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

AGENDA ITEM 29

The situation in the Middle East (continued)

1. The PRESIDENT: The first speaker this afternoon is the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO], on whom I now call.

2. Mr. TERZI (Palestine Liberation Organization): For 30 years this Assembly has been discussing the question of Palestine and its ramifications, in particular the situation in the Middle East. For 30 years my people have been enduring misery and dispersal. For 30 years my people have been looking with hope to the United Nations—hope that an entire displaced people will be able to return home and live in peace like any other people. Until 1974 the Palestinian people were deprived of the right to present their cause before this Assembly. When the General Assembly invited the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people to participate in its deliberations on the question of Palestine in plenary meetings, it did so after having decided to consider the Palestinian people as the principal party to the question of Palestine. I am referring to the resolution adopted by this Assembly at its 2268th plenary meeting on 14 October 1974 [resolution 3210 (XXIX)].

3. In that recognition by this Assembly the Palestinian people saw a new ray of hope: the United Nations might and could assume its responsibility and bring their misery and dispersion to an end. Our hopes were further sustained by the course of events at the United Nations. The question of Palestine was set on a new and, if I may say so, a well-defined course. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were defined. A Committee was established to recommend ways and means to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. After arduous work, the Committee completed its precise task, and the programme of implementation was overwhelmingly approved by this Assembly [resolution 31/20]. Only 16 Member States voiced their opposition, and for very well-known reasons.

4. On 15 November 1976 Mr. Kaddoumi, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO and head of the Political

Department, made the following statement regarding the Committee:

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

“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.

“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.

“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.

“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.

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

“These are the principles adopted by the Committee. They are the necessary basis for the resolution of the Palestinian problem and 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.

“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 because of 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.” [66th meeting, paras 65-71.]

5. Secretary-General Waldheim has presented to this Assembly, in document A/31/270-S/12210 of 18 October 1976, his report on the situation in the Middle East. In his report of the same date on the item “Question of Palestine”, Secretary-General Waldheim states:

“The implementation of [resolution 3375 (XXX)] is of course closely connected with the efforts undertaken within the framework of the United Nations towards a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. These efforts are described in a report which the Secretary-General submitted on 18 October 1976 in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 3414 (XXX) of 5 December 1975 (A/31/270-S/12210).” [A/31/271, para. 2.]

Thus, documents A/31/270 and A/31/271 must be read together if we are to acquaint ourselves with the efforts of the Secretary-General in pursuance of resolutions 3375 (XXX) and 3414 (XXX).

7. The Secretary-General was requested, *inter alia*, to follow up the implementation of resolution 3414 (XXX), paragraph 4 of which reads:

“Requests the Security Council, in the exercise of its responsibilities under the Charter, to take all necessary measures for the speedy implementation, according to an appropriate time-table, of all relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council aiming at the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region through a comprehensive settlement, worked out with the participation of all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and within the framework of the United Nations, which ensures complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories as well as full recognition of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and the attainment of those rights”.

8. The Security Council met in January 1976 to consider the situation in the Middle East including the Palestinian question. The discussions of the Council emphasized the Palestinian dimension of the Middle East problem.

9. The Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries welcomed in its Political Declaration [A/31/197, annex I] the growing international recognition of the PLO as well as the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people. It considered this recognition to be among the most momentous achievements since the Fourth Conference.

10. The Palestinian dimension was further emphasized in the proceedings of the Security Council, when it met in June 1976 to consider the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [A/31/35].

11. But the Palestinian dimension was most particularly emphasized by the revolt of the Palestinian people against the Zionist forces of occupation. The Security Council met

in March, May and November of this year to consider the serious and explosive situation arising from the persistent policy of occupation and repression and the brutal Fascist practices engaged in against the Palestinian population under foreign domination.

12. At the Security Council meeting of 12 January 1976—a meeting that was boycotted by the representatives of Tel Aviv—the PLO stated:

“Our people’s case, the question of Palestine, is the essence, the core of the crisis with which this Council has been concerned and of which it is endeavouring to reach a just settlement. The Council’s decision to invite the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the discussions of the Council, combined with the totality of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly over the past two years, testifies to the profound and widespread international understanding of the Palestine question. They reflect the concern of the majority of the States of the world with rendering justice to the Palestinian people and with responding affirmatively to their national rights. It is for the attainment of these national rights that the Palestinian people have resorted to armed struggle.

“However, I should note the deliberate absence of Israel from this discussion. Why is Israel not present? What is its pretext for boycotting this Council’s session? Israel is absent simply because the representatives of the people of Palestine are invited to take part in these deliberations. This is symbolic of who is anxious to participate in the process of peace-making and who is deliberately eager to frustrate the will of this Council.

“Moreover, the Council’s decision constitutes a basic and imperative step along the path of confronting the facts as the Council prepares itself to issue a just decision, the decisive resolution for which our people has long awaited. Our people has been waiting for such a just decision for over 28 years, during which our people suffered anguish, deprivation, exile and oppression. This Council’s decision, in our view, is a courageous international recognition of the fact that whoever wishes to search for a serious resolution of the Middle East conflict will have to begin with its root cause and heart, which is the question of Palestine. Had there not been the question of Palestine, all the wars our region has suffered in 1948, in 1956, in 1967 and in 1973 would never have been; there would never have been the constant tensions which threaten further wars. In short, had there not been a question of Palestine there would not have been what is mistakenly termed ‘the Middle East crisis’.

“Although the invitation of this Council comes after very long and painful years, it is better late than never. For without addressing the essence of the ‘crisis’ with which the Council is dealing, it would be useless to attempt to find its solution, and consequently there would be no peace in the Middle East or, perhaps, in the world. The Council’s invitation to the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the deliberations of the Council is right and just, but it is also based on the serious search for peace in our region, where peace is most threatened.”¹

¹ See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-first Year*, 1870th meeting.

13. The PLO has assured the Secretary-General, Mr. Waldheim, of its full co-operation in the pursuit of peace and justice within the framework of the United Nations. This it did in its reply to the Secretary-General's initiative of 1 April 1976.

14. The PLO believes, as does the overwhelming majority of this Assembly, that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be established without the achievement of a just solution of the problem of Palestine and the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return and the right to national independence and sovereignty in Palestine. We consider that the recommendations in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People provide the basis for the solution of the problem of Palestine and, consequently, for the situation in the Middle East.

15. I should like to conclude by recalling Mr. Kaddoumi's statement before this Assembly on 15 November:

"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 . . .

"At a time when the PLO stands firmly by all sincere political and diplomatic efforts to realize a just settlement of the 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.

"For our part we continue to extend all support to the peace efforts, in full awareness of the fact that in the world of today, all peoples—all peace-loving peoples—must close ranks in order to resolve the explosive problems facing mankind . . . We wish for a peace based on justice; we do not want war for the sake 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 . . . rights.

"This is the Palestinian position, which I exposed 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.

"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 aggrandize-

ment: this force is the United States of America." [66th meeting, paras. 82-86.]

Mr. Lang (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

16. Mr. EL HASSEN (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): The question of the Middle East is regularly discussed at every session of the General Assembly. Numerous resolutions have been adopted; many moves have been made and appeals uttered; but Israel's arrogant stubbornness is still there, like a stumbling-block to all the peace efforts undertaken by the international community. It is, then, legitimate to wonder what other possibilities are open to the Arab countries whose territories have been occupied by force and whose peoples have been driven from their homes and stripped of their possessions. It would seem that the possibilities are to resort to force or to continue to appeal to reason and good sense.

17. Unfortunately, recourse to force is the only solution which seems immediately to recommend itself, because all the other means seem to have been largely exhausted. However, the Arab countries, anxious to maintain international peace and security, have once again decided to offer one new chance for a peaceful solution by asking the United Nations to face up to its principal responsibility as defined in Article 1 of the Charter.

18. That is what justifies our debate today on the situation in the Middle East, and that is what gives this debate particular significance and importance, for this is an opportunity which must be seized by all those who are motivated by a true desire for peace and international harmony.

19. Will the Tel Aviv authorities let this new opportunity slip by leaving the Arab countries no other alternative but to resort to force? The question is, I think, a legitimate one and deserves to be asked, because the peace efforts undertaken from 1948 to the present day have all failed owing to Israel's stubbornness and its systematic refusal to yield to international law and morality. We all know very well what happened to the first United Nations Mediator, Count Bernadotte, when he merely proposed a minor adjustment in the frontiers of the Zionist State. We also know that the plan submitted in September 1948 by his successor, Ralph Bunche, was in turn rejected under Zionist pressure. We also know that the internationalization of Jerusalem, decided upon by the General Assembly on 9 December 1949 [*resolution 303 (IV)*], met with absolute refusal on the part of Israel. While there is no need to go on with this list, since I am sure that it is perfectly familiar to all the representatives present here, it is nevertheless useful to recall, although briefly, what has been and remains the attitude of the Tel Aviv authorities since the June 1967 war with regard to both the United Nations and the peace efforts.

20. We all know that since 1967 the United Nations has become the favourite target of the Israeli leaders. The principle of the Charter concerning the non-acquisition of territory by force was described as "immoral" by Mrs. Golda Meir on 30 August 1971, when she was Prime Minister of Israel. For his part, the representative of Tel Aviv in the United Nations stated in the Security Council

that the resolutions of the United Nations, and in particular those of the Council itself, should be cast into the "mortuary of history".

21. Despite this policy of arrogance and defiance of the United Nations of the Israeli Government, the Egyptian Government, wishing to live in peace and concerned to save humanity from a general conflagration—a concern which, moreover, it shared with the other countries of the subregion—at the beginning of 1968 proposed to the Secretary-General's Special Representative a plan for the implementation of the Council's resolutions. Israel rejected that proposal.

22. Israel's blocking of the mission of Mr. Jarring then prompted the French Government to propose a policy of joint action by the permanent members of the Security Council. The Arab Governments welcomed that initiative and accepted it without reservation.

23. Israel rejected it outright.

24. Meanwhile, the Soviet Government submitted a peace plan which, again, was rejected by Israel. At the same time, it rejected a plan submitted on 9 December 1969 by the United States Secretary of State, who at that time was Mr. William Rogers.

25. On 19 June 1970, the United States initiated another peace move by requesting the parties concerned to observe a cease-fire of 90 days and to use that period of calm to implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967) through Mr. Jarring. The Egyptian Government, with which Mr. Jarring had made his initial contact, accepted that initiative, whereas Israel denounced it after having first accepted it.

26. In the subsequent discharge of his mandate as mediator, the Secretary-General's Special Representative went to the Middle East. He began by submitting an aide-mémoire on 8 February 1971 to Egypt and to Israel.² On 15 February, the favourable reply of the Egyptian Government was communicated to Mr. Jarring.³ On 26 February, Israel made known its comments on the Egyptian reply and its own proposals.⁴ Instead of a favourable response to the aide-mémoire of Mr. Jarring, it emerged from these comments and proposals that Israel would not withdraw from the occupied Arab territories to the armistice line existing before 5 June 1967.

27. On 5 March 1971, Secretary-General U Thant appealed to Israel to give greater consideration to this question and to respond favourably to Mr. Jarring's aide-mémoire. Israel ignored that appeal.

28. On 4 February 1971, President El-Sadat proposed a two-stage plan to facilitate the implementation of the Security Council resolutions. Israel rejected that initiative also.

29. On 4 October 1971, a new six-point plan was submitted to the General Assembly by the United States

² *Ibid.*, *Twenty-sixth Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1971*, document S/10403, annex I.

³ *Ibid.*, annex II.

⁴ *Ibid.*, annex III.

Secretary of State, William Rogers,⁵ a plan for the complete implementation of Security Council resolutions. This plan was rejected out of hand by Mrs. Golda Meir, then Prime Minister of Israel.

30. On 22 June 1971, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity [OAU] requested the current President, in consultation with the African Heads of State and Government, to use their influence to bring about the complete implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). It was pursuant to that recommendation that a Committee of 10 African Heads of State was set up. A sub-committee, composed of the Heads of State of the United Republic of Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal and Zaire, was instructed to make contact with the parties with a view to getting Mr. Jarring's mission moving again.

31. Israel again refused to subscribe to the principle of the non-acquisition of territory by force under the pretext that its security could be guaranteed only by expansion.

32. This brief review proves, if indeed proof were needed, that all the wars that have taken place in the Middle East since 1948, and more particularly the 1973 war, were caused by Israel's stubbornness and its systematic refusal to make peace on the basis of United Nations decisions and of the most sacred and most fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

33. There it is then. The Israeli policy is characterized not only by its clear intransigence but also by its obvious scorn for all the efforts that have been made to achieve a negotiated solution of the Middle East problem.

34. Of course, interim agreements have been concluded since the October 1973 war, but they are so limited in their scope and consequences that they constitute no more than a very tiny first step towards an over-all solution. In fact, this is the interpretation placed on them by the Security Council. For these agreements have been used by Israel to freeze the situation, whereas the first aim of the agreements was to promote and facilitate the search for a peaceful, just and lasting solution. Many opportunities for peace have thus been ignored by Israel, which has preferred, each time, to maintain a dangerous tension in that part of the world—dangerous for peace in the region itself and for the world.

35. It is legitimate, then, to wonder whether Israel is moved by a genuine desire for peace or whether, on the contrary, it refuses, or is unable, to understand any language but that of force. Its attitude with regard to the peace efforts clearly indicates that it attaches little importance to negotiated solutions and that the only language it understands is that of arms.

36. Today, a new opportunity for peace is being offered to Israel by the Arab countries. Is Israel again going to let it slip on the fallacious pretext which it has the habit of submitting to this Assembly? Or will it, on the other hand, take the path of reason?

⁵ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 1950th meeting, paras. 69-74.

37. If we examine closely the recent statements by the Tel Aviv authorities, we will realize that this new opportunity for peace could well be lost, like the many others that preceded it.

38. Israel is saying, in effect, that any new peace negotiations must be linked, *inter alia*, to two fundamental conditions: first, the non-involvement of the Palestinian people in those negotiations and, secondly, the acknowledgement of Israel's right to what it calls "secure and recognized boundaries". Now, it is clear that, with regard to the first condition, it is a negative approach because, as far as the Palestinian people is concerned, the international community widely recognizes that there can be no peace in the Middle East without a just solution to the Palestinian tragedy. The PLO, the only representative of the Palestinian people, is henceforth an essential party—acknowledged as such in fact by Israel's most powerful friends—to any peace negotiations on the Middle East. To ignore that fact, as Israel does, would be nothing less than to scuttle any possible negotiations.

39. To insist also on "secure and recognized boundaries" is, in our view, to resort to commonplace tautology in order to conceal the true intentions of the Israeli aggressor. Indeed, there can be no secure boundaries unless they are recognized even were they to extend over the whole Middle East region. But the present boundaries of the Zionist State cannot be recognized, because they are based on aggression and the acquisition of territory by force.

40. Moreover, on the practical level and at a time when intercontinental missiles that can reach any part of the world are fast becoming conventional weapons, international recognition of boundaries becomes the essential basis for their security and safety. But the present boundaries of Israel cannot enjoy that international recognition, because they have been imposed by force and to the detriment of sovereign, independent Member States of this Organization.

41. This means that Israel's demand for the non-involvement of the people of Palestine in any Middle East negotiations and its insistence on what it calls "secure and recognized boundaries" are actually nothing more than false pretexts designed to undermine the current prospects for peace. Under these circumstances, the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East, on which the Arab countries insist, may never materialize. Of course, Israel pays lip service to the resumption of that Conference, but the initiative Israel has just taken in this Assembly shows how it wishes to limit the chances of success if ever that Conference were to be resumed. For by eliminating the representatives of the Palestinian people as a principal party to any possible Geneva negotiations, Israel intends, above all, to prevent the resumption of that Conference, leaving the Arab countries no alternative but recourse to force.

42. Overarmed as it is, Israel may win military successes here and there; but in the long run it cannot withstand the determination of the Arab countries and peoples struggling to recover their dignity and their possessions. The October 1973 war constitutes, I believe, a lesson that the Tel Aviv authorities would do well to ponder. Moreover, it is the bounden duty of the international community, and especially of Israel's most powerful friends, to bring Israel to its

senses by impressing on it a just appreciation of the situation.

43. Israel must be reminded in particular that force never constitutes a permanent solution and that, sooner or later, force must give way to law and morality. As the popular adage has it, one can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it. Israel should also be reminded that any just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem must inevitably include the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Arab States of the region where territories are today occupied by force. It is in these conditions alone that peace can finally be achieved in that part of the world.

44. Mr. RYDBECK (Sweden): The object of the debate in the General Assembly on the Middle East problem should be to find ways and means to achieve peace in the area. Our foremost task is to promote negotiations aiming at a comprehensive solution. Certain signs have indicated that a possibility exists for making progress. The tragic war in Lebanon appears to be coming to an end. Those who were engaged in that conflict must now devote all their efforts towards the solution of the fundamental problems, which, in that context, too, played such an important role—the conflict between Israel and the Arab world and the problems of the Palestinian people.

45. It appears to us that present political developments in the Middle East could further the readiness among the parties to make concessions in order to achieve progress towards negotiations. It is urgently necessary to strengthen the momentum which may thus exist in this direction. The parties now seem to be inclined to favour the idea of using the Geneva Conference under United Nations auspices as a negotiating forum. It should be possible to find a common political basis for these deliberations and also to find a formula which will allow all parties to participate.

46. In considering the Middle East problem, the General Assembly should try to reach decisions which can obtain broad support. Highly controversial resolutions will not benefit any of the parties in the area. Decisions which contribute to inflaming the situation, such as the unfortunate decision last year to equate Zionism with racism, could cause considerable harm. However, there now seems to exist a fairly wide consensus among the States Members of the United Nations concerning the prerequisites on which future negotiations must be based. I wish briefly to state the Swedish view on this matter.

47. The basis obviously, first of all, consists of the two resolutions—242 (1967) and 338 (1973)—of the Security Council. The principles laid down in those resolutions are still fully valid. We must not do anything which may weaken those principles. The Swedish Government is convinced that the overwhelming majority of the Members of the United Nations support this position.

48. It should be strongly underlined that the interests and rights of no people must be sacrificed. To the Swedish Government it is of decisive importance that the existence and the territorial integrity of Israel and all other States in the area should be safeguarded within secure and recognized boundaries.

49. A fact now hardly denied by anybody is that the interests and rights of the Palestinian Arabs have not been sufficiently taken into consideration in previous attempts at attaining a lasting solution. Neither is this the case in resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That people also has its legitimate interests and rights, which include the right to form a State which will live in peace with Israel.

50. If lasting peace is to prevail, the Palestinians must take part in arrangements which concern their own future and the obligations which they later must fulfil.

51. Sweden has therefore supported proposals to invite the PLO to participate in debates concerning the Middle East which take place under United Nations auspices. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) signify, among other things, that the boundaries between the States in the area must be defined and that the situation which existed before the June 1967 war must be the point of departure. That follows from the important proviso in resolution 242 (1967) that the acquisition of territories by means of force is unacceptable. The same holds true for the demand that the final boundaries which will one day be agreed upon must be secure and recognized.

52. Military factors cannot be a reliable basis for peace in the Middle East. Hopes that military power will deter the opponents from resorting to acts of war have previously proved to be illusory. Political agreements that all parties concerned can accept are a prerequisite for a minimum of trust—and only that can in the long term preserve peace. In an agreement of that kind further guarantees for the safety of all States in the area can naturally be included. In this context, the United Nations can play an important role.

53. On the United States and the Soviet Union rests a greater responsibility and those states have greater possibilities than others to create the necessary conditions for a final solution. The arms with which the States in the area are equipped essentially emanate from those two Powers. New military conflicts in the area might lead to antagonism between them which, in the final analysis, could be a threat to world peace. It is therefore inevitable that the rest of the world expects increased efforts by the United States and the Soviet Union to utilize, urgently, all opportunities to contribute to an agreement that will create lasting peace.

54. To state that does not mean to accept in any way the right of any State or States to dictate the conditions of peace or to force the parties in the area to accept an arrangement which is in conflict with their fundamental interests. Such an arrangement would not only be unjust; it would have no prospect of creating a real peace in the long term.

55. On the parties themselves falls the main responsibility to reconsider their stands and to initiate the process towards a peaceful solution. A will to compromise from both sides is needed. All parties participating in the negotiations—thus also the Palestinians—must recognize the principles contained in the United Nations Charter, among them the right of all Member States to independence and territorial integrity. Israel must reconsider its settlement policy in the occupied Arab territories. That policy is in conflict with international law and constitutes an obstacle to progress in the negotiations for peace.

56. Acts of violence and terror can only bring harm to all parties and complicate the strenuous efforts at bringing about results through negotiations. It is of the utmost importance in this situation that the parties act with restraint so that the world will not once more witness spiralling violence leading to an exacerbation of the political climate.

57. In conclusion, I wish, on behalf of the Swedish Government, to stress that the arms race in the Middle East must be halted. The responsibility of the major Powers in this regard is great. But, by the same token, the States in the area should realize that, while more powerful arms of destruction hardly reduce the risks of war, they make the consequences of war even more devastating for all parties concerned. The risks that an armed conflict may spread outside the area and involve other countries also increase. It is of the utmost importance for international peace and security and for all of us that the parties to the Middle East conflict should now act forcefully in favour of agreements, arrangements and an understanding that will lead to a durable peace in the area.

58. Mr. OYONO (United Republic of Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation has examined with special care the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East [A/31/270-S/12210]. That document contains substantial information on the various initiatives that have been taken and the various approaches proposed by both our Organization and the parties concerned with a view to establishing genuine peace in that part of the world.

59. Therefore, I should first of all like to congratulate the Secretary-General most warmly, not only because his report is clear and complete but also for his unremitting efforts in seeking a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

60. There is no need to recall once again on this occasion the sustained interest which Cameroon has always evinced in the grave question of the Middle East. That interest, which is the reason for my participation in this debate, is due essentially to the profound aspirations of the Cameroonian people for peace, their peaceful perception of international relations and their devotion to the principles and fundamental objectives of the Charter of our Organization.

61. Cameroon is a profoundly peaceful country. It can in no way approve or endorse the acts of annexation which, in defiance of the United Nations Charter and international law, confirm the acquisition of territory by force. That is why here in the General Assembly, in the Security Council and in other international forums we have unequivocally and relentlessly condemned Israel for its illegal occupation of Arab territories for almost 10 years now.

62. In keeping with this view my country has always felt a constant solicitude with regard to questions bearing on international peace and security wherever that peace and security are gravely threatened. Thus the Cameroon was a member of the committee of wise men designated by the OAU to find a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

63. Our concern in respect of that conflict is all the greater since the rigidity of the positions of the parties

concerned, exacerbated by suspicion and antagonisms of all kinds that the tension arouses, considerably hampers any serious progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Hence the persistence of a dangerous instability and the risks of a new military confrontation cannot be disregarded.

64. The statements made recently on the subject by the parties concerned—which we must remember have already had confrontations in three particularly deadly wars in the course of the last 20 years—represent a serious warning for us.

65. Without being apocalyptic, it is self-evident—but tragically self-evident—that such a confrontation, which it is the duty of our Organization to prevent at all costs, would have incalculable consequences extending far beyond the framework of that region.

66. Cameroon believes, and we reaffirm it here, that any just and durable solution of the problem of the Middle East, whose final settlement requires not a partial but a global approach, must include strict compliance by all the parties concerned with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as with General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX) and other subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly, which call for withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Golan Heights; recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to national independence and sovereignty; recognition of the right of all the States of the region, including Israel, to exist within secure and recognized boundaries; participation of the PLO in all peace efforts undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations.

67. In the view of my delegation, only a negotiating basis encompassing all these elements, among others, is capable of leading to a balanced and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict.

68. The Geneva Peace Conference, held under the auspices of the United Nations and attended by all the parties to the conflict, including the PLO, with the United States of America and the Soviet Union as Co-Chairmen—these countries, moreover, having a major responsibility with regard to the Middle East because of the balance of forces and their interests in the region—is, in our view, the appropriate organ to deal with this question.

69. By its very composition, the Geneva Conference offers every guarantee of objectivity for a clear perception and significant awareness of the interests at stake, and for a correct interpretation and application not only of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), but also of General Assembly resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3376 (XXX).

70. The latter resolutions are as vitally important as are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), because they recognize the Palestinian dimension of the Middle East question as fundamental, thus broadening and strengthening the negotiating base, reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, their right

to self-determination without external interference and to national independence and sovereignty, and recognizing that the Palestinian people are a principal party in the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

71. It is neither wise nor realistic for Israel obstinately to isolate itself by ignoring the existence of the PLO and by recognizing only Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

72. We, for our part, are convinced that there can be no positive result at the Geneva Conference without the active participation of the PLO, which is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

73. There is no objective or rational motive in the present circumstances for excluding the PLO from the negotiating table at the Geneva Peace Conference. There was doubtless a tendency to ignore the PLO politically, to consider it as marginal in the balance of forces. But it is time that those who contributed to promoting that idea should use their reason to recognize the change in the balance of forces.

74. The problem of Palestine has not been grafted onto the general problem of the Middle East; it is not a secondary element in the principal conflict. It is, as I said in my statement on 23 November 1976 [76th meeting] on the same question, at the source and very core of the crisis in the Middle East. The PLO, being the official representative *de jure* and *de facto* of the Palestinian people, and recognized as such by our Organization, must quite obviously be a principal party at the forthcoming Geneva negotiations.

75. That is why my delegation urges Israel and its allies to move beyond mere declarations of intent and multiple delaying manoeuvres which can have no positive outcome, to cast aside their obstructive attitude and resolutely to embark on the path of negotiation and realism, treating the PLO as a valid spokesman in that it is the recognized representative of the Palestinian people.

76. Cameroon's position with regard to the Middle East crisis is impartial and clear. It is in no way a partisan position. Our insistence on the right of the Palestinians to a country, like our recognition of Israel's right to existence, proceeds from one and the same fundamental consideration of a very high degree of priority: land or territory as an essential element of statehood is inseparable from the State entity. That is a principle endorsed by international law and practice, and to which we firmly adhere. Logically, therefore, Cameroon cannot refrain from firmly and energetically condemning any attempt at annexation or occupation, for whatever reason, of a part of the territory of a State, however small, by another State.

77. We also take a stand beyond positive law, at the level of the human conscience, to affirm that it is not conceivable or admissible for an entire people to be reduced to the level of refugees, that entire families be forced to a life of wandering, with no country and no future. Thus we wish to give the assurance of our support to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, established by General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX).

78. Finally I should like to recall that the position of the Cameroon on the problem of the Middle East is clear and that our approach is global. This was recalled by Mr. Jean Keutcha, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Cameroon, in the statement he made to the General Assembly at this session. He said:

“The Government of the United Republic of Cameroon wishes to reaffirm . . . that the Israeli-Arab problem must be dealt with, bearing in mind the positive elements contained in resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council. It is clear and incontestable that Israel must withdraw from the territories which it occupied by an act of war. Israel, whose right to live within secure and recognized boundaries we do not deny, must likewise recognize the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, and in particular their right to a country, which is the corner-stone for the restoration of a just and lasting peace in that region.

“The great Powers, and particularly those which have a determining influence on Israel, have a duty to use this influence so that at the peace negotiations at Geneva, which should be resumed quickly, that State will adopt a realistic attitude by entering into a constructive dialogue with all the parties concerned, particularly with the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the authentic representative of the Palestinian people.” [10th meeting, paras. 234 and 235.]

79. The presence and the contribution of the PLO at the Geneva Conference, in conformity with the aforementioned General Assembly resolutions, represent, in our opinion, a decisive factor for the success of that Conference.

80. We conclude our statement by expressing the hope that the influential parties and the parties concerned will co-operate so as to promote a resumption of the Geneva Conference; that the voice of reason will triumph, thus relaxing the rigid positions and silencing the deep-rooted dogmatism that is linked with the hatred, selfish interests, vindictiveness and aggressiveness that passion incites men to; and that finally, right will prevail over might.

81. Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Within a few months it will be the tenth anniversary of the second-to-last Middle East war. Since 1967 our Organization has had to face this problem and, in the General Assembly and the Security Council, it has defined the principles, and the ways and means to be used in order to restore peace in that region and put an end to a conflict the perpetuation of which we all agree represents a constant source of aggravation of the international situation and a lasting threat to peace and security.

82. During this period my delegation has had numerous opportunities to express from this rostrum the position of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba on the matter. At this stage I believe that it is hardly necessary to speak at length here to reiterate our position, which has remained unchanged since the beginning of this conflict. We believe that this is a grave problem, which requires the urgent attention of the international community and compels the General Assembly and the Security Council to adopt all the

decisions that may be needed for the elimination of this conflict.

83. We believe that no just solution can be found and no lasting peace established in the Middle East until two requirements, which we consider essential, are fulfilled: first, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Arab territories which they occupied at the time of the 1967 conflict and, secondly, the recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, in particular its right to self-determination in its own homeland.

84. We believe that in the present circumstances the General Assembly should take certain initiatives that would make it possible to enhance the opportunities for moving forward towards a peaceful solution of the Middle East conflict. With this in mind, my delegation has joined others in submitting to the Assembly two draft resolutions in documents A/31/L.26 and A/31/L.27. The first reaffirms the basic principles which the General Assembly had previously determined for solving this conflict and the second would have the Assembly call for an early resumption of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, giving some guidelines which, in our opinion, are essential if that Conference is to be able to make a real contribution to a peaceful and just solution of the question which we are now considering.

85. Draft resolution A/31/L.26 reflects the wish of the sponsors to affirm the desirability of the early resumption of the Peace Conference and the fact that all the parties concerned, including the PLO, should participate therein. That demand is fully in accord with General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX), which considered it essential that the PLO should participate in any arrangements regarding the Middle East conflict. Under our draft resolution the Assembly would condemn Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories, which is beyond any doubt a flagrant violation of the Charter of our Organization and the principles of international law.

86. This Organization has adopted many resolutions affirming the illegitimacy of the occupation of territories by force of arms and calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Arab territories occupied in 1967. In addition to reaffirming this principle of the withdrawal of Israeli troops, we emphasize once again the need to allow the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, as a basic prerequisite for solving the Middle East conflict.

87. The General Assembly should also once again condemn all measures taken by the occupation authorities in those territories to change their demographic and geographic character, as well as to change their institutional structure.

88. Similarly, the Assembly should request those Powers that have enabled Israel to develop this aggressive policy to desist from continuing to supply Israel with the military and other means that have so far allowed it to perpetuate its aggression and maintain the present situation in the Middle East that is, a situation in which there is a permanent threat to international peace and security.

89. In our delegation's opinion, those criteria should be the basic guidelines of the action that the international

community should now take. At the same time, the General Assembly should contribute to advancing other possible initiatives at the diplomatic level which, in present circumstances, could contribute to a peaceful solution. Obviously, the most effective means that the Assembly could use at this time would be to call for the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference and to insist on the participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO.

90. If we were to do that, if the General Assembly were to reiterate in that way the principles and criteria that have been expressed so often and if the Peace Conference were convened as soon as possible, it might be possible to express the hope that this would lead to a situation in which an end could be to put the foreign occupation in the region, the vestiges of the military intervention in 1967 could be liquidated, and the conditions could be established in which all the countries and peoples of the Middle East could live in peace. That objective of guaranteeing that all the peoples of the Middle East have the right to live, and the possibility of living, in peace should represent the loftiest aspiration of this Assembly. It should be the inspiration for our diplomatic action, since it is fully in accordance with a universal aspiration and a universal right, and with the basic principles of our Organization.

91. That is why my delegation trusts that both draft resolution A/31/L.26 and draft resolution A/31/L.27 will have very wide support in this Assembly.

92. To conclude, I should like to express once again our Government's solidarity with the peoples that have been victims of military aggression in the Middle East since 1967, including the Arab people of Palestine, and to state our conviction that some day justice will be done and those peoples will regain all their rights.

93. Mr. BANYIYEZAKO (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): Once again the General Assembly is called upon to examine the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East".

94. The very explosive situation in the Middle East continues to be a source of concern to the international community. Apart from the fact that the present situation is a sensitive and tragic one, no one can deny that it represents a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations.

95. What we have to do today is nothing less than to make Israel respect the various resolutions adopted by our Organization enjoining that country to withdraw from the Arab territories occupied since 1967 and to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

96. We note that since the General Assembly adopted resolution 3414 (XXX) little progress has been made in the search for a "just and lasting solution" to the Middle East problem, despite the vigorous initiatives of the Secretary-General, acting within the framework of resolution 3414 (XXX), to which I have just referred.

97. One speaker on this item said that we were wasting a lot of money and time in considering questions that have

already been dealt with, money and time that could be spent in dealing with parlous economic situations now confronting us. Nevertheless, we continue to believe that the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East dictates that the delegations here present should not forget for a moment the suffering of the peoples of that part of the world, who have been enduring occupation since 1967; the delegations here present cannot forget the suffering of the Palestinian people who are in refugee camps.

98. My country's position on this question has been well known for a long time. The head of the Burundi delegation at this session recalled that position when he said on 1 October 1976:

"... my Government's position is very well known. We roundly condemn the intransigent attitude of Israel and its refusal to restore to the Arabs the territories which it occupied by force. We restate our total support for the Palestinian people in its legitimate claim to the inalienable right to have a homeland." [14th meeting, para. 216.]

99. That condemnation is based on my country's commitment to the purposes and principles of our Organization. Respect for the Charter dictates that Member States should ensure the implementation of the various resolutions and should categorically condemn any attempts to legalize aggression.

100. Burundi has always tried to make an active contribution, within the OAU and in the non-aligned movement, to the search for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis. Thus it supported the resolution adopted at the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in July in Mauritius as well as the resolution adopted by the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in Colombo [see A/31/197, annex IV], both of which reaffirmed the support of those States for the Arab peoples in their just struggle to liberate their occupied territories and to establish a Palestinian State.

101. Today there does indeed exist an opportunity which the parties concerned, and in particular Israel, should seize without delay for a true settlement of this question to be achieved with the participation of all the parties concerned, with a view to finding an over-all solution to the question of the Middle East.

102. In my delegation's opinion, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) should be the basis for any discussion of this matter since they have gained general support. However, it must be recognized that the Palestinian problem is not merely a refugee problem but also, and above all, a problem of self-determination.

103. In my delegation's view the continuation of the present situation in the Middle East region involves the danger of an explosion. That state of affairs can work in favour only of those who wish to control the Middle East and its oil resources. That tension should spur us to find or to propose a solution as quickly as possible.

104. My delegation believes that the following principles provide the essential basis for any solution. First, Israel must withdraw from the Arab territories occupied since

1967. Secondly, any solution to the Middle East problem must necessarily include recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination. Thirdly, it is therefore necessary and urgent to reconvene the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East with the participation of the PLO with a view to finding a final solution to the Middle East problem.

105. That is why my delegation unreservedly supports the two draft resolutions A/31/L.26 and A/31/L.27 submitted by a group of delegations. One concerns the principles underlying any solution to the Middle East problem, and the other sets forth the immediate measures which should be taken by United Nations bodies and by the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on the Middle East.

106. Mr. HUSSEN (Somalia): Few would deny that the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East is a prerequisite for the establishment of international peace and security. The Middle East problem, which has remained intractable for three decades, is still a political time-bomb. There is no question about its ability to involve not only the whole Middle East region but also a much wider international circle in armed confrontation of the most dangerous kind. The world community would be deluding itself if it believed that Middle East issues will fade away or become less dangerous with the passing of time. In the view of my delegation, the United Nations must exert the most determined efforts in order to remove that threat to peace, which has existed for far too long.

107. The existence of that dangerous situation is particularly frustrating to the majority of Member States because the main elements of a just and lasting peace have been delineated in resolutions adopted and repeatedly affirmed and reaffirmed by large majorities of the United Nations membership over the years.

108. The chief obstacles to peace have been Israel's refusal to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and the support for Israeli intransigence given by those friends and allies of Israel which are permanent members of the Security Council.

109. Between 1947 and 1967 it was clear that the cause of the chronic unrest in the Middle East was Israel's failure to respond to General Assembly resolution 194 (III). As we know, with the support of its allies Israel obstructed every effort to implement that resolution, the provisions of which had been accepted as a condition of its membership in the world body.

110. After 1967 the refugee problem was compounded when a million more Palestinians became the victims of Israeli aggression and joined the millions already suffering the misery and hardship of exile and homelessness. Israel's illegal occupation and annexation of Arab territory through armed aggression added a new dimension to an already dangerous situation.

111. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of November 1967, though limited in scope, provided a useful starting-point for progress on the major issues of the Middle East question and was particularly valuable because of its

emphasis on the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. However, it was again Israeli intransigence which caused the Jarring mission established by the Secretary-General to implement resolution 242 (1967) to abort.

112. Nine years after its aggression of 1967, Israel is still pursuing its expansionist policies on the basis of the *fait accompli*. We have seen its outright annexation of East Jerusalem and creeping annexation of Arab territory on the West Bank of the Jordan, in the Gaza Strip and on the Golan Heights. Israel's harsh and illegal occupation policies provide irrefutable evidence of a callous disregard for international law in general and in particular for the fourth Geneva Convention,⁶ to which Israel is a party.

113. The Zionist belief in the *fait accompli* and in the right to enjoy the fruits of armed aggression was clearly expressed by the Permanent Representative of Israel in his statement in this debate of 2 December [87th meeting] when he said that history could not be reversed and spoke of dealing with *de facto* situations. The arrogance of this statement from the representative of a country that has been trying to reverse 2,000 years of Middle East history is, indeed, staggering.

114. The Permanent Representative of Israel also claimed that a disproportionate amount of the General Assembly's time was spent on the Middle East question, and in particular in subjecting Israel to various accusations. The reasons for this situation could be easily determined by the Israeli Permanent Representative if he asked himself what other countries, besides Israel and its close ally, South Africa, have ignored the resolutions of the United Nations for three decades, have remained in direct and open contravention of fundamental principles of the Charter or have cynically flouted the system of agreements and conventions on which modern relations among States are based.

115. Today the international consensus is that the two main requirements for peace in the Middle East are the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people and the return by Israel of Arab territory illegally seized during the June 1967 war and illegally occupied since that time.

116. The right to return or to receive compensation has always been demanded by the world Organization on behalf of the dispossessed Palestinians. In more recent times, the United Nations had rightly recognized and reaffirmed their right to self-determination and statehood in Palestine. The establishment of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session was evidence of its determination to go beyond affirmation to practical implementation of its resolutions on Palestinian rights. With regard to Arab territory still under Israeli occupation, both the General Assembly and the Security Council have placed this question firmly within the context of the principle of international law prohibiting the acquisition of territory by force.

117. The substantive issues of the Middle East question are now all clearly defined in General Assembly resolution

⁶ Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

3375 (XXX) of 10 November 1975. The question of procedure must now be decided on so that a new momentum towards a settlement can be set in motion. In the view of my delegation, the United Nations Peace Conference on the Middle East should resume as soon as possible with the participation of all concerned, including, of course, the PLO. In this setting, negotiations for peace can take place on the basis of the principles of the Charter and of relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Those parties to the Middle East conflict which have always insisted on placing the modalities for a settlement within the framework of the United Nations have given evidence of respect for the Charter, for the authority of the world Organization and for the principle of collective responsibility for international peace and security. These are the considerations which are most likely to provide the basis for a just and durable peace.

118. The Secretary-General has already shown his willingness to use his good offices to contact all the parties to the conflict, and we are sure that he will continue to do all in his power to promote progress towards that goal.

119. The world community must not be lulled into a false sense of complacency about the situation in the Middle East. All peace-loving States will, of course, share our satisfaction that internal strife in Lebanon has ended and

that the country is returning to normal, owing in large part to the efforts of the people themselves and also partly to the efforts of the countries members of the League of Arab States. This internal conflict was another offshoot of the Zionist dispossession of the Palestinian people. Its aftermath must not be used as an excuse for foreign intervention of any kind, including renewed Zionist aggression.

120. In other areas of the Middle East, the large-scale injustice done to the Palestinian people also continues to fester. If left without redress it will inevitably lead, once again to violence and armed conflict. For their part, the Arab States which have been the victims of Israeli aggression cannot be expected to look on philosophically at the creeping annexation of their territory or to acquiesce in its loss while Israel plays for time to swallow its ill-gotten gains.

121. A heavy responsibility lies on all States, and in particular on Israel's close allies and friends, to bring pressure to bear on the Zionists so that they will act in accordance with the collective wisdom of the international community. If they persist in going against the tide of history, the result can only be a tragic prolongation of tension, violence and bloodshed in the area.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.