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Official Records

President: Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 35 (continued)

Question of Palestine

- (a) **Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/57/35)**
- (b) **Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/621)**
- (c) **Draft resolutions (A/57/L.34, A/57/L.35, A/57/L.36, A/57/L.37)**

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Last Friday, when we began considering agenda item 35, entitled "Question of Palestine", we were celebrating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, primarily the right to self-determination and statehood. Today, we would like to join other Member States in reaffirming our unswerving support to and solidarity with the Palestinian people and wish them ultimate success in their just struggle.

We share the international community's deep concern that the prospects for the peace process in the Middle East remain grim. The invasion and re-occupation of the Palestinian territory launched by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) earlier this year brought the process to a complete halt. The new cycle of violence in the Middle East has not only plunged both

the Palestinian and Israeli peoples into a horrific bloodbath, but has also undermined peace and stability in the region as a whole.

As a result, thousands of innocent civilians of Palestine and Israel have been killed and wounded, and a great deal of their properties have crumbled. Other inhumane measures and practices of the occupying Power have further added death and injury to the Palestinian people. The disturbing fact that the perpetrator continues to legitimize its military operation by claiming it as part of the international campaign against terrorism is another cause for widespread concern.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic opposes excessive and indiscriminate use of force and other vile actions against the Palestinian people. It also condemns any act of violence against Israeli civilians. We believe these acts will bring neither peace nor security to either people. Conversely, they would bring about only endless suffering and instability in the Middle East.

We, therefore, renew our call for complete and unconditional compliance with the ceasefire agreement of 17 October 2000 and all relevant United Nations resolutions. We likewise urge both parties to honour their commitment to a ceasefire and return to the negotiating table in order to find a political solution to their lingering and tragic conflict.

As a consistent backer of the Middle East peace process, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the view that only a politically negotiated solution

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acceptable to all parties, under international supervision, as well as the principle of sovereign equality, can bring an end to the conflict. Such a solution must be preceded by respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to establish an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with United Nations resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and, of course, the principle of land for peace.

We cannot but express our appreciation for the relentless efforts the international community has made in support of the war-stricken Palestinian people, especially in the field of humanitarian activity. Our commendations should also go to the relevant United Nations committees, in particular, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for their pro-active endeavours to advocate and advance the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people around the globe.

Yet, like other Member States, we remain extremely concerned about the ongoing tension in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Middle East and the deteriorating situation on the ground. We, therefore, strongly urge all the concerned parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint to halt the violence and bring the peace process back on track.

Our delegation also deems it more necessary than ever before for the world community to redouble its efforts towards that end. It is only by doing so that the spiral of carnage can be checked, a negotiated settlement eventually secured and genuine peace, stability and development brought about in the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Jomae (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Although the past century has witnessed the great liquidation of colonialism, largely attributable to the role played by the United Nations in many regions of the world, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has continued to deteriorate, year after year, for the past 50 years.

Operations of bloody revenge between the Israelis and the Palestinians have continued until now, and at present the situation has reached such a dangerous level that it threatens regional and world peace. The Israeli Government's insistence on pursuing its colonialist settlement policies and its attendant use

of excessive force in order to physically liquidate the Palestinians, their leaders and political activists, flies in the face of all divine laws and international law. This is a crime that cannot be ignored. Assassinations and extrajudicial executions have increased without punishment of the perpetrators. Vendettas and vengeance have abounded as a result of Israel's heinous deterrence policies.

Israeli policies have set the pattern for Israeli dealings with the Palestinians. The dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories requires an immediate and urgent solution in order to end the cycle — and the dangerous escalation — of violence. The international community cannot continue to stand idly by and watch the situation in the Palestinian territories deteriorate. It is the duty of the United Nations to assume its full and immediate responsibilities — by giving the Palestinian people immediate protection and by helping the two parties to control the situation and put an end to acts of provocation and destruction that have led to numerous deaths on both sides. Israel must halt its practice of aggression and comply with international and humanitarian laws.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia fully supports the efforts to achieve peace and put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and supports the implementation of the relevant international resolutions, notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. It calls on the international community to appeal to Israel to return immediately, responsibly and unequivocally to the peace process and the negotiating table and to respect international law. Arab leaders have stressed the fact that peace is a strategic option and a desired objective. The Arab initiative of the Beirut Arab Summit offers a just, comprehensive and peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which will restore peace, security and stability to the region and to the world.

Mr. Mahendran (Sri Lanka): I would like to convey through you, Sir, the thanks of my delegation to Ambassador Papa Louis Fall of Senegal, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his introductory statement.

We acknowledge the work done by the Committee in its efforts to safeguard and promote the

rights of the Palestinian people. We also appreciate the humanitarian work undertaken by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), often carrying out their functions under the extremely difficult conditions prevalent in the occupied territory.

The root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the question of Palestine, and the main issue there continues to be the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory. The Palestinian people have lived far too long under occupation and under conditions that are not in keeping with norms of international humanitarian law nor with the requirements of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which also applies to occupied territories.

The laws and regulations and the administrative measures that have been implemented in the occupied territories to achieve the objectives of the occupying Government affect important aspects of the lives of the Palestinian people. Implementation of such rigorous measures has created a tense situation and a sense of fear and hopelessness among the Palestinian people.

The escalation of violence, the loss of life on both sides, bombings in Israeli towns and the consequent military attacks on Palestinian areas and the destruction of property have all contributed to the further escalation of violence in the area.

The withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territory, respect for the right of all States to live in peace and security and the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are some of the principles essential to a lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

The position of my Government on the question of Palestine has remained unchanged over the years. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their right to independent statehood must be respected. A solution to the question of Palestine should be achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and other relevant resolutions. Such a solution should enable the two States, Israel and Palestine, to live side by side and recognize the right of all States in the region to live in peace within internationally accepted borders.

As we look back at the past year, the events that have taken place in the territory are most distressing.

Although violence has continued, there have also been some significant developments in the direction of promoting the peace process. Among them are the adoption of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) calling for two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side, within secure and recognized borders; the Arab Summit peace initiative; the peace efforts of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations to end the violence and to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table; and greater attention paid to the need to address the question of security as well as issues pertaining to political economic and humanitarian aspects of the question of Palestine.

Violence and counter-violence have deeply affected the efforts of the international community to bring peace to the region. It is regrettable that the attempts by the international community to contain the violence, to stabilize the situation and to resolve the crisis situation have not had the desired results. It is our earnest hope that the international community will continue to be engaged in efforts to bring peace back to that troubled region.

Mr. Theron (Namibia): On Friday, we appropriately observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Although media coverage exposes very little of the tremendous suffering of the Palestinian people in recent times, the reports of the United Nations and international organizations contain sufficient information for us to understand how desperately the Palestinian people need our compassion and solidarity in this darkest hour.

The discussion of this agenda item also serves as a reminder that until a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement is reached, the question of Palestine remains the permanent responsibility of the United Nations. The draft resolutions before us serve the same purpose, and we hope they will receive the usual overwhelming support.

The Palestinian people are still deprived of their inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State. Those rights are entrenched in international law as well as in numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). Those resolutions, as well as other agreements, should be fully implemented to ensure a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which describes the tragic developments in occupied Palestinian territory and contains important conclusions and recommendations. The Committee, under the able leadership of Ambassador Papa Louis Fall of Senegal, continues to play an essential role in efforts towards a comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine.

After recent positive developments in the peace process, especially those that took place between 1998 and 2000, the latest catastrophic situation in occupied Palestinian territory is a direct result of the visit of the then Israeli opposition leader to the Holy Site of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Since then, the peace process has suffered great harm.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the extremely harsh and repressive measures being used by the occupying Power. They have profoundly negative effects on each and every aspect of Palestinian life, such as on health, education, freedom of movement and economic and social activities. More importantly, those measures constitute serious violations of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people, as well as grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

Early last month, in a report on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, Amnesty International stated that some acts by the Israeli occupying forces amount to war crimes and grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Those crimes include atrocities such as unlawful killings, torture, wanton destruction of hundreds of homes — sometimes with their residents still inside — deportations, the blocking of ambulances and the denial of humanitarian assistance. It is incumbent upon the international community to ensure that those atrocities are stopped and that those responsible for them are held accountable.

My delegation deplores the ongoing attempts to destroy the Palestinian Authority, including the humiliation of President Arafat and the calls for his expulsion. It is clear that those acts are counter-productive to the peace process, as the very institutions with which a peace agreement should be reached are being undermined and left incapable of functioning. Peace will never be achieved through the mere use of force, or without a political agreement between the parties.

It is for that reason that my delegation appreciates the efforts by international actors such as the Quartet of international mediators and, in particular, the effort represented by the so-called road map. However, my delegation firmly believes that the correct approach to achieving peace must be comprehensive and must simultaneously deal with the political, economic and security dimensions, and include agreement on the final outcome from the very beginning. In cementing that process, the United Nations should retain its natural role through the adoption of appropriate resolutions in the Security Council.

In addition to showing solidarity, the international community should continue to assist the Palestinian people through the provision of economic, humanitarian and technical assistance during this critical period, to help alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and to rebuild the Palestinian economy and infrastructure.

In conclusion, Namibia remains steadfast in its support for the Palestinian people in their quest for their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and to establish their own independent State.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates.

I would like to thank the President for his efforts in conducting the work of this session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their valuable efforts to reveal the truth about the tragic situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories. We also appreciate their efforts to explain to the international community the facts and the scope of the Palestinian question, as referred to in their comprehensive report containing important and valuable facts and information.

Today, the people of the world celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this day 55 years ago, history started to record the events of the Palestinian catastrophe and is still doing so now. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which divided Palestine into two independent States: the State of Palestine and the State of Israel. However, the world

has witnessed through past decades the establishment of one State only — the State of Israel — which was created and has been expanded through the use of military force, occupation and aggression. The Israeli State was built over the ruins of the Palestinian State that already existed and over the dead bodies of thousands of innocent Palestinians.

It is very sad to see that the international community has been a mere spectator during the commission of the longest and most horrible human crime, committed by the Israeli military forces against the people of a country, generation after generation. Throughout this time, the international community has taken no action to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the systematic destruction and genocide committed by the Israeli Government and its military forces against the Palestinian people and their historic, religious and cultural heritage. No action has been taken, either, by the influential bodies of the United Nations to help the Palestinian people exercise their rights or to end Israel's illegitimate policy of expansion and settlement, which is based on such false justifications as Israeli security and religious and historical rights, in full disdain of relevant United Nations resolutions and international agreements.

The ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories since 1967 has placed the Middle East on the verge of a dangerous explosion that threatens international peace and security and has become a source of grave concern. Israeli policies of aggression and expansion, its violations of human rights and its brutal crimes against the Arab population in the occupied territories have led to the outbreak of violence in the region more than once. The latest such eruption has been the bloody events that began in the occupied Palestinian territories in September 2000 and continue to this day, resulting in the killing of more than 2,000 civilians, most of them children; the injuring and disabling of tens of thousands; the demolition of hundreds of houses, the displacement of thousands of civilians and the massive destruction of the Palestinian economy.

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms in this forum its continued material and moral support for the brotherly Palestinian people in their just struggle to attain their legitimate right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State, Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In this connection, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its

condemnation of the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories and the war crimes committed by its military troops against civilians. It also confirms that the Palestinian question remains the core and the essence of the Middle East conflict.

It also reaffirms its conviction that, in order to achieve a comprehensive, lasting, just and peaceful settlement of this question, the international community must take collective, effective steps to condemn the occupation, State terrorism and war crimes practised by the Israeli Government and its military apparatus, the systematic killing of civilians, arbitrary detentions and torture in prisons, the destruction of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority and the attacks and reoccupation of Palestinian cities and refugees camps. It must condemn and reject all procedures and illegal measures taken by the Israeli Government to build settlements and to change the historical, legal and demographic characters of Palestinian and Arab territories and cities under its occupation, in particular the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Arab Golan, with the aim of imposing its laws and jurisdiction over these lands and of judaizing them and negating their Arab identity.

The international community must also affirm the importance of the role of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, and of the other members of the Quartet in following up the implementation of legal international resolutions, especially those compelling Israel, the occupying Power, to cease immediately all its acts of aggression against and massacres of Palestinian civilians, their cities and properties. Measures should also be taken to provide international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. It must compel Israel to abide by all the legal obligations stipulated in the series of peace agreements concluded with the Palestinian side and to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Lebanese Sheba'a farms, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the relevant United Nations resolutions, especially General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). These bases were all affirmed by the Arab peace initiative and the American road map and guarantee the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and to establish their State, Palestine,

with East Jerusalem as its capital and with complete sovereignty over their land, air, regional waters and all natural resources.

The international community must further reaffirm the principles for solving the problem of the return of refugees to their stolen lands, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and hold Israel fully responsible for the adverse repercussions and consequences of its aggression, including compensation for the financial losses incurred in the infrastructure of the Palestinian cities, villages, camps, properties, institutions, as well as the national economy, and for bringing those responsible for war crimes to justice. It must also demand that Israel immediately free all Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners held hostage in Israeli detention camps and prisons and enable humanitarian organizations to visit them and investigate their situation.

Finally, the international community must pressure Israel to eliminate its weapons of mass destructions, especially its nuclear weapons, and to subject its nuclear reactors to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in implementation of the relevant international treaties and conventions, in order to achieve a military and security balance in the region.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates — which has committed itself, its Government and its people to solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to attain their freedom, liberate their land from Israeli occupation and oppression and recover their legitimate national rights — expresses its support for a comprehensive, peaceful and just settlement of the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East in the framework of impartial international efforts. It also deplors any attempt to defame the image of the Palestinian and Arab struggle for freedom and to associate it with terrorism in justification of the policies of Israel aggression and oppression. The United Arab Emirates wishes to reiterate that the courageous Palestinian intifada arose in response to State terrorism and to the policy of occupation practised by Israel over the past decades. Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates calls on the international community, especially influential members of the Security Council, to exercise their full authority to put an end to the massacres and the destruction perpetrated against the Palestinian people and to strengthen political, development and relief assistance to support

them in their fight for freedom and independence. We call on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to accept a peaceful settlement and return to negotiations based on international law, to stop the bloodshed and to maintain security, stability and peace in the Middle East and international peace and security.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): While the General Assembly has been examining the Palestinian question this year, the explosive security and economic situation in the region has been dangerously deteriorating to an unprecedented degree, with catastrophic humanitarian conditions and a total halt to the peace process. This tragic situation, which worsens day by day, results from Israeli practices that target the Palestinian people and its leadership.

Israel continues its aggressive policies against the defenceless Palestinian people. It persists in the excessive and disproportionate use of military force against civilians, as well as in its systematic recourse to sieges, raids, destruction of property, desecration of holy places, isolation of Palestinian towns and cities and starvation of the Palestinian civil population. And when there is nothing left to destroy, the occupation army has opted for mass arrests and assassinations of leaders of the Palestinian authority, going even so far as to target members of the United Nations relief personnel, as happened recently.

The situation in the Palestinian territories is so alarming that it foretells a grave humanitarian catastrophe resulting from a combination of economic siege, the spread of epidemics and disease and the degradation of health and security infrastructure. Despite the international community's repeated calls for peace in the Middle East, the Palestinians continue to suffer daily the worst forms of violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupying force in flagrant violation of the most basic principles of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, in total disregard of successive Security Council resolutions, Israel persists in its repressive policies, ignoring all international conventions and shirking agreements it has entered into.

In fact, these Israeli practices aimed at consecrating the fait accompli of occupation, are in total violation of international law, particularly humanitarian law, and most of all, the 1949 fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

This situation is likely to continue as long as there is no comprehensive solution to the causes of tension and hostility, namely the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Tunisia, which follows with deep concern the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, reaffirms its condemnation of Israeli aggression against innocent Palestinian civilians and of the endless series of political assassinations committed by the Israeli Defense Forces. Tunisia will continue its strong and unflinching support to the Palestinian people in their struggle to restore their legitimate rights, including the right to establish its own independent State on its national soil, with Al Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Faced with this delicate situation, Tunisia calls on the Security Council to play an effective role to ensure protection for the unarmed Palestinian people, and reiterates, in this context, its call for international observers to be sent to the region, as proposed by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali at the Cairo Summit of the League of Arab States in 1998. Tunisia has played an active part in all the phases of the peace process in the Middle East and contributed to efforts aimed at establishing peace based on agreements, namely, the principle of land for peace and respect for all commitments.

Faced with the immobility of the peace process and the declaration of the Israeli Prime Minister that his country is no longer bound by any agreements with the Palestinians, including the Oslo accords, it has become perfectly clear that it is the Israeli Government that is neglecting its commitments and reneging on the accords that it has signed, thus endangering the whole region. Israel's further denial of international agreements constitutes a real cause for concern that should prompt the two sponsors of the peace process, as well as the European Union and the entire international community, to increase their efforts in urging Israel to choose the path of peace, halt its manoeuvres, practices and provocations and respect international law, notably Security Council's resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region requires Israel's total and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and from the rest of the occupied Lebanese territory, in conformity with the relevant and references.

Arab leaders have shown a unanimous will for peace by adopting, at the Beirut Summit of the League of Arab States last March, the Arab peace initiative presented by Prince Abdallah Bin Abdulaziz. This would lead to the signing of a peace agreement through which Israel would totally withdraw from the occupied Arab territories in exchange for the establishment of normal relations between the Arab States and Israel. Unfortunately, the dire events and developments that have taken place in the region do not point in this direction.

At another level, Tunisia strongly supports the vision presented by the President of the United States, George Bush, calling for the establishment of a Palestinian State, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We hope that that vision will be translated into concrete action as soon as possible.

Tunisia also welcomes the Quartet's efforts to re-launch the peace process. We are convinced that if the four members of the Quartet unite their efforts and coordinate their actions they will play a decisive role in reaching a final settlement for the Palestinian question.

The peace talks that took place in the spring and summer of 2000 and that achieved considerable rapprochement between the points of view of the parties, proved that a just and final settlement of the conflict is possible if there is sufficient political will.

The continuous cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories will come to an end only if there is a political peace process that involves all parties. The Israeli Government should realize that military force and excessive violence will never guarantee peace and stability for the Israeli people and that there is no alternative to returning to the negotiating table in an engaged and responsible way in order to revive the peace process, stop bloodshed and ensure the stability of the Middle Eastern region.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My statement will address agenda item 35, entitled "Question of Palestine", and agenda item 36, entitled "Situation in the Middle East".

At the outset, I would like to confirm the solidarity of the people and Government of Iraq with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to liberate their land from the terrible Zionist occupation. Today, we will all recall that, despite decades of suffering, the

Palestinian people have not yet been able to exercise their basic rights — namely the right to independence and self-determination.

This year the General Assembly is discussing both agenda items, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, at an extremely difficult time characterized by an increase in criminal operations by the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people, as well as by its continued threats against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, the occupation of the Lebanese Sheba'a farms and of the Syrian Arab Golan.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/57/35). While we express our appreciation for the great efforts made in preparing that report, we wish that it had reflected in a more concentrated and accurate manner what was really happening in occupied Palestine, especially since the whole world knows the daily detail of the horrifying acts being committed by the Zionist entity against the defenceless Palestinian people.

Over the past 50 years, the people of Palestine have been exposed to horrendous, merciless acts by the occupying Zionist entity, which has uprooted them from their land and denied them their rights. We all know that there are millions of Palestinians who have been living in refugee camps for the past 50 years in the diaspora, having been denied their basic right to return to their homeland. There has been unprecedented violence in the past two years, due to the extensive use of heavy weapons against the defenceless Palestinian people, including the use of F-16s and American-made Apache helicopters and the use of enriched uranium equipment and destructive fissile material in areas densely populated by civilians.

That has led to the death of thousands and the wounding of tens of thousands of Palestinians. It has also led to the destruction of many homes, leaving families homeless. The occupation forces have intentionally destroyed houses and farms, tightened the blockade of cities and villages, transforming them into small cantons, separated from each other, and destroyed the economic infrastructure. The Zionist occupation forces have led assassination campaigns against the symbols of the legitimate Palestinian resistance. People have been detained and tortured. Families have been forcibly deported to other areas,

and Palestinian civilians have been used as human shields during inspection operations and the incursion into cities. That has been achieved through the Israeli practice of using neighbours as inspectors.

As if that were not enough, the occupation forces have built a security wall that extends deep inside the Palestinian territory under the pretext of protecting settlements, which in reality is a flagrant attempt at annexing more West Bank land to the usurping Zionist entity. The occupying Power has also resorted to destroying institutions in order to eliminate the Palestinian Authority or perhaps to weaken it so it will respond favourably to its demands of dividing the Palestinian people, creating dissension and causing civil war among them.

The policy of the Zionist entity of usurping Palestinian and other Arab lands since 1948 and 1967 has become identical to the policy of the United States of blocking all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on the question of Palestine.

This has been done with total disregard for public opinion and for States' positions on the aggressiveness of the Zionist entity and on the massacres perpetrated daily by its forces against the Palestinian people, whose only sin is that they have rejected occupation and use resistance as a means of liberation.

The American Administration has given its blessing to the Zionist campaign of terror against the Palestinian people. It has even described Sharon as a man of peace and has stated that the Zionist entity had the right to defend itself — an entity that occupies Arab lands, assassinates civilians and demolishes houses. Thus the American Administration equates the struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their land with the actions of the Zionist entity and its policy of State terrorism and barbarous practices.

We call on the General Assembly, in the light of all the crimes being perpetrated against the Palestinians, to bring pressure to bear on this criminal entity, in order to put an end to its grave violations of the principles of international law and of international humanitarian law, in particular of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Zionist entity has refused to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, in violation of all relevant Security Council and General Assembly

resolutions. In addition to its occupation, it has enacted legislation, taken various measures and used different methods to steal land. It has used all the resources at its disposal to build more settlements and to bring in more settlers. It has attempted to destroy civilian areas, to take control of water resources, and to destroy agricultural land and animal life that belongs to the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan.

Lebanon also has been suffering from daily Israeli violations of its sovereignty, characterized by aggression against its airspace and land and daily threats of using military force against it and of cutting off its water supplies. We strongly support the legitimate Lebanese right to sovereignty over all of its land and airspace. The General Assembly, which has always supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination, must effectively shoulder its responsibility to bring justice to the Palestinian people by taking steps to end the occupation, so that they can regain their inalienable rights.

Israeli officials should be brought to justice before international criminal courts. Not to do so would be tantamount to destroying established international laws and principles — a destructive outcome that would affect the whole world. It is not enough for the General Assembly to show sympathy for the Palestinians, to adopt resolutions, whenever it can, or to condemn the Zionist entity. Rather, we call on the Security Council to shoulder its legal and moral responsibility to defend the rights of the Palestinian people, since the peace process has been unable to restore peace and security to the Palestinian people.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November provided the international community with an opportunity to reiterate its steadfast support for the realization of the cherished goals and aspirations of the people of Palestine. India reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Palestine, who have striven valiantly for decades for the restoration of their legitimate rights. India's bond of friendship with the Palestinian people is firm and unshakeable and is based on a rich and varied interaction over the ages.

India's support for the Palestinian cause is based on principles; it is consistent and unwavering. We are committed to a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region, based on Security Council resolutions

242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and on the principle of land for peace. We support the inalienable and legitimate right of the Palestinian people to a homeland, as well the right of all States of the region, including Israel and Palestine, to co-exist peacefully within secure and recognized borders.

We would recall our earlier statements, in which we had emphasised that President Arafat, who enjoys wide support and respect, is the symbol of Palestinian nationhood. We remain convinced that the Palestinian people stand on the threshold of a new era wherein their national aspirations, for which they have so long struggled, can be realized. We remain vitally interested in peace, development and stability in the region and are ready to assist in whatever way we can.

The tragic cycle of violence that has engulfed the Middle East region since September 2000 has been damaging to peace and stability. It is a source of deep concern to all of us. This violence has led to the tragic loss of hundreds of lives and grievous injuries to thousands. We condemn such acts. As recent events have demonstrated, these have neither enhanced Israel's security nor served the cause of peace. If anything, such acts have only created more impediments to the collective quest for a lasting peace in the Middle East.

The continued military operations by Israel and its acts of retaliatory violence serve no purpose except causing loss of life, mostly that of innocent civilians, including women and children, and making the divide between the peoples of Palestine and Israel even sharper. Immediate cessation of military operations, withdrawal by Israel and a ceasefire are therefore the most urgent steps. These brook no delay, as the price is being paid by the innocent on both sides, quite needlessly.

The extent of the continuing humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza has been highlighted by the Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy, Mrs. Catherine Bertini, who visited the region last August and, more recently, by the release of the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process on the impact of closure and other mobility restrictions on Palestinian productive activities.

The report shows that the Palestinian economy is in a severe depression, with only international aid stemming a possible total breakdown. According to the

report, unemployment in the occupied territories is around 50 per cent, poverty levels have reached 70 per cent in Gaza and 55 per cent in the West Bank, while income losses are estimated at \$7.6 million a day — a total loss of \$3.3 billion since October 2000. The Secretary-General has reported that, despite high-level Israeli assurances of increased cooperation with the aid agencies, there have been only marginal improvements on the ground.

We urge the Government of Israel to do all that is possible to alleviate the social and economic plight of the Palestinian population by lifting closures and blockades, by allowing unhindered access to humanitarian supplies and by releasing the balance of the funds due to the Palestinian Authority.

There is a general recognition that there is a need not only for political support for the peace process, but also to focus on the multifaceted tasks of nation-building. The efforts of the Palestinian Authority, particularly in the fields of health, education and the creation of employment, need to be encouraged and assisted. Infrastructural development is an area of critical importance. The challenge posed by the present requirements of financial and technological support merits the urgent attention of the international community. Regional cooperation, complemented by international efforts, is an essential prerequisite for enhancing peace and prosperity in the region.

India congratulates the Palestinian Legislative Council for approving the new Cabinet appointed by President Arafat. We also applaud the decision made by the Palestinian Authority to initiate a process of reforms intended to benefit the Palestinian people. We see this as an important step in the process of nation-building.

India remains ready to engage with the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people in their reconstruction efforts in Gaza and the West Bank. Two India-aided projects in Gaza — the Jawaharlal Nehru Library at Al-Azhar University and the Mahatma Gandhi Library and Student Activity Centre at the Palestine Technical College in Deir al-Balah — have been completed. India has sent medical supplies for use in hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza. The Government of India has a substantial ongoing programme for human resource development for the Palestinian National Authority. We are ready to do more.

While it is incumbent on all of us to work together to advance the peace process in West Asia, ultimately it is the parties themselves that have to shoulder the major responsibility for achieving a permanent and lasting solution. A spirit of accommodation and political will must imbue the negotiation process. The parties must harness all their energies to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, which is a vital mutual interest.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): Throughout the three and-a-half decades of its existence as an independent State, Guyana has stood in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for the exercise of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to a homeland of their own. Today, we once again join the international community in solidarity with this cause.

The question of Palestine has occupied — nay, troubled — this Organization since its very beginnings. It is a question that continues to defy solution and final settlement, despite the many efforts of the international community. The hope for such a settlement, sparked in Oslo early in the last decade, has all but vanished in the violence and terror that has engulfed the region over the past two years. We continue to be dismayed at the untold suffering brought about by the conflict and call for an end to the Israeli occupation, which is at the heart of this human tragedy. It is unacceptable that in this era of democratization, a population of nearly 4 million is still without a land of its own and condemned to live in refugee camps, often in sub-human conditions. Their uncertain situation can only breed discontent and despair, leading inevitably to further conflict.

While Palestinians by the thousands continue to pay the ultimate price for their liberation, we are not unmindful of the fact that Israelis are also paying with their lives as a result of a conflict that, seemingly, is in no one's best interest. It must surely be painfully obvious to all concerned that the way of violence will not lead to peace. The cycle of violence and retaliation must therefore end. We urge restraint on all sides and condemn all forms of terrorism. At the same time, we call upon Israel, as the occupying Power, to desist from using extremist acts as a pretext to deny the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, and to honour its obligations to peace, in keeping with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Notwithstanding the despair that has prevailed over much of the past year, it is still possible to discern an occasional glimmer of hope that leads us to the belief that the Palestinian problem, like seemingly intractable problems elsewhere, can be resolved. On 12 March this year, the Security Council adopted resolution 1397 (2002), in which, for the first time, it affirmed a vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. This vision will be translated into reality for the parties concerned only if there is bold and strong leadership on both sides willing to grasp the opportunities that arise. Equally important will be popular support for reason over irrationality to promote a new spirit of mutual tolerance and trust.

The Government of Guyana believes that the various resolutions that have been adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council with regard to the Palestinian question, as well as the accords that have been reached directly by the parties themselves, provide an ample framework to guide the search for a settlement. In seeking to foster a culture of peace, based on respect for human rights, tolerance, participation and solidarity, we call on the parties involved to eschew further confrontation and to return to the negotiating table with a view to bridging the gulf that separates them.

We also welcome and encourage further efforts by the international community, including those of the diplomatic Quartet and the Arab peace initiative adopted at Beirut last March. We further commend the efforts of countries in the region and beyond that have supported the peace process, as well as provided succour to the Palestinian people, including through humanitarian, economic and other forms of assistance. Special mention must also be made of the contribution of United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and others that labour tirelessly to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, let me say that Guyana will continue to work with the international community in the cause of peace and justice in the Middle East. We look forward earnestly to the emergence of a just, comprehensive and lasting solution that would mark the end of conflict and suffering and the beginning of a new dawn of peaceful coexistence and cooperation for the peoples of the region.

Mr. Al-Saidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is once again discussing the question of Palestine, an item that has been on its agenda for more than 50 years. During that period, colonialism has been eliminated from many countries of the world. Many colonial peoples have attained their rights to freedom and self-determination. Unlike those peoples, however, the Palestinian people remain deprived of their basic rights as a result of a chronic problem that demonstrates the inability of this Organization to implement its own resolutions.

We would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its positive efforts, as reflected in the report (A/57/35) before us. The efforts made by that Committee on behalf of the international community provide some solace for the Palestinian people in their crisis, and offer some hope in the dark tragic night of occupation and oppression in which they have been living.

Brief consideration of the contents of the report confirm what we have been seeing and hearing every day — the hooliganism that the Israeli Government has engaged in this year in its reoccupation of lands that were under Palestinian control, the destruction of the infrastructure of the national Palestinian Authority and a large part of the Palestinian economic infrastructure, in addition to the killing of 2,000 people in the occupied Palestinian lands and the intensified policy of assassination of the Palestinian leadership.

All this makes it clear that Israel is in a feverish race against time. It is striving to create a new fait accompli in the occupied lands that would perpetrate its control over the Palestinians and their lands in order to pre-empt any possible peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question. The current Israeli Government has exerted all efforts to deal an abortive blow to the peace process and to create obstacles in the way of the Quartet's present efforts. Its aim now is to crystallize what is called the road map so that it, Israel, would have enough time to implement its own designs and plans.

Israel's lack of commitment to relevant United Nations resolutions has always been the main cause for complicating the Palestinian question and has created more problems in the Middle East region. Despite dozens of resolutions confirming the invalidity of the Israeli occupation and despite international consensus

to that effect, as confirmed by the adoption of many resolutions, most recently Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which calls for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, Israel is still continuing its expansionist policy and carrying out aggression in the occupied territories, in blatant violation of the will of the international community.

How can we expect Israel to pay any attention to the United Nations and its resolutions when the Security Council, just a few months ago, was unable to implement a simple procedural resolution, adopted unanimously, to send a fact-finding team to investigate the Jenin massacre perpetrated by Israel in April 2002? Israel has not paid any attention to international legitimacy and has exploited the silence of the United Nations, which has led to the present situation. What is strange is that some members of the Security Council work to accommodate Israel every time the international community stands up against Israeli practices, instead of forcing the occupation authorities to respect its legal commitments. What is so strange is that Israel not only circumvents international laws and norms, but also tries to distort international legal and political concepts to serve its aggressive expansionist policies so that its repeated lies become facts. The fact of the matter is that Israel has unfortunately found those who support its attempts. Legitimate resistance against foreign occupation has become terror in their eyes. The international community must condemn this terror. An appeasement policy towards the Israeli occupier will make things worse and will not provide a good basis for the establishment of a peaceful settlement or put an end to this haemorrhage in the occupied territory; nor would it contribute to achieving peace and stability for the peoples and countries of the region.

The Republic of Yemen firmly believes that peace and coexistence in the Middle East have become a necessity. Hence, we consider the initiative undertaken at the Beirut Arab Summit last March to be an expression of the Arab will to reach a comprehensive, just settlement for this conflict that has lasted for so long. This initiative uncovered the Israeli lies about Arab intentions.

My country has been closely following the efforts of the Quartet to establish what is called a road map in order to reach a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question on the basis of international consensus. The road map calls for the establishment of an independent

Palestinian State that would be fully sovereign after three years. Although it is premature to judge this plan, we still find that the connection between the Palestinian question and the highest foreign policy priorities of the big Powers, if continued, would not augur well for an end to the crisis of the Palestinian people.

The United Nations has to shoulder its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian people. We call on Secretary-General Kofi Annan to redouble his tireless efforts to force Israel to desist from its aggressive policies in the occupied land and to push the peace process forward.

We look forward to the day when the Palestinian people will regain its usurped rights. Only then could we put an end to the last manifestation of occupation and colonialism in our era.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable report on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. I would also like to welcome the comprehensive report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, of which Indonesia is currently a member. This report contains extensive insight into the situation concerning the question of Palestine over the past year.

Both reports underline what we already know concerning the difficulties being faced by the peace process, and they collectively supply us with a firm grasp of recent developments with helpful facts and figures. The reports are unequivocal about the vast number of Palestinian lives lost in the conflict since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa *intifada* in September 2000 — that is, about 18,000. They record the number of those injured as between 25,000 and 37,000. The Committee reports that some 2,500 of the injured have been left with permanent disabilities.

Two years ago, it was our hope and belief that the Millennium Summit had given fresh impetus to man's quest for peace, not only for himself, but also for others. The coming together of world leaders to reaffirm the Charter of the United Nations and to chart a new way forward was a reassurance that the important social, political and economic issues of the day, including the desire of all peoples to enjoy self-determination, would be seriously addressed. For the

Palestinian people, those hopes have tended to drift further and further away in the past year.

After the great heights of optimism of September 2000, the historic month of the Millennium Declaration and the decision of Palestinian leaders to defer the declaration of a Palestinian State until the conclusion of a final peace agreement, today we stand at a point where the prospects for peace lie under the tires of Israeli tanks and trucks visiting deadly force throughout the Palestinian territory.

In the report before us is a disturbing picture of the mayhem that the Committee has described as “the steady escalation and expansion of the geographic scope of Israeli military operations in the occupied Palestinian territory.” (A/57/35, para.17). This has led not only to the heavy toll of death and injury about which I have just spoken but also to great damage to Palestinian infrastructure, further deterioration in the humanitarian situation, unprecedented economic destruction, increased tension in the occupied territories and great damage to the peace process. In the Jenin refugee camp alone, Israel’s military activity brought untold destruction and suffering to approximately 14,000 refugees. I am sure that everyone here remembers that the events in that camp led directly to the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1405 (2002). In that context, it is unfortunate that the fact-finding team set up by the Secretary-General to establish an accurate picture of what happened in the camp had eventually to be disbanded following Israel’s refusal to cooperate.

Rather than invest in peace, Israel, before the eyes of the entire world, embarked on the path of State terrorism: taking and retaking entire towns and villages, deliberately destroying infrastructure, blockading, starving and terrorizing the population, imposing unilateral closures and curfews, deporting civilians from their homes or assassinating them. Before our very eyes, the peace process was, inevitably, put in danger, the humanitarian situation and the economic life of Palestinians continued to worsen and human rights violations became the order of the day.

It is the strong opinion of my delegation — an opinion that we do not tire of reiterating — that it is the responsibility of the international community, especially the Security Council, to continue the search for the road to peace in the Middle East. In this regard,

we support the efforts of the Committee to continue mobilizing of the international community in support of the Palestinian people, in the execution of its mandate. Indonesia will continue to support ongoing international peace efforts based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the fundamental principle of land for peace. Israel must make a commitment to implementing of those resolutions. Israel must avoid the temptation to close the road to the peace process through the deliberate use of policies that negate peace.

Towards that end, we are pleased with the work of the Security Council in the past year, including its widely acknowledged vision of two States, Palestine and Israel. We strongly believe that this vision, encapsulated in resolution 1397 (2002), which provides for both nations to live side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders, could end the cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. Similarly, we recognize and encourage the work and efforts of the Quartet, as well as the Arab peace initiative that was adopted in March 2002.

It is important that the United Nations should continue to accept its historic responsibility for the issue of Palestine. The increased suffering and injustice that the people of Palestine have suffered in the past year make it imperative that the United Nations reaffirm its solidarity with the people of Palestine as they continue their struggle for justice and peace and that it insist that the Government of Israel abide by the resolutions of our Organization. As we have said in the past, as long as the inalienable right of the Palestinians to self-determination is being violated with impunity, there can be no lasting peace in that part of the world.

We reiterate our call on Israel to recognize that there can be no military solution to the situation in Palestine. The path to peace and stability lies through the implementation of United Nations resolutions and through working within the ambit of the international community. Indeed, solving the core issue of Palestine would contribute to the comprehensive settlement of all aspects of the problems in the Middle East.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 35.

I would like to inform Members that action on draft resolutions A/57/L.34 to A/57/L.37 will be taken on Tuesday, 3 December 2002, in the morning, as the second item.

Agenda item 36

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/470, A/57/621)

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.44, A/57/L.45)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/57/L.44 and A/57/L.45.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first to introduce the two draft resolutions under agenda item 36, contained in document A/57/L.44, entitled "Jerusalem", and in document A/57/L.45, entitled "The Syrian Golan". In this context, allow me to inform you that the following countries have also become sponsors of A/57/L.44: Bangladesh, Guinea, Pakistan, Senegal, Sudan and Togo.

With respect to the draft resolution entitled "The Syrian Golan" contained in document A/57/L.45, the following countries have also become sponsors: Bangladesh, Guinea, Pakistan, Senegal and Togo.

The first three preambular paragraphs of draft resolution A/57/L.44, entitled "Jerusalem", like earlier resolutions on Jerusalem, emphasize that the legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel to alter the character and status of Jerusalem are null and void, and in particular the so-called Basic Law.

The first three preambular paragraphs also recall Security Council resolution 478 (1980), which rejected the Basic Law and called upon those States that had established diplomatic missions in Jerusalem to withdraw them.

Furthermore, the first operative paragraph of the draft resolution reaffirms the fact that there is no validity or legality to the steps taken by Israel to enforce its laws and administration in Jerusalem.

Operative paragraph 2 deplors the fact that some States have transferred their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem, which constitutes a violation of decisions of international law. This paragraph also asks all States to comply with the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations in this regard.

Operative paragraph 3 emphasizes the fact that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the issue of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of the Israeli and Palestinian parties, while safeguarding the freedom of religion and conscience of the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem and enabling all religions and nationalities to have freedom of movement in the Holy Places.

With regard to the draft resolution entitled "The Syrian Golan", the preambular paragraphs emphasize the principle of the illegality of acquiring territory by force, as laid down in international law and the United Nations Charter. It also reaffirms the applicability of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Syrian Golan. Moreover, the draft resolution expresses deep concern over the fact that Israel has not withdrawn from the Golan, in violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions in that regard. The draft resolution also reaffirms the illegality of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. In its final preambular paragraph, it also expresses deep concern over the interruption of the peace process on the Syrian track, as well as the hope that peace talks will resume in the near future from the point they had reached.

In its operative part, the draft resolution declares that Israel has failed so far to comply with Security Council 497 (1981), and that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws on occupied Syrian Golan is null and void. It also calls upon Israel to rescind that decision.

The operative part also reaffirms the applicability of the provisions of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. It also determines that the continued occupation of Syrian territory constitutes an obstacle to the establishment of just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. The draft resolution calls upon Israel to resume negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks and to comply with commitments already entered into.

Furthermore, the draft resolution demands that Israel withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. It also calls upon all the parties concerned, including the co-sponsors of the peace process, to do their utmost to ensure the resumption and success of the peace process and the

implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In its statement to the General Assembly of 29 November 2002, Egypt set out the basic elements of its position on the issue of Palestine. Allow me quickly to reiterate the major points of our position with regard to the situation in the Middle East.

Although Egypt believes that the question of Palestine represents the crux of the Israeli-Arab problem, we also believe and affirm that there are other elements that must be resolved in order to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The first of those issues concerns the need to put an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories in Lebanon and Syria. We believe that the key to peace and stability in the region is for Israel to accept the fact that a just and lasting peace can be achieved only through implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. Consequently, there is a need for Israel to respond sincerely and credibly to peace negotiations and to refrain from any decision that may harm or destroy the peace process. Egypt therefore reaffirms its view of the three prerequisites for peace, security and stability in the Middle East: first, Israel's total withdrawal from all occupied territories; secondly, reciprocal security arrangements that guarantee security for all States in the region and, thirdly, normalization of relations between Israel and all the countries of the region. Everyone is aware of the fact that Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories is the essential and inevitable point of departure.

The prerequisites for the peace process I have just outlined constitute the very essence of the principle of land for peace. In the past decade, the international community has tried to implement this by trying to convince successive Israeli Governments to agree to that principle. However, since May 1996, the international community's efforts have been met by categorical refusal on the part of successive Israeli Governments with regard to the peace effort, as well as by continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories. Israel has continued building settlements on those territories and encouraging migration to them, in the hope of fulfilling utopian dreams and false rights.

Violence by Israeli forces has reached the point of violating the provisions of international humanitarian

law and basic human conduct over the past three years in order to break down resistance to occupation and destroy any legitimate hope for freedom and independence. Israel and its armed forces have nevertheless failed to break Palestinian resistance. That failure will persist as long as such practices and policies remain in place.

In that regard, I would like to emphasize that Egypt's historic experience in peacefully settling issues related to the Israeli conflict on the basis of the principle of land for peace has borne out the rightness of the principle itself as the key to peaceful resolution of the region's problems. That precedent opened the way for further international and regional efforts. Egypt therefore categorically supports Syria's right to regain the rest of its occupied territories as a basic condition for the establishment of peace between Syria and Israel. I would also like to reaffirm that same solidarity with Lebanon, in order that it may regain the rest of its occupied territory from Israel.

We very much hope that we will be able to achieve a peaceful, just and lasting settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict in all its aspects. We await a gesture of good will from Israel, so as to demonstrate sincere willingness to respond to peace calls seriously and credibly.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

For more than half a century, the General Assembly has devoted continued and focused attention to the situation in the Middle East. Sadly, however, during that lengthy period the Middle East has remained in a state of serious crisis. As it was half a century ago, the epicentre of the crisis today remains the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The European Union outlined its views on the tragic events that continue to unfold in the occupied territories during the debate on the question of Palestine. I would therefore just like to underscore that the European Union strongly condemns the recent acts

of terror and violence, which only serve to derail the process towards reconciliation. Only through a process of negotiation can we hope to achieve a peaceful and just settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The European Union remains committed to continue the work within the Middle East Quartet on a concrete, three-phased road map towards a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement by June 2005. Peace in the Middle East must, however, be comprehensive and include a final Israeli peace settlement with Syria and Lebanon. A just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the conflict, including on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the Madrid terms of reference — in particular the principle of land for peace — and the implementation of all existing agreements between the parties.

In March of this year, Arab League countries, at their Summit in Beirut, adopted the proposal by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah on an Arab peace initiative. The European Union warmly welcomes that initiative, which is an important factor in international efforts to promote a comprehensive peace on all tracks, including on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. For the first time ever, that initiative offers Israel the prospect of full normalization with all Arab League countries, after the conclusion of a comprehensive peace settlement.

In May 2000, Israel unilaterally withdrew its forces from south Lebanon, in line with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Even though the situation there has been characterized by a state of relative calm, serious violations of the ceasefire continue to occur. It is essential that the Lebanese Government fulfils its responsibility under that resolution and that it reinstate its effective authority over all of southern Lebanon, including by deploying its forces along the Blue Line in order to restore peace and security in the area. For its part, Israel must stop its repeated air and other violations of the Blue Line, which are unjustified and a cause of great concern to the civilian population. Furthermore, both parties must ensure the safety of the personnel of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), as well as their full freedom of movement in the discharge of UNIFIL's mandate.

Besides being actively engaged in the Middle East peace process through the Quartet, the European

Union takes a strong interest in the development of the Mediterranean region as a whole, and in maintaining close and long-standing ties with its countries. Through the Barcelona process, the European Union aims to play its full part in ensuring peace, stability and security, as well as sustainable and balanced economic and social development in the Mediterranean region. At the Euro-Mediterranean conference of foreign ministers held in Valencia in April this year, the parties reconfirmed their commitment to the Barcelona process and its relevance as a forum for dialogue and cooperation between the European Union and Mediterranean countries.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the commitment of the European Union to continue — in close cooperation with the other members of the Quartet and all parties concerned — to assist in finding a final, just and comprehensive settlement to the Middle East conflict. We urge all parties concerned to work with the Middle East Quartet, with a view to achieving that objective.

Mr. McIvor (New Zealand): New Zealand is saddened to note that, over the past few months, violence has continued unabated in the occupied territories and in Israel, while prospects for a peaceful settlement of the conflict remain bleaker than ever. The two are, of course, connected. Death and serious injuries are reported on an almost daily basis. Most victims are civilians, and include women, girls and boys — children who will not see their tenth, or perhaps even sixth, birthday. They also include young people attending social events.

New Zealand utterly rejects all acts of violence, from whatever quarter. Our hearts and condolences go out to the families of all victims on both sides. We deplore the terrorist act that took the lives of innocent Kenyans and Israeli tourists in Mombassa last week. We also extend our sympathy to the families, friends and colleagues of Ian Hook, the staff member of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in Jenin, who died of gunshot wounds on 22 November. The violence breeds further hatred and mistrust, and drives the two sides further apart. We recognize the intensity of the feelings involved and the destructive effect of victim mentalities.

Israelis are entitled to live safely within secure and recognized borders. It is their right. But that will

not be achieved through Israeli military operations and the excessive use of force in the occupied territories. It will not be achieved by continued, provocative and illegal settlement activity in the occupied territories. Nor will it be achieved by Israel's undermining of the role and capacity of the Palestinian Authority and the health of the Palestinian economy. All that simply fuels the extremists' determination.

For their part, Palestinians are entitled to a State of their own. That is their right. That will not be achieved through violence and terrorist acts against Israeli citizens by extremist groups. Such violence only weakens the Palestinian cause and lessens Israeli public support for a prompt resumption of peace talks. It works directly against the prospects of Palestinians realizing their acknowledged rights.

Like others, we have stressed before that the essential objectives of both sides can only be achieved through a negotiated political settlement. In New Zealand's view, resolution of the conflict should be at the highest level of the international community's priorities. Individually, a few countries are in a position significantly to influence developments in the right direction. Collectively, the international community has a responsibility to persist. In that regard, we would acknowledge in particular the tireless efforts of the European Union over the past year and the initiatives of Saudi Arabia and the Quartet.

Let us not underestimate the seriousness of what is at stake. The Arab-Israeli conflict remains a predominant threat to international peace and security. The issue is of overwhelming importance to Arab nations. It is used as a rallying call to inflame other tensions and occasionally even as a justification for terrorist activity. We believe that resolving the conflict is central to a positive relationship between the Western and Arab worlds in the long term.

The United Nations has an important part to play in addressing this conflict. First, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations provides the major international body tasked with addressing the dire humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. The current conditions truly represent a crisis — and an entirely man-made one at that. UNRWA is doing what it can, but continues to face incredibly difficult conditions, including obstruction of its staff and unreasonable delays in

clearance of humanitarian supplies. Malnutrition has reached sub-Saharan African levels. Between 50 and 80 per cent of the population is dependent on food aid. Reflecting the deteriorating situation, New Zealand will this year increase its annual core contribution of \$300,000. In the year to June 2002, New Zealand also made an additional contribution of \$400,000 to UNRWA.

Secondly, the United Nations has a key role in facilitating talks between the parties, now institutionalized by its participation in the Quartet. New Zealand supports this involvement and the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to encouraging a return to negotiations. United Nations membership in the Quartet recognizes the stake of the broader international community in resolving the conflict. We look forward to the Quartet's finalizing details of the road map towards a two-State solution. Once agreed, we would hope it will receive Security Council endorsement.

This year, the Security Council discussed the Middle East on a regular basis and held an open debate on developments, in which New Zealand was pleased to participate. In March, the Council adopted a landmark resolution — resolution 1397 — affirming a vision of two States. New Zealand welcomed this development.

This Assembly's annual consideration of the items on the Middle East and its special sessions provide valuable opportunities for multilateral discussion on the issues. Perhaps inevitably, these debates can involve little more than rehearsing the history of the conflict and articulating long-held positions. At times, they degenerate into recrimination. We would encourage, instead, a forward-looking discussion, a search for conciliatory language and recognition by all of the concerns of both sides to the conflict. As an institution, we need to add value. If we do not, these are opportunities lost.

Finally, we conclude with an appeal to both parties to work with the elected leadership of the other, to look to their long-term interests and to commit to serious negotiations.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): Turkey has already aligned itself with the European Union's statements of 29 November and today, delivered under the agenda items "Question of Palestine" and "The situation in the

Middle East". This being so, I would like to expound our views on some aspects of these agenda items.

The unabated cycle of violence that has almost become the norm in the region throughout the past year is of great concern to us. Our sense of concern and our feeling of dismay are deepened by the fact that the level of violence has increased to even greater proportions in recent days.

As previously stated on similar occasions, Turkey strongly and unequivocally condemns all acts of terror and violence. We reiterate our firm stand that there can be no justification for such acts under any pretext whatsoever. Acts of this nature do not and cannot help the just cause of the Palestinian people. Obviously, it is equally important to recognize that the use of excessive and disproportionate force cannot serve as a means to a peaceful end. On the contrary, it can only serve to beget further desperation and violence.

Let us be clear: terror and violence are a one-way street leading to a dead end in the form of darkness and misery. This path has one very definitive result, which is that the hopes of future generations are irretrievably dashed. The only way to break this cycle of violence is to overcome the deep lack of confidence between the parties and to revitalize the hopes for peace. It is incumbent upon all concerned to recognize the dangerous fact that any sense of hope for peace is indeed on the verge of extinction.

We urge the sides to desist from all forms of violence, as demanded in Security Council resolution 1435 (2002). We also call upon all interested parties to once more embark upon serious negotiations for a solution. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), along with the principles of Madrid and Oslo, as well as subsequent agreements reached between the parties, will constitute the framework for this endeavour. We wholeheartedly support the efforts of the Quartet and other initiatives that aim to assist the parties towards the noble goal of reaching a negotiated and peaceful settlement.

We strongly believe that a single road map to be developed by the Quartet can play a vital role in breaking the cycle of violence and that it can help promote a peaceful settlement. This road map needs to contain all of the relevant parameters for achieving a two-State solution and should address the needs, demands and concerns of the parties in an equal and balanced manner.

Turkey will continue to make every possible effort leading to the establishment of peace and to initiating a genuine political process in the Middle East. To this end, we will maintain our close contacts and cooperation with all interested parties.

Both the European Union and the United States road maps envision the holding of an international conference. I would like once again to announce Turkey's readiness to host such an international conference, once the conditions are deemed ripe enough to do so.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The situation in the Middle East has continued to deteriorate, to the point that it is difficult to foresee what the future will bring. The Arab peoples are angry and their Governments are frustrated. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to escalate and threatens to expand. The region lives in fear of a new war. In addition, the gap between the region and the North — the industrialized world — is increasing and the chasm is deepening between the civilizations of the East and of the West, threatening to develop into a form of religious confrontation. All of this leads to further extremism and greatly jeopardizes the stability of the region.

As is known, the region of the Middle East is of strategic importance in view of its location, its resources and its deep-rooted great civilizations. From there came the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The people of the Middle East are proud of their culture, history and religion. It is difficult to imagine that they can continue to accept insults, disregard and humiliation for long.

Many peoples of the third world achieved national liberation during the past century. They rid themselves of the yoke of colonialism and, still reeling from the pain, began to address their condition and to undertake the hard process of nation-building against all odds in the face of great challenges. In the Arab world, in spite of the successive independence of States, the era of national liberation has not come to an end, at least not completely. At the heart of this, of course, is the question of Palestine, with all that it entails: occupation, colonialism, expansionism and the influence of foreign Powers. Some might think that the Arab position and Arab anger towards Israel comes only from decades of Israeli oppression, suppression and atrocities committed against the Palestinian people.

Of course, that is important; it has given rise to broad sympathy and solidarity throughout the world. But, for us Arabs, the issue is far more complex than that.

Arab anger and animosity towards Israel have come about as a result of what Arabs see as unprecedented injustice from the very beginning. An entire people have been deprived of their rights — notably their right of national independence; they have been uprooted from their land and prevented from returning. Instead, immigrants were brought from all over the world to supplant them, and a new and foreign State was founded for those immigrants. This is one of the most peculiar colonial projects in history, carried out in Palestine, whose people bear no blame for the atrocities that many of those immigrants had been subjected to in Europe. Arab anger continued to deepen in response to the role that this State played over the years in the region on the military, security, political and even economic level, in full cooperation with, and at times on behalf of, foreign great Powers. Israel occupied what was left of Palestine and began colonizing it. It occupied territories of several Arab States and committed aggression against Arab nations, threatening the national security of the entire Arab world.

Anger and animosity climaxed when the Arab leadership and Arab elites tried to overcome all of the above and to launch a historic new era by reaching peace with Israel in return for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, only to be faced with Israel's contemptuous rejection of this attempt and its insistence on expanded colonization of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and on the negation of the national rights of the Palestinian people. Once more, this was done in cooperation with, and with the support of, one of the foreign great Powers.

The issue is thus deeper and much more complicated, going well beyond the heinous practices of the occupying Power against the occupied people. The issue also relates to ongoing national humiliation, to Israel's insistence on pursuing and escalating injustice and to what Arabs see not only as the continuation of occupation but also as Israeli expansionist plans for a greater Israel. Alongside that is the conviction that our region is targeted and that most countries of the West are supporting Israel at the expense of international law and norms that they themselves have established.

Some international parties, especially friends of Israel, are now trying to claim that all the problems and bad conditions stem from the Arab regimes, their handling of economic and social issues and their hesitation regarding necessary democratic transformation. Those things may be important and have their own impact. But like any other society, we cannot pursue our natural economic, social and political development before settling the question of nationhood. The Arab-Israeli conflict must be resolved before we can build our relations with the national enemy and with foreign Powers — especially the most influential ones. This is true also of our relations with those Powers we view as Israel's protectors and as the cause of our national predicament. Only then will the climate of extremism be dispelled; only then will natural progress in the region begin, enjoying the benefits of peace and coexistence, including between Israel and Palestine.

Then came the barbaric terrorist attacks of 11 September and the onset of the battle against international terrorism. At that time, everyone adopted the correct position, strongly condemning what happened and expressing readiness for a common effort to fight and eradicate terrorist groups through global outreach and calling for the revision of economic and political policies that provide the breeding ground for extremism and terrorism.

Let me reaffirm our strong condemnation of the latest form of terrorism that took place a few days ago in Mombasa, Kenya.

Some important and positive successes have indeed been achieved at the military and security levels in this battle against international terrorism, especially in Afghanistan. At the level of policies, particularly with relation to the Arab and Islamic worlds, unfortunately no similar successes have been achieved. There have even been attempts to undermine the international agenda and to influence it in the interest of narrow illegal interests.

Israel has tried to link the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the battle against international terrorism. It has even tried to compare its acts as an occupying Power against the Palestinians to what the Allies have done in Afghanistan. Moreover, some of Israel's more fanatic friends in some States are trying to divert the battle towards a confrontation between religions and

civilizations and are clearly pushing for a confrontation with Arabs and Muslims.

We must warn against the real danger of such positions taken by some fundamentalist groups and the danger of some official policies of some countries. We also reaffirm the need for compliance with the sound positions declared by responsible leaders and the need to focus efforts on resolving and ending hate, prejudice and confrontation.

In addition to all the above-mentioned, there is the threat of war in Iraq, which will be yet another war in the region. If that war takes place, it could result in unforeseen dire consequences. The Security Council has provided, through its resolution 1441 (2002), the potential for a different road to be taken, and we hope to see the complete and accurate implementation of that resolution.

Nevertheless, we must mention that Arab nationals cannot ignore what they see as a double standard. If the issue is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, why then are no efforts being made to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction possessed by Israel? And, if the issue is the implementation of Security Council resolutions, why then has there been no implementation of Council's resolutions in the case of Israel, at least the 37 resolutions adopted on the situation in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967?

We remain hopeful that we will soon see a new Middle East — a region free of occupation, of extremism, of violence and terrorism, of weapons of mass destruction and free of hatred; a region where all people can live in peace, security and prosperity. However, that requires reconsideration of policies and positions and needs serious work. Let us seek to achieve those noble objectives.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): As we witness the renewed surge of violence in the region, today's deliberation in the Assembly on the situation in the Middle East is, regrettably, I must say, all the more timely.

I would like to begin by extending my sincere condolences to the bereaved families who have lost loved ones and to those who have sustained injuries in the recent exchanges of violence by both parties to the conflict.

The Government of Japan condemns all acts of terrorism, particularly those aimed at innocent people. Terrorism cannot be justified for any reason. By the same token, my Government deeply deplores excessive retaliatory military action, which all too often claims civilian victims. That can never improve the situation.

It is intolerable that this brutal cycle of violence continues unabated, despite the calls by the international community for an end to the hostilities and the restoration of peace. The Government of Japan urges Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority to make utmost efforts to crack down on extremists, and calls on the Government of Israel to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from any action that could further inflame the situation, and re-engage in the dialogue to achieve peace.

The gravity of the situation cannot be overstated. The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is a serious threat to the entire Middle East region. The engagement of the international community in the endeavour to find a just solution to this conflict is thus essential. Such international involvement in this issue is also important for maintaining solidarity in the fight against terrorism, as well as for addressing the issue of Iraq.

I wish to note in that regard the work now being done by the members of the Quartet in drawing up a road map to realize the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. The Government of Japan supports the efforts by the parties concerned to attain consensus on that road map, and hopes that that will be achieved by the Quartet at its meeting later this month. In addition, reform of the Palestinian Authority is an important element in advancing the peace process. The Palestinian Authority Reform Task Force, of which Japan is a member, is now working on reforms in seven areas, in consultation with both parties.

Improving the economic and humanitarian situations of the Palestinians is another important task for the international community in order to create an environment conducive to peace. Toward that end, the Japanese Government has been calling on the Israeli Government to take such steps as transferring frozen tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority and easing the closures of the Palestinian territories. Japan is also extending assistance to the Palestinians, which has amounted to more than \$600 million since 1993. We intend to continue to provide support for the

Palestinians in a comprehensive and effective manner in the form of emergency humanitarian assistance, capacity-building, support for democratic reform, aid for institution-building and election monitoring.

The international community can certainly help draw up a road map to follow in pursuing peace in the Middle East. However, it is the parties themselves that must walk that road with their own feet and determination. The Government of Japan urges the leaders of both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to make steady progress toward reaching the road's final destination: two States living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland is deeply concerned about the alarming situation which continues unabated in the Middle East. The upsurge of violence has caused many deaths and is inflicting tremendous suffering on the civilian population. It is compromising the future of an entire generation and sacrificing their right to live in freedom and safety. It is engendering suicidal desperation and the illusion that security can be achieved through force alone. Switzerland considers it imperative that this logic of violence stop. In this context, it recalls the obligations incumbent upon the parties to the conflict contained in Security Council resolution 1435 (2002).

Switzerland recognizes and strongly reaffirms Israel's right to live in security and in peace. It underlines the tragic impact of the suicide attacks, which no political cause can justify. It has unceasingly condemned them in the strongest possible terms as morally outrageous and as grave violations of international humanitarian law. These murderous attacks against civilians — no matter where they are — must cease immediately. They are intolerable and undermine and discredit the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. It is the duty of the Palestinian Authority to denounce them in these terms and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The international community, including the Arab countries, should condemn without reservation all terrorist acts against civilians.

Switzerland recognizes and reaffirms equally strongly the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own State. Switzerland recalls its desire to see the creation of an independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State that respects the principles of the rule of law and good governance. In this spirit, Switzerland

urges the Palestinian Authority to proceed resolutely with a thorough reform of its structures, also with a view to ensuring both the democratic control and transparent functioning of its security apparatus. Israel must also act in such a way as to facilitate the emergence of Palestinian institutions capable of ensuring respect for public order and of strengthening civil society. In Switzerland's view, the establishment of effective cooperation in security matters between the parties, accompanied by socio-economic and humanitarian measures to revitalize Palestinian society, is the necessary condition for restoring mutual confidence and for the resumption of a genuine peace process.

Negotiations will be possible only if there are real prospects for a just and peaceful political solution to the conflict. To achieve this, it is important that not only the parties concerned but the international community as a whole shoulder the responsibilities incumbent upon them to break the current negative spiral of violence. Not long ago, a definitive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian question seemed to be close at hand. Such an opportunity will come again only if the parties cease to act unilaterally, in pursuit of their own interests, and instead resolutely embark on the search for a compromise solution which takes into account the interests of all concerned. Such a compromise can result only from negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002); on the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference; on the principle of land for peace; and on the implementation of all the previous agreements concluded by the parties.

Switzerland fully supports the current efforts of the Quartet aimed at achieving the goal of two States, Israel and the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. It underscores the importance of the peace plan adopted on 28 March 2002 by the League of Arab States, which it believes can make a key contribution to the efforts of the international community to promote a comprehensive peace in the region — one which also settles the outstanding questions concerning Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon.

Switzerland is determined to ensure that both parties comply with international humanitarian law. It has recently made proposals with a view to ensuring that the parties better respect those commitments which they have undertaken, and it will continue to work to

achieve this end. Israel's legitimate demands concerning security and the aspirations of the Palestinians to create their own State must be addressed within the framework of strict compliance with international humanitarian law. In particular, compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention is essential, both with regard to combating terrorism and to facilitating the work of the humanitarian organizations, indispensable to improving the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories.

In this respect, Switzerland recalls the importance of the declaration adopted on 5 December 2001 by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. The declaration underscores, without weakening them, the responsibilities and obligations of each party. The two parties have undertaken to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to take all measures provided for in the law to prevent further violations. The declaration also appeals for the resumption of negotiations, for an end to the occupation, and, in the interim period, for the de jure application of the law governing the conditions of occupation and the protection of civilians, who are the main victims of this conflict.

In this context, Israel must acknowledge that the creation and expansion of new settlements in the occupied territories is an obstacle to peace and one of the causes of the continuing insecurity. The settlements are a breach of international law. Israel must immediately act in compliance both with its commitments as set out in the Mitchell Plan and with its obligations as stipulated by international law. In this regard, Switzerland considers it especially important for Israel to fulfil the commitment it undertook in the Oslo Accords to abstain from actions liable to change the status of the West Bank and Gaza.

Furthermore, Switzerland condemns in equally strong terms extrajudicial executions, collective punishment and acts of reprisal by the Israeli Defence Forces, which, due to their indiscriminate and disproportionate nature, spare neither civilians nor humanitarian workers. Switzerland also condemns in the same terms acts of terrorism by Palestinian groups against civilians, wherever they may be committed.

A solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is urgently needed in order to halt the continuing deterioration of the situation of the civilian populations caused by the prevailing violence. Such a solution, however, will be found only when there is concrete evidence of the political will to find one. Peace must

no longer be the hostage of either terrorist or retributive violence.

It is incumbent upon the Palestinian Authority to restore the security and credibility that are needed if it is to continue to be an indispensable partner for the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Internal reform and the organization of free and fair elections in 2003 will constitute the new pillars of its legitimacy.

Finally, it is incumbent upon the international community to provide resolute and active support for the search for peace and to mobilize the necessary resources for its achievement. Switzerland reaffirms its willingness to contribute to that endeavour.

Programme of work

The Acting President: On Wednesday, 4 December, the General Committee will meet at 9.30 a.m. to consider a request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-seventh session, contained in document A/57/234.

At 10 a.m., the General Assembly will meet in this Hall to consider, as already scheduled, agenda item 23, "United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage".

In addition, the General Assembly will take up the following: a report of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council"; reports of the Fifth Committee on sub-items (a) to (e) and (j) of agenda item 17, "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments"; agenda item 47, "Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present United States Administration in April 1986"; agenda item 48, "Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security"; agenda item 49, "Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait"; agenda item 50, "Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations"; and agenda item 51, "Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development".

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.