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A/42/PV.86  
3 December 1987

ENGLISH

Forty-second session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 1 December 1987, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)  
later: Mr. OULD BOYE (Mauritania)  
(Vice-President)

The situation in the Middle East: Reports of the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 39

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/42/277, A/42/465 and Add.1, A/42/714)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 4 p.m.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

Mr. SALAH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): A few days ago I addressed the General Assembly on the question of Palestine, which is considered the core and crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict under discussion today. In my brief statement at the time, I recalled the fundamentals of the question in order to facilitate our joint efforts, either at present or in the future, to arrive at a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In my statement I explained that the most salient point grasped by an observer of the Palestinian question was Israel's refusal to recognize the legitimate right of the Palestinian people, which led not only to an increase in the suffering of the Palestinians, but also to a deepening of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel's policy regarding the Palestine question remains the cause for the continuing tension in the Middle East and the prime motive for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel's leaders often insist on claiming that there is no

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Palestinian question, but rather an Arab-Israeli conflict, the cause of which is the desire of the Arab States to destroy Israel. Those leaders intended to misconstrue the Arab peoples' support of the political rights of the Palestinians as the official policy of the Arab States, the objective of which is the destruction of Israel.

Israel has endeavoured to exploit that false allegation, not only by denying the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and obfuscating the Palestinian question, but also by trying to change the territorial status in the region by attempting to resolve the Palestinian question outside the geographical limits of Palestine.

Israel's policy has had numerous manifestations, the most important of which are expansion, occupation, illegitimate annexation of Arab territory, exploitation and exacerbation of existing conflicts inside the Arab world, and the exploitation of other regional disputes, especially those between certain Arab countries and other countries in the region.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Although 20 years have elapsed since the Israeli aggression of 1967 against Egypt, Jordan and Syria, its vestiges continue to deteriorate. Israel annexed the Syrian Golan, in addition to its annexation of Arab Jerusalem. It continues to occupy the West Bank and Gaza, and rules illegally and inhumanely over approximately one and a half million Arabs. Israel's destructive role in Lebanon is well known to all. In 1978, Israeli forces occupied large parts of southern Lebanon, from which it subsequently withdrew. In 1982, it returned to occupy approximately half the territory of Lebanon, including the capital, Beirut, which was used by Israel to carry out experiments with the products of its military arms industry and military arsenal. In addition to the military destruction of Lebanon and the occupation of parts of its territory, Israel blatantly intervened in Lebanese internal affairs with a view to fanning Lebanese differences and perpetuating factional fighting.

The violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the threat to its independence are unacceptable. This must not be permitted to become a fait accompli. To the extent to which we consider the Lebanese tragedy a testimony to Israel's negative and destructive role in the region, it is also an indication of the inability of our Organization to redress the situation in the Middle East and to restore of normality.

The role of Israel in the Iraq-Iran conflict is still unfolding. The hidden part of it is more serious than the known parts. I need not dwell on that. I wish only to recall that Israel's attempt to aggravate and exploit this conflict indicate that Israel's policy only prospers as a result of wars and tensions, and it is therefore bereft of any ethical basis. We are all aware of the dimension of the destruction and human suffering which has afflicted the Iraqi-Iranian people.

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as well as the danger which this war poses to international peace and security. Despite this, Israel does not hesitate to fan the flames of war and to rejoice therein. Since Israel's policy is based on expansion and aggression, it has persisted in making these elements characteristic of the Middle East region. This state of affairs is in keeping with Israel's philosophy and conduct based on force and expansion.

When the option in the Middle East is either understanding, moderation and peaceful coexistence, or expansion, hegemony and violence, we find that Israel always opts for the latter. It was not enough for Israel to harness the political infrastructure of the Middle East in order to perpetuate its aggression. It went even further and exploited the rivalry between the two super-Powers and its role in the region, so as to realize this scheme. It has exploited the circumstances of the cold war which characterized the relationship between the two super-Powers during certain periods in order to reinforce its strategic importance in the region and its special relations with one of the two super-Powers, in a manner which hindered peace efforts in the region.

It now strives to exploit international détente so as to consolidate its occupation of Arab territories by asking for more Jewish immigrants in order to break out of its international isolation. In so doing Israel was assisted in accomplishing its international strategic objectives in the Middle East by the super-Powers at the expense of the interests and rights of the countries of the region, leaving Israel free to continue its aggressive policy and to realize its expansionist goals with the blessings of one of the super-Powers. This was accompanied by the inability of our Organization to take any effective measures to redress the situation. The result of this situation was a military and political stalemate in the region, which Israel attempted to exploit in order to perpetuate

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the status quo. Some wrongly believe that the continued Israeli military superiority will imbue it with a feeling of security and lead it to make concessions, and that it will drive the Arabs to submission and to the acceptance of a fait accompli. Such calculations have been proved wrong. Israel's superiority has led to further expansion and intransigence. It has prompted the Arabs to cling to their rights and their dignity. This was also accompanied by manifestations of extremism and violence in the region, which has led to a diminishing role of the moderate forces and parties who believe in peaceful coexistence. It has also led to inhumane and illegal Israeli practices in the occupied territories and to further frustration and tension.

Israel's regional policies have led to increased violence and despair in an expanded area. In this state of affairs, which is fraught with danger, we in Jordan have tried our utmost to keep alight the torch of hope among the moderate forces which are faithful to coexistence and consensus. Along with other Arab States, we have continued to reaffirm as a priority our belief in the principle of a political solution to the Middle East problem. Such a commitment was expressed at the Arab Summit held in Fez in September in 1982. We have continued to try to develop a regional and international consensus concerning the contents and methods of the political resolution of the conflict. We are trying to lay the foundations of a moderate basis that is committed to the national rights of the Palestinians and the principles of justice and international legitimacy within the occupied territories.

From this premise, we have lent our support to all forces and parties that believe in the methodology of peace and which support the inalienable Arab rights. If there is a consensus that the comprehensive implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as called for by the international community, constitutes an acceptable frame for a peaceful settlement, then the

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international conference that has been proposed by the Council in those two resolutions, and reaffirmed by subsequent resolutions, constitutes the appropriate and acceptable framework for a settlement. The Secretary-General has indicated the importance of those two resolutions in his valuable annual report on the work of the Organization this year. (A/42/1, p. 2)

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

I wish to extend to him our profound thanks for his constructive efforts in this regard.

In spite of Israel's persistence in refusing to accept the idea of an international conference, there is international insistence on the need to convene such a conference. To the extent that Israel's refusal to accept this Conference stems from a desire to expand, to dominate and to annex territories, the insistence of the international community is based on a desire to realize justice, legitimacy and peace, and is also attributed to practical circumstances, as well as moral and political justification.

Such justification is based on essential facts, foremost of which is that the Palestine question, in its essence and development, is an international problem. The United Nations, and before it the League of Nations, had an important role in the emergence of this problem and in its development. The great Powers also played an important role, on which I need not expound. Everyone in this Hall is aware of the various dimensions of the problem, which has been under consideration by our Organization since its inception.

The international circumstances, marked by rivalry between the super-Powers and the cold war, have had an impact on the situation in the Middle East. As I mentioned, Israel managed to exploit this rivalry for its own interests, in addition to exploiting its influence with one of the two super-Powers so as to establish a special strategic relationship, which came about at the expense of the opportunities for peace, understanding and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East region.

Israel has continued to exploit its role, which is based on hegemony and military superiority in the region, so as to extort political concessions first from the countries of the region, and secondly from other countries, so as to break

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out of its international isolation and to attract new immigrants without conceding any concessions for peace.

In spite of important initiatives, such as the initiative of His Majesty King Fahd of 1981, President Reagan's initiative, the Fez programme of 1982, Mr. Brezhnev's initiative of 1984 and the Jordanian-Palestinian Agreement of 1985, as well as the constructive European role, and the activities of the Secretary-General of the United Nations - in spite of all of this, the political option was fruitless.

All these peaceful efforts collided with Israel's intransigence and its refusals, as it has tried to exploit the frustrations of the Palestinians, which has led to the continued resistance to the occupation. Such a situation is one for which Israel is responsible and it continues to exploit the deteriorating situation in the region so as to escape having to make any concessions.

In such a state of affairs, we in Jordan have tried to promote the appropriate political circumstances for peace. While Israel continues to adopt the policy of expansion and sows seeds of discord in the region, we are trying to adopt the peaceful option and to work for it. We have tried to co-operate and to co-ordinate with our Arab brothers in order to consecrate the principle of the just and lasting settlement in the Middle East based on relevant United Nations decisions.

Today there is regional and international unanimity on this matter in spite of Israel's dilatory measures and intransigence. There is a regional consensus on considering the International Conference as the appropriate vehicle for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the need for the participation of all concerned parties on an equal footing, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in addition to the permanent members of the Security Council. Israel is the sole exception to this consensus, at a time when one super-Power is hesitant regarding the convening of this Conference. Arab unanimity on these basic

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issues has materialized on more than one occasion, the most recent of which was the Extraordinary Arab Summit Conference, which took place in Amman, between 8 and 11 November of this year.

Therefore, we call on everyone, particularly those countries and parties that have an influence, to continue supporting such an orientation and to pressure Israel so that it will respond to the international consensus, which calls for a comprehensive and just peace before it is too late. I wish to reaffirm to the General Assembly that the alternative will not be the perpetuation of the fait accompli and Israel's conditions, but, rather, more violence and tension, the ramifications of which will not be limited to the Middle East region.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of Denmark, who will speak on behalf of the States members of the European Community.

Mr. BIERRING (Denmark): The Twelve remain deeply preoccupied by the serious situation in the Middle East and have, over the last year on several occasions, expressed their concern in declarations on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the conflict between Iran and Iraq, and the situation in Lebanon. The political, historical, economic and cultural links between Europe and the Middle East are strong and firmly rooted. The Twelve are gravely concerned at the suffering of which the civilian population in the Middle East continues to be the victim as a result of regional tensions and armed confrontations in the area. While the problems of the Middle East are complex and costly to the region itself, they also have serious repercussions for international peace and stability in a way which directly affects the member States of the European Community.

The Twelve have long advocated the need for negotiated solutions for these problems. The aim must be to bring just, global and lasting peace to the region and good relations between neighbours and to permit economic, social and cultural development, which have been too long neglected.

(Mr. Bierring, Denmark)

In our statement during the debate on the question of Palestine a few days ago, we reaffirmed that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the following two fundamental principles: the right of all States in the area, including Israel, to exist within secure frontiers; and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination with all that this implies. Those principles must be respected by all the parties concerned, and thus by the Palestinian people, and by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which will have to be associated with the negotiations. Thus, the essence of a settlement must be a full, just and lasting accommodation between Israel and the Palestinian people, so that they can live together in peace and security.

The solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute should be based on the principles, enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in international law, of non-recourse to the use of force and of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

(Mr. Bierring, Denmark)

This implies that Israel must put an end to the territorial occupation it has maintained since the conflict of 1967. Furthermore, pending a withdrawal Israel must, in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 and of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, fulfil its obligations as the occupying Power to lift restrictions on political and economic activities. Human rights and the living conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories remain a constant preoccupation of the Twelve, which continue to contribute to the economic and social development of those territories.

In their declaration of 14 September 1987 the Twelve reiterated their call on Israel to put an end to the illegal policy of settlements. Not only is this policy illegal but also it poses an obstacle to the peace process, due to the ensuing tension in the occupied territories. In this connection the Twelve wish to reaffirm that Israel's policy in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights is contrary to international law and that therefore all measures taken within the framework of that policy are to be considered null and void.

The Twelve ardently wish to see progress towards a peaceful settlement in the Middle East and are prepared to support any peace initiative that might ensure the co-operation of all parties. Over the past year increasing attention has been paid to the idea of an international peace conference to be held under the auspices of the United Nations. Regrettably, a final breakthrough in those efforts does not seem to be within immediate reach. However, the Twelve continue to support that approach and are in close contact with the parties concerned. We shall do all in our power to encourage them to bring their positions sufficiently close together to allow an international conference to be held.

We have noted the observation made by the Secretary-General in his report on the situation in the Middle East dated 13 November 1987 that while the gaps between the parties remain wide they should not be regarded as unbridgeable for they

(Mr. Bierring, Denmark)

reflect differences between parties who accept the principle that an international conference is the only practical way of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The Twelve fully support the Secretary-General in his efforts to find ways of bridging the gaps between the parties and agree with him on the need to consolidate and build on the foundation that has so far been established.

In their declaration of 23 February 1987 the Twelve made clear their view regarding such a conference with the participation of the parties concerned and of any party able to make a direct and positive contribution to the restoration and maintenance of peace and to the region's economic and social development. For their part, the Twelve would be prepared to play their part with respect to an international conference on peace in the Middle East. Such a conference would provide a suitable framework for the necessary negotiations between the parties directly concerned and is at present the only formula which would allow the peace process to move forward. The Twelve express the hope that conditions allowing an international peace conference to be held could be established rapidly upon the basis of an agreement between the parties to it.

The Twelve welcome the fact that the idea of such a conference was strongly supported by the Arab summit meeting in Amman where - under the able chairmanship of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan - important efforts were made to adopt common positions and to foster the unity of the Arab world.

The devastating war between Iran and Iraq, now in its eighth year, causes the Twelve the deepest concern. The fighting has lasted for longer than either of the two world wars and has taken an extraordinary toll in human life. It has been estimated that more than a million people have been killed or wounded. This gruesome conflict combines some of the worst aspects of past conflicts, such as the bombing of civilian targets and the use of chemical weapons. Cities have been razed and the economic infrastructure of both countries has been laid waste. Most

(Mr. Bierring, Denmark)

importantly a generation of youth have given their lives in a war that should never have been started, nor been allowed to continue.

This conflict represents an increasingly serious threat to security both in the region and more widely, and to the freedom of navigation in the Gulf. Tension in the Gulf threatens the interests of many nations and attacks on shipping, including our own, in contravention of established international law, are a cause of deep concern. The Twelve attach great importance to the freedom of navigation and commerce in international waters and urge both parties to respect the relevant international conventions and law.

It is indeed imperative that both parties respect all relevant international legal instruments, including the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical weapons. The Twelve were deeply concerned by the unanimous conclusions reached by the experts sent to the region by the Secretary-General earlier this year. According to their report Iraqi forces had once again used chemical weapons against Iranian troops. Furthermore, the experts established both that Iraqi troops had suffered losses caused by this type of weapon and also that the civilian population in Iran had been subjected to attacks with chemical weapons. The Twelve strongly condemn those flagrant breaches of the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

The Twelve also deeply deplore the frequent attacks on civilian targets and urge the parties to refrain immediately from any such action. They express in particular their grave concern at the possibility of a resumption of large-scale military operations.

Since the debate on this item last took place, the Security Council has intensified its efforts to bring a rapid and peaceful end to the conflict. By adopting in July resolution 598 (1987) the Council made a historic effort to

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provide a balanced framework for a comprehensive, just, honourable and durable settlement.

The Twelve are convinced that a peaceful and comprehensive solution could be found within the framework of the United Nations. They reaffirm their whole-hearted support for resolution 598 (1987) of the Security Council and again strongly call for its early implementation in full. In the current critical phase they reiterate their urgent call for a speedy implementation of the resolution and for the immediate observance of a cease-fire on land, sea and in the air, and reaffirm their determination strongly to support the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts towards a peaceful solution and the implementation of resolution 598 (1987) in its entirety.

The situation in Lebanon is another area of tension in the Middle East which has for many years been of great concern to the Twelve. A worsened cycle of violence is bound to lead to a further deterioration of the situation. Whether it be a matter of acts of resistance against foreign occupation, countermeasures by the Israeli forces and their associates or shelling across the border, innocent civilians will always be among the victims.

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(Mr. Bierring, Denmark)

This year we have witnessed a very serious situation in and around some of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, alongside a continuation of violence, further hostage-taking and an escalation of killings in southern Lebanon. Once again we express our grave concern for the fate of all hostages held in Lebanon and appeal strongly on humanitarian grounds for their release as soon as possible.

The Twelve express the hope that all interested parties will show moderation in order to allow the political dialogue to recommence, with a view to national reconciliation based on respect for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon. This also requires a total Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. The so-called security zone and the continued presence of Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, contrary to Security Council resolutions, can only hinder the restoration of stability to the area.

Bearing this in mind the Twelve firmly support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and urge that it be enabled to fulfil its mandate in the best possible security conditions for its members, three of which belong to the Twelve. We reaffirm the obligation of all Member States to pay their assessed contributions to United Nations peace-keeping operations and express the hope that a solution of UNIFIL's serious financial difficulties may soon be found. We appeal to all parties to co-operate with the Force in its effort to carry out its mandate and its work of maintaining stable conditions and protecting the civilian population in its area of operation.

The Twelve follow developments in all areas of conflict in the Middle East with great attention and concern. In almost all fields they have close ties with the region and its peoples. Peace in the Middle East is of vital importance to the region itself, to Europe and, indeed, to international peace and security in

(Mr. Bierring, Denmark)

general. The Twelve remain committed to the pursuit of peaceful settlements of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the conflict between Iran and Iraq and that in Lebanon, and we shall continue our efforts to help all realistic and reasonable peace initiatives.

Mr. BADAWI (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): During the year since the General Assembly considered this item in November 1986 the Middle East region has witnessed many developments and a number of events, some of them aimed at giving momentum to the efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict that would end the disturbing situation that has affected the Middle East for four decades now. That settlement should pave the way to a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine, which is the core and crux of the Middle East conflict, and restore to the Palestinian people its legitimate national rights, foremost among which is the right to self-determination.

On another level, some of those developments and events, which we are about to address, had grave consequences in heightening tension in that historically sensitive region. One such development was the continued deterioration in the Gulf situation as a result of the failure to end the Iraq-Iran war, added to the emergence of grave indications of the possibility of that armed conflict spreading to encompass other parties in the region which bear no responsibility for the eruption or continuance of that war.

The armed conflict on the eastern flank of the region is taking place at the same time as the continuing confrontation on the Arab-Israeli front and the absence of serious negotiations and dialogue. All this highlights the dangers that threaten international peace and security and imposes on all peace-loving Powers the obligation to strive speedily and effectively to control the possibility of deterioration and channel the course of events in a new direction, towards the cessation of war and confrontation and prevention of the waste of energies and

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

resources. Action in that new direction would restore usurped rights and give an opportunity to all the peoples and States of the region to enjoy stability and security. This would enable them to concentrate on the reconstruction of their societies and achieve their goals of socio-economic development within the framework of fully democratic political systems enjoying wide popular support.

In the face of the problems of this region, at the heart of which Egypt lies, my country has always based its actions on a balanced foreign policy closely linked to its supreme national goals and strategic interests and aimed at defence of the whole territory of the Arab homeland and the right of the Arab peoples to peace and stability, free from threats by regional or external forces. Thus, Egypt has made efforts to bring about a Palestinian settlement and to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. These efforts encompassed peace approaches to both parties to the conflict. It has continued to urge the initiation of negotiations to achieve a settlement, to point the way, set landmarks, encourage the parties to the conflict to move forward and lay the foundations on which the settlement must be based.

My country has been encouraged in these efforts by its long experience of negotiation and successful settlement gained through the saga of historical Egyptian initiatives, starting with the acceptance by Egypt of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which, in the international community's opinion, constitutes the appropriate basis for the political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and continuing with the series of well-considered Egyptian offers and moves during the 1970s - before, during and after the armed conflict of October 1973. All those efforts culminated in the decisive step of November 1977, which gave a great momentum to peace efforts and led to major transformations in the approach to the settlement of the conflict - transformations whose existence, influence and consequences cannot be denied.

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

Today the Arab side is more than ever ready to participate in a peaceful political settlement of the conflict through negotiations within the framework of the International Peace Conference. This position was reiterated recently at the Amman Summit. There have also been some transformations and changes on the Israeli side. Egypt has encouraged such adjustments in the hope that they would come to prevail in Israeli thinking in the direction of peace.

The Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in the Middle East, issued on 13 November last, clearly reflects the progress made, on the one hand, and the sense of frustration of all those who sincerely wish to promote efforts at settlement, on the other. It is also noteworthy that the report clearly defines the elements on which we should concentrate in order to move the whole process towards negotiation. The report points out that the consultations carried out by the Secretary-General

"confirmed that there is very wide, though not yet unanimous, support for the proposition that an international conference, under United Nations auspices, is the best way of negotiating a just and lasting peace in the Middle East ...

"Nevertheless, the gaps between the parties remain wide. Some of those gaps reflect well-known differences about the procedural aspects of a conference. Although these procedural differences are difficult to resolve, I do not regard them as insurmountable, for they are differences between parties who accept the principle that an international conference is the only practical way of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. ... The major obstacle at present... is... the inability of the Government of Israel as a whole to agree on the principle of an international conference...".

(A/42/714, paras. 25 and 33)

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

Both the Secretary-General's report and the dangers that would threaten the Middle East should efforts at a peaceful settlement come to a halt have led Egypt to persist in the momentum towards peace efforts and the expansion of the number of countries co-operating towards the achievement of that goal.

Undoubtedly the Israeli side has to confirm, through the adoption of a series of measures, that it genuinely wishes to renounce the concepts of expansion at the expense of others and to accept the principle of peace, equal security, stability and good-neighbourliness with all the peoples of the Middle East. Israel is called upon today to offer its hand to the Palestinians, whether in the West Bank and Gaz or elsewhere, so as to build confidence and dispel doubts. It is therefore desirable for Israeli society to concentrate on confronting the forces that continue to call for the building of settlements in the occupied Arab territories, whether in the West Bank, Gaza or the Arab Syrian Golan Heights. It is also necessary for Israel to recognize the reality of developments in the Arab and Palestinian situation in two decades of struggle for the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people - namely, that the Palestinian people has its legitimate representatives who enjoy the unanimous support of the population of the occupied Palestinian territories. Should any doubt remain about that, let the democratic way be the decisive factor: let free elections be held in the Palestinian territories to establish the people's representatives who would participate with the other parties in efforts at a settlement.

Four decades have elapsed since the United Nations first took up the sad situation from which the Middle East has been suffering. It is high time for everyone to make a vigorous and sincere attempt to restore peace and stability. Our hopes and expectations will allow us to continue striving for the achievement of these goals during the coming year.

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

Yet we are aware that this question is not confined to the occupied Arab territories of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and Arab Jerusalem. It also encompasses Lebanese territory in the south of Lebanon that is still under Israel's control. The Lebanese people has suffered and continues to suffer from the effects of a decade-long fierce civil war during which many external forces interfered and fanned the flames of confrontation between the communities of Lebanese society, leading to further fragmentation of that Arab people with an ancient culture, determination and creativity. It is time for all to take their hands off Lebanon. This has been Egypt's position ever since the beginning of the deterioration of the situation in 1975; and it remains my country's position. As was stated by my President, the effective solution of the Lebanese problem lies in freeing Lebanon from foreign pressure and interference, thus enabling its people to arrive at an acceptable formula for the organization of political life in that friendly country.

Egypt has a vision of its Arab role, one that governs its policy towards the Middle East, at the heart of which lies the Arab world. Aware of its historical role and great cultural heritage, Egypt recognizes that its cultural, economic and political power must always remain at the service of protecting the national security of the Arab nation.

As President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak stated before the Egyptian People's Assembly on 12 October this year, my country seeks to strengthen the Arab position through Egypt's co-operation with the Arab nation on the basis of certain factors, as follows:

"First, the achievement of a shared understanding among Arab countries of the supreme national objectives, in particular the way in which the security of the Arab nations is to be maintained and in which to confront any dangers along the way;

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

"Secondly, maintenance of the independence of the Arab world and of freedom of Arab decision, as well as consolidation of the solidarity of the Arab States and the peaceful settlement of their disputes;

"Thirdly, commitment by every Arab State to respect the basic instruments governing unified Arab action, foremost among which is the Charter of the League of Arab States and the mutual Arab defence Treaty;

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

"Fourthly, commitment by all Arab States to the principle of mutual respect and non-interference in the affairs of other States;

"Fifthly, achievement by the Arab States of the basis which would govern the relations between them and non-Arab States in the region.

"Egypt believes that this basis should be free from racism and racial discrimination, and must reject the claims of territorial expansion, hegemony, domination and the theories of supremacy."

Within that vision, Egypt continues to call for the immediate cessation of the Iraq-Iran war and for the implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) of 20 July 1987. Since the eruption of that war, my country has opposed it. Today, while condemning the continued refusal of one of the parties to end that war on the terms unanimously approved by the international community and as embodied in Security Council resolution 598 (1987), my country warns against the dangers inherent in the possible expansion of the war and against further acts of aggression against Arab territories, whether against Kuwait or other sisterly Arab States in the Gulf. Egypt calls upon all Powers which support the rights of the Muslim peoples to enjoy peace, stability and development, to attempt to put an end to this senseless war, which leads to nothing but a waste of resources and grave division. While rejecting this armed conflict between Muslim brothers, Egypt prays to Almighty God that history will not qualify this era and these events as a period that aborted the development of Islamic societies.

Egypt believes in regional and in international co-operation as the corner-stone of understanding among peoples and countries. In this regard, my country has constantly called for increased understanding and co-operation between the non-aligned countries of the Mediterranean basin, many of which lie also in the Middle East. Those efforts have yielded good results so far and it is our hope that additional positive results will be achieved in the near future.

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

While following closely the encouraging developments taking place currently on the European continent, and their reflection in the basin of the Mediterranean, Egypt hopes for increased co-operation in the cultural, economic and social fields between the Mediterranean non-aligned countries, on the one hand, and the European countries on the other hand. It also hopes for an enhanced European contribution to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Egypt is convinced that it is not sufficient that Europe or the northern shore of the Mediterranean should witness the liquidation of all short- or medium-range nuclear missiles. It is also necessary to face decisively any attempt by any of the parties in the Middle East to introduce any form of nuclear weapons into the arsenals of one party or the other. Egypt is fully confident that the final, just and comprehensive settlement of the problems of the Middle East will also involve the question of the prohibition of the introduction, manufacture or stockpiling of nuclear weapons, or their delivery vehicles, into our region.

Once again, my country maintains that it is necessary to give an opportunity to all the peoples of the Middle East to live in peace, security and stability. Egypt will continue to work diligently and sincerely for the achievement of that goal.

Mr. SIDDIKY (Bangladesh): For 40 years the United Nations has been grappling relentlessly with the problems emanating from the situation in the Middle East. Even today that area is akin to a dormant volcano, sending smoke signals now and then, reminding us of its horrendous potential. At any moment, an eruption may occur, causing a conflagration which could engulf the world and set our civilization aflame.

It is but natural for us, then, to seek the centre, the core, of so crucial a matter. Doubtless it is the question of Palestine: the agonizing and pathetic history of a Diaspora, the victims of which have been roaming the world for

(Mr. Siddiky, Bangladesh)

40 years, struggling to create a homeland of their own in a land that is by legacy, law and legend, rightfully theirs.

While perhaps for us in this Hall the starting point of history should be 14 February 1947, when the question of Palestine was first submitted to the General Assembly for discussion, I feel we must go back three more decades to trace the beginning of the tragic tale of tears, torture and terror. The fateful Balfour Declaration of November 1917, as if its other contents were not disastrous enough, contained further ambiguities, purporting to convey that the Palestinian Arabs were a minority. This myth has contributed to the support for, and creation of, an alien State in their midst. Thus it was that a private letter to a private individual, from Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild, who represented no legally recognized community, laid the foundation of a dispute over which, since then, States and nations have been in conflict in peace and war.

Over the years, this transplanted entity amidst Palestinian Arabs acquired power and strength, and sought to enhance its security by an increase in size. Its irredentist designs on its neighbours not only soon became evident, but were executed in machiavellian manoeuvres that shocked and dismayed peace-loving peoples everywhere. Israel is many times larger today than when it began, because it has not only extended its illegal control over Palestine, but has also occupied and annexed the territory of its neighbours. Aggression is being carried out with impunity against Arab States. Time and again resolutions of this Organization have urged restraint upon this aggressor, but to no avail. Sadly, fed by arms and material, and other external support, it is continuing to pursue its aggressive and expansionist policies and practices in the following manner:

(Mr. Siddiky, Bangladesh)

First, by illegally occupying territory over which it has no right whatsoever secondly, by trampling over human rights of the Arab and Palestinian people in the occupied territories; thirdly, by establishing, in defiance of the relevant United Nations resolutions, settlements in the occupied areas and desecrating holy places and finally, by perpetrating attacks on neighbouring countries and upon innocent and homeless Palestinian refugees in the camps in Lebanon.

(Mr. Siddiky, Bangladesh)

These actions have led to an intricate web of violence and anarchy that overwhelms and characterizes the Middle East today and threatens global peace and security.

Surely such a state of affairs can be in nobody's interest. Surely there are saner elements in Israel that realize this. Surely it is time for them to exercise every influence they have and urge upon their Government that all will benefit from peace and lose from war. Is it such a difficult choice, the one between peace and war? They must also know that peace without justice is a chimera, and that, unless the solution has a solid base, it will last just as long as a soft sand dune against a desert wind.

It is heartening to perceive a positive trend in the total gamut of international relations today. Traditional rivals not only have discovered the benefit of agreements, but are painstakingly working towards them. This provides the situation in the Middle East today with a changed matrix, a backdrop that is rapidly transforming itself into shades that reflect optimism. It is not only in relations between the super-Powers. There are signs of it elsewhere - in Central America, for example. The same could, we sincerely believe, happen in the Middle East, provided the political determination to seek a lasting solution can be mustered.

What are the elements that can provide such a lasting solution? In our opinion, the starting point is the recognition of four factors: first, that the question of Palestine is at the core of the conflict in the Middle East; secondly, that peace in the Middle East is indivisible and must be based on a comprehensive, just and lasting solution under the auspices of the United Nations; thirdly, that no just and lasting peace in that region can be achieved without the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable national rights; and, finally, that

(Mr. Siddiky, Bangladesh)

the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, must be able to participate in all relevant deliberations, on an equal footing with other parties.

A sine qua non for the creation of the appropriate ambience is Israel's immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem inspires the most sacred emotions for millions of varied faiths. To make this holy city a negotiating chip for political ends is to desecrate it.

We are all aware that, with regard to these and other relevant matters, as far back as 1983, the General Assembly, in resolution 38/58, had called for an international peace conference on the Middle East. Last year, the General Assembly reiterated this demand and asked the Secretary-General to continue his efforts towards the convening of such a conference. This he has been doing, and we commend his endeavours. I wish to state, in this connection, that my delegation has perused with great interest and examined the contents of his report in this regard contained in document A/42/714, dated 13 November 1987. It is heartening to note his observation that his decision to make a special effort this year was endorsed by leaders of all parties to the conflict. Regrettably, however, it appears that the gaps between parties are still wide on procedural and some other aspects. Human efforts have been known to bridge wider gulfs. Therefore there is no reason why hope should dissipate. We believe it is time a preparatory committee was set up within the framework of the Security Council to undertake all measures to convene the Conference.

To those who still oppose the peace Conference, our appeal is that logic should dictate their actions, and rationality should prevail. The only way to resolve differences is to talk. No positive purpose will be served by differences over whether to talk.

(Mr. Siddiky, Bangladesh)

While, indeed, we must proceed with the Conference as a goal, in the meantime, we must desist from provocations that exacerbate the conflict. Israeli activities in the occupied territories have recently brought about resentment and violence. Security Council resolution 592 (1986) has gone unheeded. This cannot make for a propitious and appropriate atmosphere in which to strive for understanding.

In this respect, I should like to underscore the importance of the implementation of the elements contained in the draft resolutions submitted this year, which Bangladesh has also sponsored, on the question of Palestine under agenda item 38. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been performing a truly edifying task. The Division of Palestinian Rights within the Secretariat must be provided with all relevant resources, and the Department of Public Information should continue its special information programme on this question. To sensitize global public opinion on the question would assist the achievement of our goal of peace.

More words perhaps have been expended on this issue in the General Assembly over a longer period of time than on any other. Today we can see light at the end of the tunnel, through which the journey has been tortuous. There is no reason why we cannot reach our destination soon. May the Almighty guide us on this path of peace.

Mr. TURKMEN (Turkey): The post-war world has lived with the Middle East conflict since the inception of the United Nations. A whole generation has experienced the frustrations of an intractable problem that intermittently leads to explosions of violence and constantly threatens international peace and security. Yet the will to act to resolve the problem, which emerges after every military conflict, quickly evaporates when the sense of crisis recedes. There are undoubtedly many vested interests militating in favour of the continuation of the

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

dispute, and recently an atmosphere of despondency and resignation seems to have permeated the discussions on the Middle East in various forums. We believe that the explicit or implicit abandonment of the search for a just solution only postpones a far greater upheaval. We cannot forget that the Middle East conflict has many dimensions, that its continuation not only can provoke at any time a new confrontation between the antagonists but also undermines the stability of an extremely sensitive region and nurtures the ingredients of a future catastrophe the magnitude of which we cannot even conceive.

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

We therefore fully agree with the assessment of the Secretary-General in his latest report on the Middle East, where he states:

"Forty years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its initial resolutions concerning the Arab-Israel conflict. Yet despite this long-standing United Nations involvement, and despite the numerous resolutions adopted since 1947 by both the Security Council and the General Assembly, the people of the area have been subjected to endless suffering and to five major wars. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost, and the conflict continues to be explosive, with ramifications not only for the region but for the entire international community. And at the core of this conflict lies the plight of the Palestinian people, most of whom now live under occupation or in exile."

(A/42/714, para. 36)

The Turkish Government's position on the situation in the Middle East, including its central element, the question of Palestine, has been consistent all through the years. We firmly support the widely accepted parameters for a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. The withdrawal of Israel from Arab territories under its occupation since 1967, including Jerusalem, the exercise by the Palestinian Arab people of their right to self-determination and the assurance of the right of all States in the area, including Israel, to a secure existence within recognized borders constitute the pillars upon which a comprehensive and lasting peace can be built.

Confrontation can be imposed, but peace can only be negotiated if it is to last. A durable political settlement can emerge only from comprehensive negotiations, conducted in good faith, between all the parties concerned. The just, comprehensive and lasting settlement that the Middle East awaits will, therefore, also have to emerge from purposeful negotiations to be held between

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

Israel and all the interested Arab parties. Such negotiations will have to address and satisfy appropriately the legitimate demands of all the interested parties, including the Palestinian Arab people.

The Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine occupy a distinctive place among the regional or international problems considered by the General Assembly. A number of other important issues of a differing nature and scope have also called for the international community's attention during the past 40 years. But, starting with the General Assembly resolution of 29 November 1947, the United Nations has assumed a special responsibility for the situation in the Middle East. The experiences of the past 40 years have shown that it is dangerous to expect only time to resolve the fundamental problem in the region or to be lulled by periods of inactivity. None of the parties to the conflict can safely assume that time is on its side.

The lack of a proper negotiating mechanism has for many years constituted one of the major obstacles to addressing in a meaningful manner substantive questions on the Middle East. In the absence of dialogue, suspicions among the parties have deepened, creating an atmosphere conducive to either recurring conflagrations or unproductive rhetoric. Under these circumstances, an international peace conference on the Middle East has been considered by the General Assembly to be a suitable means for initiating negotiations on a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the question of Palestine. In view of the complex nature of these problems, which can be resolved only through a process of negotiations between the parties concerned, a peace conference conducive to such negotiations has been, in the case of the Middle East, a proposal that deserves to be supported.

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

Following his consultations with the parties concerned, the Secretary-General has reported once again that

"sufficient agreement does not exist to permit the convening of the International Conference" (A/42/714, para. 25)

on the Middle East. It is significant, however, that, according to the Secretary-General, these consultations have also confirmed the very wide support for such a conference as

"the best way of negotiating a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on terms acceptable to all concerned",

as well as the

"urgent need for such a conference to be convened as soon as possible."

(A/42/714, para. 25)

The deep divisions, not only between the opposing camps, but also between the protagonists of the same cause have been one of the factors which have hampered the efforts to initiate a successful diplomatic process in the Middle East. Therefore, it was encouraging that the Arab leaders, at the Extraordinary Arab Summit Conference, held in Amman between 8 and 11 November 1987, supported the convocation of an International Peace Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on an equal footing, regarding it as the only suitable means for a peaceful, just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We regard this as a significant development, since the proposal for the International Peace Conference on the Middle East has, for the first time, been endorsed at the highest level by the Arab countries. We hope this inter-Arab solidarity will make a positive contribution to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the Middle East.

(Mr. Turkmen, Turkey)

The convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East has been the subject of lively debate within Israel as well. As the Secretary-General stresses in his report,

"These positive trends, combined with the growing international consensus in favour of the early convening of a conference, demand of us that we consolidate and build on the foundation that has so far been established.

"Not to do so would cause increasing frustration and tension and would further aggravate a situation that is already volatile." (A/42/714, paras. 34 and 35)

We therefore hope that the Government of Israel will, without further delay, also be able to develop a unified constructive approach for initiating a negotiating process, under the auspices of the United Nations.

While considering the situation in the Middle East, we cannot overlook the persistent situation in Lebanon. Recurring incidents have continued to remind us that the crisis that has prevailed for so many years in Lebanon has not yet come to an end, and that the people of Lebanon have not yet had the chance effectively to address their problems in an atmosphere of national reconciliation. It is significant that Arab leaders, as a whole, considered the situation in Lebanon at their last Summit meeting and underlined the importance of their assistance to help overcome the present crisis.

Over the past year, the attention of the international community has increasingly focused on the continuing armed conflict between Iran and Iraq and the situation in the Gulf. This tragic conflict has posed a growing threat to regional and international peace, security and stability.

As we have stressed on many occasions, we are deeply concerned by the situation. We still hope that Security Council resolution 598 (1987) can provide a suitable basis for both countries to bring the war to an end, and we have supported

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the Secretary-General's efforts for its implementation. Since the outbreak of hostilities between our two neighbours, we have, while remaining strictly neutral, maintained friendly relations, based on mutual confidence, with both parties. We have been willing to contribute to the peace process. The escalation in the Gulf and the tensions that have arisen in the region have further complicated the situation. In this respect, we have striven to eliminate misunderstandings arising from lack of communication, and to maintain a dialogue between the countries concerned. We are still ready to do everything in our power to be of assistance in this respect, while pursuing our friendly relations with all sides.

We believe that the two parties owe it to themselves and to the world to bring an end to a fratricidal war which, if pursued, can become one of the most destructive the world has ever seen. The judgement that history will pass should not be overlooked. We are aware of the constraints prevailing at present in the Security Council, but nevertheless hope that the Secretary-General will persist in his efforts, in which he is benefiting from the unanimous support of the whole international community.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): The more the General Assembly debates the Middle East problem, the more certain the truism becomes that the essence of the problem is the Palestinian issue, and the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the usurpation of a homeland and the rights of an entire nation in broad daylight, and all that is happening today in the region is either its outgrowth or the adverse effect thereof.

But thanks to the abundant and undeserved support given the Zionist entity - which puzzles world public opinion as a contemporary anomaly - Israel has been able to defy the world, abort all peace efforts, rebel against legitimate international institutions, continue its occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Golan and south Lebanon, and annex holy Al-Quds and the Syrian Arab Golan by decisions unanimously deemed null and void by the world community.

The President of the Zionist entity stood before the United States Congress some days ago to affirm commitment to the peace process and to assert that direct negotiations were vital and the Israelis' unanimous desire was for negotiations. With such statements we find ourselves asking the question: Which peace is it that it wants, and with whom? Israel, indeed, wants peace that fits its own perception; namely, the peace with conditions imposed by the force of invasion; the peace of the fait accompli, for which submission is required as an approach. By combatting the Palestinian people and their legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Israel brings to light the kind of peace about which it speaks in high-sounding terms.

Are not some Israelis being persecuted just for talking to Palestinians about established and legitimate Palestinian rights? Was it not Israel which some days ago ordered the expulsion of a Palestinian American for merely preaching non-violent resistance among the Arabs in the occupied territories? And is it not

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

Israel whose obstinacy and expansionist designs have been wrecking all formulas for just, lasting and comprehensive peace, as we recently heard for example, from its leaders regarding the international conference that has been endorsed by the overwhelming international majority? The situation may remind us of the fact that no outlaw would voluntarily enter a court, especially if protected by a strong umbrella and if his appetite for violating laws were still ravenous.

Those who argue that it is the Arabs who reject peaceful settlements only intend to cover up Israel's obduracy and rejection of peace formulas that ensure one's rights. Otherwise, they would have remembered that for five years now the Arabs have been unanimously committed to a just and comprehensive peace plan that was adopted by their leaders at the Fez Arab Summit Conference of 1982, and to which they renewed their commitment during their Extraordinary Arab Summit Conference, held in Amman in November. The plan was based on the same foundations endorsed by international legitimacy by which it has been upheld on every occasion. It was, in fact, a real opportunity for the Zionist entity to restore all the Palestinian rights and the occupied territories and to establish peace in the region. But for the same reasons explained previously, of which we are all certainly aware, the Fez peace plan collided with the wall of Zionist rejection.

Until today, Arabs are still calling for the establishment of peace. To that end, they joined the international majority in supporting the proposal to hold an international conference on peace in the Middle East, and, since the emergence of the idea they have been among its promoters and have pursued efforts towards its achievement. The Arab countries want a truly international conference attended by all concerned parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing. They do not want a frail umbrella incapable of weathering the winds of truth, which will certainly blow away Israel's false claims. True peace, through an international conference attended by all parties, will undoubtedly expose Israel,

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

its expansionist intentions and aggressive craving. Despite the obstructive Israeli attitude towards convening the proposed conference, and the existence of some obstacles, the Arab countries will continue very earnestly to seek to solidify international commitment to this endeavour. And, as long as we view this step as inevitable for peace, it will have to be pursued continuously.

In our opinion, the benefit of any step taken to settle the ongoing conflict in the Middle East must be evaluated according to its ability to address the root of the problem, which is the Palestinian people's tragedy. Kuwait's rejection of annexing others' lands by force derives from the Charter, and it therefore calls for Israel's total unconditional withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories.

For years now talk about the Middle East problem has been neither complete nor comprehensive without tackling the problem of southern Lebanon which Israel occupies by brute force. And, if the problem of south Lebanon were originally influenced by the Palestinian issue, which is the core of the Middle East conflict, it later became one of the most important elements in the Middle East equation, and one of its most inflamed and violence-stricken points since the barbaric Israeli invasion of south Lebanon in 1982, the occupation of part of its Arab territory, and its persistent terrorizing, torturing and continuous assaults and crimes perpetrated against it.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

The international majority has always strongly condemned the continued Zionist occupation of parts of south Lebanon and the persistence of brutal practices carried out by its forces against the civilian population in the area. We reiterate our appeal to Powers with influence over Israel and to all who cherish peace to spare no effort to induce Israel to comply with Security Council resolutions on Lebanon, including south Lebanon, in particular resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 508 (1982) and 509 (1982).

As we declared at the Islamic summit in Kuwait and at the recent Arab summit meeting in Amman and as has been declared on countless occasions to be in accordance with international law, a just peace in the region can be established only on the basis of total and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian lands and Arab territories, including the Golan and south Lebanon and the restoration of the Palestinian people's established national rights, their right to their homeland and to return to it; to recover their possessions; to self-determination in full freedom and without outside intervention; to the exercise of full sovereignty over their land and resources; and to establish their independent State with Holy Al Quds as its capital and under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, their sole, legitimate representative.

Mr. BELONOGOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The item we are discussing, "The situation in the Middle East", was first included in the agenda of the General Assembly 20 years ago, following Israel's aggression against neighbouring Arab States, namely, Egypt, Syria and Jordan. At the time the Soviet Union took the initiative of proposing the convening of a special session of the General Assembly at which resolutions would be adopted reaffirming the basic principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition by force of the territory of other States. Subsequently, this

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principle was reflected in relevant decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Unfortunately, however, the Middle East remains today the arena of a complex tangle of many conflicts, disputes, and controversies between States and nations which have a most negative effect on the situation not only in the region itself but in the world in general. The conflict between the Arabs and Israel, with its long history and 40-year-old animosity, the continuing deterioration of the situation in the territories occupied by Israel as a result of the measures carried out by the Israeli authorities, the highly acute and tense situation in and around Lebanon, the bloody war between Iran and Iraq - these are the most dangerous manifestations of the crisis in the Middle East, which demands urgent solution.

All these problems have long been the subject of thorough comprehensive discussions in our Organization. For many years persistent appeals have been heard from United Nations rostrums for a speedy, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as for an end to the Iran-Iraq war, in accordance with Security Council resolution 598 (1987), and restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and the cessation of foreign interference in the internal affairs of that Arab country. However, no real progress towards resolving problems in the Middle East has been made so far. Moreover, developments in the region are becoming increasingly complex, while existing conflicts are being aggravated by new crisis events.

We should not ignore the fact that the fact that the Middle East problems remain unsolved could have serious military-political and economic consequences for the whole world. The main cause of this is the situation created by the Israeli aggression against the Arab States and the arms race that it breeds. The facts show that Israel's stubborn reluctance to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, its repeated military attacks against the territory of Lebanon and the

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lack of real movement towards a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict are creating the conditions for a further escalation of military preparations in the region and causing the arms race to spiral to increasingly higher levels. Suffice it to recall in this connection the activities of the Israeli nuclear research centre in Dimona, the integration of Israel into the strategic defence initiative, recent tests of Jericho-II missiles and the potential threat to mankind that would emanate from any further armed confrontation between Israel and the Arabs.

The Soviet delegation, in drawing the attention of member States to these aspects of the alarming situation in the Middle East region, in no way wishes to create the impression that the outbreak of war in the Middle East is inevitable, although extremism and mutual antagonism have put down such deep roots in the Middle East that it would be naive to hope that today's silence will never be shattered.

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

In this case it would rather seem that reliance on force and military superiority is generally unreasonable and is fully inimical to the interests of the States and peoples of the Middle East, as well as the interests of the universal peace and security. The experience of many decades since the United Nations decided to create two independent States in Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish, has shown convincingly that the path of confrontation has not led to the interests and rights of even one party to the conflict being assured. Furthermore, it has only worsened the acuteness of the regional issues and deepened mutual distrust and hatred. There is only one sensible way out of this deadlock, namely to find a comprehensive, just, political - I stress political - solution that would take into account the interests of all parties concerned. This is the reason behind the Soviet initiative to convene an international conference on the Middle East that has received wide support from States Members of the United Nations.

I believe that such an approach on the part of the United Nations is no mere accident. It reflects the conviction of the absolute majority of the Members of this Organization that, only through such an international forum would it be possible to restore the long-awaited peace to the peoples of the Middle East, to provide reliable guarantees of their right to national sovereignty and secure existence and development. In order to achieve that goal, it is necessary to abandon the stereotyped belief that guaranteeing the rights to independent existence and security of one party should automatically mean denying such a right to the other party, and that parties should view each other only through the prism of hostility, mutual animosity and intolerance. The parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict - and primarily this applies to Israel - should also realize that breaking

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the deadlock in the matter of the Middle East settlement would only be possible if each of them were to develop its political line taking into account mutual interests on the basis of the principle of equality and equal security.

In advocating a comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs, the USSR bases its approach on the relevant decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. According to those decisions, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East can be obtained on the basis of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and the implementation of the right of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination, sovereignty and independence, and also guaranteeing the right of each State of the region to an independent existence and security.

With regard to the international conference on the Middle East, Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, noted in his book, entitled Perestroika and New Thinking for Our Country and for the Whole World, that:

"If the Conference does not become an 'umbrella' for covering up separate deals and steps, if it is directed at a genuine settlement in the Middle East, taking into account the interests of the Arab States, including the Palestinians, and Israel, we are ready to provide all the co-operation we can and to participate at all stages of the Conference. And to participate constructively".

It is our understanding that the same spirit is reflected in the decisions taken at the Extraordinary Arab Summit Conference, held at Amman in November which pronounced itself in favour of convening the international conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council. The Final Communiqué of the

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Conference stresses the importance of strengthening unity and the solidarity of the Arab countries, is something for which the Soviet Union has always called.

In our view, the conference should become a truly authoritative, viable and the most flexible mechanism capable of drawing up mutually acceptable solutions and decisions on the whole range of problems emanating from the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the core problem, the question of Palestine. It is important in this context that the format of its work should not only be without prejudice to the rights and interests of any party, but that it should make it possible to observe the principle of unconditional respect for the sovereignty and independence of each State, the right of each people to self-determination, the right to choose their own path towards development.

We are often asked what the term "authoritative conference" means. In our view, such conditions should be provided so that the agreements reached at the conference should not remain on paper, but be implemented in practice, that obligations undertaken by the parties within the framework of those agreements be strictly complied with, and such compliance be guaranteed by authoritative international support. The participants of the conference should also have the possibility not only to draw up mutually acceptable solutions, but also to take practical steps towards their implementation.

In this regard, I cannot fail to mention the question of Palestinian representation. Voicing its support, together with many other United Nations Members, for the participation of the PLO in the international conference, the Soviet Union, among other things, takes into account the fact that it is this organization that is highly esteemed by the Palestinians and which guarantees acceptability of agreements, reached with the participation of the PLO, to the Arab

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people of Palestine. Past experience, including the most recent, shows convincingly that any decision taken without consideration of the PLO opinion is inevitably doomed to failure.

That is why not only the Soviet, but also many other delegations consider it very important that the PLO Observer Mission to the United Nations should not be prevented from participating in the work of our Organization.

(Mr. Belonogov, USSR)

In conclusion, I should like to point out that throughout the past year the Soviet Union has been actively engaged in attempting to put the convening of the Middle East conference into a practical perspective. To that end it has undertaken intensive consultations with all the parties to the conflict, as well as with other countries, including the permanent members of the Security Council.

For the last few decades the Middle East has been the scene of many tragic events; unfortunately it remains so today. What will its future be? The reality of the Middle East and the world in general makes it imperative for the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict to rely on talks and mutually acceptable agreements instead of on force and military strength, and to abandon attempts to impose their own conditions and solutions. The sooner that happens, the better it will be for everybody.\*

Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): The Assembly has come back again this year discussing the problem of the Middle East, or, rather, the tragedy of the Middle East, as it has done in previous years, because the practice of despotism is continuing; the perpetrator is known and has confessed at the same time as it challenges law and authority.

It would have been part of a strange dream, had it not been a reality which we are living through today, for Israel - that evil offspring of a General Assembly resolution of 1947 which violated the Charter - to be able to undermine the normal life of a whole region of the world and to threaten the security of great peoples which have witnessed history and been witnessed by history and by whose merit, the merit of the Arab and Islamic nation, the Western and Eastern civilizations have reached the point at which they stand today.

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\* Mr. Ould Boye (Mauritania), Vice President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

Ariel Sharon, the well-known Zionist terrorist and today one of the Israeli policy-makers, in a lecture to the Centre for Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv in 1982, speaking of what he called "the remote strategic lands, yet peripheral and vital for Israel", said:

"besides the Arab countries in the Middle East and the countries of the Middle East and the Red Sea region, the strategic and security interests of Israel should extend to include 80 States, such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and other countries in the Gulf and Africa, especially the countries of north Africa".

I ask the Assembly to consider this design. The Zionist war criminals would like to extend the problem of the Middle East, the arena of Israeli aggression, to 80 countries, including all the countries of the Arab and Muslim world, 42 States and 1 billion Muslims, and approximately 38 more States.

I ask the Assembly to note how this evil thinking could extended its horizons and widen its spheres, as though the whole global arena were open to its design, which the world has only to swallow. It is evil itself in human mould.

The problem of the Middle East is the problem created by the Zionist presence in Palestine and the Zionist aggression against the Palestinians in their country and homeland; against Jordan; and against Syria, in order to usurp a part of that land in the Golan; against Lebanon, which it invaded and whose integrity it threatened while attempting to impose an Israeli peace of capitulation upon it; against Iraq in the east and Tunisia in the west; and against all the nations of Arabs in between.

It warns and threatens every Arab country and every Arab people. It violates Islamic and Christian Holy Places and challenges the Islamic peoples by threatening their sacred shrines in Al Quds and the rest of Palestine. Israel remains a problem that complicates the situation and threatens the security of the countries and peoples of the region and for which the United Nations has not yet found a

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

solution, while the Israeli authorities continue their oppression without any deterrence or impediment. This is the evil which has befallen the region from far horizons and created the problem of the Middle East, which is the subject of our discussion, of investigation and of the implementation of punishment.

The question is, how long will this danger to the Middle East and to the world continue and remain a crisis of which the United Nations is constantly seized a crisis which preoccupies the international community, without a solution being in sight? Israel's leaders want this oppression to extend its evil effects to 80 States, half the membership of the United Nations. Could there be a criminal way of thinking or a design for criminality more abominable than this? The evil the Israelis are spreading in Palestine and the Middle East does not seem to be sufficient; they want it to extend to 80 countries. This is not surprising, as the entire United Nations witnesses here the burden of their practices. The question is, how far and how long?

This international irresponsibility and these Zionist designs which threaten the peace and security of hundreds of millions of people are an evil against which the United Nations should adopt a firm stand. The States which nourish Israel with the means of committing crime and the ability to sustain it bear the biggest responsibility for the acts committed by Israel which threaten the security of the countries of the region as well that of countries outside the region.

Chemical weapons or nuclear weapons are not the gravest danger to the people. Fatal diseases or economic crises are not the greatest threat to the stability of nations. It is the evil men among peoples who play with the destinies of nations who are the evil and the source of danger. The Israeli leaders in Palestine, with their terrorist past and criminal present, are the greatest and most serious example of evil and evil men.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

With such deplorable thinking they represent the greatest danger that threatens the safety of peoples inside and outside the Middle East region. These leaderships represent the gravest danger even to the Jewish people and the greatest threat to its future, security and safety by making it hostage to circumstances beyond its control. They are riding a tide against history. It is the ignorance of irresponsible leaderships, the danger of blind evil and the arrogance of artificial strength in the hands of men, whose predecessors history has judged and condemned for war crimes. Their likes in history led their people to ruin, and history is full of adventurers who preceded them for a similar goal, who thought they had won, but eventually lost the war. The result was the same in all those cases - the end of the adventures and the adventurers.

The negligence of the United Nations in confronting the flagrant Israeli evil, which is taking place before the eyes and ears of the world, confers a great responsibility upon the international community with regard to the present situation of the problem of the Middle East.

Is there in this entire international Organization another Member whose establishment is based on a threat to all its neighbours, attacking them with all the instruments of war, and on the occupation of their countries and expulsion of their population? Is there in this entire Organization a Member other than Israel which has dared to challenge the world for 40 years, forcibly expel a people from its country and establish itself on its land, occupy the rest of Palestine, invade Lebanon, usurp part of Syria, put part of Lebanon under its direct or indirect occupation, wage aerial raids on Iraq and attack far-away Tunisia by air?

Imagine, for example, if a socialist State were to decide to attack by aeroplanes some centres in other countries which acted as hosts to groups opposing international socialism. Imagine if a capitalist State were to decide to attack by

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aeroplane certain centres in other countries which acted as hosts to organizations which opposed capitalism. What would happen in the world arena? What would be the result?

As for Israel - that evil offspring - it remains a Member of the United Nations and can commit all the crimes in all the countries, kidnap persons from Latin America and Europe, steal uranium from the United States and foreign ships on the high seas, hijack warships in international waters, spy on the security of its friends and patrons, steal their security secrets, work against their interests in the Middle East, as well as despatch its murder squads to assassinate persons in Europe and elsewhere. It even displays arrogance against the dignity of leaders and Heads of State to undermine them, while it sits here as if it were immune to punishment. Are representatives, by their silence, not also responsible to a great extent for that?

The report of the Secretary-General which is before us says more by what it has omitted than by what is included in it. Such are his possibilities now for dealing with the situation of the Middle East. But we want for the Secretary-General, with his great ability for action and the abundant confidence that he enjoys, a more effective role in confronting the situation.

Israel refuses to solve the Middle East problem. It even rejects the convening of an international conference to discuss a solution of the Middle East problem. Any justification for its position other than this is deception in words and fraudulence in method. What, then, do the Israeli authorities want? What does Zionism want? What do the generals of terrorism in Tel Aviv want? Do they want the continuation of the state of war? Do they want an Arab capitulation? They are deceiving themselves and their followers by what they are receiving through wide-ranging foreign support when they imagine that the realization of the objectives that we have mentioned is possible.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

After 40 years of Zionist aggression in Palestine and the Middle East region, what has been the result for the Israelis? What has been the result for the region? What has been the result for the world? For the Israelis, they have expanded the area of danger in which they live; they have extended the frontiers of danger that make them continuously sleepless. And whenever they engage in battle and think they have won, their exposure to danger increases after each battle and they realize that they have not won the war. They will never win the war. Their feeling of instability has increased after every military excursion initiated by them that they thought would bring them safety. The more their ability to inflict ruin and destruction and the killing of people increases, the more the determination of the region to deter and resist them will increase - no matter how long it takes. The conviction grows also that they do not want peace, but want to impose capitulation. They want 200 million Arabs and 1 billion Moslems to surrender to this handful of 3 million alien settlers.

They are the source of instability and insecurity in the region, as representatives have seen and heard. Their threat to the security of the region is the core of the international problems that affect international interests in the region and its periphery and which would never have existed but for them and would never have continued without their defiance of all conventions and principles, as well as their opposition to every constructive attempt for a balanced peace in the region. Otherwise, why have they rejected the Arab peace initiative adopted by the Fez Summit in 1982, which was, I repeat, a historic opportunity had they been honest.

We should call upon the United Nations again, as we have done in the past, and call upon it State by State so that every State, big or small, recognize its responsibility for solving the problem of the Middle East. This international

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Organization should inevitably deal with determination and firmness with the matter of Israeli rejection of every peace initiative and the Israeli practices, which violate all conventions and rights in Arab Palestine and other Arab countries against which Israel has committed aggression, and the matter of the more than 2 million refugees in camps awaiting return to their homes and lands.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

The Organization ought to deal with the matter of a people which is completely able and competent, but whose land has been usurped. It ought to address the serious and dangerous facts that are being increased and exacerbated by the passage of years. It must deal with the affair of a handful of political and military adventurers whom the support of some Member States represented here has enabled to build an Israeli war machine that threatens the security of the Arab and Muslim countries, in the first place the peoples of the Middle East.

I ask representatives to imagine the Arab world devoid of the Zionist war machine of evil and aggression, as an oasis of security and safety and a source of spiritual and cultural radiance for the world, as it was in the past. It has given the world over the centuries the most splendid scientific and cultural heritage and the greatest spiritual values. And we see it now, with this disaster, a battlefield and an arena of ruin and destruction. Even a sign on the horizon of a balanced peace seems difficult to attain. What would the solution be, if a balanced peace were not the objective? What is the objective and what is required? Certainly the solution would not be Zionist dominance. Member States should reassess the scales in the Middle East problem and work for a peace based on the United Nations Charter, on the balanced peace that the Arabs suggested in the Fez summit plan, of 1982 as a way out of this predicament which threatens the security and stability of the region and the world. But that plan was rejected by the Israeli authorities because they do not possess the ability to reassess balances.

Procrastination in looking with suitable seriousness into the dangers of the situation in the Middle East would only increase the threat to world peace. It would also give the Zionist authorities a dubious conviction, and their supporters a dangerous illusion, that things were going their way, while they know deep in

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their souls that time is against them and that after 40 years their situation is worse than at any other time.

How long are we going to permit this situation to continue?

Mr. PITARKA (Albania): For more than four decades now the Middle East region has continued to be one of the most explosive hotbeds of tension and war in the world. For a number of sessions on end the representatives of many countries have expressed their concern over the tense and threatening situation prevailing in that region and their desire for a just and lasting solution to the Middle East question. Events and facts bear witness to the further exacerbation of the situation in the region and to the fact that new obstacles and hardships and further complications have cropped up on the road to a solution of the Middle East question.

The developments that have taken place in the region since the last session of the General Assembly testify to the fact that tension in the Middle East is constantly escalating and that threats and dangers fraught with grave consequences for the peoples of this region and for international peace and security are constantly increasing. The Arab peoples, and first among them the Palestinians, are at present confronted with new difficulties and impediments in their struggle to fulfil their lawful aspirations and enjoy their inalienable national rights. The intensification of Israel's annexionist activities, its acts of aggression and armed provocation against Lebanon, the super-Powers' rivalry and constant interference in the Middle East region and their plotting of anti-Arab activity in general are permanent factors that help to preserve the grave and explosive situation in the region and around it. The bloody events in Lebanon, the ongoing fratricidal Iran-Iraq war and the actual escalation of tension in the Gulf area have recently further aggravated the situation.

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As has constantly been pointed out in the past, too, at the core of the Middle East problem undoubtedly lies the solution to the Palestinian question. However, no real progress has been made towards working out such a solution. On the contrary, the threat of the blows dealt by the Israeli Zionists and of the manoeuvres and perfidious plots of the super-Powers and reactionaries is still being directed against the Palestinian people and their liberation movement. That reactionary strategy is continually aimed at destroying that movement and undermining the unity of the Arab countries on the Palestinian question and their struggle to liberate all the occupied Arab territories and eradicate the consequences of imperialist and Zionist aggression.

Throughout this year also the Israeli Zionists have continued with more intensity and arrogance their acts of provocation and threats and acts of aggression against the Arab peoples, especially the Palestinians, to force them to yield to Israeli blackmail and annexationist claims.

The incessant bombardments in Lebanon, particularly of the Palestinian camps, the repeated military operations on the territory of that country and the criminal practices carried out against the Palestinian and other Arab inhabitants in the occupied territories are eloquent proof of Israel's increasing aggressiveness and annexationist intentions. Moreover, as demonstrated by their recent acts against Lebanon in pursuit of their expansionist policy, the Israeli Zionists are overtly displaying a new annexationist appetite at the expense of a sovereign country, Lebanon. The events taking place in Lebanon - where, regrettably, fratricidal wars are being waged owing to the anti-Arab intrigues and plots of the super-Powers, Israel and other reactionaries - are being exploited by Israeli Zionism as an excuse for its aggressive acts against that country and its attempts physically to liquidate Palestinians and to compel as many of them as possible to flee Lebanon.

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In the escalation of the aggressiveness and arrogance of the Israeli Zionists and the continuous aggravation of the situation in the Middle East we have never failed to identify the hand and role played by United States imperialists, who have always been and continue to be Israel's main supporters, abettors and backers providing it with unlimited economic and financial, political and military assistance.

Israel benefits substantially, too, from the dangerous situations fomented in the Middle East by the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Despite the demagoguery and political and diplomatic manoeuvres to which they resort in order to pose as friends of the Arab countries, they overtly demonstrate that it is of great interest to them that Israel should persist in its Zionist aggression and destabilizing activity in the Middle East region. The two super-Powers, regardless of their separate interest in preserving and strengthening their influence and hegemony in the region, are equally interested in maintaining a "neither peace nor war" situation there. Their activity and the various conflicts and discords they stir up among the countries of the region furnish the super-Powers with excuses to maintain their political and military presence in and around the region and keep it a permanent market in which to sell armaments and other military equipment.

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The hegemonistic and aggressive policy of the super-Powers, their anti-Arab plotting and divisive activity, provide Israel with the advantages of constantly receiving a flow of economic and military aid and the moral, political and diplomatic support of United States imperialism, on the one hand, and assistance in human resources used both as settlers to inhabit the annexed territories and as cannon fodder in its aggression and the encouragement of Moscow's anti-Arab policy, on the other hand. The recent rapprochement and increase of contacts with Israel are a piece of supporting evidence of this policy of Moscow.

Throughout this year the two super-Powers, especially the United States of America, have endeavoured to create new hot-beds of tension and conflict in the Middle East with a view to fomenting new feuds and discords between the countries of this region. In the meantime, while the Soviet Union, through its political and diplomatic manoeuvres, strives to penetrate every quarter of the region by offering its "assistance" to solve problems, the United States is taking advantage of the tense situation that the Iran-Iraq war has created in the Gulf further to expand its military presence in the region. Moreover, both the United States and the Soviet Union are separately planning deceitful manoeuvres and schemes for so-called political solutions to the Middle East problems to be achieved through negotiations conducted under the patronage of the super-Powers and through mechanisms invented by them, which they have always used to realize their hegemonistic intentions to the detriment of the interests of the Arab peoples, and the Palestinian people in particular.

Lately there has been much talk of the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. The head of the Albanian delegation, in the speech he delivered during the general debate in the General Assembly, in expressing our country's stand as regards this conference, pointed out:

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"We believe that no conference on this question can yield results if it ignores or seeks a substitute for the PLO. Still less can be expected from such a conference if it fails to deal with the very heart of the Middle East problem, the Palestinian problem". (A/42/PV.14, p. 41)

The solution of the Palestinian question, the restitution of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, has been and remains the only way to the genuine solution of the Middle East problem. The interminable struggle of these peoples for the realization of these noble goals, the superhuman efforts of the martyred Palestinian people and the sacrifices of the Lebanese people testify that they have never reconciled themselves to foreign occupation and oppression. Their freedom-loving and progressive drive is acknowledged world-wide. In this long process of struggle, the Arab peoples have acquired the ability to distinguish friends from enemies and gained the conviction that the strengthening of their unity is indispensable if they are to withstand common enemies.

The Arab peoples and countries are becoming ever more aware that, only by overcoming feuds and discords instigated by imperialist Powers and reaction and by closing their ranks, will they be able to resist the diabolical intentions of their enemies and defeat the endeavours and schemes of the super-Powers against them.

We sincerely rejoice over every step of the fraternal Arab peoples along the road to the strengthening of their unity. We salute whole-heartedly and sincerely every positive development in regard to the strengthening of unity and combative initiative in the ranks of the Palestinian movement headed by its sole leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization. On the other hand, as old friends of the Arab peoples, we sincerely hope that the fratricidal wars in Lebanon and between Iran and Iraq will be brought to an end, for this could be a great service

(Mr. Pitarka, Albania)

to the cause of the peoples and countries of this region in their efforts to resist common enemies, the super-Powers and Israel.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Albanian delegation, I should like to reiterate that the People's Socialist Republic of Albania and the Albanian people will, as always, render unflinching support to the just cause of the Palestinian people and the fraternal Arab peoples in their struggle against imperialist and Zionist aggression and for the liberation of the Arab territories. We will unreservedly support the struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their homeland and national rights.

Mr. FALEIRO (India): The situation in the Middle East has been debated in the United Nations for nearly four decades. Innumerable resolutions have been adopted by both the General Assembly and the Security Council, which have remained unimplemented. A just solution of the Palestinian question is indeed the crucial element in the search for an equitable and lasting political settlement in the Middle East.

Forty years ago, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending the creation of two States in Palestine: a Jewish State and an Arab State, and while Israel has come into existence, there is as yet no State of Palestine.

In the meantime, millions of Palestinian refugees have had to live elsewhere. Those remaining in the occupied territories face policies of discrimination, exploitation and humiliation. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements on the West Bank has led to the virtual incorporation of that territory into Israel. The Secretary-General, in his report, has referred to the unrest and violence and the loss of innocent lives caused by the Israeli occupation. Indeed, the Secretary-General has warned that the situation remains:

(Mr. Faleiro, India)

"explosive, with ramifications not only for the region but for the entire international community". (A/42/714, para. 36)

The international community has sought, over the years, to find a comprehensive solution to the problem of the Middle East and to the question of Palestine. These efforts received fresh impetus with the holding of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine at Geneva in August-September 1983. The Geneva Declaration, adopted at the end of the Conference, called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East on the basis of the principles of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations with the aim of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, an essential element of which would be the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. The recommendations of the Geneva Conference were overwhelmingly endorsed by the General Assembly. In terms of the mandate given to him under resolution 39/49, the Secretary-General initiated a process of consultations. At that time, India conveyed its broad agreement with the Plan of Action proposed by him, while suggesting that some flexibility be retained in the selection of participants for the Conference. It was our view that the situation in the Middle East was such that urgent preparatory measures should be undertaken so that the Conference could be convened at the earliest possible time.

Since then a great deal has happened, but the International Peace Conference remains the only viable framework for a solution of the Middle East problem. Over the years, this framework has found increasing international acceptance, even in those quarters where previously there had been hesitation and even opposition.

(Mr. Faleiro, India)

The Secretary-General has made special efforts to promote the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East. He has had extensive consultations with the parties to the conflict, concerned States and the members of the Security Council. We have noted his cautious optimism on the unfolding developments in the past year. To quote from his report:

"I am encouraged by the fact that the past year has seen favourable developments in the political environment, both in terms of the level and frequency of the contacts between the permanent members of the Security Council and between them and the parties. I am also encouraged by the fact that the idea of an international [peace] conference under United Nations auspices has been given high priority among the Arab parties to the conflict, and has been the subject of lively debate within Israel. These positive trends, combined with the growing international consensus in favour of the early convening of a conference, demand of us that we consolidate and build on the foundation that has so far been established". (A/42/714, para. 34)

The Palestinian problem has been one of the fundamental preoccupations of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. Their support for the Palestinian cause was reaffirmed at the last meeting of Heads of State or Government, in Harare. The Non-Aligned Committee on Palestine has made efforts to explore, through dialogue and consultation, ways and means to convene the conference as early as possible.

An important development has been the growing realization within Israel itself that peace is of paramount importance and that the present state of affairs distorts the very principles upon which Israel is purportedly based. We hope this body of opinion will gather strength, as it must, and that a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine problem, based on the acceptance of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, will soon become a reality.

(Mr. Faleiro, India)

Situations evolve, the world moves on. New perspectives are developing today on the international scene. Peace and security is vital and important to all States in the Middle East. It is unacceptable that the security of one of them should be more fundamental than that of others.

The struggle of the people of Palestine has been marked by bravery and sacrifices, by sorrow and tragedy. It has been one of broken promises and unfulfilled hopes. It is one of the great challenges to the conscience of humankind.

Yesterday in this very building we marked the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi sent a special message on the occasion reiterating India's firm support for the Palestinian people in their fight for their right to self-determination and a homeland of their own. I quote from his message:

"Despite their long and valiant struggle, the Palestinian people remain deprived of their legitimate and inalienable right to self-determination and to a State of their own.

"There cannot be a durable peace in the Middle East as long as the just aspirations of the Palestinian people are not realized".

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important role played by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in finding a just solution for the question of Palestine. As a member of the Committee, India has supported the Committee in its efforts to secure the rights of the Palestinian people and to promote their cause. Though the basic recommendations of the Committee have remained unimplemented so far, its activities during the past years have served to increase the support of the international community for the cause of the people of Palestine.

Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly again pronounced itself on the question of the Middle East in the resolutions it adopted at the previous session, when it reaffirmed that the question of Palestine was the core of the Middle East conflict and that there would be no comprehensive, durable and just peace without the following elements: the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the withdrawal of Israel from the Arab Golan Heights and occupied southern Lebanon, and the participation of all parties in arriving at a just and comprehensive settlement, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Once again the General Assembly reaffirmed that Israel's decision to extend its jurisdiction and to apply its laws and administrative procedures to the city of Jerusalem was null and void, as was the transfer by certain Member States of their embassies to Jerusalem.

Once again the General Assembly denounced Israel's decision to impose its laws on the Arab Golan Heights, its establishment of illegal settlements there and the imposition of Israeli nationality on Syrian citizens. All the foregoing were branded as breaches of the Geneva Convention relating to the protection of civilians in time of war.

The General Assembly denounced the supply by certain countries of modern weapons and substantial financial assistance to Israel. It called on all Member States to desist from extending military and material support to Israel and to sever relations with Israel so as to isolate it in all fields.

We look forward to a reaffirmation of those resolutions at this session. These resolutions, as well as other decisions which have been taken and those which

(Mr. Al-Kawari, Qatar)

will be taken, reaffirm the international legitimacy of the struggle of the Palestinian people. In its heroic and unflinching resistance the Palestinian people is exercising a legitimate right upheld by the United Nations Charter. It is incumbent on the international community to stand by the side of the Palestinian people in its constant struggle until it achieves its legitimate objectives.

What applies to the Palestinian resistance applies also to the resistance in southern Lebanon, which has set a striking example of the only language understood by the racists in Tel Aviv. Therefore, we can only express our admiration for the resistance of the Arab people in the Golan Heights against the decisions of the Zionist occupier and their rejection of its measures, as well as the preservation of the national identity of the Arab people of the Golan.

In the 40 years of the Zionist occupation of Palestine, the bodies and forums of the international Organization have taken numerous decisions in this regard, and its position on the question and the basis for a solution is now crystal clear.

(Mr. Al-Kawari, Qatar)

By insisting on denying Palestinian rights and continuing its occupation of the territories occupied in numerous wars against the Arabs, Israel has put up an insurmountable obstacle to the resolution of the Middle East problem, to such an extent that there is today a glaring gap, a painful disparity, between United Nations resolutions and the realities of life in the region called the Middle East.

The responsibility for that state of affairs is not Israel's alone; the blame lies equally with those that support Israel. The result is a continuing deadlock in the dangerous situation in the Middle East, seriously damaging the credibility of the United Nations, since its resolutions have not been implemented, and posing a continuous threat to international peace and security. The situation in the Middle East is therefore a time bomb that could go off at any minute unless the international community defuses it promptly.

We are confident that the sons of Palestine, the Golan and southern Lebanon are not struggling only for the liberation of their land; they are struggling also for the credibility of the United Nations and the implementation of its resolutions.

The Arab party to the Middle East conflict has for many years been calling for a comprehensive, just, peaceful solution, and it is striving to find the means conducive to such a settlement. The Arab summit in Amman last month reaffirmed the desire of the Arab countries to reach a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. Its resolutions called, among other things, for the convening of an international peace conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the permanent members of the Security Council. That decision was taken at the highest political decision-making level of the Arab world. Therefore there is no longer any shadow of a doubt about the desire of the Arab side to achieve peace based on justice.

(Mr. Al-Kawari, Qatar)

It is now clear to all who is reluctant to take the path of peace and who rejects the idea of an international conference, which is now advocated by the whole world.

My country, which supports the rights of the Palestinian people and stands at their side, salutes their struggle for their legitimate objectives. We also salute the Arab people in the Golan and southern Lebanon and look forward to the day when the cloud of occupation will be dissipated, matters will return to normal and international legitimacy will be established, with recognition of the right of peoples to self-determination and protection of the values and principles of the United Nations.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I now call on the Observer of the League of Arab States, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V), of 1 November 1950.

Mr. MAKSOUUD (League of Arab States): This debate on the situation in the Middle East comes midway between the League of Arab States summit in Amman, which concluded on 11 November 1987, and the forthcoming super-Power summit, scheduled to take place in Washington on 7 December.

This might be a propitious moment to seek for Arab concerns and rights the support that the Arabs aspire to and struggle to achieve. The solidarity that our just causes have enjoyed in the Assembly throughout the years has given us a major impetus to persist in our quest for a just peace and has sustained our commitment to the United Nations and our faith in its ability to restore the rights that have been usurped, the territories that have been occupied and the integrity that has been ruthlessly violated. That faith and commitment have frequently been shaken when our people have seen resolutions adopted by massive majorities in the Assembly dismissed with impunity by Israel and its supporters, and when it has not been possible to enforce Security Council resolutions against recalcitrant parties.

(Mr. Maksoud, League of  
Arab States)

Perhaps the message that ought to go from this Assembly of nations to the summit of the two super-Powers is that more deference should be shown to United Nations mechanisms and resolutions, and that their co-operation on issues pertaining to the Middle East - whether it be the Iraq-Iran conflict, the tension in the Gulf or the Arab-Israeli conflict - can be the corner-stone of the vitality this Organization needs to enable it to perform its functions in resolving regional problems. Furthermore, an energized United Nations could remove many of the contentious issues which, if they remained unattended to, could become breeding grounds for renewed conflict and fertile ground for violence and tension that could undermine many arrangements and agreements that the two super-Powers might arrive at.

In other words, when the Arab summit reiterated the firm commitment of the Arab States to the United Nations, whether in stopping the Iraq-Iran war or dealing with the various consequences of Israeli aggression and expansion into Arab territories, they signalled to the United Nations support for its role as provided for in the Charter and mandated in various resolutions.

I am sure that the Assembly can be emboldened to call on the leaders of the two super-Powers to recognize its moral and political influence and to see that it is in their ultimate interest that that influence become the power for peace and justice that the Charter intended.

That prospect may seem to the so-called realists and pragmatists to be far-fetched, but the realists of the moment have often been treated as footnotes to history rather than the makers of history.

To us, the forthcoming summit in Washington holds much promise. By the same token we must not shy away from articulating some of our misgivings, both in order to avoid future misunderstandings and to ensure that super-Power dealing with the

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Middle East situation does not fall into the trap of possible trade-offs that might prejudice the weight of recognition and support that the United Nations has given to our national aspirations and legitimate rights.

First, it is becoming clearer to us that the policy of non-alignment needs to be restated. For too many years this policy has lacked the ability to adjust to and accommodate the changes that have taken place within the non-aligned countries and on the world scene. The degree of co-ordination has been weakened, perhaps, by the strain of the many unresolved regional conflicts and the stresses that have tended to make many of us inward-looking. The lukewarm pursuit of our independence judgement in the international arena is perhaps a projection of the national malaise that has afflicted many societies in the developing world.

While signs of vigour are beginning to emerge - as in the Arab summit consensus or the Central American peace plan - many of our societies' achievements remain threatened by the intrusive manifestations of a bipolar world. The democratic strides that have been taking place remain vulnerable to the debilitating impact of lingering sectoral offshoots of receding dogmatic posture or self-righteous assertions of certain aspects of super-Power behaviour and policies.

Questions will be asked as to the relevance of such broader and general concerns to the situation in the Middle East, which is the item on today's agenda. It is our belief that the Middle East situation can be properly understood, and hence dealt with, only in the wider context of global considerations. We have not chosen to globalize our problems, but many of them have implications and causes extraneous to the region, besides their more direct and visible reasons.

It is customary these days, in the post-Amman Arab summit period, to portray its results and resolutions as if they relegated the Arab-Israeli conflict to the

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background. We in the League of Arab States fail to see the logic of this conclusion, except as a characteristically deliberate misreading of our situation and the imperatives of our national security. In this respect, our emphasis has been on salvaging the peace option. We have repeatedly emphasized that this can be done through an international conference sponsored by the United Nations, with a clear mandate to bring about a comprehensive, just and durable peace. This is a commitment from which we shall not waver.

(Mr. Maksoud, League of Arab States)

During the Washington summit, regional problems are bound to be dealt with. It is of crucial importance that our commitment in regard to this matter be understood so that Israel will not be allowed to engage in procrastination, ambiguous responses and sugar-coated suggestions of alternatives, to strain our people's patience even more than it has already been strained by what they have endured from Israeli indignities, systematic violations of the sovereignty of many Arab countries and humiliation of our people under Israeli occupation.

We expect that the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States will realize that time may be running out for the peace option to be salvaged. The recent attack by a freedom fighter on an Israeli military barracks is but a signal of a re-emerging conviction that Israel cannot remain in violation of Palestinian rights or occupy Arab territories with impunity and without cost. The United States cannot remain hostage to Israel's interpretation of the international conference as a sort of ceremonial occasion or an orchestral background for direct negotiations.

To both the super-Powers we must say that the issue of Soviet Jewish immigration is of grave concern, because if Israel and its lobbyists get away with it, then Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel and Israeli settlements in the occupied territories becomes a one-way traffic, with the Palestinian right to self-determination becoming dysfunctional for all practical purposes and the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes being finally chopped off. That is why the Zionist theatricals planned in Washington should not disrupt the serious business of the summit to be held there.

It is our understanding that the Iraq-Iran conflict will be at the top of the agenda of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit when they address the burning regional

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issues. The Amman Arab summit unanimously and in the strongest manner reaffirmed the Arab commitment to Security Council resolution 598 (1987). From the moment of that resolution's adoption on 20 July 1987, Iraq accepted its terms and agreed to the plan evolved by the Secretary-General. This has now been reinforced by the unity manifested at the Amman summit. This unity must, I am sure, facilitate the task of the Security Council and the efforts of the Secretary-General to expedite the stemming of the haemorrhage that has devastated two countries and led to untold casualties and human suffering. We hope that the negotiations to be undertaken in the next few days by the Secretary-General will bear fruit and lead to the required outcome.

On that level, we shall continue to be helpful. Our assessment of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) has been positive. It is the fruit of a diligent pursuit of unanimity. We have shown a readiness to help preserve the unity of the Security Council. But preservation of unity in itself cannot remain hostage to Iran's intransigence. It was, and still is, to be expected that the unity among members of the Security Council remains operational unity. That will transmit the clear message needed at this moment - namely, that intransigence does not pay and can be costly. We hope that the Washington summit will facilitate this task, in order that resolution 598 (1987) may carry with it the resolve necessary to render it implementable.

It was for that reason that the Amman summit focused on this burning issue during its emergency session. While Iran was seeking to broaden the military zone of operation, the international community was seeking measures to restrict and contain it, in order to end the war.

(Mr. Maksoud, League of Arab States)

The proliferation of targets in the Gulf region, such as the attacks on Kuwait and Mecca and the mining of the Gulf waters, as well as the threats to shipping and the lack of a clear response to the appeals by the Arab League members, by the Conference of the Islamic Organization, by the Non-Aligned Movement, and, finally, by the United Nations, has failed to elicit from Iran any disposition to heed the urgings of those who harboured friendship for it.

Seeking to persuade was mistakenly perceived by Iran's authorities as eagerness to placate. Again our desire for reconciliation was misinterpreted as readiness to compromise what the international community has recognized as legitimate rights. The Amman summit not only made clear the Arab response but ascertained the consensus. That is why we can conclude that this level of Arab unity enables the United Nations to proceed more efficaciously in carrying its mandate to the conclusion. This haemorrhage should not continue. It is to be hoped that the Secretary-General's efforts at persuasion in the next few days will safeguard the integrity of resolution 598 (1987) and make Iran heed it. Otherwise the Security Council must resort to the only option remaining to it in order to move us closer to the peace that has been so elusive.

Last year, from this rostrum, when Israel's role in "Iranagate" was disclosed I stated:

"... this might be the moment, ... to respond positively ... to the various peace initiatives. I am sure [the Iranian people] realize that this [destruction] ... has benefitted only Israel, the common foe of both the Iranian and the Arab peoples. Whatever the differences, they are certainly transient and should be subordinated to the imperatives of the spiritual and historical links that bind them". (A/41/PV.88, pp. 88 and 89)

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Since then, the war has continued, and Iran's threat has become more inclusive. The pattern of blocking the objective peace efforts has continued. Having exhausted attempts at mediation, the Arab summit in Amman took cognizance of the fact that we have reached a crossroads.

Let us hope that the year 1988 will be inaugurated by the peace that the United Nations in 1987 has worked so hard to achieve. Logic, reason and the configuration of regional and international factors justify this ennobling expectation. The need to end the suffering, devastation and misery and the scarring wounds of war dictate this.

In Lebanon, where paradise and hell blend in a most paradoxical fashion, the situation continues to deteriorate. The economic plight is affecting every sector of the Lebanese population. The tragedy has engulfed the entirety of the body politic. The social fabric is endangered and the institutional infrastructure, which throughout the disastrous years has sustained a viable Lebanon, is being strained nearly to the breaking point by debilitating impoverishment and arrested development. In spite of this bleak picture, the Lebanese people's resilience and patience have sustained the international commitment to Lebanon's integrity, unity and independence.

The international community is called upon to lend instant assistance to Lebanon in order that the relief measures and the reconstruction and developmental aid may further strengthen Lebanon's will to be and to overcome. Investing in Lebanon's sovereignty and unity is a most worthy act in regard to a country that was one of the founders of the United Nations and that has so assiduously contributed to the functions and values of the Organization; it is an investment which, when successful, enriches in the wider world the principles of integration

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and co-existence, the concept of diversity within unity, the required quotient of tolerance that defeats the propensity for violence, and the various oases of sanity where differences are settled through dialogue and the cross-fertilization of ideas.

That was the Lebanon of our forefathers, and it ought to be the Lebanon of our children. This cruel situation that Lebanon has experienced in the past 13 years cannot be treated as a pattern but, rather, as a rude interruption caused by the continued conflict and present situation in the Middle East.

In that respect, the first task of the United Nations is to see to it that various Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 425 (1978), 508 (1982) and 509 (1982), are implemented forthwith. Israel's continued occupation of the southern part of Lebanon is intended to keep Lebanon's national institutions incapacitated. The central Government should be enabled to deploy its forces to the internationally recognized borders. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) must be enabled to fulfil its mandate in every manner possible. It is a shame that the world body should find itself helpless in facing Israel's studied and structured contempt. We are required to devise the means and modalities that will ensure that Israel is never again allowed to trample on United Nations resolutions and forces.

We are convinced that with the deployment of Lebanese authority in the south of Lebanon, a whole corrective process would be set in motion. The perception of the national army of Lebanon as a viable defence force on the borders will make it possible for Lebanon to help restore internal security and political trust in its objectivity and national purpose. Simultaneously with the political steps, economic aid for development tasks should be immediately forthcoming from

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all the actual and potential donors. Besides the obvious reconstruction function that such aid will have, it will be a signal of renewed international confidence in Lebanon's future and of a revitalized commitment to Lebanon's unity, sovereignty and restored sense of mission.

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Arab States)

The situation in the Middle East is fraught with many dangers and crises. That is why we are convinced of the need for a viable, properly structured, clearly mandated United Nations international conference that will address comprehensively and simultaneously all the issues arising from the Arab-Israeli conflicts. This will ensure an ongoing diffusion of tension, reduce the tempo of conflict and prepare the ground for a just and durable peace.

The United Nations is called upon to justify our hopes and mankind's expectations. In the Middle East situation recalcitrant parties to the conflicts should not be allowed to consider United Nations efforts to persuade to be a disposition to placate or United Nations acceptance of intransigence to be possible submission to their continuing ability to undermine the Organization's moral and operational function.

The two super-Powers, at their forthcoming summit meeting, should help restore to the United Nations its pivotal role in solving problems and resolving crises. If these expectations are fulfilled, or are on the way to fulfilment, many of the disappointments we experience will not lead to disillusionment. There are many developments that allow us realistically to be hopeful. Not wanting to delude ourselves with false expectations, we confine our reading of developments to justifying hope, but not yet justifying optimism.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.