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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 7 October 1988, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. TREIKI
(Vice-President) (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

later:

MR. KALFOKAS
(Vice-President) (Vanuatu)

- General debate [9] (continued)

Statements made by:

Mr. Letsie (Lesotho)
Mr. Gyi (Burma)
Mr. Al-Eryani (Yemen)
Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar)
Mr. Gbezera-Bria (Central African Republic)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Treiki (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. LETSIE (Lesotho): On the auspicious occasion of the forty-third session of the General Assembly, I bring the Assembly fraternal greetings from His Majesty King Moshoeshoe II and the Government and people of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

We are confident that under the wise leadership and guidance of the President the deliberations of this session of the Assembly will come to a fruitful conclusion.

At this early juncture I wish also to avail myself of this opportunity to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Peter Florin of the German Democratic Republic, for the noble task accomplished during the hectic forty-second session.

It is also worth noting that most of the positive achievements of the United Nations system during recent years are attributable to our ever-indefatigable Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, to whom we are ever grateful. The catalogue of his outstanding achievements is second to none; indeed, he continues to acquit himself with flourishing distinction.

There is barely a decade to go before the turn of the century. This should be, for all of us, a moment of reflection as we seek to examine the future of mankind in the years that lie ahead. The pursuit of peace, as enshrined in the

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Charter of the United Nations, remains one of the loftiest challenges to humanity. Recent developments in international relations have signalled a definitive shift from a world characterized by confrontation to a world of reconciliation, mutual accommodation and tolerance. Increasingly the futility of war is dawning upon nations, as is the untenability of aggression and foreign domination.

The emerging spirit of dialogue and co-operation has aroused great hope that the preservation of human civilization can be ensured. Moshoeshoe I, the founder of the Basotho nation, an eminent thinker of his time and a man of immense diplomatic skills, used to liken peace to his sister. He visualized peace as the mother of the community of nations, and hence the basis for the collective survival and security of nations large and small.

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Never before in contemporary history has the conscience of mankind been so elevated with respect to full regard and respect for fundamental human rights. The inalienable right of peoples to national self-determination and independence, the sanctity of human life and its dignity, and the irrelevance of racism as a determinant factor in human interaction are now universally accepted as basic tenets of humanity. We have to rededicate ourselves and live up to the noble principles of human rights to ensure a better future for posterity.

My country has great faith in the role of the United Nations system in promoting respect for international law. The quest for justice entails a commitment to the principle of equal rights for all peoples of the world. The founding fathers of the United Nations envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Statute of the International Court of Justice legal instruments to guarantee for future generations conditions of just peace, freedom and security for all.

We applaud the initiatives now under way world-wide to resolve regional conflicts through peaceful means. We welcome the international community's growing awareness of the perils inherent in resorting to belligerency to settle disputes. We have reason to believe that the remaining hotbeds of tension in the world are on the verge of resolution, given the current mood of reconciliation and goodwill among the nations of the world.

It is a sad reality of our times that, in spite of the heightened world-wide appreciation of the worth of human life, poverty in the Third World remains the most serious affront to human dignity. Poverty, with its squalor, the pangs of hunger, the misery of disease and the despair resulting from unfulfilled dreams of the promise that came with political independence, remains a stark reminder of the blatant inequalities that characterize our modern world. There can never be hope

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for peace and stability in a world in which the abject poverty endured by the many, coexists with the abundance and wastefulness enjoyed and practised by the few.

Southern Africa continues to be a hotbed of tension and the situation in South Africa continues to be ever volatile. The problematic socio-political vicissitudes continue to come pouring in, not one by one but in sky-rocketing, astronomical figures. Black to black conflict, bordering on ethnicity and ideological-political adherences and convictions, continues to soar. Racial tension and social imbalances are increasing. Should the world just sit back and watch? I think not.

The root cause of this uneasy malaise is the policy of apartheid. It is my considered opinion that peaceful pressure exerted on the Government of the Republic of South Africa regarding the dismantling of apartheid and the resolution of the conflict in Angola and Namibia is an effective tool that should be used to persuade the Republic of South Africa to come to terms with inescapable realities and initiate round-table negotiations with all the parties concerned in South Africa, without any discrimination.

Unless and until all men and women in South Africa participate in the political process and collectively determine their own destiny, lasting peace and harmony will not reign in South Africa. It is therefore imperative for all those countries in a position to do so to act promptly, before it is too late.

Inextricably linked to the conflict in the Republic of South Africa is the question of refugees and displaced persons. The nexus is not difficult to identify. Most of the persons fleeing from the repercussions of the South African situation make Lesotho their first port of call. Because of its geographical location within the heart of South Africa Lesotho is easily accessible from South Africa.

(Mr. Letsie, Lesotho)

As a signatory to international instruments on refugees, Lesotho continues to abide by its obligations. We are a country that was founded on the fragmented pieces of ethnic groupings at a time when people were suffering and fleeing from the scourge of vicious and violent subregional strife. Therefore, it is only fitting that we should reaffirm our unswerving and steadfast commitment to provide sanctuary to all genuine refugees, without discrimination based upon race, creed or colour. This reaffirmation of our commitment was also made by my country during the recent Oslo Conference on the plight of refugees, returnees and displaced persons.

The current diplomatic initiatives intended to lay the basis for the return of peace to Angola, independence for Namibia and the withdrawal of all foreign troops have given us great hope. It is to the credit and thanks to the foresightedness of the United Nations Security Council that, 10 years after it adopted the celebrated resolution 435 (1978), that resolution now appears to be receiving endorsement by all the parties concerned as the key to the long overdue attainment of independence by Namibia.

The General Assembly has served the cause of decolonizing Namibia with distinction. Hence, it is our conviction that it will accomplish with even greater distinction the tasks it will be called upon to shoulder in the period leading to Namibian independence.

(Mr. Letsie, Lesotho)

The world is awaiting with profound anxiety the carrying out of the stated intention of the Republic of South Africa to commence implementation of resolution 435 (1978) by pulling out its administrative machinery from Namibia by the beginning of November this year. We are also hopeful that South Africa's gesture of withdrawing its forces from Angola signifies the beginning of the end of hostilities in Angola.

We are gratified to note the constructive role of the two super-Powers, the Soviet Union and the United States of America, in bringing their influence and prestige to bear in ensuring that a just and durable solution of this regional problem is arrived at.

One other issue that has featured prominently on the United Nations General Assembly agenda for the past eight years is the fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq, two Islamic countries bound together by commonality of cultures, traditions and beliefs and both members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the United Nations. We all stood and watched with horror and disbelief as those two sister countries rampantly expended their resources and energies on the destruction of each other's economic infrastructures and the disruption of shipping in the Gulf region.

The United Nations took the lead in making unsparing efforts towards the resolution of this conflict, and we are quite gratified to acknowledge that these efforts have not been in vain. Security Council resolution 598 (1987) has finally been accepted and earned its rightful place in the minds of those who are in a position to order the cessation of the hostilities. It is regrettable that this war, in which neither party has emerged as victor or vanquished, has resulted in the loss of so many human lives. We strongly believe that the war should not have been fought in the first instance.

(Mr. Letsie, Lesotho)

As I have already stated, many regional and subregional conflicts continue to be intractable because of the lack of political will of the parties to the conflicts to adhere to the guidelines enshrined in the United Nations Charter, such as non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, peaceful settlement of disputes and non-use of force, to mention only a few.

Having regard to the foregoing, my delegation is of the opinion that the Palestinian issue would be resolved if an international conference were to be convened under the auspices of the United Nations, at which conference the issue would be thoroughly discussed and concrete proposals and plans for the resolution of the dispute drawn up so as to bring to an end this problem which has been on the agenda of this Organization for such a long time.

Acknowledgement of the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign State within recognized and secure borders and the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland of their own and ultimately to independence and sovereignty is a sine qua non for a durable and pacific settlement of the Middle East crisis. In the meantime we appeal to all the parties involved to exercise restraint and to desist from resorting to the use of force as an instrument for the settlement of the conflict.

Despite numerous efforts by the United Nations to bring about lasting peace in Cyprus, the situation there remains contentious. We are, however, gratified to note that the Turkish and Greek Cypriots are now headed along a promising path towards resolution of the dispute. May the recent talks held between President Vassiliou and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktash, under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, herald the beginning of a new era in the politics of that troubled island, so that in the not too distant future Cyprus may once again enjoy its unity, which it has so long awaited.

(Mr. Letsie, Lesotho)

Lesotho continues to support all genuine efforts to resolve the Central American problem. We support and fully endorse the Arias peace plan and the Contadora initiative, which in our view constitute a highly pragmatic framework through which the pain and suffering in Central America may be brought to an end.

Thanks to the highly commendable mediation efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and of the Organization of African Unity, we are beginning to see a ray of hope on the horizon of the Western Sahara problem. The intended referendum, which we hope will be fair, should give the people of the Western Sahara an opportunity to exercise freely their right to determine their political destiny. No doubt the road to peace will also be greatly facilitated if the two parties to the dispute agree to open the channels of direct communication.

The sons and daughters of Kampuchea are rightly yearning for peace and a permanent resolution of the present political stalemate. For almost a decade the people of Kampuchea have experienced untold suffering, involving massive loss of life and destruction of property.

The political and economic effects consequent upon the Kampuchean problem have not been felt in Asia alone; they have been a daunting problem for the international community. Hence the barrage of resolutions passed by our Organization consistently calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Kampuchea. Lesotho steadfastly continues to support the intent and spirit of those United Nations resolutions and will do so until they are fully and unconditionally observed and implemented.

By the same token, Lesotho fully supports all the current moves and initiatives aimed at the reunification of the two Koreas and the return of true and lasting peace to the Korean peninsula.

(Mr. Letsie, Lesotho)

While the global economy, according to recent statistics, is showing some signs of recovery, it is, regrettably, noteworthy that the situation in the developing countries remains bleak. Many developing countries are experiencing a decline in real per capita income while at the same time they are faced with the debt crisis, which is wreaking havoc on their already fragile economies. The major casualties of the present economic situation continue to be the least developed countries, whose problems are mainly structural.

(Mr. Letsie, Lesotho)

We are hopeful that the economic recovery of the North will create conditions conducive to the uplifting of the South, with particular attention being paid to the special needs of the least developed countries. It is also our fervent hope that the recommendations relating to the developing countries made at the 1988 Toronto summit, especially those concerning debt relief, will be faithfully implemented.

The mid-term review of the United Nations programme of action for Africa's economic recovery and development, conducted here at United Nations Headquarters just before the convening of the present session, revealed that Africa is in no better economic situation than it was when the programme was adopted in 1986. Africa's needs remain more acute than ever.

It would be remiss of me to conclude my statement without expressing our heartfelt congratulations to the United Nations peace-keeping forces for the well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize awarded to them in recognition of the meritorious service they continue to render to the international community in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. GYI (Burma): I deem it a privilege and an honour to extend to the President the warm felicitations of the delegation of Burma on his election as the President of the forty-third regular session of the General Assembly. We are confident that his long and brilliant career at the national level in his own country as well as on the international scene will stand him in good stead in guiding our deliberations to a fruitful conclusion.

I should also like to refer to the outstanding leadership provided by His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin, the outgoing President, to the international community during the preceding session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Gyi, Burma)

It is with a sense of satisfaction that we wish to join other delegations in paying tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar for his dedication to the Organization and for his tireless efforts in the cause of peace.

The agenda of the General Assembly portrays the diverse and complex nature of the issues that the United Nations faces in dealing with international problems in their global perspective. In the search for solutions, the universal nature of the Organization makes it possible to see and reflect the interest of the world at large although finding consensus to meet the interest of all has not always been easy. While many problems remain to be resolved, the Organization represents the hopes and aspirations of the world community and must therefore continue to serve as the essential instrument for harmonizing the relations between States and upholding the rule of law in international relations. We are encouraged to believe that the present international situation provides favourable opportunities for the United Nations to further its endeavours to preserve peace, increase international security and develop international co-operation.

Maintaining international peace and security is at the forefront of the agenda of the United Nations. However, the interdependent nature of the world is such that issues of peace and security cannot be separated from endeavours for the common well-being of the world's population. This in turn would depend much upon finding solutions to the problems of global development and the reduction of the disparities in the conditions of life of peoples.

Regional conflicts have been a particular feature of our international life and have constituted major obstacles to the implementation of the provisions of the Charter. They are a feature that is prevalent particularly in the developing areas of the world and have created obstacles to the security and well-being of peoples, exacerbated international tensions and brought about much suffering. There is

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therefore a political as well as a humanitarian dimension to finding solutions which will enhance the prospects for peace at the regional level.

The major Powers can do much in finding solutions to international problems. However, the objective of ensuring international security requires the endeavours of all Members through the collective security system of the United Nations. In the final analysis, it is through the willingness of Member States to conduct their relations on the basis of the principles of the Charter that international security can be effectively enhanced.

The bilateral agreement between the two militarily most significant States constitutes the first essential step in the process of nuclear disarmament and its significance can be seen from the prospects for achieving further substantial measures.

Successful disarmament negotiations are of vital interest to all nations, and agreements between States that have the primary responsibilities should have a significant bearing on the efforts of the international community. The United Nations constitutes the centre stage for all such activities.

In Afghanistan, the United Nations, through the good offices of the Secretary-General, has played an important role in the achievement of the Accords, which are highly commendable. We believe that if the Geneva accords are implemented in good faith by all parties, the tragedy in which Afghanistan has been caught for nearly a decade will now come to an end and the Afghans themselves will once again be able to map out their future and reconstruct their land with the help of the international community.

(Mr. Gyi, Burma)

A more favourable international environment that is conducive to the resolution of international conflicts is also noticeable in the quest for solutions to the problem of Kampuchea. Year after year the Assembly has reaffirmed the basic principles of international relations with regard to Kampuchea. It is time that reason and fairness prevailed over force. We hope that the people of Kampuchea, who have suffered for so long, will have the opportunity to work out a solution that will put them on the path of national reconciliation and reconstruction. It is a source of satisfaction for my delegation to observe the recent emergence of new, positive impulses which may be conducive to what the Assembly has been endeavouring to achieve for so many years - the peaceful and negotiated settlement of the question of Kampuchea.

With regard to the situation in Central America, the peace plan signed last year in Guatemala by the five Central American States reflects the desire of the peoples of Central America to live in peace, through a process of conciliation and co-operation, in accordance with the principles of self-determination and non-intervention. The prospects for peace in Central America should not be allowed to falter, and it is incumbent upon the international community to support such regional co-operation.

The question of Palestine, which has been recognized as the core of the Middle East problem, has been the focus of international attention as a result of the situation that prevails in the occupied territories. The tragedy of these events is a grim reminder of the urgent need to reach a just, comprehensive and peaceful solution of the Palestinian problem.

We feel that an international conference on the Middle East, under United Nations sponsorship, could serve as a useful vehicle in the search for a just and durable solution to the problem, provided all parties to the conflict are allowed

(Mr. Gyi, Burma)

to participate on an equal footing. The necessary foundations have already been laid in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

After much perseverance, the collective efforts of the Security Council have now resulted in a cease-fire between Iran and Iraq. The cease-fire constitutes the first essential step towards a negotiated settlement, through implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987), that would bring about a durable peace and an end to the suffering and devastation experienced by the peoples of both countries. We continue to place much hope in the efforts of the Security Council and in the important role of the Secretary-General in the peace-keeping efforts of the United Nations and in finding a solution to the conflict.

In southern Africa, the Assembly continues to face a situation in which the régime shows no sign of relenting in its efforts in maintaining the policies of apartheid. However, there are now significant developments with regard to the situation in the south-western region of Africa. The agreement on a set of principles for the establishment of peace in the region and recognition of the rights of the people of South West Africa to self-determination and freedom brings nearer the day of independence for Namibia. South Africa's intransigence and refusal to comply with the United Nations plan for Namibia constitute the obstacle to its implementation. It is hoped that the agreement reached will bring about without delay implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978), which constitutes the framework for the exercise by the Namibian people of their right to freedom and independence.

Needless to say, the root cause of South Africa's acts of destabilization, aggression and violation of the territorial integrity of neighbouring States lies in the régime's racial policy of apartheid. Universal condemnation and the international call for the complete abrogation of the apartheid system have not been heeded by the South African régime.

(Mr. Gyi, Burma)

The international community, through efforts in the United Nations and elsewhere, must continue to give steadfast support to the people of South Africa in their struggle against the institutionalized system of racial discrimination practised by the Pretoria régime.

United Nations endeavours to foster and promote the economic and social well-being of all peoples are also a priority issue. Such efforts need to be focused on more balanced and equitable international relations and on narrowing the gap between the developed and the developing regions of the world.

The developing countries continue to face an increasingly difficult economic environment. The institutions which govern international economic relations and which were created for the purpose of facilitating the smooth functioning of the global economy have not been effective in meeting the needs of the vast transformation that has taken place in the pattern of the global economy. Fundamental to these changes is the growing interdependence of nations, the recognition of which would require a more favourable international economic environment that would help to overcome the imbalances in the world economy. The revival of multilateralism is keenly needed so that the process of meaningful dialogue in areas relating to international economic co-operation may begin.

The general debate in the Assembly sets the tone for co-operation between nations on affairs of international importance, for which this Organization was created, and the statements we have heard this year inspire us with confidence. At the same time, we note some remarks that do not contribute to the attainment of the purpose of our discussions, and which encroach upon what can be considered matters of an internal nature in the affairs of States. With these thoughts in mind, the delegation of Burma considers it relevant to mention developments that pertain to our country.

(Mr. Gyi, Burma)

Nations, in the course of their history, sometimes go through crises and experience situations which gravely affect their national life and result in turmoil and unrest and the occurrence of unavoidable incidents.

(Mr. Gyi, Burma)

Burma has recently passed through such a phase, which has deeply touched the hearts and minds of the nation, the Government and the people. In such a time, when there is a need to establish law and order, when there are moments of great danger and the nation is threatened, it is the duty and obligation of the authorities of the State to assume their responsibilities to overcome such difficulties.

The situation prevailing today is that our nation is overcoming a period of disruption and has achieved a reasonable measure of stability. No outside Power can prescribe for Burma what its future political destiny should be, for it is the right of peoples to determine their own future. In order that the Burmese people may be able to exercise their rights, the State authorities have announced and are making arrangements for the holding of general elections, which will be free and fair and in which all political parties will be able to participate so that the multi-party system of democracy to which the people have been aspiring may be successfully established.

With regard to the conduct of its foreign relations, Burma will continue to pursue its traditional independent and active foreign policy and maintain its relations with other countries on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, profound changes that will shape life in the century ahead are taking place on the international scene. The problems that beset the world are many and complex and the destinies of nations have become more intertwined than ever before.

An atmosphere of optimism now prevails as nations express renewed faith in the United Nations. Such positive developments should bestow upon the Organization greater vitality and strength, as the universal forum for seeking solutions to the problems arising out of the complexities of our time, problems that affect all nations.

Mr. AL-ERTANI (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): I wish first to congratulate Mr. Dante Caputo, on behalf of the delegation of Yemen and on my own behalf, on his election as President of the forty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am certain that his generally recognized qualities as an experienced diplomat will prove invaluable for the success of this session. I can assure him that my delegation will do its utmost in working closely with him as he endeavours to carry out the tasks assigned to him and in the interests of satisfactory results for this session.

I am pleased to thank warmly his predecessor, Mr. Peter Florin, who guided the proceedings of the previous session and of the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament with great confidence and dedication.

It is also a pleasure for me to congratulate warmly the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, on his praiseworthy efforts to resolve many problems in keeping with the objectives of this Organization and in the maintenance of international peace and security.

On this occasion I cannot fail also to congratulate the Secretary-General and his associates, especially those who are devoted to peace and security and who have devoted their lives to the preservation of peace in many areas of the world. I refer in particular to the peace-keeping forces, which most assuredly deserved the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. Those forces, which are active in many areas of the world, unquestionably reflect the unanimous will of the world community represented here to see real dialogue established where the sounds of war are heard. We thank the Nobel Prize Committee on its choice, which reflects the confidence of the international community in the peace-keeping forces and in their humanitarian mission.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

I am pleased also to praise the valuable report submitted by the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, an eminently positive role it plays within the context of the general trend to find solutions to the chronic problems which threaten international peace and security, and whose main aspect is the maintenance of international peace and security. Our Organization has given the international community proof of its effectiveness as a result of its efforts in Afghanistan, the Arab Gulf, South-East Asia, South-West Africa and Western Sahara. Those efforts not only prove that the Organization is playing an invaluable role in maintaining international peace and security but also show that success or failure in peace-making efforts all largely depend on the conduct of the Member States and their determination to find solutions - through peaceful means and by refusing recourse to force even when one of the parties enjoys marked superiority - to the problems the world faces, for problems there will be as long as the world exists.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Even when one party to a conflict has a marked superiority, efforts must be made to bring about peace.

This session is being held in a general atmosphere of optimism and détente, the result of the progress that has been made and the relaxation of tension between the two major Powers, a concrete expression of which was the signing of a treaty reducing intermediate and long-range missiles. That is a first step towards general and complete disarmament, as my country said when the treaty was signed. My country expressed its great pleasure at the signing, but we believe that what has been achieved so far applies to only a tiny fraction of the nuclear arsenals; it is just a start.

The international community urgently calls for general and complete disarmament. Only when it is achieved can mankind's hopes for peace and understanding be realized. That is why we call on the international community - particularly the nuclear-weapon States - to make the Middle East and The Indian Ocean nuclear-weapon-free zones.

I cannot fail to express the deep concern of the countries of our part of the world about the present situation there. A State born of aggression and usurpation - Israel - and another country whose policies are based on racial discrimination and racial exclusivity - South Africa - refuse to have their nuclear facilities inspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as the international community desires.

The relaxation of tension between the two super-Powers augurs well for a future free from tension, on the basis of co-operation. Peaceful solutions to problems can be found in keeping with the right of peoples and free of outmoded policies based on efforts to gain illicit advantages which are likely only to bring the world to the brink of disaster. That is why my country supports the proposal

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to abolish nuclear weapons by the end of the century. We would also support any attempt to end nuclear tests and to strengthen the role of the United Nations politically and financially, in order to devote the sums poured into the arms race today to economic and social development, the kind of development that the least advanced countries sorely need and that is needed to create a world of peace, stability and justice in which we are all free from domination and exploitation.

My country believes that the militarization of outer space is a new threat to mankind, for mankind wishes to be free from the threat of the use of weapons and it would like to use outer space not for military but for peaceful purposes serving the interests of all mankind.

My country reaffirms its refusal to accept any military presence in the Indian Ocean. We should like to see a nuclear-free zone in that part of the world and in the Mediterranean basin, where there continue to be serious threats caused by the actions of a State born of aggression and colonial expansion. I refer to the Zionist entity in occupied Palestine.

The problem of the Middle East has existed now for more than 40 years. It was 40 years ago that Israel emerged as a racist, expansionist entity in the Middle East. For the past 40 years the region has been ravaged by successive wars which have seriously threatened regional peace and security and, even more, world peace and security. That has all been the result of Israel's aggressive policies and of the occupation of Palestine and other Arab territories since 1947.

There has been a refusal to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and Israel has engaged in aggression against the Palestinian and other Arab peoples.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Time and time again we have called on the international community in this Assembly to discharge its responsibilities and face up to the situation in the Middle East, to force the Zionist entity to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. But, despite the international community's recognition of the legitimate rights of Palestinian people, in particular its right to return home and to establish its own independent State on its own land, Israel continues to pursue a policy of tyranny, repression and terrorism against the defenseless Palestinians, thereby violating United Nations resolutions and defying the unanimous will of the international community, and thus defying all humanitarian values.

During the past 10 months the world has witnessed an uprising of Palestinians in occupied lands and crimes perpetrated by Israel in an attempt to deal with the uprising. I refer, of course, to the killing, torture, arrests and deportations engaged in by the Israeli forces against the Palestinians, the old and the young, men, women and children, in defiance of the will of the international community and resolutions adopted by it, including resolutions adopted by the Security Council and other international bodies.

Israel's intransigence is matched only by the arrogance of that country, which has the support of certain Member States of the Organization. But we have every reason to hope that the popular uprising in the occupied territories will make it possible to draw a distinction between what is true and what is false. All of us who are members of the United Nations must follow the proper course of action. For the truth is now clear for all to see. We call on those who still hesitate to recognize the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people to realize that it is high time for all of us to work together and put an end to Zionist

(Mr. Al-Bryani, Yemen)

occupation, so that we may respect the promises, the commitments, we entered into when we became members of the Organization. It is dismaying indeed to see some States which would have us believe that they are champions of human rights, and which have imposed sanctions against certain other States which have allegedly committed acts against those rights, suddenly changing course when it is a question of their own affairs and Israel's actions against the Palestinian people. That is why we believe our positions must be based on well-established humanitarian principles and values, and not on duplicity. We must not apply a double standard; we must view matters fairly.

That is why we believe the United Nations is now beginning to play an important role, owing to the relaxation of tension between the two super-Powers. We also believe that the Organization, and particularly the Security Council, will now be able to take proper action against Israel's inhuman acts against the Palestinians, committed daily for all the world to see.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Everyone knows full well that the failure of the international community to find a solution to this problem is due to Israel's stubborn refusal to implement the United Nations resolutions. My delegation believes that the only framework within which a just and lasting peace can be established in the Middle East is that of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, authentic representative of the Palestinian people. If the rights of these people are not recognized, then failure will be inevitable.

I wish now to stress the gravity of the situation in Lebanon. The situation is serious because of the failure of the efforts to elect a president of the Republic. My country warns against any attempt to partition Lebanon or to divide the people there. My country also reaffirms its desire to see peace and independence in Lebanon, a fraternal country. Yet my delegation believes that all this will be possible only if the Lebanese leaders, political and religious, understand that social and political equality will remain meaningless as long as they fail to reach a national consensus transcending psychological, religious and regional obstacles. From this rostrum we express our hope that our Lebanese brothers will succeed in overcoming their present difficulties, which only serve the interests of the enemy and frustrate their friends. We wish them every success in their endeavour.

I should also like to reaffirm my country's position of principle in favour of the prompt implementation of the Security Council resolutions calling for the immediate withdrawal of the occupying forces of Israel from Lebanese territory.

My country has expressed its deep satisfaction over the fact that Iran has accepted Security Council resolution 598 (1987), a resolution which Iraq accepted as soon as it was adopted. We are pleased that both parties have agreed to the

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

cease-fire and have accepted direct negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General but we know that these negotiations will indeed be arduous and that success will depend largely on the patience shown by both parties. Patience is needed if we are to achieve a just, honourable and lasting peace, one that recognizes the legitimate rights of both parties and removes the nightmare and spectre of war for future generations; a settlement that will re-establish good-neighbourly relations, fruitful exchanges, and peace and security for the region of the Gulf. Moreover, that would bring prosperity to the region and would put an end to the suffering and hardship caused by war.

We wish to thank all those who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the efforts that have led to the acceptance by Iran of Security Council resolution 598 (1987). That has led to a cease-fire and direct negotiations between the two countries. We hope that the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations will be able to continue their efforts to bring the views of the two parties closer together in the current talks between them. We hope also that a genuine, just and lasting peace will be established and that the two countries will devote their efforts to national reconstruction and will restore everything that the war has destroyed. We hope that the developed countries will be able to provide both countries with whatever assistance may be needed for their task of reconstruction.

On the problem of Afghanistan my country has followed with interest the results achieved through the Geneva Agreements concluded under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General. We would be very happy to see these Agreements implemented so that the Afghan people might be allowed to enjoy stability and so that the Afghan refugees may be allowed to return home. We trust that all the Afghan parties will be able to reach agreement on national unity and on the choice

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

of a government, an agreement that will satisfy the desires of the Afghan people, who wish to preserve their independence, neutrality and non-alignment.

Furthermore, my country welcomes the efforts that have been made by the Maghreb countries, and foremost among them the fraternal countries of Morocco and Algeria, to reach a just and lasting solution to the problem of Western Sahara under the auspices of the United Nations. That problem has always been a serious obstacle to the building of the greater Maghreb, and a resolution of the problem should lead to closer co-operation among the countries of the area, and to the greater Arab unity of which every Arab dreams.

My country is following with interest the Secretary-General's efforts to reconcile the differences between the two Cypriot communities. We wish for the fulfilment of the aspirations of the two communities, with respect for the rights of the Cypriot people to independence and to freedom of religion, which will guarantee their unity and independence.

I must also refer to the relaxation of tension in certain regional conflicts. I am referring to the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia. Both countries have declared their desire to settle their problems through fruitful dialogue and in accordance with the rules of international law. We hope that the dialogue between these two neighbouring countries, with which my country has historic economic and cultural ties, will be successful. That is important if peace and security in Africa and in the Red Sea area are to be maintained.

As regards South Africa, my country has often expressed its strong condemnation of the acts of aggression of that régime and the terrorism and repression practised by it against the South African people and the Namibian people, not to mention the repeated acts of aggression against the front-line States. My country welcomes the negotiations which have begun between the parties to the conflict and we hope that the visit by the United Nations Secretary-General

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

to South Africa, which is part of the efforts made this year in the interests of peace in many areas of the world, will make it possible for the Namibian people to enjoy freedom and will lead to the end of the policies of apartheid pursued by the Pretoria régime.

We are anxiously awaiting the practical steps that are to be taken to put into effect Security Council resolution 435 (1978) pertaining to the problem of Namibia and its independence and we believe that the forthcoming independence of Namibia is a victory for its fighting people and for all those who condemn colonialism and racism. It is also a victory for all peace-loving and justice-loving people in that part of the world and it is a further success to the credit of this Organization.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Yemen believes nothing can replace dialogue and negotiation in the resolution of regional and international conflicts. Thus we have been following with keen interest regional and international efforts to resolve the problem of Kampuchea.

My country has also been paying close attention to the contacts begun recently between the two Koreas and the agreement on a formula for the resolution of the Korean problem, which we hope will lead to the reunification of Korea with full respect for peace and democracy.

My country is deeply concerned by the political problems of the world, to which we have referred at length. We feel equal concern about its economic problems, which remain as urgent and important as ever.

Our highly developed world continues to be based on an unfair economic order. As has been emphasized, there is great need for change in this regard, and a new international economic order must be found, one based on equal opportunities and the interests of all parties concerned. That order must be capable of resolving the problems of the third world and reducing the gap between the industrialized rich countries and the impoverished areas of the world, which continues to grow day by day. My country believes that the current crisis and the stifling situation of the third world, which is characterized by imbalance, inequality and recurring acute conditions, poses a threat to the entire world economy. The implementation by third-world countries of measures to rationalize their imports - given the debt and reduced revenues that have resulted from the collapse of prices for their primary commodities and the protectionism their products encounter - could lead to an even more severe paralysis of the world economy and further widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Here I should like to welcome the decision of some developed countries to cancel the debts or the debt servicing of many developing countries. We hope further such measures will reduce the debt burden of the developing countries.

We also hope that the world will be able to emerge from this crisis, this impasse, and establish a new international economic order allowing for the transfer of technology under the best possible conditions with full regard to the sovereignty of the developing countries over their natural resources.

To that end, we must strengthen the role of the United Nations in the area of international economic co-operation, which would encourage us to make further efforts to establish a new international economic order that recognizes the equality of all States in all areas.

Economic and social development is the paramount concern of our country and in this regard we have made remarkable progress in spite of our meagre resources. A few days ago we celebrated the twenty-sixth anniversary of our Great Revolution, and on that occasion we launched a number of vital projects. Prior to that we had held free, direct elections to the Council of State, in keeping with the Constitution of my country and with full respect for law, democracy and the equality of all Yemeni citizens.

I might also refer to the Agreement of 17 May 1988 which paved the way for the eventual reunification of the two parts of Yemen through democratic, peaceful means. This Agreement establishes freedom of movement between the two parts of Yemen for citizens solely on the basis of possession of an identity card, without any restriction or administrative procedures.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Our people reaffirmed their confidence in their leader, Colonel Abdallah Salah, who had just been re-elected to a new five-year term of office as a result of the successes he has brought about for our country: prosperity, development, peace and stability. This was achieved by 10 years of dedication and self-denial for the glory of Yemen and the enshrinement of democratic principles in an egalitarian and just republican régime.

I hope that this session will be crowned with success, and that future sessions will witness a further reduction of tensions in a world free of conflicts, injustices, exploitation, suffering and hunger, where justice, co-operation and human solidarity will reign.

Mr. AL-THANI (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the President on his election to guide the work of the forty-third session of the General Assembly. I am confident that his wisdom and experience will contribute effectively to the achievement of the results we all seek through strenuous efforts to find constructive solutions to the problems of international peace and security through the co-operation of all the peoples of the world. My pleasure is all the greater because the President represents a country with which mine maintains positive and constructive co-operation.

The experienced leadership given by his predecessor at the forty-second session of the General Assembly earned him the gratitude and recognition it is now my pleasure to express.

We also wish to express our appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his distinguished service to our Organization in pursuance of the goals and political objectives of the Charter.

We are now witnessing hopeful international developments in the direction of dialogue and peaceful coexistence after a critical period of tension and

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

confrontation. We join with the international community in hailing these welcome developments. We hope that this new atmosphere will help bring about just solutions to problems affecting many of the peoples of the world, foremost among which are problems such as regional wars, foreign occupation, denial of the rights of other peoples, external hegemony, economic exploitation, terrorism and degradation of the environment.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

It is encouraging to note the new awareness of the impasse reached in the arms race and, as a result, the conclusion of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles between the United States and the Soviet Union. We also welcome the agreement on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the first steps taken towards solving the problem of Namibia, the Iran-Iraq war, and a number of other regional issues. We hope that this new awareness of the futility of military force will pave the way towards the settlement of other conflicts around the world and that the year 1988 will be the gateway to world peace.

My delegation salutes the popular uprising - the intifada - in the occupied territories of Palestine against the Fascist policies, encroachments and depredations of the Zionist entity in the holy places of Palestine. We strongly condemn the violent repressive measures, including deportation and the use of terrorist tactics practised by the Zionist entity against the unarmed Palestinian people, including women, children and the elderly.

The valiant resistance and steadfastness of the Palestinian people under occupation are the measure of its categorical rejection of the status quo imposed by Israel and of that people's insistence on its right to self-determination, to preservation of its national character and the full exercise of its national rights on the whole of its territory.

The intifada and the new facts it brought to light have negated Israeli propaganda's false claims to democracy. The new facts expose Israel before the whole world and starkly underline its Fascist practices and expansionist policies expressed in such abhorrent measures as deportation, imprisonment without due process, demolition of homes, confiscation of property, the establishment of colonial-type settlements and the continued transgression on the al-Aqsa mosque and other holy places in Palestine.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

Israel has to learn the lessons of history and reconsider its policies in light of these new facts which belie the "secure boundaries" argument invoked as a pretext for continued occupation and creeping annexation, in violation of the United Nations Charter and its resolutions, the norms of international law and the Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of the civilian population in time of war.

We reaffirm our unlimited support for the Palestinian people's uprising and call upon the world body and all peace-loving forces in the world to shoulder their historic responsibilities and do what is necessary to put an end to attempts at genocide and the policy of expulsion and deportation practised by Israel and aimed at driving out the legitimate inhabitants of Palestine and the occupied territories from their homeland.

Just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East cannot be founded on repression, terrorism and killing. It can only be built on a foundation of justice and respect for human rights and international norms of conduct. This can only be achieved by recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to self-determination and the establishment of its own State on its national territory.

From this perspective, the Amman summit meeting of Arab States unanimously declared that the only way to solve the problem in a fair and comprehensive manner is the convening of an international peace conference, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on an equal footing, as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The international community is leaning towards reaching a definitive solution along those lines.

The State of Qatar declares its support for all steps the PLO might take in its capacity as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

We welcome the acceptance by Iran of Security Council resolution 598 (1987), which had been accepted by Iraq when it was adopted. This acceptance carries great potential for the establishment of a just peace between two neighbourly Muslim nations, Iran and Iraq.

We express the hope that Iran and Iraq will be able to resolve all the problems between them in a peaceful, just and comprehensive fashion, thus safeguarding their respective interests and consolidating the peace and stability of the region in the best interests of their peoples and of the whole Arab and Islamic world.

In this regard, we commend the fruitful efforts of the Secretary-General, which were crowned by a cease-fire between the two warring neighbours. We reaffirm our support for his continued efforts to achieve the lasting peace for which we all yearn.

The State of Qatar, together with the other sister nations members of the Gulf Co-operation Council, stands ready to make every effort to ensure the success of the peace talks between Iran and Iraq. Despite all the difficulties, we are confident that negotiations will continue until a real, just and permanent peace is achieved and the stability of the Gulf region restored.

The State of Qatar welcomes the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and hopes that conditions in that country will be stabilized so that the Afghan people can devote its efforts to rebuilding the country and determining its own course.

The current situation in Africa is one of our main concerns. The South African régime represents the antithesis of what the United Nations was intended to embody, namely, the negation of repression and discrimination. The United Nations should intensify its efforts aimed at putting an end to the inhumane and immoral régime of apartheid. That régime cannot be reformed; it must be dismantled.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

We condemn the new racist legislation on residential segregation and firmly support the just struggle of the peoples of South Africa, Namibia, and the other countries in southern Africa. We call upon the international community, especially those countries which can influence South Africa's policies, to support the struggle of the people of southern Africa and compel South Africa's racist authorities to renounce their policies of apartheid and their attempts at destabilizing the neighbouring countries.

We commend the efforts of those parties which seek a solution to the problem of Namibia by putting an end to South Africa's illegal occupation and paving the way for Namibia's independence. We hope that the current negotiations will bring a halt to military operations on the Angolan border, ensure Namibia's independence and eventually do away with apartheid.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

The ever-growing nuclear arsenals of the two super-Powers are a persistent threat to the survival of the human race. We therefore welcome the initial agreement reached by the United States and the Soviet Union on the elimination of medium-range nuclear missiles. We hope that this agreement is the harbinger of other agreements on radical reductions of their strategic missiles and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The decision to conduct negotiations on nuclear testing should lead to the early conclusion of a treaty banning all such tests. At the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, the adoption of a convention prohibiting chemical weapons seems now more than ever before to be within reach. That result should speedily be achieved.

Another important problem is that of international terrorism. It is a complex problem that endangers the stability of States and affects their mutual relations. Moreover, terrorist activities pose a wanton threat to life, limb and property. While international co-operation and the enactment of co-ordinated measures at the domestic level are needed to combat terrorism, it is necessary also to understand the true nature of international terrorism.

We must also condemn terrorism practised by or under the direct supervision of States. Colonialism, Zionism and racist and hegemonist régimes indulge in State terrorism through armed aggression against sovereign States and interference in their internal affairs, and the expulsion from their homes and assassination of innocent people. Colonialism, Zionism and racism are all sources of widespread international terrorism, which constitutes a threat to peace and security and is condemned by the peoples of the world.

It is of prime importance to draw a clear distinction between evil acts of terrorism and the legitimate struggle of national liberation movements.

The state of the world economy is a source of deep concern. Despite all efforts to assemble the prerequisites for development, the rate of growth in

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

industrialized nations has been less than expected. In the developing world, dwindling returns on the export of raw materials and high interest rates on foreign debts have critically affected the financial resources of developing countries. This situation has a negative impact on economic performance and diminishes the possibility of growth through development.*

The indebtedness of the developing world continues to be the main obstacle to growth. It lowers the already low standard of living of the poorest of the poor. The heavy debt burden complicates all attempts at structural improvements in the economic policies of the countries concerned. All efforts at restructuring and at better mobilization of local resources are hampered by the immediate claims of debt servicing and thus fail to produce the expected rapid results. The problem of the effects of debt servicing on developing countries needs to be re-examined in a world-wide context. In allocating financial aid, the needs of the least developed countries should be given the special consideration they deserve.

Against that background, the State of Qatar welcomes the positive achievements of the seventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Implementation of the recommendations in the Final Act of that session could lead to specific progress in co-operation in dealing with the current acute crisis in international economic relations.

In conclusion, I wish to state that, even though changing conditions since the inception of the United Nations may have required changes in the Organization's methods of work, the lofty purposes and principles of the Organization remain as relevant as ever. The importance of the role played by the United Nations on the

*Mr. Kalpokas (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

world scene has been enhanced. It is more than ever necessary for us all to renew our commitment to the Charter principles, for the sake of a better world for our peoples and the future of mankind in general.

Mr. GBEZERA-BRIA (Central African Republic) (interpretation from French): The hope placed in the United Nations, which for a time had given way to indifference and mistrust, if not scorn, is being reborn. There is a new course in international relations that bodes well for the co-operation envisaged in the Charter. As the forty-third session of the General Assembly begins, my country, the Central African Republic, cannot but welcome these developments.

Our task is to consolidate and develop this new approach, and the international community has great need of the vast experience and personal qualities of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Dante Caputo, who can count on the co-operation and support of the delegation of the Central African Republic. In addition to conveying to him the warm congratulations of His Excellency General André Kolingba, President of the Republic, Head of State and founding Chairman of the Central African Democratic Assembly, I wish to pay a tribute to his country, Argentina, with which the Central African Republic maintains excellent relations of co-operation.

I wish also to express to his predecessor, Mr. Peter Florin, my delegation's satisfaction at the way in which he fulfilled his responsibilities.

The rebirth of trust and of the prestige of our Organization is the result, of course, of the will of Member States, but also of the faith and the patient, persevering action of the Secretary-General. The developments with regard to certain conflicts confirm this. The Central African Republic reiterates its expression of encouragement to Mr. Perez de Cuellar.

(Mr. Gbezera-Bria, Central African Republic)

Similarly, my delegation welcomes the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations. That is eloquent proof of our Organization's decisive action for peace and of its regained credibility.

The present international situation and the work of the Organization are being evaluated now in the context of a certain element of détente and a new dynamic of dialogue and search for compromise. These developments, historic in themselves, should not be interpreted as being fortuitous - and here we agree with the Secretary-General, who makes this point in his report on the work of the Organization for this year. They are the result of an awakening on the part of Member States to their interdependence and community of interests, which commit them to exploiting to the utmost the Charter and what it contains in order to seek, together, solutions to their problems. They stem from the instinct of preservation - a salutary reflex which in times of danger requires that the common values essential to the cohesion and survival of the group be defended.

Indeed, it is as if suddenly States, and particularly the great Powers, have finally realized that we were on the verge of catastrophe; that we could not go on arming ourselves indefinitely without grave danger to mankind; that freedom and the right of peoples to self-determination and development are common values and causes that are essential to all peoples, all States, and that cannot be constantly flouted or neglected.

These developments stem also from the failure of the ways and means to which States have hitherto resorted to find - in a fragmented or even selfish or unilateral way - overall solutions to problems that are, however, of common interest.

A brief review of recent events on the international scene suffices to demonstrate that this new approach, which consists in real participation by Member

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States in the search for solutions to the problems confronting the international community, can bring about, if not a settlement, at least an easing of certain conflicts the persistence of which was rendering the balance of peace ever more precarious.

It is to this that we owe the felicitous outcome of the situation in the Gulf region between Iran and Iraq, and the Central African Republic welcomes this outcome. The negotiations now going on under the auspices of the Secretary-General with a view to guaranteeing the consolidation of this achievement, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of Security Council resolution 598 (1987), could not have any other outcome. My delegation hopes for the rapid success of these negotiations and the restoration of a climate of trust between the two brother countries: Iran and Iraq.

With regard to southern Africa, while no final agreement has yet been reached, we place a great deal of hope in the negotiations under way - in Brazzaville among other places - and in all the individual or concerted action being taken at the moment. Indeed, for the first time, there is now a momentum that could bring about peace in that region. The determination of the parties to find a compromise that honours justice and peace is welcomed by the Central African Republic, which very much hopes that this momentum will accelerate, through the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978), the process of Namibia's accession to independence; will prevail upon South Africa to undertake the true democratization of South African society through the elimination of apartheid and the recognition of the political rights of the black majority; and will make possible a climate of confidence among the States of the region.

Furthermore, we are pleased with the turn of events in the Western Saharan situation. That has been made possible by the concrete action of the United

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Nations and the Organization of African Unity, which has led to the adoption of a peace plan by the interested parties. My delegation very much hopes that the application of that plan will finally bring harmony to that part of Africa.

Similarly, the normalization of relations between Chad and Libya which has just led - to the satisfaction of the Government of the Central African Republic - to the restoration of diplomatic relations between them should be viewed as a milestone in the efforts undertaken in all quarters to establish the conditions for the return, at last, of genuine peace in that region. It is important, nevertheless, to continue to work for a broadening of this climate of restored confidence.

The same co-operation among Member States which was indispensable for the settlement of certain conflicts should also be shown with a view to putting an end to the situations prevailing in the Middle East, where it is now urgent to hold this international conference which, with the participation of all the interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, will deal with the situation in the region - in particular the question of Palestine, which is its core; in Afghanistan, where, it is true, the withdrawal of foreign forces has begun and where, by the effective application in good faith of the Geneva agreements, the right of the Afghan people to decide their destiny in a neutral and non-aligned State must be recognized; in Kampuchea, where the principles of the United Nations on this question should lay the groundwork for any solution, including the unconditional withdrawal of foreign troops from that territory; in Central America, where the Guatemala agreement, which could establish genuine conditions for peace in the region, should produce its full effects; in the Korean peninsula, where the renewed dialogue between the parties should continue and be encouraged, not only to promote the enjoyment by the Korean people of their legitimate aspirations to

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African Republic)

independent and peaceful reunification, but also to make it possible to consider the question of the admission of Korea to the United Nations.

From what I have said so far it is clear that we must increasingly engage in efforts to encourage States to evince genuine political will, by co-operating within the framework of the machinery they have created, not only to ensure the maintenance of peace but also to promote the socio-economic development of all parts of the world - another condition for the balance of peace.

This new approach - in the economic field this time - can be reflected only in the support of States that is indispensable to the work of the United Nations, which can thus contribute to the establishment of conditions for the co-operation that is essential to the economic recovery of the least-developed parts of the world.

Now, the condition of those parts of the world, and Africa in particular, are regularly placed on the agenda of the General Assembly. Efforts have been made, it is true, under the auspices of the United Nations, to engage in reflection on this question. A Programme of Action was even adopted, on the basis of mutual responsibility. We have just had a mid-term review of that Programme. At this stage, the conclusions so laboriously reached by the Ad Hoc Committee that made the review - apart from any other comments on them - gives us an exact assessment of the situation two years after the adoption of the Programme.

They show that the African countries, whose responsibility for the application of the Programme of Action remains paramount, have kept their commitments; they have accepted enormous sacrifices and have made genuine efforts for development - efforts that, by the way, have been recognized and supported, unequally it is true, by the international community. But, as the Ad Hoc Committee recognizes, real obstacles have been impeding the development efforts that have been undertaken.

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African Republic)

These obstacles - which relate essentially to the impact of difficult climatic conditions, the collapse of the prices of commodities on which the economy of the African countries largely depends, the increase in their external debt and also in the servicing of that debt, and the inadequacy of financial flows in their direction - must be removed; otherwise, these countries cannot make any progress towards development.

However, the fact that the Ad Hoc Committee, at this interim stage, was able to reach agreement on the measures to be taken for the full application of the Programme of Action demonstrates the will of the African countries as well as of the international community to achieve the objectives laid down in the Programme of Action. The prospects thus opened up can lead to results only if the developed countries change their attitude and help to create a new climate of confidence in co-operation among States, particularly by trying to remove the obstacles to the development sought by their African partners. In that regard, earnings from the export of commodities should be sufficiently guaranteed so that countries would not be constantly subjected to the deleterious effects of the fluctuation in the prices of those commodities.

Priority should be given to the adoption of sound and flexible measures to alleviate the debt burden, because debt-servicing - which in some cases, such as in the Central African Republic, has attained one third of budgetary income - is a real impediment to the process of economic development, since no resources are available for investment.

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African Republic)

Recourse to rescheduling debts, because of its limited scope, does not make it possible to solve the structural problems which affect most African economies. That is why the international community should demonstrate a spirit of greater co-operation and solidarity, so that the measures that emerge from the forthcoming international conference on Africa's external debt will take account of the reciprocal interests of States. The action taken by Member States to contribute, jointly with the United Nations, to creating conditions for better organized co-operation in various fields will be effective only if the human dimension is taken into account as its ultimate goal. A larger measure of security and a minimum of development must, above all, mean greater security and at least a minimum standard of living for all.

In the Central African Republic, under the leadership of President Andre Kolingba, the democratic institutional process begun a short time ago is now being crowned by the restoration of democracy. My country has signed various international instruments which, within the framework of the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity, organize, govern and guarantee human rights. The protection of human rights has now become an imperative duty for the State and an ethic for the nation, because we cannot appeal for development efforts, for harmony or for peace if we do not promise man a better life. It is for man that these values must be cultivated, fostered and extended, particularly at a time when we are celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Yes, a new hope is emerging at the end of our century, a century of profound change, of phenomenal and prodigious advances in science and technology, of universal recognition that every man has a unique identity and character with

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regard to the values of emancipation, freedom and equality; but also a century which does not yet fully promote the achievement of these values for the benefit of mankind as a whole, as was the dream of the founding fathers of our Organization.

Can the renaissance of hope and the new trend towards dialogue and the search for compromise be the prelude to the attainment of a world of justice, tolerance and solidarity, a world in which together we can tackle the problems affecting the human condition and together provide a solution?

It can if we continue to show the political will to safeguard the United Nations, the indispensable framework for working together, for co-operation, for a new era of trust among States, nations and peoples.

It is time for all men of goodwill to unite their genius and their efforts, to speak the same language, the language of peace. Let them say no to war and no to poverty. Let their faith in the Charter of the United Nations and in a better mankind become ever more manifest.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic who has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind him that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): Yesterday evening the Israeli representative used this forum in flagrant defiance of all the rules and norms of morality, in a desperate attempt to divert the attention of the international community from the tragic situation afflicting the Palestinian Arab people in occupied Palestine and the populations of the other occupied Arab

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territories, just as his Foreign Minister did a few days ago. The comments made by the Israeli representative do not deserve any reply since they were based on a whole series of fabrications and distortions and were an attempt to divert attention from the facts of the situation in the Middle East. I would like, simply to set the record straight, to make the following clarifications.

First, the Israeli elections, together with projects and ideas in the run-up to those elections, are a farce intended to divert attention from the reality of the Israeli expansionist, settler-colonialist and aggressive policy in occupied Palestine and in the other occupied Arab territories. The world public can see quite clearly that Israel is the main obstacle impeding the peace process in the Middle East. The comments made by the Israeli representative yesterday evening cannot put back the masks that have fallen from the expansionist, racist, settler-colonialist face of Israel.

Secondly, a just, comprehensive peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved - I repeat, cannot be achieved - except in the context of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, in accordance with the resolutions relevant to the Israeli-Arab conflict and on the basis of the following: first, total withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, without any exception; secondly, agreement to enable the Palestinian Arab people to exercise their inalienable rights, foremost among which is their right to return to their homeland, Palestine, their right to self-determination and their right to establish their own independent State. Short of that, there will be no peace in the Middle East. I say that clearly. The slogans that are being used and the schemes that are being proposed to delude the world public and make it believe that Israel desires peace are false and cannot change the truth, which is that peace must be achieved at an international conference convened under the auspices of the

(Mr. Masri, Syrian Arab Republic)

United Nations, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and the parties concerned in the Israeli-Arab conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. This view enjoys international unanimity. Who, then, impedes the convening of such a conference? It is Israel, and only Israel, with the backing of some of those that support Israel.

(Mr. Masri, Syrian Arab Republic)

Thirdly, Syria has repeatedly made it clear, affirmed and reaffirmed that its relationship with Lebanon is a historical brotherly relationship based on the desire to help the Lebanese people solve their problems. That historical brotherly relationship between Syria and Lebanon cannot be compromised by anyone. It is based on common interests and common security.

The problems in Lebanon are the result of the barbaric invasion launched by Israel in 1982, which devastated Lebanon, undermined its territorial integrity and resulted in the occupation of southern Lebanon. Because of the Lebanese national resistance, Israel was forced to withdraw, but it remained in the southern part of the country. Israel must withdraw from the south. The Lebanese national resistance will force it out of the south.

With those comments, in which I have clarified the facts of the matter, I conclude my statement.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.