by the parties themselves, to resolve outstanding questions.

From within the Security Council, Argentina will continue to see to it that the right conditions prevail for the continuation of this indispensable dialogue between the parties. We place all our hopes in the success of this dialogue.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Botswana.

Botswana's support for the peace process in the Middle East is far beyond doubt. We have never wavered in this support, even when at times in the past, as is the case at present, clouds of doubt and indecision on the part of the negotiating partners have descended so heavily on the process, threatening to dampen and overwhelm it. We are realistic enough to know that no process of negotiation can be completely bereft of pain, immune to obstacles and absolutely impervious to the vicissitudes of politics, occasional rancour and other conditions of human frailty. This is particularly true when such negotiations involve such deep-rooted and complex problems as those that are the subject of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian people.

Of cardinal importance to my country is that the parties continue to have the patience and fortitude of a Nelson Mandela and the sacrificial submission of men and women of peace. Nothing must deflect them from the path they have chosen. The parties' fidelity to the historic Washington Declaration of Principles will be tested, sometimes beyond the capacity of the parties to endure, but there should be no let-up. In the Declaration may lie the hope for peace and reconciliation between the people of Israel and their Palestinian neighbours. What has been gained so far in the peace process is not to be disparaged, for not long ago it could have been considered almost utterly impossible to achieve.

It is our hope, therefore, that whatever action we take in this debate on an issue so deadly sensitive will in no way whatsoever accentuate the complications or difficulties presently encountered by the negotiations. Everything we do must help the negotiations. My delegation exhorts the parties to stay the course and try as much as is humanly possible to remain true to their noble mission.

For Botswana, I declare to the parties that they will never find us wanting in our determination to continue to cheer them up as they struggle to find peace for their war-weary people.

I resume my function as President of the Council.

Mr. Mérimée (France) (*interpretation from French*):
I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The peace process in the Middle East is at present encountering serious difficulties. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the idea that these should be overcome by the parties concerned, because the effort made at the peace Conference inaugurated in Madrid almost three years ago has produced noteworthy results that have made it possible to resolve a major portion of the problems that were impeding reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world.

The European Union notes that today the most disturbing problems are those in the negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the Government of Israel has just categorically reiterated that it is resolved to continue its discussions within the agreed framework. The leaders of the PLO, for their part, have decided to continue to pursue the peace process. None the less, they have seen fit to draw the attention of the international community to the current situation. These attitudes are encouraging. On the other hand, the disappointing results of the recent Summit meetings at ministerial level between the Palestinians and the Israelis, despite the intervention of mediators, shows the seriousness of the obstacles that the negotiators have encountered.

The Israeli population is disturbed at the increase in terrorism. The enemies of the peace process are trying to destroy it and to impose their own logic — that of war — by trying to convince public opinion in Israel that the path of dialogue will lead to deadlock. The European Union most vigorously condemns recourse to blind violence, which creates innocent victims. The concern expressed by the Government of Israel over security matters is therefore quite legitimate.

The Palestinian Authority must provide itself with the necessary means and take every possible step, while respecting human rights, to monitor the activities of extremists in the regions that it administers. The recently announced decisions regarding the handing over of the lists of Palestinian police officers to the Israeli authorities and the creation of a new security court indicate that the Palestinian leaders have become aware of the crucial importance of this matter.

But the question of security must not become an obstacle to progress in the negotiations. The Palestinian people, which placed great hope in the autonomy agreements, has the impression that its living conditions have not substantially changed since. The sealing off of territories is clearly the most disturbing decision in this connection, because it deprives numerous Palestinian families of their income. The delay, in relation to the initial timetable, in the negotiations on the elections and in the redeployment of the Israeli army has also contributed to a feeling of disillusionment noticeable among the inhabitants of the occupied territories.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine particularly wished to draw the attention of the international community to the settlements question. I hardly need go into any lengthy detail about the position of the European Union on this topic, as it is based on a number of Security Council resolutions. These settlements are in contravention of the provisions of The Hague and Geneva Conventions governing the occupation regime of occupied territories. The Israeli Government had taken the courageous decision to put a freeze on these settlements. This new departure was in accordance with the agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which, *inter alia*, stipulate that this is a matter that will be taken up during the final-status negotiations.

The authorization given at the beginning of this year for new construction on the West Bank and around Jerusalem is, unfortunately, at variance with the Declaration of Principles. This is why the European Union expressed its concern by issuing a declaration in Brussels on 5 January. Furthermore, it approached the Israeli Government to alert it to the negative consequences of this matter. The European Union reiterates in this meeting of the Security Council its appeal to the Government of Israel to find ways to settle this matter, with respect for international law and commitments solemnly undertaken.

The European Union would like, in conclusion, to address an appeal to both parties and to all those who assist them. Courage and political vision have always led to the most significant results in the region. The European Union would therefore issue a plea for the prompt conclusion of the main discussions currently under way between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, whether on security, the redeployment of the army, settlements, continuing the transfer of authority or the elections, so important to strengthening the legitimacy

of the peace process by establishing normal democratic procedures.

The European Union has already given its financial and political support to the peace process. I would recall that it has promised 500 million ECU over five years and, more importantly, it alone has already expended some \$100 million to help to finance the administration of Jericho and the Gaza Strip and to pay the salaries of the Palestinian police. The European Union will continue to give its support. It is at the disposal of the parties whenever needed, as it has always been, to help them overcome any problems they may encounter in implementing their decisions.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abu Odeh (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my pleasure, at the outset, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, which is now coming to an end. Your diplomacy and experience have undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Council's work. It is also my pleasure to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Emilio Cárdenas, on his successful handling of the work of the Council last month.

Our delegation, fully aware of the tremendous importance of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, and fully aware that this matter is closely linked to the achievement of a just and lasting peace and is a very sensitive matter, with an effect on the peace process as a whole, would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for your prompt response to our request for this meeting. It was indeed a very timely response, made in full awareness of the situation, fully in keeping with the Council's knowledge, and the knowledge of the international community, of the need to maintain the momentum of the peace process and to ensure its success.

The Jordanian delegation is participating in this debate because of our firm belief in this concept, and because we deem it essential to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region. We wish to participate in any effort to eliminate all obstacles to peace. Israel's reactivation and resumption of its settlement policy, as well as its insistence upon it at this stage, when the States of the region and the partisans of peace have been attempting to maintain the momentum of peace and to accelerate the peace process and ensure its success, undoubtedly constitute a very curious development,

one that is very dangerous for the peace process and its credibility *vis-à-vis* the peoples and States of the region.

We know that the topic of settlements was included in the Oslo Declaration as one to be discussed in the final stage of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and left to the people concerned. But we are sure that it was put back to the final stages because of its tremendous importance, and because it is fundamental and central to the peace process in the region, just as the questions of Jerusalem, refugees and sovereignty are. Hence, we assume that postponing discussion upon it was intended to preserve the peace process and keep it going smoothly in its early stages in order to build more confidence among the negotiating parties so that the peace process could be strengthened in the face of the tremendous challenges presented by the questions of Jerusalem, the settlements and sovereignty.

We did not expect Israel to disregard this concept and resume the establishment of settlements or resort to new concepts that must destroy the very foundations of the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track after the process had become a palpable reality and its two main protagonists had shared the Nobel Peace Prize. The resolution adopted by the Israeli cabinet on 24 January 1995 to resume the establishment of settlements can be explained only as a deviation from the declared Israeli commitment to ensure the success of the faltering peace process.

The Security Council has discussed the question of settlements before. It is not a new question, but emerged in 1967. Many resolutions have been adopted declaring these settlements null and void and an obstacle to peace efforts and mediation aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The Council's resolutions have called upon Israel to implement in detail the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, article 49 of which, in its sixth paragraph, prohibits the occupying Power from deporting or transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. The importance the Council has attached to the matter is very clear in the light of the fact that resolution 446 (1979) established a Commission of members of the Council to examine the situation relating to settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967. That Commission, despite the difficulties it faced, was able to submit its report to the Council. In the light of that report, the Council adopted the well-known resolution 465 (1980), which not only strongly deplored the settlement policies, but also expressed its deep concern over the consequences for the

local population and the need to protect their interests. The Council considered such policies to have grave consequences for peace efforts and called for an end to such activities and even for the dismantlement of the settlements. Paragraph 7 of the resolution also called on all States not to provide Israel with any assistance in connection with the settlements.

If I recall these matters, it is because I am certain of the Council's position concerning the Israeli settlements, a position based on international consensus at the level of experts, politicians, legal scholars and even Governments, and of the entire United Nations system. It has also been agreed that the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War is the instrument that governs the situation and the Israeli presence in the occupied Palestinian territories. I also recall these matters because I believe that the Council bears a historic responsibility to save the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track, and consequently on all tracks, from complete collapse as a result of Israel's resumption of its activity in establishing settlements. Such a collapse could also result from the failure of all efforts and mediation to persuade Israel to give up this formal establishment of settlements, a practice that has indeed surprised us. It constitutes a tremendous stumbling block to the progress of the ongoing bilateral negotiations and could even threaten the peace process at a time when it has inspired hope throughout the world.

The greatest threat to the peace process is the illusion on the part of the stronger party that genuine peace can be established on the basis of imbalance between the negotiators, and that the Middle East peace process demands clever, cunning negotiators able to wrest the best possible deal from their interlocutors. All efforts based on such assumptions are futile and are doomed to failure, for they can never lead to a just peace or, hence, a lasting one.

What peace in the Middle East needs is statesmen and leaders with vision, not mere technocrats with clever linguistic traps and an ability to take advantage of the weaker party.

Because of its desire and hope for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, my delegation calls on Israel to put an end to all settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories, first and foremost in Arab Jerusalem. This would restore credibility to the Israeli Government's utterances. We hope that the Security Council will take a clear position in response to this blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions and of Security Council resolutions, and will

adopt measures that will put the peace process back on track.

The President: I thank the representative of Jordan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Owada (Japan): As I address the Security Council for the first time this month, Sir, the Council has reached the final day of your presidency. Rather than offering you the congratulations of my delegation on your assumption of that high office, therefore, permit me to commend you on the exemplary manner in which you have led the work of the Council this month. Thanks in large part to your wise guidance and evident diplomatic skill, the Council has discharged its many important tasks most effectively in the course of the month. I should like also to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, for the wisdom and insight he brought to the presidency during January.

We have witnessed dramatic breakthroughs in the Middle East peace process over the last two years. The agreement signed in 1993 in Washington by the leaders of the PLO and the Government of Israel and the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement of 1994 were truly epoch-making events that engendered cautious but nevertheless genuine optimism throughout the international community. Needless to say, we all understood that with these achievements the process had by no means reached its ultimate goal, but was, rather, setting out upon a fresh path, one that would be marked by myriad dangers and challenges.

Indeed, in the ensuing months we saw truly disturbing developments, including terrorist activities, the expansion of settlements and the redeployment of Israeli forces. The parties directly involved, as well as the broader international community, are now challenged to ensure that the peace process remains viable and continues to make progress.

The peace process depends primarily, of course, on the efforts and the political will of the parties concerned. Thus, we welcomed the meeting in Washington on 12 February in which the representatives of Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority reaffirmed their determination to consolidate the breakthroughs achieved

in the Arab-Israeli peace process, to overcome obstacles and disputes, and to push forward towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Japan was heartened by United States Secretary of State Christopher's statement that same day, in which he affirmed that the Israelis and Palestinians were committed to a real partnership to reach real peace. He assured us that both parties were clearly determined to fulfil all elements of their agreements and to ensure their implementation. We commend this firm determination by the parties and strongly encourage them to maintain their resolve to reach genuine peace in the Middle East.

The debate in the Security Council today provides us with the chance to send a clear and decisive signal that the international community is also committed to the peace process. Indeed, it is incumbent upon the international community to demonstrate to the parties concerned that they have its full and steadfast support as they strive to advance the peace process.

Among the gravest threats to that process are the terrorist activities of those who are the enemies of peace. Japan strongly condemns terrorism or violence which is aimed at thwarting the peace process. It extends its sympathy to the victims of terrorism and fully understands the concerns of the Israeli people for their security. Japan also understands that the security needs of the Israelis are inseparable from the political and economic needs of the Palestinian people. The peace process cannot be said to be genuinely making progress unless all the people in the region are able to pursue their lives in a safe and secure environment, and in the knowledge that tomorrow will bring a more stable life. To that end, it is necessary that the international community strengthen its social and economic development assistance to the region.

Job-creation for the Palestinians is an area to which Japan attaches particular importance. Japan has already disbursed \$100 million out of the \$200 million it pledged in September 1993 for the Palestinian people, and it has allocated \$10 million to be expended through the United Nations Development Programme for the creation of job opportunities for Palestinians in Gaza.

The United Nations has been involved in the Middle East situation almost since its inception. The multiple problems in the region are deep-seated and complex; we have learned that there are no easy answers, and that for every two steps forward there may be one and a half steps backward. But we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged. I remain firm in my conviction — and recent

events confirm this conviction — that the path ahead leads inexorably to the establishment of peace throughout the Middle East.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Mr. President, it is a pleasant duty for me to address you on behalf of the Algerian delegation and to convey my sincerest congratulations on the way in which you are directing the work of the Security Council this month. I am quite sure that under your wise guidance the Council will be able to fully discharge its responsibilities with respect to the very delicate situation prevailing in the Palestinian territories.

We should also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, for the very skilful way in which he conducted the Council's work last month.

The representative of Djibouti has set forth the position of the Arab Group, and I will therefore confine myself to noting certain general points.

In September 1993 the Declaration of Principles was agreed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government. Despite the obstacles which thus far have made it impossible to fully and effectively implement the agreement in accordance with the timetable which was established, the international community was won over by the promise of peace in the Middle East. It had expected the Israeli Government to take confidence-building measures instead of continuing practices which are contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention — collective punishment, sealing off occupied territories and isolating Jerusalem, setting up new settlements and enlarging existing settlements — particularly since the Security Council had reiterated on a number of occasions that the Fourth Geneva Convention was fully applicable to the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. Consequently, Israel's continuing to change the nature of the city of Jerusalem, its establishment of settlements surrounding it and its isolation of the rest of Palestinian territory all destabilize the peace process and contribute to worsening the situation.

The massive presence of settlers in the Gaza Strip, protected by the Israeli army, also destabilizes the peace process, because it is liable to give rise to acts of violence and retaliation. The presence of settlements in occupied Palestinian territories is, to a certain extent, a kind of bomb which may explode at any minute. The most recent acts of violence have played into the hands of the extremists in Israel, who are asking that the settlers be armed, that the occupied territories be sealed off and that the armed protection of the settlements be strengthened.

None of these factors give grounds for optimism; rather, they make us believe that the intervention of the international community has become necessary to prevent a deterioration of the situation as well as its escalation and confrontation between the parties. Therefore, we fully appreciate the importance of the Security Council's studying the negative developments in the Palestinian territories as well as their negative impact on the possibilities of peace.

The success which we so earnestly desire for the peace process in the Middle East requires that we should control any factors which might help to poison the atmosphere or thwart the effective implementation of the agreements between the parties concerned. Consequently, the question of the settlements is the real litmus test of whether the Israelis are really anxious to reach a genuine, lasting and just peace with the Palestinians. It was the settlements which gave rise to the massacre in the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi mosque a year ago and the acts of violence and retaliation which have resulted in numerous victims. Since the same settlements are currently impeding the peace process, the Security Council should consider this question very seriously and utilize its mandate to serve peace in this very delicate period.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on your exemplary performance at its helm this month. We should also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Cárdenas, on his excellent work last month.

It is now a year to the day since the Security Council met to debate the situation in the occupied territories following the horrible massacre perpetrated by an Israeli settler in the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi mosque in Al-Khalil. Many delegations, including mine, drew attention then in this very Chamber to the real dangers that the Israeli settlements presented to the peace process in the Middle East.

The question of settlements is certainly not new. In fact, the international community has consistently emphasized the illegality of this practice, which the Israelis have turned into a consistent policy, in defiance and denial of international law and legality, in particular of relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well the Geneva Conventions.

The advent of the Middle East peace process launched in Madrid made it possible to open the way to what became a turning-point in the history of the region following the signing of the Israel-Palestinian accords and the Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan. A peace dynamic thus began, quite rightly giving rise to the highest hopes throughout the world for an overall, just and final settlement of the question of the Middle East as a whole. However, it is obvious that any peace agreement, no matter how important, presupposes good-faith implementation, an open mind and willingness for compromise, as well as the will to achieve peace and the right attitude. Unfortunately, the opposite has occurred with the persistence of an attitude comprising lack of understanding and rejection.

Israel has not stopped the settlements being built as it ought to have, prior to dismantling the existing ones completely. Not at all: it is going on building, extending, developing, although its commitments require it to do the very opposite without further delay with a view to re-establishing the normal status quo that prevailed before the occupation. That was what it was supposed to do in fulfilment of its commitments within the framework of the peace agreements and in accordance with international treaties. And yet, assurances that have been given out by authorized spokesmen to the effect that colonization activities have been halted, unfortunately all too soon contradicted by government decisions that must certainly pander to the wishes of the very people who are opposed to peace.

The settlements are a major but not the only obstacle in the way of tangible progress towards the desired goal. Others include the withdrawal of Israeli troops scheduled

to begin last April and the establishment of arrangements for holding elections in the self-governing Palestinian territories that were intended to provide them with the necessary political institutions for civilized life. These are the same elections that were supposed to be held last July too.

What we have seen instead is a succession of reports that never fail to disturb international public opinion. Moreover, for over a month now Israel has kept its borders with the self-governing regions of Gaza and Jericho closed, thus imposing a veritable blockade. The closure has once again sank the territories back into despair, with the concomitant gloomy procession of dire effects on the economy of the occupied territories and consequently for the Palestinian attitude towards the peace process.

Reasons of security are adduced and who could fail to understand such concerns, which are of course legitimate ones for any State? However, we could well ask ourselves whether this really is the best way to combat violence and bring about its end. The most apt answer to this question is provided by the developments now taking place in the occupied territories, where the stubborn economic and social difficulties the Palestinians must wrestle with — aggravated by the cordon round the territories and by continued settlement activities, are currently gelling into frustration, bitterness and disenchantment for the people there, opening up fertile ground for the extremists opposed to the peace process.

In any case, the Palestinian Authority has taken effective steps, thereby showing its determination to shoulder its responsibilities in the struggle to combat violence. However, that does not change the fact that the problems must be tackled right at their roots by putting a full and final stop to settlement activities, withdrawing the Israeli troops from the self-governing territories, holding elections to ground the Palestinian Authority on institutional foundations, lifting the blockade against the territories and freeing the political prisoners — in brief, by the implementation of the agreements between the two parties, all fair, square and above board. The international community has every right to demand that Israel meet its obligations pending an agreement on the ultimate status of the occupied territories.

International donors and financial institutions are obliged for their part to honour their commitments to the Palestinians by stepping up the pace of their economic assistance to the self-governing territories; in the short term, this would ease the suffering of the Palestinian people and

allow them in time to lay the foundations for their economy, the *sine qua non* for consolidating self-rule and, later, independence.

Tunisia, a peace-loving country, supported the Madrid process then and continues to do so now. It has already hosted several meetings of working groups as part of the multilateral negotiations in which it has been participating actively. Like all nations, it had great hopes for this process, in that it opened a new chapter in the history of the region. Important gains have been made that must not be lost. Nevertheless, the path to peace is strewn with obstacles and the process now under way is meeting various kinds of opposition that can be neutralized only by speeding up the process towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement soon. The Council and the sponsors of the peace process share the paramount responsibility for getting it back on track in order to safeguard the future of peace and stability in the region.

The President: I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Sir, allow me first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. It is also my pleasure to express our sincere thanks to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, for his work as President of the Council last month.

Despite the rather positive developments in the question of Palestine — developments that are embodied in the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements between the PLO and Israel — we and the international community must admit that the process that began in Madrid is going through a very rough patch as a result of the pretexts and other excuses advanced by Israel in order to avoid implementing its commitments and abiding by them. Indeed, Israel is continuing its practices of violence and terrorism, and is imposing famine on the population by besieging their territory, annexing their land and destroying their homes. Furthermore, the Israeli Government has recently begun work again on building new settlements and expanding existing ones, particularly in the holy city of Jerusalem

and its suburbs. This must be considered a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 465 (1980).

The Israeli cabinet recently adopted a decision giving the go-ahead to the construction of 4,500 units in East Jerusalem, its eastern suburbs and on part of the Golan Heights. This is above and beyond the recent plan to build 15,000 new units in certain areas of Jerusalem as homes for approximately 80,000 settlers by end 1997, on the pretext of ensuring those settlers' security and stability. Israel's security pretexts should not become the principal factor in the peace process because otherwise, unless Israel follows through on its commitments and lays all its cards on the negotiating table, the peace process could stumble over pitfalls of every sort.

The Israeli settlement schemes reveal once again that the Israeli Government has no sincere or serious intentions regarding the ongoing Middle East peace process. They also show that Israel is following a policy of imposing a *fait accompli* and causing material, historical, cultural and demographic changes to the city of Jerusalem by attempting to Judaize it before the final stage of the negotiations on Jerusalem with the Palestinian party. Israeli practices, in fact, are in flagrant violation — and threaten the credibility — of the agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and they are an obstacle to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We should like once again to state that we totally reject these activities by Israeli settlers, and lay the responsibility for these practices, that cannot but hinder the ongoing peace process, at the door of the Israeli Government. Our delegation wishes to express its full support for the position of the Palestinian people, who day in, day out reject the activities by the Israeli settlers in their territories as they reject other practices that are in contravention of international legitimacy and law. We look forward with impatience to seeing the Council take into account all its previous resolutions, particularly resolution 465 (1980), which calls for an immediate end to the building and expansion of such settlements for the existing settlements to be dismantled and any plans to building any further settlements in the occupied Arab territories, including the holy city of Jerusalem, to be halted. The Council must deal with this matter and all its political dimensions in a constructive fashion that will enable the peace process to continue.

Given the international changes now prevailing, it has become very important to keep up the responsibility of the international organizations and that of the Security Council in particular, with respect to all aspects of the Palestinian question, so that we can achieve real peace.

In conclusion, our delegation wishes once again to state that the achievement of a peaceful, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict must be based on the principles of the Madrid Conference, on the principle of land for peace, and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). All those resolutions call for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to be safeguarded and for a total Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the holy city of Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. Unless Israel respects those principles and those foundations for peace, there will be no progress on any other negotiating tracks of the peace process, for the peace process is a whole that includes the implementation of rules of strategic security in the region.

Of course, to this very day Israel refuses to implement such measures, as is seen in its aggression against and siege of areas of Lebanon, including attacks on the Lebanese coast, its refusal to respond to requests to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. It must do all those things it now refuses to do so that the Palestinian people can realize their aspirations for a dignified and free life on an equal footing with all the peoples of the world and so that we can move the peace process forward and strategic security returns to the Middle East.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Cissé (Chairman, Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People) (*interpretation from French*): I congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I am certain that your great experience and diplomatic skill will contribute to the success of the Council's deliberations.

I should also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Emilio Cárdenas, Permanent Representative of Argentina, for his exemplary guidance of the Council's work during the month of January.

I am also grateful to the members of the Council for allowing me, as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in the important debate on the question of the establishment of Israeli settlements in the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and the dangerous consequences they could have for the Palestinian people and the Middle East peace process.

The issue before us is as complex from the political, diplomatic standpoint as it is painful and emotional from the human. I am speaking of Israel's continued construction and progressive expansion of settlements on Palestinian land. For many years the Committee I represent has tried, as have other United Nations bodies, to make the international community aware of the illegality of those actions.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to implement the unlawful policy of establishing settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and authorizing more and more Israeli settlers to move into them, in the most direct and serious contravention of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, and also in violation of many Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979) and 465 (1980).

Not only that, even more Palestinian land is being confiscated, existing settlements are constantly expanding and ever more buildings are being put up while yet more settlements are being established, particularly in and around the occupied city of East Jerusalem. Since September 1994, several announcements by high-level Israeli officials have indicated a toughening of Israel's position on this key issue, and Israeli policies and other goings-on have caused serious friction.

Even as recently as 19 February 1995 the Israeli Government, in a vote that showed how divided it is, approved the expansion of three Jewish settlements in the West Bank, near Jerusalem. This decision cannot but have an adverse impact on the peace talks with the Palestinians.

The plan in question, under which 500 homes would be built in Maaleh Adumin, 800 in Givat Zeev and at least

500 in the religious settlement of Bitar, was met with immediate criticism from the Palestinians, who hope to gain self-rule in the occupied West Bank through the negotiations now under way.

It should be noted that the Israeli decision comes at a time when the implementation of the second stage of the 13 September 1993 Declaration of Principles has been delayed for seven months, including the redeployment of the Israeli forces away from populated areas in the West Bank and the election of the Palestinian Council. Clearly, this decision further undermines the current peace process and exacerbates the already fragile, tense and dangerous atmosphere in the occupied territory.

It is well known that the Israeli settlements are contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which is applicable to all the territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. The Council has repeatedly reaffirmed this fact in several resolutions. Moreover, settlements are a very serious obstacle to peace, and the continuing settlement activity violates the letter and the spirit of the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as threatening the integrity of the peace process at this critical stage.

These developments have also triggered widespread demonstrations by Palestinians and Israeli peace activists, highlighting the importance of the settlement issue for the future exercise of Palestinian rights and the peace process itself.

On behalf of the Committee, I should like to recall that the Security Council, in its resolution 465 of 1 March 1980 and other resolutions, determined that all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, have no legal validity, are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and, furthermore, constitute a serious obstruction to the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Committee considers that the increasing expansion and consolidation of settlements create facts on the ground inconsistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) — which the current peace process seeks to implement — and seriously compromise the agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Noting the similar concerns

expressed by the Council of the Arab League in its resolution of 5 January 1995 and by the Permanent Observer of Palestine in his letters to the Secretary-General of 9 and 31 January 1995, the Committee wishes to join them in appealing to the Security Council, to the sponsors of the peace process and to all others concerned to exert their influence on the Israeli Government to end its settlement policy, as an indispensable step towards the attainment of the just and lasting peace we are all working for.

The Committee believes that only rapid and consistent progress in the peace process, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, will prevent the current situation from deteriorating even further. The Committee calls on all concerned to do everything possible to surmount the current obstacles and to advance towards full implementation of the agreements that have been reached thus far.

The convening of today's meeting of the Security Council indicates that the continuing deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has become a matter of major concern to the members of the Council and to the international community as a whole. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People therefore hopes that this debate will culminate in a clear demonstration of the Council's determination to find ways and means to reinvigorate the peace process. The international community must assist the parties to proceed rapidly along the road towards a negotiated peace, on which they have embarked together — the only road that can ensure a lasting peace in the region.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on the very able way in which you have presided over the affairs of the Council during the month of February.

The last time the Security Council pronounced on this issue was in 1980 — almost 15 years ago. Many milestone events and developments have taken place in that time, but the issue of illegal Israeli settlements has remained an

obdurate stumbling-block to the many initiatives for a durable solution to the Middle East problem.

Eighteen months ago, many believed that the signing of the Declaration of Principles marked a fresh beginning in the efforts to resolve this conflict. Regrettably, this has not come to pass. The international community has yet to see the seeds of peace take deep root in the Middle East — in particular, in the occupied Palestinian territories.

One of the salient characteristics of the peace process so far has been its apparent disregard of deadlines: although the Declaration of Principles was signed on 13 September 1993, the implementation agreement, known as the Cairo Agreement, was not concluded until 4 May 1994; although the implementation accord was signed last May, the Palestinian National Authority, scheduled to be put in place in December 1993, did not actually happen until July of last year, while troop redeployment, and the elections in the rest of the West Bank due last July, have yet to have any credible timetable.

While recognizing that there has been some progress in some areas, we have to say that the situation on the ground remains far from satisfactory. The lack of political will and commitment on the part of the occupying Power to implement the provisions of the peace accord complicates and delays the peace process.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the continuing policy and practices adopted by Israel regarding its settlement activities in the occupied territories, especially in the West Bank. My delegation is disturbed to learn from official sources and media reports that the Israeli Government is still actively pursuing its settlement policy in the occupied territories.

According to the November issue of *Settlement Report*, a Washington-based bi-monthly publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, the settler population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has increased by 28,000 — from 112,000 to 140,000 — while that of Jerusalem has grown by 22,000 — from 148,000 to 170,000. This represents an overall settler increase of 50,000, or about 20 per cent over two years since July 1992. The report also indicated that the settler population was increasing faster than the rate anywhere in Israel itself.

The expansion of Israeli settlement policy is also substantiated by facts and figures provided by the representative of Palestine in his letters to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to the Secretary-General (S/49/50 and S/1995/95).

Given the importance of the issue for the future of the peace process itself, my delegation would like to urge the Israeli Government immediately to cease such a policy and practices for the following obvious reasons.

Legally, such a policy and practice of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in the occupied territories constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. Article 49 of that Convention, among other things, stipulates that

“The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”

The policy also violates numerous resolutions of the Security Council — resolutions 446 (1979) and 452 (1979) and 465 (1980), which, among other things, called upon the Government and people of Israel to cease the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Members will recall that one of those resolutions, resolution 465 (1980), was unanimously adopted.

Politically, the settlement issue would further complicate and undermine the peace process. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reported to the General Assembly late last year that the existence of the settlements, the persistently violent behaviour of the settlers and the presence of the Israeli Defence Forces constituted the principal source of tension in the occupied territories. Furthermore, it violates the spirit and letter of the Declaration signed in Washington on 13 September 1993.

My delegation is of the view that a resolution from the Council reaffirming its earlier decisions as reflected in the resolutions that I have mentioned would be timely and would facilitate the peace process. The argument by some that the United Nations has no role to play on central issues such as the legality of Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and Palestinian sovereignty is unjustifiable and unacceptable. The United Nations — in

particular this Council, which is charged with primary responsibility for international peace and security — has an important role to play in the peace process in the light of current developments. It was a Security Council resolution that rejected the Israeli policy and practice of establishing settlements; it was this Council which called upon Israel to respect the Geneva Convention and reaffirmed that settlements in the occupied territories were illegal and an obstacle to peace. The Council is being called upon again to live up to its responsibilities on this issue.

It is the view of my delegation that the successful progress of the peace process very much depends on the sincerity and willingness of both parties to implement all the provisions that they have agreed to. At this very critical juncture, when the situation is delicate and fragile, it is vital for the success of the peace process to make every effort to remove the climate of distrust and suspicion. The leaders who were bold enough to forge a historic breakthrough for peace must not allow extremism or a shortsighted policy to prevail. The international community opposes all forms of extremism and the recourse to terror tactics by extremists. For Israel in particular, it would be delusory to conclude that an improvement of relations, even cooperation, with some other Arab countries would permit it to equivocate on the settlement issue. The hard, critical choice has to be made in a timely, decisive manner, or the conflict will continue and worsen. For countries looking at Israel, encouraged by the signing of the Declaration of Principles, efforts to join in the momentum for peace by normalizing relations with it remain in abeyance, given the uncertainty over its commitment and sincerity to move critically on the remaining central issues, including the settlement issue.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, first of all, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I should also like to pay tribute to the Permanent Representative of Argentina for the excellent manner in which he guided the work of the Security Council last month.

The Security Council is once again meeting to discuss the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories and another instance of the violation of international law by the Zionist regime. The sacred land of Palestine and its holy centre of Al-Quds continue to suffer under aggression and occupation, and the people of Palestine are continuously subjected to inhumane treatment by the occupying forces, including the frequent imposition of curfews, the sealing or closing of the occupied territories, the confiscation of land and the expansion of settlements.

Numerous United Nations documents and various reports of different United Nations agencies regarding the very critical situations in the occupied territories indicate that practices by the Zionist regime in the field of land confiscation and the expansion of Jewish settlements, particularly in Al-Quds, have gained momentum since September 1993.

According to the latest report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People, 40 per cent of the territory in the Gaza Strip is still taken up by settlements, military installations and so-called security zones, and the recent decision of the Zionist regime to continue housing construction in settlements around the Jerusalem area reveals the true intention of that regime to persist in its occupation policies.

The imposition of curfews on Palestinian cities and refugee camps, the sealing off or closing of areas and the killing and detention of Palestinians have continued since September 1993, and more than 5,000 Palestinians are still held in jail by the occupying forces. On the other hand, the tightening of existing restrictions during recent months has aggravated even further the already critical economic situation prevailing in the occupied territories. Israel's real and ultimate objective has been, and continues to be, the prolongation of its occupation, and today, under the disguise of the peace process, this policy is being pursued.

Furthermore, it should be noted that whenever the Zionist regime intends to divert the attention of the international community from its own expansionist policies, it depicts some countries as threats to the region. This old, obsolete policy will not succeed, because the very nature of the Zionist regime is becoming clearer to the countries of the region.

The Zionist crimes are being committed at a time when Israel is claiming to seek peace in the Middle East. The continuation of the occupation of Palestine, the Syrian

Golan Heights and southern Lebanon and the violation of human rights in those territories, as well as Israel's intransigence in not allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear facilities, have escalated the tension in the region.

In our view, the current process and the recent agreements will not lead to the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people. The comprehensive and just solution of the question of Palestine lies in the full realization of all the rights of the Palestinians, the liberation of all occupied territories and the return of the more than 50 per cent of Palestinians who live outside their own land as Stateless refugees.

It is incumbent upon the Security Council to deal effectively with Israel's continued violation of international law and its threat to peace and security in the region. The people of Palestine, including all Palestinian refugees, are entitled to be protected against continuous oppression and the occupation of their homeland.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Marker (Pakistan): On behalf of the Pakistan delegation, I should like to convey our warm congratulations to you, Sir, on having so successfully carried out the responsibilities entrusted to you as President of the Security Council for the month of February.

I should also like to convey our profound appreciation to Ambassador Cárdenas of Argentina for the excellent manner in which he guided the deliberations of the Council last month. His personal involvement in providing frequent briefings to the General Assembly membership was an extremely useful step in furthering the transparency of the work of the Council.

It is with a sense of deep concern that the Pakistan delegation addresses the important item under consideration by the Council. As has been pointed out in vivid and graphic detail in two letters from the Permanent Observer of Palestine, the situation in the occupied territories of Palestine is most disturbing. The continued

practice of the Israeli authorities of building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories — in particular, in and around Jerusalem — and their permission to the new wave of Israeli settlers to occupy those settlements, not only are a grave violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention but also put the Middle East peace process in serious jeopardy.

The massive expansion and consolidation of settlements creates a situation on the ground that is inconsistent with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which the current peace process seeks to implement. Furthermore, it seriously compromises the recent agreements reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The international community viewed the historic Declaration of Principles reached in Oslo between the Palestinian and Israeli leadership as paving the way for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The signing of that Declaration in Washington in September 1993 was a further step in consolidating the process of peace. The recent Israeli moves, therefore, are in direct contradiction of the spirit of the Declaration, which was to form the basis for an overall durable peace in the Middle East.

It is imperative to maintain the present momentum that has been attained in the negotiating process. We share the expectation of the international community that there should be no delay in the implementation of the agreements reached so far, and that the provisions of those agreements should be fully complied with by all parties, both in letter and in spirit. A sincere and concerted effort needs to be made to achieve peace and stability in Palestine. We urge all the parties concerned to demonstrate the requisite flexibility and accommodation as well as a sincere commitment to the vision of lasting peace in the Middle East. To achieve this noble objective, which has for so long defied a solution, it is essential that all new settlements should be stopped forthwith. It is only by taking such an obvious and imperative measure that true peace in the Middle East can be achieved.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on having guided the work of this important body with such wisdom and effectiveness during the month of February 1995. I must also convey sincere congratulations to Ambassador Cárdenas of Argentina on having served as last month's President with such talent and ability.

The current Chairman of the Group of Arab States, Ambassador Olhaye, has already stated the views of that Group on the matter before the Council. I wish, however, to add a few thoughts.

The international community welcomed with great joy the signature by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, at Washington nearly two years ago, of the Declaration of Principles, and the ensuing agreements. It has provided ongoing, sustained support for the peace negotiations between the two parties to help them surmount difficulties in those negotiations. Each time they occurred, we welcomed the regular meetings between Palestinian and Israeli authorities on implementing the agreements.

The parties must not turn back or slacken the efforts they have made to date — much less allow the paralysis of a process that has become irreversible. That is no longer the will of Palestinians and Israelis alone; it is now the will of the entire international community. Continuing the peace negotiations is no longer optional; it is a firm obligation that the parties are duty-bound to honour with a view to bringing about the peace which we have awaited so long.

But if they are to be successful, the negotiations must continue in the framework of the commitments undertaken by the parties and of a continuous, constructive dialogue carried out in good faith. That will make it possible to overcome the difficulties, to hasten the process and to protect the region against the actions of the enemies of peace.

Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, constitute one of the most serious of those difficulties, which must be overcome at all costs. We welcomed the statements by Israeli authorities that they would no longer authorize new settlements. We would have liked those statements to have been implemented on the ground, which would have bolstered trust between Palestinians and Israelis and

improved the chances of a positive outcome of the negotiations on final status.

But the Palestinians, so happy one day, were deeply disappointed the next, when they saw settlements continuing apace — with or without authorization. They felt frustrated because, in their eyes and in the eyes of the world, the settlements reflect a state of mind. It was necessary, perhaps more than ever, that statements be unambiguous, because it was a question of the trust that had been established, and was growing, between Palestinians and Israelis.

This is a serious problem because it has enabled the opponents of peace to demonstrate that there is good or bad faith in trying to take back with one hand what is given with the other.

Effectively stopping the policy of building settlements in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, is a determining factor in this process and, like it or not, it will facilitate or hinder future negotiations towards a final solution of the question.

Our words, which are addressed to all sides, are designed to be, first and foremost, words of peace and friendship, as has always been the case.

My country has invested a great deal in the peace process, and we cannot close our eyes to the dangers which lurk behind the magnificent achievement begun on 13 September 1993.

There is no doubt that our optimism has been somewhat diminished. The difficulties in implementing the accords as concluded have been greater and more numerous than expected.

The Palestinians continue to have hopes, but they now want to see an end to their daily social and economic problems. They also wish to see quick progress through the various stages, to which they see no end. The political settlement must also be swift; there must be no delays.

No pretext must be given to extremists of any kind to engage in violence. The time has come to take a clear and responsible attitude in the face of the deterioration of the situation, which threatens the loss of the amazing achievements for which we have waited for decades.

It must be recalled that the advent of a just and lasting peace in Palestine hinges on respect for United Nations

resolutions, which are the foundation of international legality, as well as on solid socio-economic foundations for such peace. Improvement of the well-being of the population in the context of mutually advantageous cooperation will help peace take root and create conditions of safety and security in the region. Improving the well-being of the population and developing the region were the primary objectives of the economic conference held in Casablanca.

The results achieved thus far in the peace process are by and large positive, but there is still a long road ahead and it is strewn with obstacles. Israel and Palestine have demonstrated such wisdom and courage that we feel that they will be able to overcome the obstacles and, if need be, hurry through some of the mutually agreed stages now at risk with the passage of time.

Our hope is that Israelis and Palestinians will continue their dialogue in order to iron out the many thorny problems remaining and that the problem of establishing settlements will be faced with courage and determination. We also hope that, for our part, we will do all in our power to remain faithful to the promise made. So much remains to be done that we might run out of time.

The international community must therefore encourage the parties to demonstrate goodwill and a constructive spirit to settle the remaining problems in order to achieve the positive peace so eagerly awaited, based on mutual understanding, cooperation, security, dignity and respect for the legitimate rights of all.

The Security Council has deemed it necessary to arrange this debate and thus remind Israel and the Palestinians that the international community is interested in the continuation of this process and the avoidance of any action that will derail it.

Morocco, for its part, will spare no effort to act accordingly.

The President: I thank the representative of Morocco for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is Mr. Ahmet Engin Assay, Permanent Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Assay: Mr. President, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Council on a matter of extreme gravity and concern to the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

At the outset, I would like to extend to you my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, for his able performance in steering the work of the Council during January.

The Middle East peace process, in particular the negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track, has entered a new turning-point following the signing and implementation of the Declaration of Principles regarding the interim home-rule arrangements in the occupied Palestinian territories and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, and the transfer of the President of Palestine to the city of Gaza. Indeed, the Declaration constituted a serious start to the realization of a just and comprehensive peace which will enable the Palestinian people to regain their rights and restore the occupied Arab lands to their lawful owners.

The agreement came within the framework of the peace process which started in Madrid, based on the resolutions of international legality, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1973). It constituted an important step towards a comprehensive solution, which involves a just resolution of the question of Palestine, Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the occupied Syrian Golan, and the occupied Lebanese and Jordanian territories.

As regards the peace process on the other tracks, a notable development occurred on the Jordanian-Israeli situation with the signature by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel in Washington on 25 July 1994, of an agreement ending the state of war between them. We have indeed welcomed the progress achieved on the Jordanian track following the signature of this declaration between the Jordanian and the Israeli parties as a step towards the desired peace. In this framework, we also stress the need for substantive progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, guaranteeing complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and Southern Lebanon.

Regrettably, the positive developments which have taken place on the Palestinian question during this past period are not really reflected in the field. Israel is still establishing and expanding settlements in all the occupied

territories, and around Al-Quds Al-Sharif in particular; it is still pursuing its repressive measures and practices against the Palestinian people, sealing off towns and villages and depriving citizens of the freedom of movement, in blatant violation of Palestinian human rights.

Instead of taking steps that would contribute to a confidence-building atmosphere, and begin reversing their expansionist settlement policies, the Israeli authorities are continuing with their policy of establishing settlements as well as expanding existing ones in the occupied territories, in general, and around Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in particular, in flagrant violation of the international resolutions which oppose the establishment of Israeli settlements, consider them illegal, call for their removal and consider them an obstacle to the progress of the peace process.

In spite of continuing to implement the home-rule agreement and hold without further delay the eagerly awaited Palestinian elections, the Israeli occupation troops are still laying siege to Al-Quds Al-Sharif and denying access of Palestinian people from other occupied Palestinian territories to Al-Quds, aimed at isolating it from the rest of these territories and creating new obstacles in the path of the peace process.

The Seventh Islamic Summit Conference, held in Casablanca recently under the chairmanship of His Majesty King Hassan II, the King of Morocco, discussed the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and Palestine in great detail and passed several relevant resolutions. It adopted, *inter alia*, a resolution expressing its solidarity with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in its just struggle to remove the consequences of Israeli occupation and establish Palestinian national institutions. It called on member States to continue strengthening their solidarity with the Palestinian people. It affirmed that a comprehensive and just peace cannot be realized without total and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese and Jordanian territories.

The Summit Conference expressed its support for the peace process and emphasized resolutions of international legality, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the restoration of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to Palestinian sovereignty as capital of the State of Palestine. It called for the dismantling of the settlements already established, since they are unlawful, and for a halt

to further Jewish settlements in occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Syrian Golan, as required under the relevant resolutions.

It also called on the international community and the Security Council to compel Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions, particularly resolution 487 (1981); to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; to implement the resolutions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) calling for the subjection of all Israeli atomic facilities to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system; to proclaim its renunciation of nuclear armaments; and to submit a full report on its stockpile of nuclear weapons and materials to the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as those steps are essential for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

I would like to assure the Council that the Organization of the Islamic Conference has made immense efforts on the road to peace in the Middle East and in Palestine, and stands ever ready to assist the United Nations and all other bodies in their quest to bring a just and honourable peace to the region.

We believe that, by adopting a new series of measures of determination, the Council can help all the parties involved in the peace process, but it can especially assist Israel to take the required bold measures conducive to accomplishing an honourable and lasting peace in the region. Otherwise, the thorny issue of the settlements, involving a few thousand, with many criminal-minded fanatics among them, will continue to mortgage the entire peace effort in the area for an indefinite period. The area in question is occupied Palestinian and Arab territory to which Israel has no legitimate claim whatsoever, as declared repeatedly in numerous resolutions of the body most responsible for global peace and security, the Security Council, over the past 28 years. The occupying Power, Israel, before anything else and without further delay, should remedy and legitimize this illegal situation.

In conclusion, as I have previously told the General Assembly, the Organization of the Islamic Conference yearns for the day when the flag of Palestine will be unfurled over its own territory and will proudly wave here also, amidst those of the other Member States of the United Nations. When that day comes, Israel will also be able to savour the sweet taste of full recognition and cherish all the blessings of peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Ansary for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Brunei Darussalam. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam): First, may I offer my congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February.

Although Brunei Darussalam sees many of the recent changes in the Middle East as a welcome sign of long-overdue progress, we are concerned by reports of new programmes of Israeli settlement in the occupied territories. Such moves can only increase tension by heightening animosity between Palestinians and Israelis, with possible grave potential consequences.

We understand that achieving a comprehensive peace will be a difficult task. We therefore urge the Israelis to stop the establishment, construction and planning of such settlements anywhere in all the occupied territories, including those in and around Jerusalem. We believe that it is as much in the interest of Israel as of Palestine to see that the peace process be implemented in full and without delay. For this reason, we feel that the settlements serve to undermine not only the confidence of the Palestinian population in general, but the whole peace process.

We encourage all parties to proceed in the spirit of the Madrid Conference and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed between the PLO and Israel, and to commit themselves resolutely to the challenge of peace throughout the Middle East.

The President: I thank the representative of Brunei Darussalam for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Batu (Turkey): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, even on this last day of February, on the able manner in which you have conducted the deliberations of the Security Council this month. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Cardenas, for his very capable and skilful work as President of the Council last month.

The historic agreements reached in 1993 and 1994 have raised hopes and great expectations for the beginning of a new era in the Middle East. However, the situation on the ground continues to be a cause of concern. It is obvious that, while much has been achieved, far more remains to be done. After decades of bloodshed and mistrust, the process of building confidence between Palestinians and Israelis is not only arduous but painful. There is much more work to be done to ensure that Palestinian autonomy can really start functioning.

It is disturbing that the implementation of the second stage of the Declaration of Principles has been delayed for almost six months. We urge the parties to strive for further progress in the negotiations leading to final peace. These negotiations require patience, perseverance and a spirit of compromise at every turn. They must be carried out in good faith. In this framework, the continuation of the Israeli settlement activity not only undermines the patience of the Palestinian side, but also threatens the already tense and fragile situation in the occupied territories. Moreover, these settlements also violate the letter and spirit of the agreements reached between the parties.

We believe that a positive step to bring an end to the settlement activities would guarantee the successful progression of the process towards the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the region.

Finally, I should like to reiterate that we still have full confidence in the Palestinian and Israeli leadership's wisdom, vision and common sense. We urge them to reaffirm their willingness to pursue the peace process currently under way, especially at this critical stage. It is my sincere hope that these stages will be followed by the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The great hopes generated by this historic agreement should not be allowed to give way to despair.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Sudan. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Eltinay (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In addressing the Council for the first time this month, I have the pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, first, on your presidency of the Council in the month of February and, secondly, on the wisdom and dynamism with which you have performed the duties of President. Allow me also,

through you, to congratulate Ambassador Cárdenas, Permanent Representative of Argentina, on his outstanding leadership of the work of the Council in January.

Today we are discussing a matter of the greatest importance for the peoples whose fate it has been to become victims of the colonialism of foreign settlers. The world has witnessed a number of cases of attempted colonialism by settlers, but those cases disappeared, thanks to international resolve and the resolve of peoples. Only the Israeli settlement colonies have remained a case apart, defying international will and all the instruments and principles at the foundation of international relations.

The practices of Israel as an occupying Power in the Arab territories seem to stem from Israel's conviction that such practices are the legitimate right of an occupying Power. On the pretext of protecting Israeli security, these practices violate all instruments and humanitarian principles. Supported either overtly or covertly by certain Powers, Israel has defied all the resolutions of international legitimacy adopted by the United Nations, thus enjoying an immunity that seems to erase its obligations under any resolutions or principles.

There can be no doubt that international instruments and the resolutions of the Organization have rejected the annexation of territory by force and have prohibited changing the nature of occupied land in the interest of the occupying Power. This includes the building of settlement colonies, which is one aspect of colonialism through settlers. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 is clear in expressing this principle, but the Israeli occupying authorities do not take into account such instruments or conventions except within the framework of their own interests. Thus, they blatantly defy international humanitarian law and all resolutions having international legitimacy, including resolution 465 (1980) and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the latest of which is resolution 36/49 C.

The pretext that the protection of the security of the State of Israel allows everything prohibited by international instruments and principles is not acceptable. It is not surprising that this has become the only pretext, for Israel has no other justification for continuing to build and expand its settlements. We wonder, as do others, what the relationship is between implanting immigrants from other countries in the midst of a people whose territories have been occupied and surrounding their cities and towns with such settlements.

Ever since the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in September 1993, Israel has attempted by all possible means to use the peace process to its own expansionist ends and has violated many of the provisions of the agreements. For example, it has not respected the deadline for redeploying its forces in the occupied territories and initiating negotiations concerning the future of the settlement colonies. The settlements have been expanded, and new ones have been built, around the city of Jerusalem, which is supposed to become the subject of negotiations at a later stage.

It cannot be denied that Israel wants peace in exchange for nothing at all on its part. For Israel, peace means imposing its own criteria. It does not really mean a comprehensive and just peace, which is the only acceptable kind. When Israel speaks of a wave of violence, it is attempting to hide the truth. Israel's prevarication in the peace process and its obduracy over accepting legitimate resolutions reveal its intentions. The State terrorism practised by Israel reveals its intentions towards the Palestinian people, whom it wants to liquidate and to prevent from establishing its independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Our delegation wishes to reaffirm its full belief in a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, which cannot become a reality as long as Israel continues to view the whole matter so narrowly, and in the absence of any serious steps towards such a peace. Israel should respect all resolutions, and we call upon the Security Council to adopt practical measures to ensure the implementation of its resolution 465 (1980) and to guarantee that Israel meets its commitment to cease building settlements and changing the demographics of the occupied Arab territories.

The President: I thank the representative of Sudan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, I would like to extend to you our sincere congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Argentina, thanks for his efforts during his presidency of the Council last month.

Syria has already stated that the Oslo agreement was concluded in isolation from the peace process and outside the framework of the talks and their terms of reference. However, Israeli officials insisted on promoting that agreement as if it were the promised one that would finally take the region to the threshold of peace and stability.

Israel launched an unprecedented campaign to convince international public opinion that the conflict in the Middle East was over and that peace had been restored to the region. The Israeli mass media targeted Arab consciousness in order to delude the Arabs into believing that the question of Palestine had been resolved, that there was no longer any reason to continue the Arab-Israeli conflict and that therefore the Arab boycott of Israel should be immediately halted and relations between Arabs and Israel should be normalized.

Syria has also stated that the Oslo agreement would not achieve the desired, just solution to the question of Palestine and that it would provide the Palestinians with only a vague, limited self-rule, which, in the interests of Israel, would be wide open to interpretation in the future.

This agreement made the Palestinian future the subject of a vague expression — "final status". It did not touch upon the most critical issues in the Israeli-Arab conflict, such as borders, the right of return, Jerusalem and the future of the settlements. In spite of the agreement's drawbacks, Syria did not oppose it. Rather, we left to the Palestinian people and their institutions the responsibility for judging it and for choosing what they deemed fit. Our position stemmed from our interest in the peace process and its objective of the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace, in addition to our keen interest in achieving solutions that are self-sustaining and in steering away from those solutions and agreements that bear the seeds of future conflicts.

Our expectations have proved to be correct. Ever since the signing of the Oslo agreement, Israel has tried to strip this modest instrument of its content. It refused to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories and to allow democratic Palestinian elections, insisting that elections should be conducted at the point of Israeli bayonets. Israel resumed the building of settlements in the occupied Arab territories, in contravention of resolution 465 (1980) and despite the assurances by the Government of Mr. Rabin that such building would be ceased.

The main equation on which the Madrid peace process was based was "land for peace". It is only natural to say that by resuming the building of settlements Israel indicates that it does not want to give up the occupied Arab territories. This leads us to state that Israel does not want peace for land; rather, it wants peace while keeping the land, under the pretext of its security and so-called Arab terrorism, disregarding Israel's terrorism and its daily cruel practices in the West Bank and Southern Lebanon, to such an extent that it recently imposed a military siege on the Lebanese ports of Sidon and Tyre and, today, on Al-Damour.

Israel is trying to thwart the peace process, which is based on the principles of international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions. Hence it tries to deal separately with each Arab party, with the aim of weakening the Arab position and bringing about incomplete settlements that do not achieve peace or justice but, rather, circumvent the objectives of the peace process in order to avoid genuine peace.

On Sunday 26 February *The New York Times* published an article about the appointment of Mr. Avraham Burg, the well-known Labour Member of the Israeli Parliament, as the Acting Chairman of the Jewish Agency, which oversees Jewish immigration to Israel. The newspaper published excerpts from Mr. Burg's statement to the board of directors of the Jewish Agency, reporting:

"And if real peace does come to Israel, he added, 'The question will be asked: can we, and how do we, survive without an external enemy?'"

The major question now is: does Israel, in fact, want genuine peace with the Arabs, or did it simply bow its head before the storm and agree to participate under pressure from the United States of America and international public opinion? We in Syria still hope for, and seek to achieve, a comprehensive and just peace between Arabs and Israel. Syria has declared at the highest levels its determination to establish normal relations with Israel, in return for full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, Southern Lebanon and the other occupied Arab territories. However, during three years of negotiations Israel has been stalling. It has not yet announced its intention to effect a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

A few days ago, at a meeting with the delegation of the European group, headed by the Foreign Minister of France, His Excellency President Hafez Al-Assad said:

"Although Israel's conduct does not give rise to optimism, Syria will not give up the objective of peace."

The President: I thank the representative of Syria for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Lebanon. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of my country, I have pleasure in extending to you, Mr. President, congratulations on your conduct of the work of the Security Council during the month of February.

Once again the Council is obliged to consider a most sensitive question that has a great impact on the future of peace in the Middle East. I refer to the question of creating Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories. The long-hoped-for peace — and my country has associated itself with this peace process within the framework of the Madrid Conference — now faces a serious threat because of the intransigence of the Israeli Government, its categorical refusal to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions concerning that region, notably in particular, those relating to the settlements, and its flouting of the provisions of international law and relevant international conventions, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The Fourth Geneva Convention forbids occupying forces to violate the demographic integrity of occupied territories. The Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights have on numerous occasions emphasized Israel's duty to implement and respect the Geneva Conventions, but Israel has not recognized the relevant resolutions and has defied the will of the international community. It is up to its old tricks and is intensifying its practice of expanding and establishing new settlements, particularly around the city of Jerusalem, which highlights the fact that Israel in no way intends to implement a genuine, comprehensive and lasting peace in accordance with the Madrid framework.

The Israeli settlement policy in the occupied territories is not new, but is an integral part of an already established policy based on the fact that Israel does not recognize itself as an occupying Power. It is continuing the annexationist policy proclaimed by past Israeli Governments. This policy is in flat contradiction to the

concept of peace and the will of the international community to stop the settlement policy.

Reality has proven that what is put out on television and through the media is nothing but propaganda, and that settlements have now become extremely numerous: their number has increased by 5-10 per cent since the beginning of the peace process, while the settler population has gone up by about 15 per cent. The Israeli Government has proclaimed that the city of Jerusalem is exempt from any limits on the number of settlements, and has extended the city limits until they take in about a quarter of the West Bank which, for practical purposes, reaffirms the continuation of the settlement policy.

A governmental commission has adopted recommendations requesting an intensification of settlement activity. The Government has rejected all attempts to move a limited number of settlers, no more than 400, from the Hebron area — which now has more than 80,000 inhabitants — although their presence gives rise to security risks and human rights violations are proliferating from one day to the next. The most striking example of this was the massacre at the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque, which claimed many innocent victims who had gone to that holy place to pray.

Lebanon has on many occasions reaffirmed its respect for the Madrid framework for establishing peace in the Middle East, but we have always emphasized that any settlement not based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories will never lead to a just and lasting peace in the region.

There can be no doubt that the crisis in which the peace process now finds itself derives from the fact that Israel is insisting on acting within the framework of a policy aimed at maintaining its hold over the territories and maintaining peace at the same time. The difficulties being put forward by Israel over its withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, the continuation of its campaign of arrests and the intransigent policies it is pursuing — whether in the Palestinian territories lying to the south of Lebanon or in the indiscriminate bombing of cities and villages within Lebanon itself and the blockade of Lebanese ports — all reaffirm this policy, which we categorically reject.

For two weeks now, Israel has been imposing a sea blockade against the ports of Tyre, Sarafund, Sidon and Al-Damour and is terrorizing citizens, particularly fishermen, who have been deprived of their sole source of income. Israeli sea patrols operate daily in Lebanese ports and Israel is engaged in continuing aggression against the region also

through the use of heavy weapons and air power. Such acts of aggression have caused a great deal of damage and claimed a great number of innocent victims among civilians, as well as causing considerable economic damage.

The continuation of these violations of Lebanese territorial integrity is part of an Israeli practice aimed at imposing Israeli hegemony over its neighbours and at totally rejecting resolution 425 (1978), which demanded that Israel withdraw to its internationally recognized boundaries. This resolution has not yet been implemented. The Israeli rejection of this resolution on various pretexts has led to a situation in southern Lebanon that was tense then and continues to be so now. Citizens in the occupied areas suffer under constant daily bombardment and as a result of types of activity that are becoming characteristic of Israeli practices in the countries of the region, and will never lead to the peaceful coexistence to which the peoples of the region aspire.

The continuation of the Israeli settlement policy in the Palestinian territories and the explosive situation in southern Lebanon confirm the presence of a major threat to the peace process. We hope to see the Security Council play a decisive role by taking the necessary measures to put an end to Israel's settlement policy, and to the intransigent Israeli measures aimed against Lebanon so that the peace process can be resumed and all Members of the United Nations can reaffirm their commitment to international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Madrid Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of Lebanon for the kind words he addressed to me.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations has asked to speak. I call on him.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is obvious that we are now moving towards the end of this part of the Security Council's work without the Council's adopting any specific measure. In view of this, I should like to make the following remarks.

At the outset, we would like to extend our thanks to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Security Council. We extend our thanks also to all the members of the Council and observers who have made statements at this meeting today. This meeting and those statements clearly demonstrate that the international

community is concerned at the dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and throughout the region.

We have made serious efforts to ensure that the outcome of this meeting would be the adoption of clear and specific measures. We were supported by the Arab Group in the United Nations and by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in the Council, along with other Council members. We extend our appreciation to them all.

Unfortunately, that outcome was not achieved, for reasons to do with the situation in the Council and, probably, I should say, with the position of one of its

permanent members. The outcome we did achieve seems to have to do with a fear of repercussions on the ongoing contacts aimed at achieving the desired progress in the peace process. It is our understanding also that the sponsors of the peace process — particularly the United States of America — plan to intensify their efforts to achieve the desired results.

We hope that this progress will occur: specifically, that there will be an end to settlements and, that there will be implementation of the agreements between the two sides. In that event, we would be extremely happy and would certainly not have further recourse to the Security Council. But, if the current situation continues, and if the ongoing efforts do not yield tangible results, we cannot but turn to the Council once more in the hope of an outcome different from today's.

I reiterate our thanks to all concerned.

The President: I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for the kind words he addressed to me and to the Council.

There are no further speakers. The Security Council will remain seized of this matter.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.