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Agenda item 27:

Question of Palestine:

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;
(b) Report of the Secretary-General 1041

President: Mr. Hamilton Shirley AMERASINGHE
(Sri Lanka).

AGENDA ITEM 27

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1. The PRESIDENT: This afternoon the Assembly will begin consideration of agenda item 27. I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed on Wednesday, 17 November, at 12 noon. As I hear no objection I take it that it is so decided.

It was so decided.

2. Mr. FALL (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): Never in the history of nations have the actions of an international organization had such a decisive effect on the destiny of a people than those of the United Nations and that of the Palestinian people.

3. Almost a year ago the General Assembly, faithful to the task allotted to it since the beginning of this decade for the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, adopted on 10 November 1975 resolution 3376 (XXX) setting up a Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This historic resolution falls well within the vocation of our Organization, which is to promote peace, international security and justice.

4. The question of Palestine, which was introduced on 2 April 1947 to the United Nations by the United Kingdom,¹ has borne and still bears the character of a problem of self-determination, which the United Nations to

date has not been able to resolve in a just and, therefore, durable manner.

5. This absence of a solution has, on the one hand, served to extend and complicate the conflict through the political, military and economic involvement of a growing number of States and, on the other, has created a grave and permanent threat to international peace and security.

6. As a result, the question has remained before the United Nations in a state of uncertainty ever since the very first days of the Organization, which has devoted more time, discussion and effort to its solution than to any other item, without, however, succeeding in bringing about a just and durable solution. This situation does not of course mean that the United Nations is incapable of promoting a peaceful solution of this question. Indeed, the absence of a settlement has depended much less on the nature of the problem than on the different approaches which have been used within the United Nations.

7. Thus the question of the implementation of the right to self-determination of the Palestine people, which is indeed the heart of the problem, has not always received the consideration it warranted nor the attention it deserved during the attempts at solution sponsored by the United Nations.

8. Approaches neglecting the substance of the Palestine question in the United Nations have predominated until recent years, when we have seen the emergence of more constructive trends.

9. The consideration of the Palestinian question in the United Nations has undergone, broadly, three major phases. The first, from 1947 to 1952, saw the partition of Palestine and the birth of the Middle East conflict. The second, from 1952 to 1969, was marked by the eclipse of the question of Palestine and replaced by the more general question of the Middle East conflict. Lastly, the period from 1970 to the present day has been dominated by a process of rehabilitation of the Palestine question.

10. The first period corresponded to the domination of the United Nations by the United States of America and Western European countries, some of which still controlled immense colonial empires. The question of Palestine was dealt with in a way very similar to the methods prevailing during the golden age of colonialism. That is to say, little attention was paid to the right to self-determination of the indigenous population. The result was to be a terrible injustice: the inequitable partition of the country to favour a minority consisting largely of immigrants most of whom came from European countries or America. As was to be

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, First Special Session, Plenary Meetings*, annexes, document A/286.

expected, this injustice set fire to this explosive situation. The war which followed led in its turn to further and even more serious injustices. I refer to the expulsion of the indigenous people and the occupation of the territory which, according to the provisions of United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 (II), was to serve as a basis for the future Arab State of Palestine. Faced with this turn of events, which ran counter to its previous decisions, the United Nations had to try to promote a peaceful solution of the problem, in which it was to play an active role as mediator. It set up a United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, whose action from 1949 to 1952 failed to bring the two belligerent sides to real negotiation. On the contrary, the *status quo* of the 1949 armistice agreements seemed destined to last, thus preparing the way for a new political configuration attained at the expense of the Palestinian Arab people. The United Nations seemed little inclined to take effective enforcement action to ensure compliance with its decisions.

11. The distinctive feature of the second period was the total eclipse of the question of Palestine in favour of the more general question of the Middle East. The worst part of this metamorphosis was that the Palestinian question ceased then to be a political issue, to become merely a humanitarian issue. The international Organization devoted its efforts to attempts to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Arab States, but without much success. The Palestinians, now removed from the political scene, were no longer associated with the search for a political solution. This state of affairs culminated in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), the aim of which was, paradoxically, to lay down the principles of a solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict by side-stepping the basic political question, that is to say, the right to self-determination of the Arab people of Palestine. Thus, this resolution, despite the great hopes it aroused, failed to lead to progress providing a final solution to the question. This dangerous passivity of our Organization, due mainly to the partisan and unbalanced approaches which prevailed within it, was happily overcome by the entry of nations who had known the same sort of frustrations and the same kind of injustices as the Palestinian people and who, more than ever, were decided to raise the problem of Palestine in its true humanitarian and political dimensions in order to make positive contribution to the solution of this problem in which the United Nations was bogged down. These countries, most of which had recently thrown off the colonial yoke, resolutely raised the problem in concrete terms, that is to say, the implementation of the legitimate rights of a people to self-determination and national independence. Resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3376 (XXX), adopted respectively on 22 November 1974 and 10 November 1975, illustrated this new trend within the United Nations and released from historical oblivion this important and tragic political question that the international community had, for almost a quarter of a century, relegated to the status of a simple humanitarian question of granting assistance to refugees. In spite of the vicissitudes, the misrepresentations and the blind and determined opposition to which this process gave rise, the General Assembly, acting in accordance with the Charter, was able to impose this just approach in the search for a positive and final solution to the Palestinian problem. It was along these lines that resolution 3236 (XXIX) laid down a precise definition of the inalienable rights of the

Palestinian people. In the key paragraphs of this resolution the General Assembly:

“1. *Reaffirms* the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including:

“(a) the right to self-determination without external interference;

“(b) the right to national independence and sovereignty;

“2. *Reaffirms also* the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted . . .”.

12. To ensure the implementation of this resolution, the General Assembly, at its following session, adopted resolution 3376 (XXX) setting up the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, whose report [A/31/35] I have the honour of introducing to you today. Resolution 3376 (XXX) setting up this Committee defined its mandate as follows:

“... to consider and recommend to the General Assembly a programme of implementation, designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise the rights recognized in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX), and to take into account, in the formulation of its recommendations for the implementation of that programme, all the powers conferred by the Charter upon the principal organs of the United Nations”.

13. This task must be recognized to be both important and difficult. It is important because, for the first time, the United Nations is dealing in a concrete manner with the question, which lies at the very heart of the Middle East conflict. It is difficult because the implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people is the subject of diverging, if not diametrically opposed, interpretations. However, the Committee, in order to overcome these obstacles and do useful work while taking into account all the interests involved, invited, in accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 3376 (XXX), all States Members of the United Nations as well as all intergovernmental regional organizations to take part in its work as observers. The Committee also informed them that it was prepared to examine all oral or written suggestions and proposals which might be submitted to it. To this end, the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] was invited to take part as an observer in the work of the Committee and to put forward proposals and suggestions. Various Member States, in particular those of the Middle East, took part in the Committee's work. Representatives of the European Economic Community as well as of the United States of America also gave their points of view in writing. Nevertheless, regrettably, the Committee met with a refusal to co-operate on the part of the Israeli authorities, although this country is one of the parties most concerned in the solution of the Middle East crisis.

14. The report now before you in document A/31/35 contains in part two the recommendations of our Committee regarding the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. These recommendations are addressed particularly to the Security Council and are

focused on the rights defined in resolution 3236 (XXIX), namely, the right of return and the right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty. I will add that all these recommendations formulated by the Committee are based on resolutions or decisions adopted by the General Assembly or by the Security Council of the United Nations.

15. During its work, the Committee gave special attention to the right of return of the Palestinians. This right was recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 194 (III), by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by Security Council resolution 237 (1967) and finally by Israel itself, in Assembly resolution 273 (III) of 11 May 1949, admitting it to membership in the United Nations.

16. In resolution 194 (III) adopted following the report of Count Bernadotte, United Nations Mediator in Palestine, the General Assembly laid down the principles for the solution of the refugee problem and resolved:

“... that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible”.

17. The right of the Palestinian refugees to return and to compensation was likewise reaffirmed subsequently in 24 other United Nations resolutions.

18. In particular we would draw your attention to resolution 273 (III) admitting Israel to membership in the United Nations in which the General Assembly takes note of the declaration by the State of Israel that it “unreservedly accepts the obligations of the United Nations Charter and undertakes to honour them from the day when it becomes a Member of the United Nations”. The same resolution explicitly recalls the provisions of resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 setting up in Palestine two territorial entities, one Arab and the other Jewish.

19. “The organic link between Israel and the United Nations, combined with its own interests, dictates Israel’s line of conduct in international affairs, that is to say unconditional loyalty to the United Nations Charter and devotion to the cause of peace.” These words do not come from myself. They were uttered by the Permanent Representative of Israel,² after that State was admitted to membership in the United Nations when the delegation of Israel had taken its place in this Organization. Still within the context of this profession of faith, the State of Israel gave its support to resolution 194 (III) regarding the right to return of the Arab refugees from Palestine. Thus, in giving very special attention to this major question, our Committee wished to stress an aspect of the problem which has been acknowledged in one way or another by each of the parties concerned.

20. As regards the ways and means to enable the exercise of the right of return to be implemented, our Committee

² For a summary of this statement, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Part II, Plenary Meetings, 207th meeting, p. 333.*

proposed a two-phased programme. The first concerns the refugees of 1967, whose return should be implemented immediately and unconditionally pursuant to Security Council resolution 237 (1967) of 14 June 1967. This resolution has binding force under Article 25 of the United Nations Charter.

21. While this initial phase is being carried out, the United Nations, in co-operation with the States directly concerned—including, of course, the State of Israel and the PLO—will make the necessary arrangements to ensure that the Palestinian refugees expelled from their lands between 1948 and 1967 return to their homes in the second phase. We must point out in this connexion that this division into two phases has been made solely out of a concern to be realistic and should not be interpreted as placing any restriction on the right of return which should be enjoyed by all exiled Palestinians. Regarding Palestinians who do not wish to return, the Committee has provided, pursuant to resolution 194 (III) that they should be given just and equitable compensation.

22. The implementation of the right of return is a fundamental condition for any just peace in the Middle East. Whatever arguments concerning security problems that might be raised to oppose such implementation, it nevertheless remains true that security can be established generally only within the framework of peaceful coexistence between all the peoples and nations of the region.

23. The second aspect of the inalienable rights of the Palestine people is the right to self-determination and national sovereignty. While the purpose of giving effect to the right of return is to promote the return of the Palestinians to their homeland, that is by no means sufficient to ensure the exercise of their right to self-determination. For this, the Palestinians must be able to express themselves freely as a sovereign people, and it is for this reason that the Committee calls for the evacuation of the Arab territories illegally occupied by Israel, so that the Arab territorial entity, as provided for in resolution 181 (II), may be established there and so that the Palestinian people may be enabled to take control over their own destiny. Such a decision is in conformity with the responsibility already assumed by our Organization when it solemnly proclaimed “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war”.

24. The members of this Assembly no doubt still remember the grave troubles which occurred in occupied Palestine early this year and the debates to which they gave rise in the Security Council. During these debates most if not almost all of the speakers recognized that the occupation of Arab territories had lasted too long and that the unilateral measures taken by Israel were not only unacceptable but contributed to worsening the situation and jeopardizing any progress towards a peaceful solution. However, the debates did not result in the adoption of a resolution, not so much because of disagreement over the facts, but rather because of considerations that had nothing to do with the substance of the issue.

25. The Committee, noting that Israeli occupation of the Arab territories was disapproved of by the international community both in principle and as to methods and that it

was an obstacle to the exercise of the right to self-determination and national sovereignty of the Arab Palestine people, proposed the adoption by the Security Council of the following measures aimed at putting an end to this state of affairs: first, the establishment of a time-table for withdrawal from the occupied areas to be completed no later than 1 June 1977; secondly, the positioning of temporary peace-keeping forces in the area; thirdly, the establishment of a temporary United Nations administration responsible for handing the evacuated territories over to the PLO.

26. Pending completion of the evacuation of these lands, Israel should desist from any action violating human rights in the occupied territories and from its policy of establishing Jewish settlements.

27. Our Committee, as you will have noted, has based its work solely on the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, whether the matter concerned the refugees, withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, or the implementation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Likewise, all measures advocated by the Committee are in conformity with the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter. I would even add, for the benefit of our Committee's detractors, that the two main documents which we took as the basis of our work, resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III), were adopted at the time with the agreement of the State of Israel and the opposition of all the Arab States.

28. The Committee in particular bore in mind the recognition by the United Nations of the Palestinian people as the principal party to the Israeli-Arab conflict, and the resolution adopted during the twenty-ninth session recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the interests of the Palestinian people [resolution 3210 (XXIX)]. The representative of the PLO made a particularly positive contribution to the work of the Committee.

29. The implementation of the recommendations we put before you requires the enhancement of the role of the United Nations in any efforts made to resolve the Palestinian question and to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The present situation requires that the Security Council make a careful examination of the recommendations which are now before you in order to expedite a solution to the question, which is indubitably decisive for the establishment of peace in the Middle East. Such an approach seems to us all the more appropriate since the United Nations bears a good part of the responsibility for this drama which is being experienced by the Arab people of Palestine. The report of the Committee was examined by the Security Council from 9 to 29 June 1976.³ Twenty-nine Member States of the Organization spoke at that time. The main feature of the debate was differences concerning the approach to the question.

30. In the view of the Committee, supported by the majority of United Nations Members, the question of the implementation of the rights of the Palestine people calls for speedy and effective action by the United Nations.

³ See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-first Year, 1924th, 1928th, 1933rd-1938th meetings.*

31. The Western countries, for their part, rejected any direct United Nations intervention and proposed that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which form the framework for a settlement, should be supplemented in order to take into consideration the national rights of the Palestinian people.

32. A draft resolution which was submitted by the non-aligned members of the Security Council⁴ and which merely affirmed the national rights of the Palestinian people was not adopted because of the negative vote of a permanent member of the Security Council.

33. At its subsequent meetings, the Committee decided to leave its report unchanged and to submit it to the General Assembly, bearing in mind the following facts. First, none of the States which spoke in the Council questioned the reality of the rights of the Palestinian people. Secondly, the criticism made of the report related to matters beyond the mandate of the Committee, which was neither to resolve the question of the Middle East nor to reaffirm the rights of Israel, but to define ways and means which would make possible the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

34. In deciding to submit this report to you in the form in which it was submitted to the Security Council, our Committee does not claim to put before you a perfect document. On the contrary, we are convinced that the changes to be made by the General Assembly will only improve and enrich it, thus bringing us closer to our final goal, which for all of us must be the establishment of a just and definitive peace in the Middle East. It goes without saying that such a goal cannot be realized without a basic change both in the political actions and in the thinking of all parties to the dispute.

35. Israel must give up its expansionist aims and its manifestations of triumphant demagoguery and realize that it cannot live and prosper in the middle of the hostile and explosive environment that now surrounds it. Peace and understanding with its neighbours are indispensable to the security and well-being of its people.

36. The Arabs, for their part, must adopt a more realistic approach to the question and banish from their minds any idea of "driving the Jews into the sea". They must abandon the subjective and emotional approach which has so far characterized their relations with the Jews. The State of Israel is a reality of our time and its existence cannot be denied.

37. We know well that on both sides it is widely held that coexistence between Jews and Arabs is impossible. Those who support such a contention implicitly argue that the problem of the Middle East can be resolved only by totally and definitively eliminating one or other of the two parties to the dispute. Such a view is both absurd and dangerous.

38. During the general debate at the beginning of this session, some 125 speakers—including Heads of State or Government, Prime Ministers for Foreign Affairs or minis-

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Thirty-first Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1976, document S/12119.*

ters responsible for other departments—all stressed the gravity of the situation currently prevailing in the Middle East. Nobody denies that this problem can no longer be considered as one concerning only the Arabs and the Jews, for it has implications that might endanger international peace and security. The United Nations, which is responsible for the resolutions which were adopted at the beginning of this regrettable crisis, has also adopted a series of decisions on the basis of which all aspects of this delicate question could be resolved. The resolutions and decisions of the United Nations are the expression of the collective conscience of the international community, and the Members of our Organization, which are all committed to respect them, must likewise work to ensure their effective and genuine application. And it is on the strength of this conviction that our Committee drew up the report which is now before you.

39. Mr. GAUCI (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: I am greatly indebted to Mr. Fall of Senegal, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, not only for his comprehensive presentation of the report, but also for the dedicated leadership with which he inspired the work of the Committee. His detailed exposition will enable me to be reasonably brief, as I have deliberately kept brief the report of the Committee. I trust the Assembly will find this brevity useful, particularly since delegations are at this time overburdened with voluminous reports which they barely have time to read, let alone consider, with the required attention.

40. As an indication of the brevity of the report, I need only point out that the explanation of the unique nature of the question of Palestine is telescoped into a single paragraph—paragraph 13—of the report. Those requiring more background material may wish to consult in particular documents A/AC.183/L.2 and A/AC.183/L.3, the first listing the nearly 200 resolutions adopted by this Organization on the question—most of them so far unfulfilled—and the second giving a brief historical background of the question of Palestine as it has been discussed at the United Nations since 1947.

41. The conciseness of the paragraph on the nature of the Palestinian question is in inverse proportion to its importance. Not for a single moment should we allow the unfortunate plight of the Palestinian people to escape our concentrated attention during this debate. Their past is on our conscience; their future is our concern. We have before us a matter of fundamental importance: at one and the same time a question of human rights and a political problem transcending the geographic area of its origin. In its wider ramifications, it represents one of the most jagged rocks on which the course of progress in international relations is foundering.

42. It would appear that this session was a particularly appropriate opportunity to seek the basis for a solution. We seem to be at an important cross-roads. Even if we are not, the longer a solution is delayed, the more complicated the problem becomes, the more bitter the resentment, the more tragic the human suffering, the greater the danger to peace.

As our outgoing President said in opening the current session:

“Can we continue to refuse to give a definite and objective reply to the Palestinian people who, for many years, have been subjected to massacre and to a life of wandering and misfortune . . .” [1st meeting, para. 20].

How many times in the past have we silently posed ourselves this question? When shall we give a reply which can transform despair into a glimpse of real hope? And how can we imagine an enduring solution being devised without the PLO, as the recognized legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, being involved in the discussions in which their own future is at stake? Despite the complexity of the problem, an attempt at a realistic and comprehensive reply, legally founded, is contained in the recommendations of the Committee.

43. I do not feel we can make a significant advance through a mere repetition of the sterile series of acrimonious accusations and counter-accusations which have characterized past debates on this question. The bitterness is understandable, but, difficult as it may sound, we need to put that phase behind us and to start a constructive dialogue in considering this item. It is now time for the General Assembly to look objectively at the question and to see whether we cannot, at this important session, make significant moves forward through a collective approach designed eventually to produce a lasting solution.

44. This seems to me our best course of action. I invite all delegations to help us pursue this approach, under the guidance of our President, in the belief that moderation pays, and that encouragement of a just and workable approach to an international problem, whose resolution would constitute a significant advance for peace, is not beyond our capability.

45. This was the constant objective that guided me in the preparation of the report. The essence lies in the recommendations, which only cover a mere three pages, and deserve very careful scrutiny. The recommendations are self-explanatory; no detailed analysis is necessary on my part. Every single sentence is measured, free of any padding and is part of a delicate balance which was not easy to arrive at. The recommendations nevertheless represent the unanimous conclusion of the Committee.

46. By way of background, I should explain that the Committee, which objectively studied and was open to all sectors of opinion, considered as its basis for progress the numerous previous decisions both of the Security Council and of the General Assembly, and also took fully into account the latest trends in international opinion. After careful and unhurried consideration, free from the pressure of events, the Committee advocates a graduated approach containing concrete, constructive and realistic suggestions which would advance progress towards peace, redress injustice, satisfy legitimate aspirations and allay genuine preoccupations. The approach suggested would bring out the latent capability of the United Nations and its organs in promoting, facilitating and overseeing, in all its stages, a graduated but comprehensive peaceful solution reflective of international opinion.

47 -A constant theme running through the report is the conviction that the Security Council has an obvious responsibility to take action—effective and overdue action—to overcome the present stalemate and so to promote and ensure the implementation of a peaceful solution. It was therefore not only in compliance with resolution 3376 (XXX) but also in accordance with the requirements of logic that the report which now lies before this Assembly should first have been scrutinized by the Security Council. To follow the logical course set by the Committee, therefore, we need to pay particular attention to the remarks of the members of the Security Council, which were wide-ranging in scope and varied in their observations. This disparity in reception is probably the best guarantee of the objectivity of the report. But such a conclusion would be hasty and facile; I believe we need to go much further and to analyse expressed preoccupations more closely if we desire the co-operation of all shades of opinion. The Security Council is not noted for the speed of its decision-taking process; it obviously requires some more time and further consideration. The well-considered opinion of this Assembly might serve as a catalyst for progress.

48. To those delegations which have already been good enough to examine the report and to support the recommendations, I would limit myself to expressing grateful appreciation. It is certainly encouraging that the large majority of the members of the Security Council, and others that took part in the debate—coming from different regions of the world, with their own perspectives on the problem—are in general agreement with the report and in particular its recommendations. It is even more satisfying that the large group of non-aligned countries have recently also had an opportunity to examine the report and to endorse its findings.

49. Other delegations expressed certain reservations on the recommendations, which, they felt, left out some important considerations. To those few delegations, who expressed lingering doubts during the Security Council debate and will no doubt correctly do so again, I would suggest that the explanations given in the presentation of the report should serve to allay their apprehension. But I should like in particular to draw attention to what is stated in the paragraph of the report which immediately precedes and introduces the recommendations:

“Against the background of the reported difficulties in the search for a peaceful solution to the Middle East question, the members of the Committee, within their more limited terms of reference”—I stress this phrase—“considered that the recommendations which follow would, in their implementation, constitute a contribution within the framework of the United Nations and would complement efforts towards the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region.” [A/31/35, para. 58.]

50. The members of the Committee were naturally bound by their terms of reference and for this reason did not consider that any changes in the recommendations were called for in response to suggestions made so far. If some delegations previously had certain reservations about the terms of reference of the Committee, we should not now lose sight of the fact that we are considering both the report of the Committee and the question of Palestine in its

wide perspective. Consequently, terms of reference are no longer circumscribed, and therefore suggestions need not be inhibited. The Committee has only paved the way for this debate.

51. In introducing the report before the Security Council,⁵ I stated that I did not believe that the Committee claims a monopoly of wisdom. I welcomed then, as I welcome now, any additional constructive suggestions from members of this Assembly for broadening and strengthening the recommendations, after careful examination of the ones proposed for consideration.

52. My own delegation, for instance, understands the insistence of the permanent members of the Security Council on the importance of specifically mentioning Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We recognize the validity of these resolutions, as also their deficiencies in overlooking the rights of the Palestinian people. The provisions of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) were laboriously worked out in response to an emergency situation, which, though a tragic episode in itself, was only one in a series of events. Most certainly the provisions of resolution 242 (1967) were not meant to be used as an unyielding obstacle to peace. Security can, in the final analysis, be obtained only through peaceful coexistence between the peoples and States in the area.

53. The broad guidelines of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as those of other equally valid resolutions adopted by this Organization, can be spelled out in specific suggestions which would complement one another and form a series of links in promoting progress by concrete steps calculated to achieve the final objective of peace in the Middle East. This is precisely what the Committee has done. The most important side of the equation—constituting the core of the problem—has been spelled out into a series of specific steps divided into a two-phase approach, as set out in the recommendations, and as required by the terms of reference of the Committee.

54. One of the permanent members of the Security Council rejected the recommendations of the Committee, principally on the grounds that such an approach was not realistic and that in any case progress was being made in the Middle East.

55. It seems to me that a cursory glance at the history of the area over the last three decades could not provide more conclusive evidence that the approaches of the past, even with the best intentions, have not advanced the cause of peace. I could detail any number of transgressions by the super-Powers of the terms of resolutions that they themselves have proposed. But it is not worth the effort. I leave it to this Assembly to consider the validity of that observation.

56. My purpose in any case is not to look back in anger on the past, but to look forward with realistic optimism to the first solid steps of a graduated approach, with peace as its final objective. This objective can no longer remain monopolized by the interplay between the super-Powers. The

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Thirty-first Year*, 1924th meeting.

countries directly involved, and those in the region, have a particular stake in the search for a solution and cannot for ever remain immobilized. Furthermore, there is no incompatibility between the recommendations of the Committee and any other initiatives. As stated in paragraph 58 of the report, implementation of the recommendations "would complement efforts towards a just and lasting peace in the region."

57. I do not believe we can escape the conclusion that we have an important responsibility to carry out. We cannot any longer turn our faces away from the plight of the dispossessed and disinherited Palestinians. Refugee camps do not provide the answer, nor do increased contributions to relief and rehabilitation ease our conscience. This Organization bears a heavy responsibility in this question. The Palestinian leadership is asking, on behalf of its people, for national dignity and statehood, with all the attendant responsibilities applying thereto and the benefits which the tormented region could derive as a result. The Palestinian leaders seek the help of our Organization to reach their goal by peaceful means. The recommendations of the Committee, founded on legality and morality, are designed to help them gradually to achieve those ends, while safeguarding the interests of all States in the area.

58. It is now for this Assembly to determine whether the recommendations of the Committee fall within the previous decisions of this Organization, whether they serve the required purposes, and whether they respond to the will of the international community. It is important for the Assembly to consider the matter carefully and objectively, and then to pronounce its verdict, so that the approach will fully reflect international opinion and concern. After that, the Security Council would no doubt be called on to take up the matter afresh at a predetermined time.

59. You may perhaps feel, Mr. President, that more qualitative progress could be achieved if you were to encourage contacts between the principal parties involved, including the members of the Security Council. The outlines for such a possible approach are given in paragraph 56 of the report. Though not forming part of the Committee's recommendation, the suggestion received wide support. This might lead to a constructive dialogue which could improve the prospects of having a widely supported resolution. This should be our aim. It would be a significant achievement, perhaps the first solid foundation for changing the present fatal mood of despair into the excitement of hope with dignity for the Palestinian people, and heralding prospects of peace and prosperity in the region of the Middle East.

60. The PRESIDENT: The next speaker on the list is the representative of the PLO, on whom I now call.

61. Mr. KADDOUMI (Palestine Liberation Organization) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure, Mr. President, to speak before you on behalf of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate you upon your presidency of the General Assembly session and to commend you on your objectivity and integrity. You have held numerous important posts in this international Organization, and you were a worthy defender of right and justice

and a worthy advocate of peace and human rights. The unanimity which brought you to the presidency of the General Assembly is a true reflection of you characteristics and past experience. I also avail myself of this opportunity to commend the constructive role played by the Secretary-General of this Organization in the service of world peace and the cause of human rights and other causes which weigh upon mankind.

62. From this international rostrum, I should like to extend on behalf of the Palestinian people, our thanks and appreciation to all friendly peoples and countries and peace-loving forces for their support of our Palestinian people in their just struggle for freedom and independence. Moreover, I should like to repeat my congratulations to friendly countries in Africa which acceded recently to independence after a long struggle and have thus become an effective factor in the international community for the consolidation of the causes of liberation of peoples. At the same time, we hail the heroic struggle waged by the peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa for the sake of realizing their sovereignty and independence, the struggle which enjoys the support of the world at large and which was instrumental in realizing recent gains, as evidenced in resolutions of this General Assembly which supported the struggle of these militant people and condemned racism, racial discrimination and the existing alliance between the forces of colonialism, racial discrimination and the Zionist movement.

63. Once more we would like to reaffirm from this rostrum that the cause of freedom throughout the world is one and the same. Hence, the great victories scored by friendly peoples in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos are at the same time victories for our peoples and all peoples. It is the triumph of freedom and progress over the forces of colonialism, backwardness and exploitation. Therefore, we find ourselves waging a common struggle with the militant peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America against imperialism and colonialism and against racist and Fascist doctrines and practices that attempt to oppress and exploit our militant peoples. At present the world is facing numerous, interlinked problems on an international level that cannot be dealt with except through joint efforts. The struggle against racism and racial discrimination; the liquidation of all forms of colonialism; the establishment of a new international economic order that fosters equality in international economic relations and puts an end to the existing order which aims at exploiting peoples and their natural resources; the working out of formulas conducive to the protection of the environment; the exploitation of sea resources—all these require a radical approach from the international community as a whole in order to restore world peace based on justice and equality.

64. The struggle of the Palestinian people has recently scored significant successes and achievements giving powerful momentum to the over-all struggle. Palestine has acceded to full membership in the non-aligned movement and the PLO has also become a member of the Co-ordinating Bureau of that group. This reflects the aspirations and hopes of the peoples of the third world and reaffirms the growing confidence in the positive and effective role played by the PLO in international affairs. Moreover, Palestine has acceded to full membership in the League of Arab States

and with this status it participated in the meeting of Kings and Presidents of the Arab League, held in Cairo on 25 and 26 October 1976. That Conference unanimously reaffirmed support for the national rights of the Palestinian people and the reaffirmation of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. At the same time, greater recognition was given the PLO in the international arena as a result of its participation in regional and international organizations and its bilateral contacts with numerous countries and Governments. We appreciate the important resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the last of which was resolution 3376 (XXX), which set up the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

65. Allow me to review now the principles upon which the Committee based its recommendations, so that they may be the premise of our discussion.

66. First, the Palestinian cause lies at the heart of the Middle East problem. Hence the Committee reaffirms its conviction that no solution in the Middle East can be valid if it does not take into full account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

67. Secondly, the Committee reaffirms the Palestinian people's legitimate, inalienable right to return to their homes and property and to achieve self-determination, independence and national sovereignty. This reflects its conviction that the full implementation of these rights will contribute decisively to a complete and final settlement of the Middle East conflict.

68. Thirdly, the participation of the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing with the other parties on the basis of General Assembly resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX), is indispensable to all efforts, deliberations and conferences related to the Middle East that take place under United Nations auspices.

69. Fourthly, the Committee recalls the cardinal principle of rejection of the acquisition of territory by force and reaffirms the consequences of this, such as speedy and complete withdrawal from any territory occupied in this manner.

70. Fifthly, the Committee deals with the duty and responsibility of all concerned to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their national and inalienable rights.

71. These are the principles adopted by the Committee. They are the necessary basis for the resolution of the Palestinian problem and for the achievement of peace in the Middle East. The Committee also approved a detailed action programme to implement these principles. This programme is inspired by the historic Palestinian problem from its genesis through all the ensuing complications and circumstances.

72. The PLO appreciates the report of the Committee, which was endorsed by the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in Colombo, but strongly regrets the fact that the Security Council was unable to adopt resolutions aiming at its

implementation due to the United States veto. This makes it incumbent upon this Assembly to assume its international responsibility in accordance with the United Nations Charter, international custom, and precedents.

73. On behalf of the PLO, I would like to extend profound thanks to the Chairman and members of this Committee, which has been objective in its work and recommendations. And on behalf of the Palestinian revolution, which is pursuing its struggle, a struggle which is increasingly reflected in world public opinion, we extend the hand of co-operation and collaboration with all those who are working with justice and equity in order to put an end to the tragedy of the Palestinian people and to establish a durable peace based on justice in the Middle East area and in order to achieve peace, security and progress for all the peoples of the world.

74. The Palestinian revolution, which emerged from the tragedy that afflicted the Palestinian people and through bitter experience and events unparalleled in the annals of human history except in the ages of darkness and degradation, is practising the principles of the United Nations and international law relating to the rights of peoples to struggle by all means, including armed struggle, in order to attain their objectives, such as sovereignty, independence and self-determination. This revolution is the outcome of an arduous struggle with extensive human suffering which began at the start of this century. This revolution never wished to wage war or to use force in its struggle. It has not resorted to armed struggle except to restore violated rights and to throw off the injustice and repression that afflict our people. After the failure of all the peaceful efforts which we made for 28 years in order to do away with injustice, aggression and occupation, I do not believe that anyone here denies our right and duty to defend ourselves and to recover our rights through all available means.

75. Our Palestinian people wishes to live like the rest of the peoples of the world, in dignity and security in their homeland. But Zionism, in alliance with world imperialism, has deprived this people of its rights and properties and forcefully ejected it through violence, repression and mass murder, and transformed it about 30 years ago into a displaced refugee people so as to establish Israel upon its ruins. The history of Israel, which is an embodiment of the principles of the Zionist movement that were condemned by the international Organization, which considers them as a form of racism and racial discrimination, is but a long series of acts of aggression and illegitimate aggrandizement against our Palestinian people and against our Arab nation. It began with the unlawful Balfour Declaration of 1917 and went on to terrorism and mass murder perpetrated by Zionist gangs, to the establishment of the Zionist entity itself, to the aggression of 1956 and 1967 which led to the occupation of all Palestine, in addition to territories belonging to State Members of the international Organization, namely Egypt and Syria. There is no need to review at length the history of the tragedy while recent events and daily events reflect the aggressive and racist nature of Israeli policy in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories. I need not remind the General Assembly of the events that took place there recently, to which the Security Council devoted three discussions this year. The Security Council last week

unanimously adopted a well-known statement⁶ in which it expressed its profound concern regarding the current situation in the occupied territories resulting from the arbitrary policy applied by Israel in this region. The Security Council expressed its condemnation of the setting up of Jewish settlements and its opposition to any steps aimed at changing the status of the city of Jerusalem; and this week the Special Political Committee will consider the eighth report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories [A/31/218] set up by this General Assembly.

76. These events are clear proof of Israel's determination to implement the same Zionist scheme which was previously put forth in occupied Palestine in 1948 and which involved the expulsion of the lawful inhabitants and their replacement by alien settlers, the setting up of dozens of new Zionist settlements on the ruins of Palestinian Arab villages, and the persecution of the inhabitants in violation of all guarantees stipulated by international law, especially the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. These facts are but an objective proof of the Zionist racist and aggressive practices in occupied Arab territory. I would like to add one more proof that sheds light on the Zionist concept and practice in the occupied territories.

77. Recently a report, known as the "Koenig report", was revealed; it was written by an Israeli named Koenig, who represented the Zionist Minister of the Interior in the northern sector of occupied Palestine. This report contained the most extremely fanatic racist concepts, which concentrate on the necessity to rid Palestine and the Arab-occupied territories of the Arab majority through the use of a number of measures designed to compel the Arabs to emigrate, to place stringent restrictions on their attempts to return, to limit the natural increase in the size of Arab families by depriving them of government subsidies, and to create a feeling of economic insecurity among the Arabs by limiting their employment in economic enterprises. This report also reaffirmed the racist idea which assumes ethnic superiority by mocking the oriental mentality, stating that "the nature of the oriental character is superficial and shallow and it ranks imagination higher than logical reasoning".

78. What Koenig called for is but the very implementation of the Zionist racist concept, which was defined by Herzl 80 years ago and on which the State of Israel was founded. These concepts call for evicting the indigenous population from the country so as to replace them by alien settlers. It is clear that the Zionist movement is determined to implement these racist principles fully with a patient and determined attitude at the expense of our Palestinian people and our Arab nation.

79. In the face of all the repression and persecution inflicted upon our people inside the occupied territories and though confronted with uprooting, forceful eviction and the usurpation of land and property, our people stand firmly. Terrorism only increases their determination; persecution and injustice only enhance their allegiance to the

land and their love for their homeland. Our people are fully aware of the vile scheme and objective of evicting the Palestinians from their homeland and replacing them by Zionists. We shall continue to foil and smash the scheme regardless of the sacrifices, and we shall go on until victory.

80. Furthermore, the international community, on numerous occasions and in various organs of the United Nations, has expressed its condemnation and profound concern at the colonialist, expansionist, racist policy practised by Israel in our occupied land, because this constitutes a real danger and menace to international peace and security.

81. If we move on to the other aspect of the policy of the Zionist Entity outside the occupied territories, we shall find the same line of thought, which is based on force and terrorism. There are Israeli attempts which aim at striking Lebanon and destroying its unity. On behalf of the PLO and from this international rostrum, I declare that the Palestinians do not accept an alternative homeland to Palestine. They will forever stand by the unity of Lebanon, the independence of Lebanon and its national sovereignty because a unified and independent Lebanon is the best supporter of the Palestinian people in their just struggle. Indeed, the PLO, throughout the Lebanese crisis and in collaboration with the parties concerned, has exerted sincere and effective efforts to put an end to the fighting in Lebanon, and to protect Lebanon as a free and independent country. Here we must warn against Israeli attempts which strive to undermine the efforts to achieve peace in Lebanon and to implement their expansionist aggressive policy in southern Lebanon, in particular, in such a way as to menace the safety, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

82. The position of the PLO is reflected in its adherence to United Nations resolutions on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and in its call for their implementation and the deterrence of all forces which hinder this implementation. These resolutions, adopted by the General Assembly, represent the minimum that the Palestinian people can accept in their march towards freedom and independence. Is it therefore your wish that these people should accept less than what you have established as a basis for a just solution?

83. At a time when the PLO stands firmly by all sincere political and diplomatic efforts to realize a just settlement of Palestinian problem, efforts have been made to obliterate and distort the features of the Palestinian cause, and these have been headed by the Government of the United States and its policy in the Middle East. Israel continues to follow a policy based on aggression and force, on manoeuvring and intransigence, in defiance of United Nations resolutions and the desire of the international family of nations to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

84. For our part we continue to extend all support to the peace efforts, in full awareness that in the world of today, all peoples—all peace-loving peoples—must close ranks in order to resolve the explosive problems facing mankind, such as aggressive war, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, backwardness, malnutrition, the pollution of the environment and other economic and social issues. We wish for a peace based on justice; we do not want war for the sake

⁶ *Ibid.*, *Thirty-first Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1976*, document S/12233.

of war. We call upon the international Organization and the international community to assume their duties and responsibilities so as to erase the injustice afflicting the oppressed peoples and to restore their lawful rights.

85. This is the Palestinian position, which I expose here before you in all clarity and objectivity. The PLO, through its contacts and consultations, has felt a firm desire on the part of all the countries of the world to put an end to tension and to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East region.

86. There is but one force that defies this international unanimity and that strives to maintain tension and conflict in the area by extending all forms of assistance and support to the Zionist aggressive entity, thereby encouraging it to perpetuate its aggression and aggrandizement: this force is the United States of America. I ask, What is the interest of the American people in the perpetuation of that aggression against the independence and homeland of the Palestinian people, the perpetuation of Israel's occupation of territories belonging to other Arab countries which are States Members of the international Organization? It is an incontestable fact that Israeli aggression could not have continued or increased in violence had it not been for the military and material aid of the United States, had it not been for American support and protection in the international arena.

87. We have followed the presidential elections in America; we have witnessed a competition between the two candidates to extend more American support to Israel. This encourages Israel to adhere to its aggressive policy, and we shall continue to ask, How long will the cause of the Palestinian people be at the stake in the American election and a field for competition between the two candidates? He who shoulders responsibility for peace and security in the world, who stands by right and justice, who stands by the repressed peoples, must call for an end to secret diplomacy and its replacement by direct, clear diplomacy which takes into account the interests of the people and their aspirations, and which does not aim at creating conflict and civil war or at opposing liberation movements by attempting to split them, because these efforts will inevitably lead to increasing tension in the world, and not only in the Middle East.

88. It is an incontestable fact accepted here in this international forum and by world public opinion that peace shall not take root, and stability shall not prevail, in the entire Arab region unless we can find a just solution to the Palestinian issue based upon the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to set up an independent Palestinian state on their national soil.

89. Until such a time we shall continue our struggle by all means. This is our duty, our duty towards ourselves, towards our history, towards our future. Our cause is just. Zionist violence and intransigence shall merely increase our force and determination; suffering and sacrifice shall only strengthen our determination to wage the struggle to enable our people to realize their legitimate objectives and to attain true peace in the region.

90. To conclude, as our people valiantly confront all the forces of evil and aggression of imperialism and zionism,

they extend their profound thanks to all friendly countries and to all who support our struggle; to our brothers in the non-aligned group and the third world, as well as to the socialist countries which continue to assist and support us. We also appreciate the position of some of the countries of the European Economic Community which demonstrate greater understanding of the rightness of our people's cause and their legitimate struggle. We should like once more to reaffirm our complete and unwavering solidarity with all the liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the struggle for freedom and independence, because our struggle is indivisible. It is part of your own struggle, a part of the struggle of humanity at large to establish a new world where freedom, justice and equality prevail.

91. Mr. ABDEL MEGUID (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, it gives us pleasure to greet Mr. Kaddoumi, the head of the delegation of the PLO and the other members of that delegation who are taking part in the General Assembly debate on Palestine. As we greet the role of the PLO and its constructive efforts to achieve a just solution of the Palestinian cause, we feel profound concern at the explosive situation prevailing in our country as a result of the delay in the efforts made to reach a just and lasting solution which would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights.

92. At the same time, we find that the new dimension of the valiant revolution and uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied lands represents the first step towards restoring the full rights of these people. To the representatives of the Palestinian people I would like to express the greetings and appreciation of the Egyptian people and our full solidarity with them in their stand against the forces of the Israeli occupiers.

93. The attention accorded by the international community to the Palestinian issue and to the inalienable and authentic rights of the Palestinian people is not strange because the Charter of our Organization stipulates the right of all peoples to a dignified life and to national independence. The Palestinian people are in no way different from the other peoples of the world who today enjoy independence and freedom. Nevertheless, they are daily subjected to further repression and violence by an aggressor who refuses to recognize the facts of an age which does not accept occupation, usurpation and repression and that, however long such occupation, usurpation and repression may continue, the will of the people shall ultimately prevail.

94. Almost one year has elapsed since President Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat, the President of the Republic of Egypt, spoke in this Assembly and addressed the peoples of the world through you, expressing the Egyptian viewpoint on the most important international questions. Naturally the question of Palestine came at the head of the list of the issues to which he alluded. For Egypt it is a basic issue, an issue of the destiny of a people to which we are bound by ancient and eternal links. May I be allowed to quote the following passage from the speech President El-Sadat made before the General Assembly on 29 October 1975:

"I have no doubt that you agree with me that there will be no peace in the region without a political settlement to

the Palestine problem. It is inconceivable—utterly unacceptable—that the Palestinian people should remain homeless and dispersed. They must regain their entity and establish their independent State, so that this ancient people can contribute constructively to the development and progress of our international community.”⁷

95. The General Assembly responded strongly to this appeal, reaffirming the concern which the Members of the United Nations have for the Palestinian people and their inalienable national rights. On this basis the General Assembly adopted two historic resolutions during its thirtieth session. The first, resolution 3376 (XXX), reaffirmed resolution 3236 (XXIX) and expressed the grave concern of the General Assembly that no progress had been achieved towards the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights in Palestine, including the right to self-determination without external interference and the right to national independence and sovereignty. Most important in this resolution was the setting up of a Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, composed of 20 Member States appointed by the General Assembly to draw up a programme which would enable these people to exercise these rights. It also authorized the Committee to submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session containing its observations and recommendations.

96. The second resolution adopted by the General Assembly during its debate on the Palestinian item—that is, resolution 3375 (XXX)—related to the invitation to the PLO to participate in the efforts for peace in the Middle East. This resolution was both logical and expected from the General Assembly, since it recognizes the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. It is elementary that any peace efforts in the Middle East must include the participation of the representatives of that people. There is a clear awareness that there can be no solution to the Middle East problem without a solution of the crucial problem, that is, the Palestinian cause. The General Assembly, recognizing the necessity of achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East at the earliest possible time, expressed its conviction that the participation of the Palestinian people is essential in any efforts and deliberations aiming at the achievement of such a peace. Therefore, the General Assembly called for the invitation of the PLO to participate in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East which are held under the auspices of the United Nations, on an equal footing with other parties, on the basis of resolution 3236 (XXIX). The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to inform the Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on the Middle East of the resolution and to take all necessary steps to secure the invitation of the PLO to participate in the work of the Conference as well as in all other efforts for peace. Finally, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the matter to it as soon as possible.

97. Allow me, Mr. President, to review here the results of the efforts to implement these two important resolutions. As to resolution 3376 (XXX), the General Assembly, in

selecting the members of the Committee, showed concern for considerations of geographical representation and sought to include in the Committee countries which are related to all the parties to the conflict. The Committee, at its 2nd meeting, invited all States Members of the international Organization to participate in its deliberations and to express their views on this important issue. It even called upon Israel, which usurps the Palestinian people's rights, to express its views to the Committee. But Israel, with its well-known arrogance and constant defiance of United Nations resolutions, has declared its rejection of the composition of the Committee, and has refused to express its opinion. This is not strange, for Israel has consistently adopted this approach and the Organization has now become used to this. Israel has incited a number of countries not to co-operate with the Committee, a Committee which pursues its work with neutrality and objectivity. The fruit of its endeavour is here before us, that is the report which appears in document A/31/35. In this connexion, I should like to commend the Committee and its members under the chairmanship of Mr. Médoune Fall for this excellent and objective report.

98. I shall not go into the details of the Committee's report because Mr. Fall has just made a comprehensive statement on this question. But allow me to make the following remarks. First, the report has touched upon the practical and objective aspects of the proposals that have been submitted and the phases of their implementation. Secondly, it is based upon United Nations resolutions, that is upon international legality. Thirdly, the phases proposed by the report are reasonable. The first phase, involving the return to their homes of the Palestinians displaced as a result of the war of June 1967, is a matter that was previously unanimously endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 237 (1967); there is, therefore, no excuse for any party to hinder this return. Fourthly, the report has accorded a major role of implementation to the United Nations and the Security Council. Fifthly, the report has not disregarded any party and has recalled the necessity for agreement between the parties concerned within the framework of the Charter and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Sixthly, the report was accurate in reasserting that it is not possible to implement the proposals as long as Israeli occupation continues. It also stresses how important it is for Israel to release all political prisoners, remove its settlements and preserve the Arab character of the territories. Seventhly, the report has placed the Palestinian problem in its proper context as it considers it the heart of the Middle East question. It reaffirms that the establishment of an independent Palestinian State according to the principles of the Charter is a prerequisite for peace in the Middle East. Eighthly, the report notes that the Committee should strive to obtain the widest possible acceptance from United Nations Members and that this requires informal contacts with countries which are not members of the Committee but which could play a positive role vis-à-vis the Palestinian question in the Security Council or in the General Assembly. Ninthly, the report, based upon the United Nations resolutions adopted at the thirtieth session of the General Assembly to which I referred earlier, has reaffirmed that the situation must not stagnate in the Middle East and that the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East must be reconvened with the participation of all interested parties, including the PLO.

⁷ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 2388th meeting.

99. These are the remarks my delegation wishes to make on this important report. My delegation believes that we should speedily work towards endorsing this report so as to stress the attention of the General Assembly and its solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to attain their legitimate rights. It was natural for the Security Council to consider this report pursuant to paragraph 8 of Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX), and the Council did indeed study it at eight meetings, which my delegation had the privilege to attend.

100. Numerous countries, both inside and outside the Committee, have demonstrated the great attention which they accord to these debates. It was natural that the Chairman of the Committee should have introduced the report to the Council. These deliberations, which Israel, as usual, saw fit to boycott, led to a draft resolution that was unfortunately not adopted owing to the exercise by one of the permanent members of the Council of the right of veto. The General Assembly must endorse this report and seek new ways and means of implementing its proposals. My delegation strongly supports all constructive efforts in this respect.

101. The second important document before the General Assembly is the Secretary-General's report dated 18 October 1976 [A/31/271] in implementation of the General Assembly's request in its resolution 3375 (XXX) in which it called for the invitation of the PLO to participate in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East under United Nations auspices.

102. On behalf of Egypt, I would like to extend my thanks to the Secretary-General for this report and for his efforts to break the deadlock. The Secretary-General in his report has referred to his contacts with representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States in their capacity as Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on the Middle East. He also referred to the Security Council meetings, especially the meeting held on 4 December 1975 at the request of Egypt following the General Assembly resolution, when the Security Council for the first time decided to invite the PLO to participate in its deliberations on an equal footing with all member States.

103. My delegation believes that the Council resolution is a step in the right direction and a practical implementation of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX) on the participation of the PLO in all deliberations relating to the Middle East held under United Nations auspices. Indeed, the PLO has participated in all Security Council meetings relating to the Middle East or to the Palestinian cause or to the situation in the occupied territories held since that date.

104. My delegation believes, however, that additional steps must be taken in order fully to implement resolution 3375 (XXX). The Secretary-General has deployed great efforts since the adoption of this resolution, including the dispatch of a special envoy to the region in February 1976. When the participation of the PLO in the peace efforts was studied, the Secretary-General took the initiative of contacting all interested parties, including the PLO, and requested their opinion on ways and means that could be used to break the deadlock on the road to peace.

105. Egypt's reply to the Secretary-General's initiative was both clear and succinct. Mr. Ismail Fahmy, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, referred to this reply in the speech which I read on his behalf before the General Assembly on 14 October last, but allow me to refer here to certain points which were contained in that reply.

106. The Egyptian Foreign Minister in his reply to the Secretary-General said:

“...I note with appreciation your sending of the aforementioned note to the representative of the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people. This constitutes a constructive step towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX), which provides for the participation of the PLO in all efforts and deliberations on the Middle East as well as for the undertaking of steps to secure the invitation of the PLO to participate in the work of the United Nations Peace Conference on the Middle East.” [31st meeting, para. 34.]

107. This is fully compatible with President El-Sadat's initiative contained in his speech before the General Assembly on 29 October 1975. The Egyptian Foreign Minister also stated in his reply:

“The ultimate goal of such contacts as well as the ensuing process would be the achievement of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East which would lead to a just and durable peace based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and self-determination. This necessitates the full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions that provide for the total withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, and the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people.” [Ibid., para. 35.]

108. This was, and still remains, the clear Egyptian position: there shall be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East without the withdrawal of the Israeli forces and the implementation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. I would like to express here my appreciation for the Secretary-General's mention in his report of his determination to pursue his efforts in this respect. One of the important indications of the growing awareness of the international community vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is the participation of the PLO at the Colombo Conference of non-aligned countries this year as a full member of the Conference. This exemplifies in our opinion the practical steps aiming at the effective application of General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX).

109. Since the adoption of that resolution, we have witnessed a growing support for the Palestinian people. This was clear in the resolutions of the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Colombo [see A/31/197, annex IV], of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Mauritius, of the Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Istanbul [see A/31/237], and of the Council of Ministers of the

Organization of African Unity, held in Mauritius [see A/31/196 and Corr.1].

110. It is incumbent upon our General Assembly at this session to demonstrate clearly once more to Israel that it will not remain silent vis-à-vis the repression and persecution perpetrated against the Palestinian people. The measures taken by Israel in occupied Arab territories, such as setting up settlements on Palestinian and Arab lands, and its attempt to contain the Palestinian people through arrests and murders will only redouble the determination of the Palestinian people to struggle until their independence and sovereignty are attained. The Security Council, which was very clear in its strong denunciation of Israeli acts in occupied Arab territories, expressed its concern regarding the serious situation in the occupied Arab territories resulting from the continuation of Israeli occupation.

111. Did Israel learn a lesson from United Nations warnings, whether in General Assembly or Security Council resolutions? Everything points to the contrary, since Israel continues its aggression and occupation, which it tries daily to consolidate, flouting all international laws and conventions.

112. The time has come for the international community to demonstrate to Israel its firm determination not to allow the perpetuation of this aggression. The time has come, in our view, for the international community to seek ways and means leading to the implementation of its resolutions and to follow up that implementation so long as Israel continues its defiance. Egypt is firmly convinced that the international circumstances and the radical changes brought about by the October war in the international community constitute a unique opportunity to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Full responsibility rests upon our international Organization to avail itself of this opportunity and not to lose it. Any attempt to block the situation is totally rejected by us because events have proved that such attempts are aimed at containing all the explosive factors in the area, and this results in serious dangers not only for the peoples in the Middle East but also for world peace and security.

113. The Egyptian position has always been that the United Nations and the international community should participate in establishing a just and lasting peace in our sensitive area. Our Organization, since its inception, has constantly been preoccupied with the Palestinian question. Egypt, from the start, has been determined to place the

Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices and to see that every step should take place with the Organization's participation and under its supervision. The continuation of the current situation in the area constitutes a menace to peace. The Arab peoples and countries will not accept the continued occupation by Israel and its violation of the national rights of the Palestinian people. The world is racing against time. The choice is either a just peace or a total war of liberation to recover rights stipulated by the Charter and supported by the General Assembly. It has become incumbent upon the international community to provide an impetus immediately. All Members of the United Nations are committed to provide momentum towards a just solution and to oppose all dilatory measures with all determination and insistence. The rights of the Palestinian people are inalienable; they cannot be distorted; Israel, if it desires a real peace in the area, must recognize these rights. The time has come for the Israeli Government to heed the voice of the international community. Some of the reasonable people in Israel have felt that ultimately there is no alternative to recognition of the lawful rights of the Palestinian people. As mentioned by Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg in his interview published in the September-October 1976 issue of the Israeli *New Outlook*,⁸ we shall have no start towards a settlement of the Middle East problem without acceptance of the fact that the Palestinians are there and that Israel cannot disregard the fact that they constitute the heart of the conflict.

114. I would like to conclude my statement by quoting from the speech of the President of Egypt before the Fifth Conference of non-aligned countries in Colombo last August. The President said:

“I cannot imagine that anyone here condones the perpetuation of aggression against the Palestinian people, an aggression not only against their political and civil rights, but against their daily life and their right to a productive, creative existence like all other peoples. Therefore we are called upon to take together practical measures with a view to halting and deterring this aggression and to making sure that no one of us falls victim to similar aggression in the future.”

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

⁸ See “Advice and Consent: interview with Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg”, *New Outlook*, vol. 19 (September/October 1976), No. 6, pp. 6-11.