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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 13 December 1988, at 3 p.m.

<u>President:</u>	Mr. CAPUTO	
later:	Mr. MORTENSEN (Vice-President)	(Argentina)
later:	Mr. RANA (Vice-President)	(Denmark)
		(Nepal)

- Question of Palestine (continued)

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
- (b) Reports of the Secretary-General
- (c) Draft resolutions

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 37 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/43/35)
- (b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/43/272 and A/43/691)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (A/43/L.50, A/43/L.51 and A/43/L.52)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Taking into consideration the request of the Palestine Liberation Organization that the Chairman of the Executive Committee of that Organization participate in the debate on item 37 of the agenda of the General Assembly at its forty-third session; taking into consideration the opinion of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations; and taking into consideration the procedure adopted by the General Assembly for its 2282nd meeting, held on 13 November 1974, I invite Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to address the General Assembly with regard to agenda item 37.

Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was escorted into the Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. I now invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. ARAFAT (interpretation from Arabic): It never occurred to me that my second meeting with this Assembly since 1974 would take place in the hospitable city of Geneva. I had thought that the new political stance and postures evolved by our Palestinian people in the course of the Algiers meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), all of which have been made public and all of which have been welcomed and extremely well received internationally, made it necessary for me

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to travel to the world Organization's Headquarters in New York to brief the Assembly on our resolutions and our conceptualizations on the issue of peace in our homeland, as formulated by our Palestine National Council, the highest legislative authority in the Palestinian body politic.

Therefore, my meeting here with you today, in Geneva in the wake of an arbitrary United States decision which barred me from going to the Assembly in New York, is a source of pride and happiness. I am proud to be with you and among you. To be in the General Assembly is to be in the foremost world forum for the issues of justice and peace in the world. I am happy because I am in Geneva, where justice and neutrality are a guidepost and a constitution in a world where the arrogance of power drives some to lose their sense of neutrality and justice. The resolution adopted by your august Assembly, with 154 Member nations voting to move the session here, was not a victory over the United States decision, but an unprecedented landslide triumph for the international unanimity in favour of justice and peace. It was an unprecedented referendum and proof positive that the conscience of humanity has taken our people's just cause to its heart.

Our Palestinian people will never forget the stand that this august Assembly and those friendly States have taken on the side of right and justice in defence of the very values and principles for the preservation of which the United Nations came into being. That stand will for ever be a source of faith and assurance to every people that suffers injustice, oppression and occupation, and like our Palestinian people, struggle for freedom, dignity and survival.

To all the States, forces, international organizations and world figures that have backed our people and supported their national rights, particularly our friends in the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, the socialist countries, the non-aligned States, the Islamic States, the African States, the Asian States, the Latin American States, and all other friendly States, I extend

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our sincerest thanks. I also thank the States of Western Europe and Japan for their latest stands towards our people and invite them to take further steps to work out their resolutions in a positive way in order to pave the way for peace and a just settlement in our region, the Middle East.

I reiterate our solidarity with and support for the liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa in their struggle, and our support for the African front-line States against the aggression of the South African régime.

I seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to those friendly States which have taken the initiative in supporting us, in endorsing our Palestine National Council resolutions and in recognizing the State of Palestine.

And I will not miss this opportunity warmly to thank His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, and his assistants for their unremitting efforts to achieve humanity's aspirations after international détente and the resolution of its problems, particularly with relation to the cause of Palestine. I also extend my thanks and appreciation to the Chairman and other members of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their efforts on behalf of our people's cause. I also salute the non-aligned nations' Committee of Nine on the Palestine Question for all their constructive contributions to our people's cause.

To you, Sir, I extend my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the Assembly. I have full confidence in your wisdom and insight. I also congratulate your predecessor on his skilful handling of the proceedings of the previous session.

Lastly, I extend warm greetings and thanks to the Swiss Government and people for making this meeting possible and for all the excellent facilities they have provided.

(Mr. Arafat)

Fourteen years ago, on 13 November 1974, I received a gracious invitation from you to brief this august Assembly on the cause of our Palestinian people. As I stand here among you now, after all those eventful years, I see that new peoples have taken their places in your midst, thereby crowning their victories in their battles for freedom and independence. To the representatives of those peoples, I extend the warm congratulations of our own people and declare that I return to you with a stronger voice, a more resolute determination and greater confidence to reiterate my conviction that our struggle will bear fruit and that the State of Palestine, which we proclaimed at our Palestine National Council, will take its place among you to join hands with you in consolidating the Charter of this Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by putting an end to the tragedies besetting humanity and upholding the principles of right, justice, peace and freedom for all.

Fourteen years ago, when your voices resounded in the General Assembly Hall: "Yes to Palestine and the people of Palestine! Yes to the Palestine Liberation Organization! Yes to the inalienable national rights of the people of Palestine!" There were those who imagined that your resolutions would have little import. They failed to realize that those resolutions were among the mainstreams that watered the olive branch I carried that day, and made that branch, which we have watered with our blood, sweat and tears, grow into a tree firmly rooted in the ground and reaching for the sky. It is a tree that bears the promise of victory over oppression, injustice and occupation. Thus you gave us hope that freedom and justice will triumph, and we, in return, gave you a generation of our people that has dedicated its life to the realization of that dream. I speak of the generation of the blessed intifadah that today defends the honour of the homeland with the very stones of its soil and thus earns its belongingness to a people thirsting for freedom and independence.

(Mr. Arafat)

I bring you greetings from those sons of our heroic people, from our men and our women, from the masses of the blessed intifadah, which is now entering its second year with great momentum and painstaking organization, using a civilized, democratic approach to weather and confront occupation, oppression, injustice and the barbaric crimes committed daily by the Israeli occupiers.

I bring you greetings from our young men and women in the gaols and collective detention camps of occupation, greetings from the children of stones who are challenging an occupation force armed with warplanes, armour and weapons, thus reviving the image of Palestinian David confronting the heavily armed Israeli Goliath.

At the conclusion of my address in our first encounter, I, as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and leader of the Palestinian Revolution, reaffirmed that we had no wish to see a single drop of Jewish or Arab blood shed, that we had no wish for the fighting to continue for one more minute. I appealed to you then to spare us all those ordeals and agonies and speed up the laying of the foundations of a just peace based on securing the rights, hopes and aspirations of our people and the equal rights of all peoples.

I said then that I was calling upon you to stand by the struggle of our people to exercise their right to self-determination and enable our people to return from the compulsory exile into which they were forced at gunpoint. I asked you to help put an end to the injustice dished out to successive generations of our people over several decades, so that they may live as free and sovereign people on their native soil and in their homes, and enjoy all their national and human rights.

The last thing I said from this rostrum was that war breaks out from Palestine and peace starts in Palestine.

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The dream we had then was the establishment of a democratic State of Palestine wherein Moslems, Christians and Jews would live as equals who enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations in a unified integrated community just like any other people in this contemporary world of ours.

Our amazement was great indeed at the interpretation that Israeli officialdom chose to put on that Palestinian dream whose fountainhead was none other than the teachings of the monotheistic religions that illuminated the Palestine sky and the cultural and humanistic values that call for coexistence in a free democratic society. The interpretation was that the dream was an evil design to destroy and obliterate their identity.

(Mr. Arafat)

We had to draw the inescapable conclusion from that response. We had to take cognizance of the chasm between reality and the dream. We set out, in the Palestine Liberation Organization, to look for alternative realistic and achievable formulas capable of resolving the issue on the basis of possible rather than absolute justice while securing the rights of our people to freedom, sovereignty and independence; ensuring peace, security and stability for all and sparing Palestine and the Middle East wars and battles that have been going on for 40 years.

Were we not the ones who took the initiative of relying on the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, the Declaration of Human Rights and international legitimacy as the basis for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Did we not welcome the Vance-Gromyko communiqué of 1977 as a move that could form the basis of a proposed solution to this conflict?

Did we not agree to participate in the Geneva Conference on the basis of the American-Egyptian statement of 1977 in order to promote the prospects of a settlement and peace in our region?

Did we not endorse the Fez Arab peace plan in 1982 and later the call for an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations in conformity with its resolutions?

Did we not support the Brezhnev plan for peace in the Middle East?

Did we not welcome and support the Venice Declaration by the European Community on the basics of a just peace in the area?

Did we not welcome and support the joint initiative of Presidents Gorbachev and Mitterrand on a preparatory committee for the international conference?

Did we not welcome scores of political statements and initiatives by African, Islamic, non-aligned, socialist, European States and groups of States which aimed

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at finding a settlement based on the principles of international legitimacy that would safeguard peace and end the conflict?

And what was Israel's posture in relation to all this? When we put this question, we must keep in mind that not a single one of those initiatives, plans or communiqués lacked political balance or overlooked the claims and interests of any of the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel's posture in relation to all this has been to escalate further its settler expansionist schemes, to fan the flames of conflict with more destruction, devastation and bloodshed and the expansion of the fronts of confrontation to include Lebanon, which was invaded by the armies of occupation in 1982. That invasion involved the slaughtering and massacring of the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples, including the Sabra and Shatila horrors. Up to the present, Israel has continued to occupy part of South Lebanon. Lebanon continues to face daily raids and air, sea and land attacks on its cities and villages and on our camps in the South.

It is painful and distressing that the American Government alone should continue to back and support those Israeli aggressive and expansionist schemes and support Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, its ongoing crimes and its pursuance of the iron-fist policy against our women and children.

It is equally painful and distressing that the American Government should persist in refusing to recognize the right of 6 million Palestinians to self-determination, a right which is sacred to the American people and other peoples on this planet.

Should I remind them of the position of President Wilson, author of the two universal principles of international relations, namely, the inadmissibility of the

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acquisition of territory by force and the right of peoples to self-determination? When the Palestinian people were consulted by the King-Crane Commission in 1919, they chose the United States as the mandatory Power. Circumstances having prevented that, the Mandate was given to Britain. My question to the American people is: Is it fair that the Palestinian people should be deprived of what President Wilson prescribed?

(Mr. Arafat)

Successive American Administrations have been aware that the only birth certificate upon which the State of Israel was established has been General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, endorsed at the time by the United States and the Soviet Union. It provides for the establishment of two States in Palestine, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish.

How then can the American Government justify a position whereby it acknowledges and recognizes the half of that resolution that pertains to Israel and rejects the half pertaining to the Palestinian State? How does the United States Government explain its lack of commitment to the implementation of a resolution it has endorsed on more than one occasion in the Assembly, namely, General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which provides for the right of the Palestinians to return to the homes and properties from which they were evicted and calls for compensating those who may not wish to exercise that right?

The United States Government knows that neither the United States nor anyone else has the right of fragmenting international legitimacy and the provisions of international law.

The unremitting struggle of our people for their rights has been going on for several decades now. In waging that struggle, our people have offered hundreds of thousands of martyrs and wounded and endured all kinds of tragic suffering. This, however, has not weakened our people's resolve. Rather, it has strengthened their determination to hold on to their Palestinian homeland and their national identity.

The leaders of Israel, in their excitement, deluded themselves into believing that, after our exit from Beirut, the sea was going to swallow the Palestine Liberation Organization. Little did they expect the march into exile to turn into a procession of return to the homeland, to the real arena of the conflict, to occupied Palestine. The valiant popular intifadah erupted within our occupied

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land, the intifadah that has come to stay until the achievement of our goals of freedom and national independence.

I take pride in being one of the sons of those people who are writing with the blood of their children, their women and their men the most glorious epic of national resistance and who, for the sake of sustaining their intifadah and making it grow until it can impose its will and prove that right can prevail over might, are performing daily miracles that verge on the mythical. We salute with deep pride our people of the intifadah as the makers of a unique democratic revolutionary experiment. Theirs is the faith that could not be crushed by Israel's military machine; that could not be intimidated by the hail of all sorts of bullets, the burial of people alive, the breaking of bones, the inducement of miscarriages or the usurpation of water resources. Theirs is the resolve that could not be weakened by detention, internment, exile, deportation, collective punishment, the demolition of homes, the closing down of universities, schools, trade unions, associations, institutions and newspapers, or the laying of siege to camps, villages and towns. Those brutal measures have only served to strengthen their faith and resolve, thus spreading the revolution to every house and making it take root in every inch of our national soil.

A people with such a heritage and such a history cannot be defeated. All the forces of repression, tyranny and terror cannot sway it from its deep-rooted faith in its right to its homeland and in such values as justice, peace, love, coexistence and tolerance. Just exactly as the revolutionary's gun has protected us from physical liquidation and the destruction of our national identity in the hotbeds of confrontation, we are fully confident of our ability to protect our green olive branch in the hotbeds of political confrontation.

(Mr. Arafat)

The world-wide embrace of our just cause, pressing for the realization of peace based on justice, clearly demonstrates that the world has come to realize, unequivocally, who the executioner is and who the victim is, who the aggressor is and who the victim is, who the fighter for freedom and peace is and who the terrorist is.

The day-to-day practices of the occupation army and the gangs of fanatic armed settlers against our people, our children and our women, have unmasked the ugly face of Israeli occupation and exposed its true aggressive nature.

This growing world-wide awareness has reached Jewish groups within Israel itself and without. Their eyes have been opened to the reality of the problem and the essence of the conflict, particularly since they have witnessed the inhuman, day-to-day Israeli practices that undermine the tolerant spirit of Judaism itself.

It has become difficult, nay, near impossible, for a Jew to reject racial persecution and uphold freedoms and human rights while remaining silent about Israel's crimes against Palestinian human rights, the Palestinian people and the Palestinian homeland, particularly the ugly day-to-day practices of the occupiers and the gangs of armed settlers.

We distinguish between the Jewish citizen whom the Israeli ruling circles have continuously sought to disinform and mislead and the practices of the leaders of Israel.

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We even realize that within and outside Israel there are courageous and honourable Jewish people who do not condone the Israeli Government's policy of repression, massacre, expansion, settlement and expulsion and who recognize that our people have equal rights to life, freedom and independence. On behalf of the Palestinian people, I thank them all for their courageous and honourable stance.

Our people do not want a right that is not theirs or that is not vested in them under international legitimacy and international law. They do not seek freedom at the expense of anyone else's, nor do they want a destiny which negates that of another people. Our people refuse to feel superior to, and refuse to be less than, any other people. Our people want equality with all other peoples; to have the same rights and the same obligations. I call upon all the peoples of the world, especially those who experienced Nazi occupation and considered it their duty to put paid to the practice of oppression and injustice by one people against another and help all those who fall victim to terrorism, fascism and nazism. I call upon all those peoples to face up today to the responsibilities put upon them by history towards our long-suffering people, who only want a place for their children under the sun, in their homeland - a place where they can live as free people in a free land, like all other children in the world.

It is cause for optimism that our struggle should culminate in the ongoing intifadah in an international climate marked by a serious and sustained quest for international détente, accord and progress. We are heartened by the successes of the United Nations and its Secretary-General and their effective contribution to the settling of many problems and the defusing of hotbeds of tension in the world in the context of this new international détente.

Surely, it is impossible to consolidate this new, positive international climate without addressing all the problems and hotbeds of tension around the globe

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with the aim of formulating the dictates of the human conscience into more accurate and responsible criteria for the evaluation of the actions of men and nations. Such criteria should have the transparency that would enable us all to face up to the challenges and new responsibilities of the coming century, in terms of averting wars and destruction and working for more freedom, well-being, peace and progress for all mankind.

No one here would dispute the fact that the Palestine problem is the paramount problem of our contemporary world. It is the oldest on the United Nations agenda. It is the most intricate and complex. Of all the regional issues, it is the issue that poses the most serious threat to international peace and security. Hence, it has a priority among the issues which command the attention of the two super-Powers and, indeed, all the countries of the world. Therefore, it is necessary to make the required effort to define a course for its resolution on a basis of justice. This, in itself, would be the greatest guarantee of peace in the Middle East.

We in the Palestine Liberation Organization - in our capacity as the leadership responsible for the people of Palestine and their destiny, in all faithfulness to the struggle of our people and respect for the sacrifices of our martyrs; in our desire to contribute to the prevailing climate of coexistence and détente, and our awareness of the importance of participating in the peaceful political efforts to find a political solution that would put an end to the tragedies of war and fighting and pave the way to peaceful coexistence under international law - summoned our Palestine National Council to an extraordinary session in Algiers from 12 to 15 November 1988 with the purpose of defining and clarifying our position as a main party to the Arab-Israeli conflict, a party without whose participation and agreement that conflict cannot be resolved.

(Mr. Arafat)

I am pleased to inform the Assembly, with great pride, that our Palestine National Council, through a totally free exercise of democracy, has again demonstrated its ability to shoulder its national responsibilities and has adopted serious, constructive and responsible resolutions which pave the way for us to reinforce and highlight our desire to find and contribute to a peaceful settlement that would secure the national and political rights of our people and ensure peace and security for all.

The first and decisive resolution of our Palestine National Council was the proclamation of the establishment of the State of Palestine, with the Holy City of Jerusalem, Al-Quds al-Sharif, as its capital. The State of Palestine was declared by virtue of the Palestinian Arab people's natural, historic and legal right to its homeland, Palestine, and of the sacrifices of its successive generations in defence of the liberty and independence of their homeland; pursuant to the resolutions of the Arab summit conferences; by the authority of international legitimacy, as embodied in the resolutions of the United Nations since 1947; and in exercise by the Palestinian Arab people of their right to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty over their soil, and in conformity with your successive resolutions.

It is important, while repeating this historic proclamation before the international community, now that it has become one of the official United Nations documents, to reaffirm that this is an irreversible decision and that we will not relent until it succeeds in casting off the occupation, enabling our Palestinian people to exercise their sovereignty in their State, the State of Palestine of the Palestinians, wherever they may be, so that they may develop their national and cultural identity and enjoy full equality in rights. Their religious and political beliefs and their human dignity shall be safeguarded under a democratic

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parliamentary system of government built on the freedom of opinion, the freedom to form political parties and where the rights of the minority will be protected by the majority and the decisions of the majority will be respected by the minority. That democratic system will be based on the percepts of social justice and equal rights, freedom from ethnic, religious, racial or sexual discrimination under a constitution that will guarantee the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in full allegiance to the centuries-old spiritual and cultural Palestinian heritage of religious tolerance and coexistence.

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The State of Palestine is an Arab state; its people are an integral part of the Arab nation and of that nation's heritage, its civilization and its aspiration after the goals of social progress, unity and liberation. The State of Palestine is committed to the Charter of the League of Arab States, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of non-alignment.

It is a peace-loving State committed to the principles of peaceful coexistence, and it shall work with all States and peoples to attain a permanent peace built on justice and respect of rights.

It is a State that believes in the settlement of international and regional disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations. It rejects the use of and the threat to use, force, violence or terrorism against its territorial integrity and political independence and, equally, against the territorial integrity of any other State, without prejudice to its natural right to defend its territory and independence.

It is a State that believes that the future can only bring security to those who are just or have returned to justice. This is the State of Palestine which we have proclaimed and which we shall endeavour to embody so that it can take its place among the States of the world and share in and creatively contribute to the shaping of a free world in which justice and peace would prevail.

Our State, God willing, will have its provisional Government at the earliest possible opportunity. The Palestine National Council has mandated the PLO Executive Committee to assume the functions of that government in the interim.

In order to give the aforementioned decision a concrete form, our Palestine National Council adopted a series of resolutions. I would like to highlight the most salient of those resolutions, which underline our determination to earnestly

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pursue the path of an equitable peace settlement and to exert the maximum effort to ensure its success.

Our PNC stressed the need to convene an international conference on the subject of the Middle East and its essence, the question of Palestine, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the conflict in the region, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing, with the provision that the international conference should be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and should guarantee the legitimate national and political rights of the Palestinian people first and foremost among which is their right to self-determination.

Our PNC also reasserted the need for Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories it had occupied since 1967, including Arab Jerusalem; the establishment of the Palestinian State; and the cancellation of all measures of attachment and annexation and removal of the settlements established by Israel in the Palestinian and Arab territories since 1967, as called for in the Arab summit resolutions of Fez and Algiers.

Our PNC also reaffirmed the necessity of seeking to place the occupied Palestinian territories, including Arab Jerusalem, under United Nations supervision for a limited period, in order to protect our people and to provide an atmosphere conducive to a successful outcome for the international conference, the attainment of a comprehensive political settlement and the establishment of security and peace for all peoples and States in the Middle East, through mutual acceptance, and in order to enable the State of Palestine to exercise its effective authority over those territories, as called for by the resolutions of the Arab summits.

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Our PNC called also for the solution of the Palestine refugee problem in accordance with United Nations resolutions on the subject. It also stressed that freedom of worship and the practice of religious rites for all faiths should be assured at the holy places in Palestine. The PNC also confirmed its previous resolution with regard to the privileged and special relationship between the fraternal peoples of Jordan and Palestine and that the future relationship between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Palestine and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan would be established on the basis of a confederacy and of free and voluntary choice by the two fraternal peoples in corroboration of the historical ties and vital common interests which linked them.

The PNC reaffirmed the need for the Security Council's establishment and assurance of arrangements for security and peace among all the States in the region.

It is important for me here to point out that these resolutions reflect clearly, both in content and wording, our firm belief in peace and freedom and our total awareness and deep appreciation of the climate of international détente and the eagerness of the international community to reach balanced solutions that address the requirements and fundamental interests of the parties to the conflict. Those resolutions also attest to the earnestness of the Palestinian people's position on the question of peace: that they are committed to peace and believe that it should be secured and guaranteed by the Security Council under the aegis of the United Nations.

The resolutions constitute a firm, unambiguous rebuttal to all arguments, prejudices, stands and pretexts used by some States to cast doubt on the position and policy of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

(Mr. Arafat)

While our people, through their intifadah and their representatives in the PNC, were voting for peace and, thereby, confirming their positive responsiveness to the prevailing mood of détente in international relations and the growing tendency to settle world conflicts by peaceful means, the Israeli Government went on fanning the flames of aggression, expansionism and religious bigotry, thereby announcing its insistence on opting for belligerence and the denial of our people's right.

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The Palestinian side, for its part, has formulated clear and responsible political positions, in consonance with the will of the international community, in order to help convene the International Peace Conference and ensure the success of its proceedings. This gratifying and courageous international backing, as expressed in the recognition of the State of Palestine, is but further proof of the soundness of our course and the credibility of our resolutions, which are fully in harmony with the international will for peace.

While we greatly appreciate the free United States voices that have explained and supported our position and resolutions, we note that the United States Administration remains uncommitted to even-handedness in its dealings with the parties to the conflict. It continues to demand from us alone the acceptance of positions which cannot be determined prior to negotiation and dialogue within the framework of the International Conference.

I would point out here that the recognition of the equality and the mutual rights of both parties to the dispute is the only way to answer the many questions being posed, regardless of their source. If policies as practised on the ground are any reflection of the policy-makers' intentions, then it is the Palestinian side that has more cause to worry and demand reassurances about its fate and its future, facing as it does a State of Israel that is bristling with the latest in arms, including nuclear weapons.

Our Palestine National Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the United Nations resolutions that uphold the right of peoples to resist foreign occupation, colonialism and racial discrimination, and their right to struggle for independence. It has also reaffirmed its rejection of terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism, emphasizing its commitment to its past resolutions in

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this regard, to the resolution of the Arab summit in Algiers in 1988, to General Assembly resolutions 42/159 of 1987 and 40/61 of 1985, and to what was stated on this subject in the relevant Cairo Declaration of 7 November 1985.

This is a position that is clear enough and completely unambiguous. And yet, as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I hereby declare once more: I condemn terrorism in all its forms, and at the same time salute those sitting before me in this Hall who, in the days when they fought to free their countries from the yoke of colonialism, were accused of terrorism by their oppressors and who today are the faithful leaders of their peoples, stalwart champions of the values of justice and freedom.

I also offer a reverent salute to the martyrs who have fallen at the hands of terrorism and terrorists, foremost among whom is my lifetime companion and deputy, the martyr-symbol Khalil al-Wazir, and the martyrs who have fallen in the massacres to which our people have been subjected in various cities, villages and camps in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon.

The situation in our Palestinian homeland can abide no further abeyance. Here are our people and our children in the vanguard of the march, carrying the torch of liberty, and giving their lives daily in order to end the occupation and lay the foundations of peace in their free, independent homeland and in the region as a whole.

For this reason, the Palestine National Council adopted its resolutions from a standpoint of realism, taking into account the circumstances of the Palestinians and the Israelis and the need to foster a spirit of tolerance between them.

The United Nations bears a historic, exceptional responsibility towards our people and its rights. More than 40 years ago, the United Nations, in General Assembly resolution 181 (II), decided on the establishment of two States in

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Palestine, one Palestinian Arab and one Jewish. Despite the historic wrong that was done to our people, it is our view today that the said resolution continues to meet the requirements of international legitimacy, which guarantees the Palestinian Arab people's right to sovereignty and national independence.

Therefore, the acceleration of the tempo of the peace process in the region requires an exceptional effort on the part of all the parties concerned and of the international parties, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, which bear a special responsibility towards the cause of peace in our region.

The United Nations, the permanent members of the Security Council and all international blocs and bodies have a vital role to play at this stage.

Therefore, in my capacity as Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee which, at present shoulders the functions of the provisional government of the State of Palestine, I present the following Palestinian peace initiative:

First, that a serious effort be made to convene, under the supervision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the preparatory committee of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East - in accordance with the initiative of President Gorbachev and President Mitterrand, which President Mitterrand presented to the Assembly towards the end of last September and which was supported by many States, in order to pave the way for the convening of the International Conference, which commands universal support, with the exception of the Government of Israel;

Secondly, on the basis of our belief in international legitimacy and the vital role of the United Nations, that actions be undertaken to place our occupied Palestinian land under temporary United Nations supervision, and that international forces be deployed there to protect our people and at the same time supervise the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from our country;

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Thirdly, that the PLO will work for the achievement of a comprehensive settlement among the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the State of Palestine, Israel and the other neighbouring States, within the framework of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1974), so as to guarantee equality and the balance of interests, especially our people's rights to freedom and national independence, and respect for the right of all the parties to the conflict to exist in peace and security.

(Mr. Arafat)

If these principles are endorsed at the International Conference, we shall have come a long way towards a just solution, and that will make it possible to reach agreement on all security and peace arrangements.

I hope it is clear to everyone that our Palestinian people, determined as they are to gain their legitimate national rights to self-determination, return and the ending of the occupation of the Palestinian homeland, are equally determined to strive for those goals by peaceful means within the framework of the International Conference, under the sponsorship of the United Nations and in accordance with its Charter and resolutions.

I assure you that, like all other peoples on earth, we are a people that yearn for peace - and perhaps with greater enthusiasm, considering our long years of suffering and the harsh conditions that plague our people and our children, who are deprived of living a normal life free from war, free from tragedy, free from the torment of exile, free from homelessness and daily anguish.

So let the voices of those who are for the olive branch, peaceful coexistence and international entente be raised. Let all hands join in defence of a historic - possibly unique - opportunity to put an end to a tragedy that has lingered for too long and cost thousands of lives and the destruction of hundreds of villages and cities.

If we offer the olive branch of peace, it is because that branch sprouts in our hearts from the tree of our homeland, the tree of freedom.

I have come to you in the name of my people, offering my hand so that we can make real peace, peace based on justice. On that basis I ask the leaders of Israel to come here, under the sponsorship of the United Nations, so that together we can forge that peace. I say to them, as I say to you, that our people, who seek dignity, freedom and peace for themselves and security for their State, want the same thing for all the States and parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

(Mr. Arafat)

Here, I would address myself specifically to the Israeli people in all their parties and forces, and especially to the forces among them which advocate democracy and peace. I say to them: Come, cast away fear and intimidation. Let us make peace. Leave behind the spectre of the wars that have raged continuously over the past 40 years. Set aside all threats of wars to come, whose fuel could only be the bodies of our children and yours. Come, let us make peace. Let us make the peace of the bold, of the courageous, far from the arrogance of power and the weapons of destruction, far from occupation and oppression and humiliation and murder and torture.

"Say: O People of the Book! come

To common terms ...": (The Holy Koran, III:64)

so that we can build peace in the land of peace, the land of Palestine.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

(The Holy Bible, Luke 2:14)

"O Lord, Thou art the peace, and the peace is of You, and the peace shall return unto You. Let us live, O Lord, in peace and enter Heaven, Thy house, the house of peace." (The Torah)

Finally, I say to our people:

"The dawn approaches. Victory is at hand. I see the homeland in your holy stones. I see the flag of our independent Palestine fluttering over the hills of our beloved homeland."

Thank you. Peace be upon you, and God's mercy and His blessings.

Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was escorted from the Assembly Hall.

Mr. ABDEL MEGUID (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to greet you once more at this current session of the General Assembly, which has been convened away from the New York Headquarters in order to discuss one of the most important items on its agenda.

I take the floor after the historic address that has just been delivered by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). On this occasion, I should like at the outset to convey my heartfelt appreciation to Chairman Arafat for his historic address. I should also like to pay a tribute to him for his courage, his foresight and his sense of realism, which are great assets that will no doubt pave the way to peace and justice in the Middle East.

I am addressing the Assembly today at a historic juncture. The question of Palestine, which we are gathered here to debate, is at an important turning-point and we are gathered together here, in an unprecedented manner, to consider it and, thereby, initiate movement towards the achievement of a just durable peace in the Middle East. Our decisions will chart the course for future generations in the Middle East and elsewhere. The stakes are very high and our responsibilities great.

The unequivocal position adopted by the great majority of States, regardless of different affiliations and orientations, is a true demonstration of understanding and acceptance. At the same time, it is an expression by those States of the fact that the Palestinian position, as expressed in the documents of the special session of the Palestine National Council that met at Algiers from 12 to 15 November 1988, has evolved in a historic manner worthy of the full support of all peace-loving countries.

The crucial session of the Palestine National Council coincided with the first anniversary of the beginning of the Palestinian intifadah in the occupied

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

Palestinian territories, an uprising demanding the termination of the Israeli occupation and the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as recognized by the United Nations Charter, upheld by the norms of international law and enunciated by a host of General Assembly resolutions.

The intifadah has captured the attention and gained the sympathy and support of world public opinion. Its motives and its rationale are universally admired. The cruelty and long duration of the occupation have not succeeded in putting an end to the genuine outcry of the oppressed. The intifadah continues, Israeli suppression notwithstanding. The steadfastness of the Palestinian people is clear testimony to the fact that the Palestinian cry for freedom and independence will remain loud and be heard in all corners of the world. The Palestinian people have paid an enormous price over the years. They deserve to attain their rights. There is no doubt that the struggle of the Palestinian people will finally be crowned with success.

The decision of King Hussein last July to end Jordan's administrative and legal ties with the West Bank was clearly in conformity with that perspective. It confronted Israel with the necessity of dealing with the true facts of the situation.

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

We have recently witnessed many meetings by various Palestinian groups held to stress the right of the Palestinian people and reach a decision. The special session of the Palestine National Council reflected the decision of the Palestinians to assume and practise their responsibilities in a democratic way. The decisions of the Palestine National Council were taken in an appropriate international climate in the context of which many problems are being solved. We hope that that positive climate will extend to the Middle East.

I should like to stress the importance of the step taken by the Palestine Liberation Organization as reflected in the three documents adopted at the Algiers meeting of the Palestine National Council. Those documents represent the fundamental development of Palestinian thought, which should carry a clear message to all. The Palestinian resolutions came at a propitious time as regards the international environment. They coincide with the emergence of positive developments in several regions. They took into account the prevalent conditions, both on the regional and international levels, as well as their implications for the course of the conflict in the region as expressed in the four following elements: first, recognition of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), coupled with the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as the basis for the convening of an international conference for the establishment of peace in the Middle East; secondly, the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State within the context of international legitimacy, based on General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which provides for two States in Palestine - an Arab State and a Jewish State - and ensures the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty and national independence; thirdly, to proceed from the establishment of an independent Palestinian State to a confederal relationship with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; and, fourthly, the rejection of violence and the renunciation of terrorism.

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

It is worth noting that the Palestinian proclamation reiterated total respect for United Nations principles and, in particular, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of non-alignment. Adherence to those principles represents, in our view, a valuable achievement of the Palestine National Council and provides a significant foundation for political progress which will strengthen the efforts to achieve a just and acceptable settlement by all the parties to the conflict.

I wish to reiterate in clear terms that, in our view, the Palestine National Council has indeed adopted a realistic and practical approach within the framework of international legitimacy.

The Stockholm Declaration was equally clear and explicit in reiterating the positive Palestinian commitment to strive for a just and lasting peace as a solution to the problem.

The Palestinians are the main party to the Middle East conflict. They have clearly identified their position, and have fully satisfied a universal prerequisite: that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) be the basis for negotiations within the framework of the International Peace Conference for a comprehensive and just settlement.

In this context, it should be emphasized that the proclamation of the Palestinian State included recognition of the existence of the State of Israel. Thus, the Palestinians have declared their crucial choice to engage in a peace process based on General Assembly resolution 181 (II) partitioning Palestine, as well as the principles and provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions which dealt with the situation as it existed on 5 June 1967.

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

This responsible position adopted by the Palestine Liberation Organization requires reciprocal responses from all parties and, in particular, Israel.

I call on Israel to respond positively to the constructive Palestinian offer in order to achieve a just and lasting peace, a peace which accepts the existence of the State of Palestine as well as the existence of the State of Israel, a peace which respects the rights of the Palestinian people and the rights of the people of Israel. The international community should not direct its efforts to serve the interests and rights of only one party in any conflict. It should direct its efforts and mobilize all its resources to achieve a settlement in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. The ultimate objective is justice for all. We are thus called upon to adopt resolutions consistent with the norms of international legitimacy and the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, which are recognized by the international community.

Allow me at this historic meeting to elaborate on a number of important points and to state them clearly. We are witnessing a steady movement towards a new era of peace, understanding and co-operation in world affairs. The Middle East should not be allowed to become the exception to this general rule. The Palestinian question should not remain as the focal point of tension, conflict and the denial of fundamental rights.

What was proclaimed in the declaration of independence by the Palestine National Council regarding General Assembly resolution 181 (II) as the basis for international legitimacy ensures the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty and national independence. That, in itself, represents an acceptance of the partition of Palestine referred to in the resolution. Furthermore, Palestinian acceptance of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) is a clear recognition of the right of Israel to exist within secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries. This

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

recognition indeed implies an acceptance of the cessation of hostilities with Israel and is a recognition of the right to sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence for Israel and all parties to the conflict.

However, it should be abundantly clear that this Palestinian acceptance is neither a gift to be offered nor a price to be paid in exchange for nothing. Israel should, in return, be prepared to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to existence, self-determination, independence and sovereignty, and to live within secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries.

Israel has the right to ensure its security, but this cannot be an absolute right. It defies logic; it defies historical facts; it defies the elementary principles of law and equity to claim that the rights of Israel should prevail over and supersede the rights of all the other parties to the conflict. Its rights should be balanced with the rights of others, for without this equilibrium and the balance of rights and duties, it will not be possible to achieve a durable, just peace.

Egypt calls upon the international community and, in particular, the great Powers, the permanent members of the Security Council, to discharge their responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe a process of consultation should start in preparation for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. We call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to carry out such consultation as soon as possible.

Egypt and other countries have presented several constructive initiatives for peace in the Middle East. Those initiatives contained positive elements worthy of support. It is important that they be implemented and that they add momentum to the achievement of a just settlement for it is only through a just peace that the rights and obligations of all the parties concerned can be attained and balanced.

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

The international community and the competent organs of the United Nations should intensify their efforts with a view to enhancement of the peace process in the Middle East. In several regions of the world that have been hotbeds of tension and conflict over long periods of time, the United Nations has assumed a vital role in ensuring peace, security and stability. Thus, we are entitled to expect an identical lofty dedication by the international community to the attainment of peace in the Middle East.

The role we expect from the United Nations and all the parties concerned with reaching a peaceful solution requires that there be constant contact with the parties to the conflict. We hope that through paving the way for negotiations and reaching a settlement, the United Nations would take advantage of the propitious international atmosphere to convene the International Peace Conference under its auspices and at the invitation of the Secretary-General, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the conflict and, in particular, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people on an equal footing. This is the framework that has received the overwhelming support of the majority of the international community for bringing peace to the area.

Egypt has been in the vanguard of States calling for peace and has consistently worked in international and regional forums for the support of the just cause of the Palestinian people, to enable them to exercise their legitimate rights, foremost among which is their right to self-determination and to an independent State. Moreover, Egypt, under the leadership of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, has exerted tremendous efforts to that end in the course of the years. The Aqaba Summit of October 1988, in which King Hussein of Jordan and Chairman Yasser Arafat participated, is but one example. From the

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outset, Egypt has supported and recognized the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State. That solid stand originates from Egypt's strategic commitment to strive, regardless of any obstacles, towards the realization of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Let me quote, in this respect from the speech that we have just heard from Yasser Arafat in order to highlight the following

"The Palestine Liberation Organization will work for a just and comprehensive peace between the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict - Palestine, Israel and other neighbouring countries - through an international peace conference for the Middle East to bring equality and balance and the rights of our people to national sovereignty and independence and for all parties concerned to live in peace and security in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967)." (supra, p. 34-35)

We are at a historic crossroads. All the parties concerned, whether regional or international, should carry out their responsibilities for the settlement of the Middle East conflict. In this regard, Egypt wishes to emphasize the following basic and significant elements.

First, all international forces should urge Israel to respond positively to the historic Palestinian decisions by accepting the concept of mutual and simultaneous recognition between the State of Palestine and the State of Israel.

Secondly, the parties concerned should embark on a process of consultation among themselves within the framework of the Security Council in preparation for direct negotiations to take place through the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as well as the recognition of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

Thirdly, the settlement would entail Israeli withdrawal from the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights and Arab East Jerusalem. It would also require the recognition of the right of all peoples and States of the region, including Israel and the Arab States, to live in peace, within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. It would provide for the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination on their own territories without any external interference.

The value of the wise Palestinian decisions is obvious. They represent serious and constructive steps towards peace. They deserve positive and supportive responses on the part of the international community and all the parties directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. Our main task here is to ensure that such a unique opportunity for peace, which might not recur, should not be wasted. The history of this conflict has been aptly described as the history of lost opportunities. We have witnessed opportunities in the past that were not firmly grasped with sobriety and determination. Opportunities were lost owing to the insistence by some on narrow, shortsighted interests. The favourable circumstances prevailing now should be utilized in the best possible manner in order to overcome the obstacles which impede the realization of the security and stability of the people of our region who have suffered for 40 years - the lifespan of this conflict.

The challenge of peace is the greatest challenge we face at a time when we are on the threshold of an extremely crucial stage in the long history of the conflict. Egypt is firmly convinced that there exist genuine and realistic possibilities of initiating serious negotiations to bring to an end a long period of agony and suffering endured by the people of the Middle East in general and the Palestinian people in particular. Furthermore, the negotiations could usher in an era in which the principles of peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness and mutual co-operation govern the relations between the States of our region.

(Mr. Abdel Meguid, Egypt)

From this standpoint, we assert the need for all the States in the region and in the world to grasp this opportunity, accept the challenge of peace in order to avoid a possible catastrophe which might result from continued tension, and establish a comprehensive and lasting peace in an area which was the cradle of civilization and of the three monotheistic religions.

Mr. MASRI (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): We have just heard the historic statement by Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in which he presented the viewpoint of the Palestine Liberation Organization emanating from the meeting of the Palestine National Council last November when it adopted the political statement and the announcement of independence and the setting up of the State of Palestine. We consider this to be a turning-point in the Arab-Israeli conflict and an important foundation for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the area because it has removed all the impediments and obstacles used as justification for impeding the path of peace.

(Mr. Masri, Jordan)

At the outset, I should like to extend to you, Sir, and to the United Nations Secretariat, our thanks and appreciation for the diligence and co-operation you have shown in dealing with the issue of transferring the United Nations General Assembly debate on the "Question of Palestine" at its forty-third session from United Nations Headquarters in New York to Geneva. I should also like to underscore the significance of the positions of both the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in their respective statements reacting to the United States denial of an entry visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which he required in order to participate in the General Assembly's debate on the item entitled "The question of Palestine" in New York. In the same vein, I should like to emphasize the pertinence of the opinion of the United Nations Legal Counsel on the same matter.

In addition, I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to put on record our appreciation for the international community's unanimous rejection of this breach of the Headquarters Agreement by the host country. The difficulties and procedures that have arisen from the transfer of the debate could all have been avoided had the United States complied with its binding obligations under the Headquarters Agreement. It is of paramount importance that similar violations not occur in the future and that this incident not become a precedent in the work of the world Organization.

The action taken by the United States Secretary of State in denying the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO access to United Nations Headquarters is an insult to the United Nations itself and to all its Member States. That is unacceptable, no matter what pretext is offered, for it means acquiescence in the conferral on one Member State of the authority to impose

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restrictions on United Nations activities in a manner that clashes with the Charter and impinges on the independence of the Organization.

The General Assembly is once again seized of the question of Palestine. Members are all too familiar with the developments of this question over the past 41 years. In point of fact, it was the General Assembly itself that, in 1947, adopted a resolution on partitioning Palestine into two States, one Jewish and the other Arab. That resolution was the genesis of the Palestinian cause as the world perceives it today. In other words, the seeds of the problem and all its current manifestations were sown at that time.

While there is no need for me now to recall in detail the evolutionary phases of that cause over the past decades, I must nevertheless point to the community of nations' failure, to date, to evolve a firm, clear-cut position vis-à-vis the continuing violations of the United Nations Charter and the flouting of international law, these being the features that have characterized Israel's posture towards the United Nations and its resolutions, in its attempt to legitimize its existence.

There is an inherent contradiction between the international community's failure to take such a firm position and the universal consensus that the Palestinian cause is, in essence, a question of a land and people under occupation and that Israel is the occupying Power. Furthermore, that failure on the part of the world community is inconsistent with the world consensus on the need to find a just solution for that problem. The most recent developments in regard to the question of Palestine now require a serious response in order to redress that failure. Those developments represent an explicit call upon the international community to end a historic injustice that has been wrought upon the Palestinian people, which has demonstrated through the years that it will never succumb to occupation or abandon its legitimate rights in its homeland.

(Mr. Masri, Jordan)

Through their heroic intifadah the Palestinians have put their cause in its proper international perspective. The uprising has underlined the fact that Israel will not be able to maintain the status quo by force ad infinitum. Moreover, the Palestinians have proved themselves capable of projecting, in clear, black-and-white terms, their national identity as a colonized people aspiring to national independence in the context of a genuine and sincere orientation towards peace and a desire to co-exist with the other side, provided they are enabled to exercise their inalienable national rights: above all, self-determination and independent statehood on their own national soil. That has been amply reflected in the recent resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council (PNC), which affirmed the PLO's commitment to work for the achievement of a peaceful, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian cause.

Jordan, especially since 1967, has consistently advocated a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian cause in consonance with the United Nations Charter and the relevant resolutions adopted by the world body. In his address before the General Assembly at its fortieth session, His Majesty King Hussein enumerated as follows those resolutions which, when implemented, will constitute a balanced foundation for any just and peaceful settlement: General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947 regarding the partition of Palestine; General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948 pertaining to the solution of the problem of the Palestinian refugees; Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which calls on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and reaffirms the right of every State in the region to live in peace within secure and recognized borders; and Security Council resolution 338 (1973), which calls for negotiations among the parties to the conflict. Those resolutions, taken together, enjoy full universal acceptance in view of the fact that they contain fundamental principles that will

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ensure the achievement of the desired solution once they are complied with and scrupulously implemented.

Jordan has considered Security Council resolution 242 (1967), from the very moment of its adoption, to be the chief basis for peace initiatives and international efforts aimed at dealing with the outcome of the 1967 war. Accordingly, Jordan has persisted in its efforts, on both the inter-Arab and international levels, to mobilize support for compliance with and implementation of that resolution.

Jordan's acceptance of resolution 242 (1967) marked the emergence of an Arab position oriented towards a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the core of which is the Palestinian cause. That position gained momentum over the past few years, taking concrete shape in the set of resolutions adopted at the Arab summit meeting held at Fez in 1982, which reflected a unified Arab stand committed to international legality as the basis for solving the Arab-Israel conflict. Within that context, joint Jordanian-Palestinian initiatives were put forward. Then came yet another Arab consensus at the Arab summits convened in Amman, in 1987, and in Algiers, in 1988, which called for convening an international peace conference and, thereby, reinforced that orientation.

All those moves have finally culminated in the emergence of a firm, unmistakable Palestinian stand oriented towards peace, as reflected in the resolutions adopted by the PNC at its recent session at Algiers. We firmly believe that we now have a historic opportunity that should not be missed, for it represents an invaluable contribution to the peace process, provided the other party to the Arab-Israeli conflict shows good faith. It is an exercise in futility for Israel to continue to prevaricate and to dismiss the sincere and earnest moves made in good faith by the Palestinians to live in peace within an independent Palestinian State side by side with Israel.

(Mr. Masri, Jordan)

We are confident that the international community, even those of its members that make announcements to the contrary, now realizes beyond the shadow of a doubt that there is currently an Arab position characterized by a high degree of moderation and responsibility and anchored in the provisions of the aforementioned international resolutions. Regardless of whether the recent PNC decisions literally meet the terms and conditions set by some Powers, it is none the less essential to acknowledge that the formal Palestinian movement towards peace has now taken a distinct, documented form. Any attempt to cast doubt upon it are uncalled for and pointless.

The question that must now be posed is whether Israel is really ready to respond to the forthright Arab and Palestinian position. Another question that arises is whether the United States, which has always insisted on specific recognition of Israel by the Palestinians, will be ready to request a similar recognition by Israel of the Palestinian side and acknowledgement of its legitimate national rights.

Regrettably, the answers to those queries are still negative. The Arab movement towards peace has not been matched by a similar Israeli position. On the contrary, Israel's repeated acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and throughout the region reveal a totally different attitude, one that exposes the entire area to the risk of constant confrontation and tensions that are not in harmony with the current atmosphere of relaxation in international relations, especially those between the two super-Powers. Extremist Israeli leaders exploit domestic policies to throw up obstacles on the road to peace by promoting racial and fundamentalist trends based on mythical credos and dreams. Those leaders, along with the extremist trend in Israel, push Israeli society in an opposite direction to that which characterizes the Arab attitude, despite the emergence of a sizeable segment of Israeli society that constantly voices its desire for a just

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peace. The manoeuvres by some Israeli forces in power and their encouragement of extremism could soon lead to the containment of those moderate Israeli voices that recognize the potential dangers to Israeli society itself posed by a continuation of the occupation of Palestinian lands. Those voices also fear a shift in the favourable supportive attitude towards Israel by its friends and supporters, who have been publicly relying on that attitude to justify most forms of support and assistance given by the West to Israel since its creation, support without which Israel would have been unable to sustain itself. The outcome of that discrepancy in attitudes inside Israel itself might put Israel's friends on the horns of a moral and political dilemma whose stakes might continue to increase with the passage of time.

With regard to the selective, double-standard approach of some Powers in dealing with the parties to the conflict, it is indeed deplorable to note that the United States has not been responsive to the dramatic positive changes in the Palestinian position that have been received with satisfaction and enthusiasm the world over. The negative American reaction contradicts the often-repeated American promises and pledges to reconsider the United States position of dealing with the PLO only if the latter accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), recognized Israel and renounced terrorism.

That is indeed what the PLO has done in adopting the recent PNC resolutions as has just been reaffirmed by Mr. Arafat. The claim that the Palestinian position is not enough to satisfy those conditions is an attempt to disavow both political and moral responsibilities and commitments by the United States in its capacity as a super-Power permanent member of the Security Council and a partner in the Middle East peace process.

To describe legitimate national resistance by a people languishing under occupation as terrorism is simply preposterous and illogical. The right of peoples

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to resist colonialism is a firm right that has been exercised by all nations, including the people of the United States of America itself. Hence, the Palestinian people cannot be denied the opportunity to exercise that right in the face of one of the most brutal forms of colonialism in the history of mankind. At this juncture, engagement in a discussion to define terrorism and to identify who is a terrorist will not, in our view, be a positive contribution to a genuine solution of the pressing problem in question. Suffice it to recall here that certain persons who have been convicted by the judicial authorities of certain Western countries now occupy prominent leading positions in Israel and have been accepted as people to deal with, notwithstanding their conviction. Furthermore, the treatment of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, especially during the period of the uprising, cannot be described as anything but a horrendous form of systematic terrorism practised simultaneously by the State as well as by armed bands of Israeli settlers.

Pro-Israeli voices, especially in the United States, continue to tout ideas that would have the world believe there are no justifiable reasons to prompt the major Powers to make serious efforts in the context of the peace process, since the "external parties" cannot be more anxious for peace than the immediate parties to the conflict and since such efforts should be initiated from within the region itself. Such ideas, which reflect the sentiments of the extremist elements in Israel, overlook the true nature of the conflict and the direct role played by the "external parties".

Moreover, the accumulated mistrust and apprehension on the part of the parties to the conflict make them unable to move on their own. Such notions are misleading; to accept them would mean a continuation of the present deadlock in the peace process. As a matter of fact, that is the wish and the desire of the those Israeli extremist circles.

(Mr. Masri, Jordan)

The major Powers, however, given their special responsibilities as permanent members of the Security Council, are duty bound to fulfil their obligations to maintain international peace and security and make persistent efforts to resolve a conflict that endangers one of the most vital regions in the world and that in all likelihood will have grave repercussions for the whole world.

Hence, we maintain that the convening of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation on an equal footing of the five permanent members of the Security Council and the parties to the conflict, including the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is the most viable and productive way to achieve a peaceful settlement of a conflict that has beset the entire region for several decades.

(Mr. Masri, Jordan)

It is our hope now that the new United States Administration will free itself from the legacy of the past, including the recent decision by the Secretary of State, in order for that Administration to be able to participate in a constructive manner, in the peace process, both as the Government of a super-Power and as a Power that has persistently supplied one of the principal parties to the conflict with everything that has made it strong and viable.

Jordan, as a principal party to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a country that is organically linked to the Palestinian cause, will persist in its unrelenting efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement that would guarantee all the peoples of the region the much needed safety and stability they yearn for. Jordan will continue its constructive co-operation in the context of the sincere international efforts, which we hope will be resumed forthwith intensively, in order to put the peace process in its true perspective and move it towards the convening of the International Peace Conference.

In that regard, it is our hope that the Secretary-General will receive full support in his endeavours from all the parties to the conflict and from the five permanent members of the Security Council, so that the International Conference may be convened as soon as possible. Efforts will be made in the framework of that Conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its core, the question of Palestine, in all its aspects. This will serve the interest of security, peace and stability not only in the Middle East region, but throughout the world.

Prince Saud AL-FAISAL (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): I wish once again to greet you, Sir, and to convey our deep appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Chairman and its members for their unrelenting, successful efforts to defend the cause of Palestine in the face of all the difficulties and obstacles created by

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Israel with a view to preventing that Committee from revealing Israel's flagrant violation of all international norms and values.

We are meeting at Geneva today to discuss the question of Palestine, which is before the General Assembly and which should have been discussed at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The fact that the United States of America refused to grant an entry visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), made it necessary to transfer the discussion to Geneva. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has accordingly expressed its deep regret at this United States decision, which is unjust towards the Palestinian people and which does not conform with principles calling for the achievement of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Some two months ago, in his message to the Assembly, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, stated that all efforts to achieve a better life for mankind will be futile so long as a just and lasting peace continues to elude us. His understanding of peace is that it is an indivisible whole and that the right to peace is not the preserve of one group at the expense of another; the right to peace should not be upheld in relation to any one issue to the exclusion of others. Peace cannot be achieved without justice.

Peace is not the acceptance of a status quo nor is it surrender to force and oppression, which do not create a right or establish peace.

The voice of the Palestinian people, which we heard today in the person of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, affirms those facts and reminds us that a people's rights to their native lands do not perish with the passage of time or through forgetfulness and lapses of memory. The repression and occupation to which the Palestinian people have been subjected for so many years has made that people more determined to live in freedom and

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independence in their own free and independent land, and it is now clear that that people is proving without a shred of doubt that its aim is peace and its paramount concern is to be enabled to achieve that peace.

While peace based on justice is the quest of mankind today, that objective is still violated by those who do not want peaceful coexistence. Israel has used every means to frustrate such peaceful methods. Israel has used every means to hinder peaceful possibilities for ending the conflict. If Israel is under the illusion that it can uproot the Palestinians from their own land and erase from a new generation's memory its history and destroy the very memory of that history by its continuous occupation of Palestinian lands and by its desperate effort to colonize those lands and settle in them, deporting and expelling the inhabitants and eliminating the identity of the Palestinian people and committing acts of savage repression, then the heroic Palestinian uprising has affirmed that repression and brute force cannot eliminate the reality of existence, even when misery assumes colossal dimensions.

The Palestinian uprising is also a reminder that legitimate rights do not die. Daily, the uprising emphasizes the vitality of the Palestinians in their just and rightful quest.

After one full year of the uprising, it is now evident that Israeli repression has increased the determined nature of that uprising. The logical conclusion of that phenomenon is that it is impossible for the status quo to continue and that there is a need for movements to change that status quo.

A full year of solidarity, defiance and determination has imposed, at all levels, a new outlook and a new method for dealing with the Palestinian question, transferring it to the very centre of international concern and revealing to world

(Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia)

public opinion the rightfulness and legality of the Palestinian cause. The world is now aware that this is the very core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as revealed by the uprising, which has imposed its cause as a reality and a historic responsibility that the international community cannot ignore.

The declaration of an independent Palestinian State has crowned the unrelenting struggle of the Palestinians and is a logical complement to the heroic uprising, whose weapons are stones, whose arms are determination, and whose ammunition is faith in God and His divine assistance. All the massive support for the Palestinian cause is but a natural consequence of these developments.

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Through the historic resolutions adopted last month in Algeria by the Palestine National Council, the Palestinian people has been able to lay down solid foundations for national unity; the Palestinian leadership has formulated a political programme for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian cause based on international legality and all United Nations resolutions relating to the Palestine question, including the two Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That programme has met with a positive response in all international forums.

We have just heard the statement of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in which he set forth his ideas for peace in the Middle East and reiterated firmly and unambiguously the positive resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council, which solidify and promote the framework and process of peace.

On the other hand, the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December condemning Israel, calling for a diplomatic, commercial and cultural boycott of it, and considering as illegal its policies and practices aimed at the annexation of Palestinian and other territories occupied in the 1967 war, are in perfect harmony with the world-wide reaction indicating the international community's desire that the PLO be permitted to express itself in this international forum. All these are but additional positive factors in the recent progress of the Palestinian cause; they emphasize unambiguously new fundamental changes in the outlook on this question and on its treatment at the international level.

The United Nations has recently succeeded in finding solutions to many regional problems, such as the questions of Afghanistan and Namibia, among others. The confidence of the international community in the role of the United Nations has

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increased considerably. Today's discussion of the question of Palestine presents the United Nations with a choice regarding its credibility, as well as its ability to establish peace and security in an important region of the world. That role assumes additional importance when we consider that the Palestine question, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has long been a concern of the United Nations.

To consolidate that credibility, the United Nations must adopt a firm and effective posture against Israel's rejection of a peaceful solution and against Israel's continuous illegal and oppressive practices, including repeated assaults upon Palestinians and incursions into and attacks on Lebanon, a State Member of the United Nations. There is no doubt that the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December serve to emphasize the credibility of the United Nations. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility and follow suit.

Believing that peace is indivisible, we note the success of the United Nations as symbolized by Security Council resolution 598 (1987) on the Iraq-Iran war, which made reference to the imposition of sanctions under the United Nations Charter against any party refusing to accept the resolution. That move resulted in a process leading to the creation of a peaceful atmosphere in the Gulf region. We therefore call for the use of that United Nations procedure against Israel, which is the party rejecting a peaceful solution. The General Assembly and the Security Council should thus adopt similar resolutions imposing sanctions on Israel should it refuse to accommodate the international will.

Another important factor for establishing the credibility of the United Nations could be the manner in which the Organization deals with the positive resolutions and intentions of the Palestine National Council relating to the peaceful solution of the Palestine question based on international legality, and

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all United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

All those factors would undoubtedly confirm the ability of the United Nations to secure peace in the Middle East and would increase the international community's confidence in the role of the Organization.

There are rare moments in history that provide golden opportunities to achieve just solutions to seemingly insoluble international problems. It takes a great deal of wisdom to take advantage of such opportunities. To fail to do so would constitute an incorrect assessment of the trend of history and the development of events, especially when the problems are of colossal magnitude.

Such a golden opportunity was provided by the important steps taken by Palestine National Council last month. That Council adopted a historic resolution that will open up new prospects for a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us all, especially at this important moment in the evolution of the Palestinian question, to recognize the Palestinian State and grant it the status of an Observer State in this forum, and to convene an international conference on the Middle East in which the Palestine Liberation Organization would participate fully. For the sake of the region we must make the most of the new developments. This is not the time for negative positions that would waste this golden opportunity for peace and flexibility.

I hope our discussions and resolutions at this session of the General Assembly will help restore the confidence of the international community in this Organization and make it possible to embark upon the path towards peace in the Middle East.

Mr. AL-MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): Today, for the first time, the General Assembly is considering the question of Palestine away from Headquarters, in accordance with a resolution adopted by near unanimity, to assert its right to invite anyone it chooses to address it, and to guarantee the right of access and free expression. The General Assembly thereby has shown its determination not only to adopt resolutions, but also to implement them.

As we begin our consideration of one of the most volatile and explosive questions since the Second World War, the Palestinian uprising - the intifadah - is entering its second year. That revolution has demonstrated unequivocally that the Palestinian people is determined to liberate its territory from Israeli occupation, no matter how many sacrifices it must make. It has also shown that the Palestinian people's firm determination to liberate the occupied territories cannot be shaken or suppressed, regardless of the magnitude of the challenges involved.

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In the present and past centuries, the Middle East, the cradle of civilization and revealed religion, with all the accompanying humanitarian and moral values, has been subjected to colonialist and Zionist invasions that brought it nothing but destruction. Colonialist ambitions were the motive power of those barbaric invasions. They were also the incentive behind the setting up of a settler-colonialist entity in Arab Palestine, the land of peace, and supplying it with aid and the military and diplomatic support it needed in order to survive - and, by surviving, create permanent tension in the region, undermine its stability and prevent its development and progress, in order to safeguard and promote colonial interests and, ultimately, realize the dream of creating greater Israel, from the Nile to the Euphrates.

Zionist leaders in modern times have made no bones about the fact that in order for this to be accomplished, it will be necessary to vacate the territories of their populations. This is exactly what has been put into practice over the past 40 years, through an uninterrupted series of fascist massacres and policies of expulsion and deportation by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people and the people of the occupied Arab territories. This theory is still being applied, and indeed in an increasingly flagrant fashion.

Israel's policy of aggression and expansion is no longer a secret to anybody. From the outset, Israel has been a settler-colonialist enterprise based on aggression and expansion. This enterprise was conceived in the context of colonialist policies and colonialist thinking. The grand design of the enterprise became apparent in Israel's wars of expansion, the occupation of Arab territories, Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and in Israel's refusal to withdraw from these occupied territories.

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Israel has consistently refused to comply with the will of the international community as set forth in United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from occupied Palestinian and Arab territories; to end the annexation of Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, the altering of the demographic and cultural structure of the territories, the policy of establishing new settlements in the occupied territories; and to dismantle those that have been established, in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

Instead of complying with such appeals, the Israeli occupation forces have stepped up their fascist practices in the occupied territories with a view to vacating them of their inhabitants by means of daily harassment, collective punishment, terror tactics and the demolition of houses.

Israel's occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories constitutes a continued aggression according to the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law. What makes the situation even more serious is that the occupation has turned into settlement. The General Assembly and the Security Council have condemned both occupation and settlement and called for an end to the establishment of settlements, the dismantling of those already in existence and withdrawal from the occupied lands.

In the light of its understanding of the nature and dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Syria has always considered the Palestinian cause to be its very own and has worked tirelessly in all international forums to highlight the Palestinian identity. Syria has also made many sacrifices and shouldered burdens in championing the cause of the Palestinians and their inalienable rights, including the right of return, the right of self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign, independent State on their own national soil.

(Mr. Al-Masri, Syrian Arab
Republic)

This firm commitment to the Palestinian cause is the reason for the continued Israeli aggression against Syria. Golan has been occupied. Even worse, occupied Golan was annexed in 1981. Despite this, Syria has adopted as a firm position of principle that the recovery of the Syrian Golan is inseparable from the Palestinian people's recovery of their national soil, the guaranteeing of their inalienable rights, and the liberation of all occupied Arab territories.

The situation in the occupied Arab territories is extremely serious because of the fascist Israeli practices against the Arab populations, involving the killing of unarmed men, women, adolescents and children demonstrating for freedom. Their bones have been broken, their homes have been destroyed; the gas used against them has caused asphyxiation and, in some cases, abortion.

For more than 40 years now a generation of people has suffered under occupation, and unless the international community takes effective steps to compel Israel to comply with the rules of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention of Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, the situation is only going to deteriorate, with unpredictable risks for peace in the region, and indeed the whole world.

Events in the Middle East in the last 40 years have demonstrated that Israel does not want peace; Israel wants land. Israel's understanding of peace is based on occupation, expansion and the acquisition of territory by force. This conception runs absolutely counter to the real concept of peace, which is based on justice, equity, an end to occupation and the restoration of owners' rights.

(Mr. Al-Masri, Syrian Arab Republic)

Those who speak of the illusion of finding a solution under occupation and the denial of the Palestinian people's rights, including their right to their homeland, Palestine, and their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, sovereign State on their national territory, have not learned the lessons of the past. For a just peace cannot be achieved under occupation, expansionism and settlement.

It must be understood that peace requires an end to occupation, and the exercise by the people of Palestine of their right to self-determination. The first condition for peace must be withdrawal from the occupied territories and restoration of the rights of the people of the region. There can be no peace until those people have regained their rights and all their territory.

It is inconceivable that there could be peace in the region without the total, unconditional withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories. Similarly, there can be no peace until the people of Palestine are able to exercise their legitimate national rights, including their right to return to their homeland, Palestine, their right to self-determination and their right to establish an independent State. One cannot even speak of peace in isolation from the conditions for peace. To do so would be a very serious error.

As we see it, Israel does not want peace in the region. I do not think one needs to dwell on this point in order to reach that conclusion. Israel wants the Arabs to acquiesce in its expansionist ambitions.

Israel still rejects the holding of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization and the permanent members of the Security Council. Israel refuses to take the path that

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could lead to a just and lasting peace. That means that Israel wishes to persist in its policy of occupation and denial of the rights of the Palestinian people, thereby perpetuating tension in the region and all that such tension implies for the region and the world.

The uprising of the Arab Palestinian people, the resistance of the Syrians to the Israeli occupation of the occupied Golan Heights, the resistance to the Israeli occupiers in southern Lebanon all demonstrate that the occupation cannot last.

The core of the conflict is the Palestinian cause. Any solution that does not take into account the national rights of the Palestinian people will be in contradiction to peace. Indeed, we have seen the results of the Camp David Agreements. Those Agreements became an incentive for constant aggression by Israel. One need only recall the aggression against Lebanon in 1982, during which Beirut was destroyed and southern Lebanon was occupied. There was the annexation of the Golan Heights and of Jerusalem and the escalation of oppression against the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories and the continued establishment of settlements there. All that exposes the fallacy of the contention that Israel wants peace.

We shall continue to state that Israel is an aggressor, an agent operating against peace and security in the Middle East and throughout the world. The General Assembly acknowledged that fact when, on 1 November 1975, it decided that Zionism was a form of racism. On 5 February 1982, it declared, after the imposition of Israeli laws on the Golan Heights, that Israel's record and the measures it continues to adopt prove that it is not a peace-loving country. Israel also continues to reject the resolution of 11 May 1948.

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Republic)

Those who believe that concessions by the Palestinian people could lead to peace in the Middle East are wrong. We are aware of Israel's colonialist, settler and expansionist plans. We are convinced that a policy of concessions will only induce Israel to become more intransigent and aggressive. It is clear that the pressures exerted on the Arabs to make concession after concession have only secured great gains for Israel and encouraged it to become more warlike and aggressive. Those concessions have not made Israel take a single step in the direction of peace.

Syria has always advocated attaching importance to and recognizing the Palestinian identity. Syria has always struggled for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and return to their homeland, Palestine, and their right to establish their independent, sovereign State. Syria has constantly urged international public opinion to support the just Palestinian cause, and that this support should take the form of recognition of the legitimate rights of the Arab Palestinian people. That is why Syria supports the establishment of the State of Palestine. That is in conformity with our policy and is consistent with international law and the decisions of Arab summit meetings.

By their heroic uprising, the Palestinian people have demonstrated their rejection of Israel's occupation and their determination to regain their national rights. Syria believes that support for the uprising and the Palestinian resistance is the path that will lead to peace and the recovery of the rights of the Palestinian people.

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Republic)

Israel defies United Nations resolutions, which are an expression of the international will. Israel persists in its policy of occupation. By so doing, it dooms to failure any effort to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The only path to peace is the convening of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization - the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - and other peace-loving States. Peace can be achieved only by restoring the rights of the people of the region. It can be achieved only if the occupation of the Arab territories ends.

We believe that to attain peace we must reaffirm the relevant United Nations resolutions, in the context of the international conference, with the participation of all the parties concerned and the permanent members of the Security Council.

If Israel does not withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, if the question of Palestine is not solved in a way that will guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people, there can be no peace in the Middle East. And if there is no just and lasting peace in the Middle East, the occupation will continue. That is a state of affairs that we must reject and resist.

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Therefore, the resistance will continue in the Syrian Arab Golan, in the occupied territories of Palestine, in southern Lebanon. This is simply the natural result of the occupation.

To conclude, we pay a tribute to the uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We also pay a tribute to those who have managed, with the stones they have thrown, to give force to a patriotic revolution that will continue until its just conclusion, that is, until the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people in a sovereign and independent State.

Mr. AZIZ (Iraq) (interpretation from Arabic): The recent major developments in the struggle of the Palestinian people make the discussion of the Palestinian cause at this particular time, and here in Geneva, an historic occasion of great importance for the Palestinian cause, an opportunity to take the pre-eminent position it deserves amongst the problems of the international community. This is also an important opportunity to define the responsibilities and duties the international community ought to shoulder in relation to this question in consonance with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter in order to end the injustice and repression suffered by the Palestinian people over past decades.

The most important of these developments has been the valiant uprising of the Arab people of Palestine and the historic decisions taken on 15 November at the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers, the session that most appropriately bore the name of the uprising, the intifadah.

The uprising and the fact that it has continued courageously for more than a whole year now throughout the occupied territories, undaunted by the violence and repression perpetrated by the occupation authorities, offers eloquent and tangible

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proof of the vitality and vigour of the intrepid Palestinian people, their attachment to the land of Palestine and their unwavering resolve to achieve self-determination on that land. It was upon this solid foundation, which became apparent to the whole world, that the Palestine National Council decided to proclaim the independent State of Palestine. The proclamation was a free, vigorous and courageous exercise of the right of self-determination, an exercise very much in keeping with international legitimacy as reflected in the resolutions adopted by the United Nations since 1947, confirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty over its national soil. In proclaiming the independent State of Palestine, the Arab people of Palestine have reaffirmed the democratic orientation of their State, its love for peace and its commitment to peaceful coexistence. Thus, the Palestinian people has declared its resolve to work, through its independent State, for the achievement of a lasting peace based on justice and respect for peoples' rights and, at the same time, has called upon the United Nations, which has a special responsibility towards the Palestinian cause, to help it achieve its legitimate objectives.

The Palestinian people has also reiterated its commitment to the peaceful settlement of regional and international problems in accordance with the United Nations Charter and United Nations resolutions. This people has also asserted its rejection of the threatened or actual use of force, violence or terrorism against the territorial integrity and political independence of States, without prejudice to their natural right of self-defence.

In addition to the proclamation of independence, the Palestine National Council included in its political statement a balanced working programme for making the necessary arrangements to ensure security and peace in the region.

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The world as a whole has a duty now to take a positive position with regard to these decisions and to deal with them in earnest. It is most gratifying to note the great number of States which are welcoming and recognizing those decisions. It is necessary to point out, at the same time, that those States which have hesitated so far to announce their support, should end their hesitation and declare their support of the decisions adopted by the Palestine National Council and recognize the new independent State of Palestine. They should also come forward in clear support of the call for an international peace conference to be held with the full and equal participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In this context, we wish to say that, while we welcome the statement issued by the countries of the European Community on 21 November, we look forward to seeing these countries shake off whatever reluctance they may still have towards recognizing the independent State of Palestine and come forward in support of this State, the establishment of which constitutes a fundamental basis for the achievement of peace in the Middle East.*

Some of the legal pretexts used to justify non-recognition of the State of Palestine are clearly no longer part of the spirit of our age; nor are they in harmony with the realistic outlook necessary for the development of the provisions of international law as a living structure responding to the needs of the age, and not merely as rules which came about to meet the needs of times gone by.

The recent developments have confirmed two essential facts. First, there is the courage demonstrated by the Palestinian people throughout their decades of struggle, a struggle that has been crowned with their valiant uprising and their

* Mr. Mortensen (Denmark), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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absolute resolve to reject occupation and establish their own independent State. Secondly, there is the fact that the leadership of the Palestinian people and their legitimate representatives have shown that they are capable of taking bold political decisions on a basis of international legitimacy and of the legal rules and regulations that form the foundations of international relations in our day and age.

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The negative attitudes of some States towards the Palestine Liberation Organization and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of its independent State, come from some sort of unjustified deference on the part of such States to the usurpers that have occupied the land. Such attitudes have no basis in justice, logic or law. They are arbitrary partisan attitudes which favour the usurper that has occupied the land in violation of international legitimacy. Hence, they are totally contrary to international law, the rules of justice and the realities of our time.

Among those attitudes is that of the United States of America. By refusing to grant PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat an entry visa to the United States of America, which would have enabled him to address the General Assembly in New York, the United States Administration not only acted in breach of the Headquarters Agreement, as this General Assembly has decided, but indeed behaved in a manner that is both arrogant and illogical. The United States position, while reflecting the unwillingness of the American Administration to understand the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine or the right of peoples to self-determination, a basic feature of our modern age, is also gravely detrimental to the cause of peace, security and justice in the region.

The Iraqi Government, while deploring the United States position, salutes this Assembly on having taken the right decision to deplore that position and to move its meetings to Geneva, where it could hear Mr. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, deliver his speech.

Reference must also be made to the position adopted by the United Kingdom, another permanent member of the Security Council, which has failed to share with the international community its legitimate and collective decision. Having been the biggest imperialist Power that had controlled the area for a long time, the

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United Kingdom in particular remains historically responsible for the injustices inflicted upon the Arab people of Palestine and for many of the problems of the region. Britain has yet to demonstrate clearly its willingness to forget its imperialist past and renounce its ambition for influence. Britain has continued to adopt a negative and suspect stance on the Palestine issue and on other issues in the region that can in no way be of service to the quest for security, stability or justice.

We must also point out that the position adopted by certain countries requiring the Palestinian people and their leaders to give one proof after another of their good will towards the issue of peace is totally unbalanced and one-sided in that it fails to require the occupiers themselves to show respect for the will of the international community, international law and the United Nations resolutions or to demand an end to their occupation of the land.

The occupier ought to understand that its insistence on occupation and on denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people remains contrary to the course of history, and that such a position is always doomed to failure. The occupier should not underestimate the ability of the Palestinian people to continue their struggle for the liberation of their homeland, the elimination of occupation and the establishment of their independent State. Nor should the occupier underestimate the determination of the Arab nation to stand by this legitimate struggle. The experience of decades of continued Palestinian struggle, the continued Arab support for this struggle and the wide international solidarity constitute tangible proof of this fact.

Iraq will remain strongly committed to supporting the just struggle of the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole and legitimate representative. Iraq has supported the decisions of the Palestine

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National Council and recognized the Palestinian State. In doing so, Iraq has proceeded from its firm stand in support of the choice made by the Arab people of Palestine and their legitimate representatives and from its belief in the justice of the cause of the Arab people of Palestine.

Following the decisions of the Palestine National Council, it has become imperative that the United Nations should shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter, which ensures security, peace and justice for all. It is time this Organization took the courageous decisions and stands that are needed in order for the peace process in the region to be placed on the right track.

Mr. AL-KHALIFA (Bahrain) (interpretation from Arabic): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its tireless efforts to call attention to the Palestinian cause and to mobilize world public opinion with a view to enabling the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights through serious efforts to bring about the peace in the Middle East to which they aspire.

The international community has great hopes, following the historic meeting between the two super-Powers in Moscow this year. A new and positive era of détente has begun in which ideological differences are overcome and the possibilities of confrontation are minimized. Among the indications of this rapprochement are the agreement to resolve regional conflicts in the world and the increasing positive relations among the five permanent members of the Security Council, a fact that has been reflected in the collective decision-making process on issues concerning world peace.

Hence the United Nations has resumed its normal role, under the Charter, as an effective international system attempting to find appropriate solutions to international conflicts and to create a favourable environment for coexistence

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and co-operation among peoples. There have been active negotiations with a view to restoring peace in various hotbeds of tension, for example in Afghanistan and Namibia. Unfortunately, however, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East have not received equal attention.

The General Assembly is meeting today in Geneva in circumstances that are beyond logic and law. Convening here instead of in New York to consider the question of Palestine, is evidence that the international community has committed itself to safeguarding the independence and neutrality of the Organization and, at the same time, has resisted any attempt to infringe international charters and agreements.

We were astonished when the United States refused to issue a visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in order to enable him to take part in the deliberations on the question of Palestine despite the fact that the PLO enjoys observer status at the United Nations.

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Nevertheless, the voice of Palestine will be heard from here - Geneva. There is no power in the world that can stifle the voice of truth, and Palestinian opinion will reach everyone everywhere, including the very conscience of the world. They wished to conceal the truth, but they will now see how wrong their policy is.

For many long years now, ever since the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the Palestinian people has been suffering from all kinds of persecution and organized injustice. Since that date, this people has been waging a bitter struggle to preserve their national identity and legitimate rights, bringing its cause, among other important issues, to international attention. It has been and continues to be subjected to various kinds of terrorism - from military to social and economic terrorism, from direct terrorism through the criminal Israeli practices in the occupied territories to political terrorism. All this has been carried out by way of illegal pressures and actions contrary to international law and conventions. Israeli repressive measures include indiscriminate murder, collective detention, destruction of houses and farms, control of water supplies and other inhuman practices aimed at compelling the Palestinian people to surrender.

The Arab people of Palestine has met these barbaric Zionist methods with increased resistance and struggle against aggression, in a spirit of self-denial and unprecedented heroism. It is providing the whole world with an example of the human experience of a people determined to recover its rights and to establish a just peace: the bold uprising - intifadah - now in its second year, the true expression of the feelings of the Palestinians in the face of the Israeli occupation of their homeland.

The continuation of this popular uprising in the occupied territories, which has been transformed into an organized legitimate revolution of the masses, stands as clear evidence that the Palestinian people is determined to recover its occupied

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land, to exercise its legitimate rights and to resist Israeli terrorism until its national goals have been achieved.

From the violent clashes and confrontation in the occupied territories and following upon the strong political wave in Algiers came the resolutions of the Palestine National Council, its political communiqué and Declaration of Independence for the State of Palestine, proclaimed on 15 November 1988. They are the genuine embodiment of the Palestinian people's will, as represented by all current trends. Acceptance by the Palestine National Council of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), associated with the right to self-determination, as the basis for convening the international peace conference on the Middle East, and the sincere will reflected in accepting to resolve the conflict peacefully, give Israel two options: either a comprehensive and just peace or confrontation with the Palestinian resistance, which is growing daily. As long as the crisis persists, the United Nations will remain seized of its historic and moral responsibility until a just and lasting solution to the conflict is found.

The decisions of the Palestine National Council have refuted the arguments usually put forward by Israel and its allies in rejecting the status of the Palestine Liberation Organization and failing to respond to peace efforts based on international legitimacy.

It is regrettable that particularly at this time Israel should have taken a negative attitude towards the decisions of the Palestine National Council and continued its aggressive policy and terrorism. In so doing, Israel has reinforced our conviction that it cares little and pays no attention to the voices calling for peace in the region.

Clear evidence of that attitude was given in its recent barbaric aggression against Lebanon, violating Lebanon's frontiers, territory, waters and air space without any moral or human qualms. How can Israel or its allies speak of human

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rights or the struggle against terrorism when there continues to be massive killing of innocent civilians - children, women and the elderly - in camps, using missiles and cluster bombs? If that is not terrorism, then what is meant by terrorism?

Bahrain was in the vanguard of those States that have recognized the independent Palestinian State, with Al Quds as its capital, since its establishment was proclaimed. We consider this the embodiment of the Palestinian people's will and as a first step on the right road to recovering its legitimate rights. The Palestinian State has become a political reality that cannot be ignored. To try to subjugate the Palestinians or to compel them to live under abhorrent conditions of occupation would be a waste of time, for such a policy has proved to be futile. Hope remains strong in the United Nations and the international community at large that the historic resolutions of the Palestine National Council will meet with the worthy response they deserve. Events in the Middle East are proceeding apace and they require concerted international efforts at channelling them towards a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The United Nations has played an effective role in defending the Palestinian cause and attracting support from world public opinion, in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Charter, which has resulted in recognition of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. At this stage the United Nations cannot renounce its role of staunch defender of this just cause, especially since the establishment of the independent Palestinian State has now been proclaimed.

At this historic turning-point, it is natural that the United Nations should recognize the Palestinian State, proclaimed on 15 November 1988, and confer upon it the status of Observer at the Organization. This political step is an international imperative, given the recognition of that State by an increasing number of States. This has become even more urgent following upon Jordan's

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decision to sever its administrative and legal links with the Palestinian West Bank. Hence the United Nations has to assume its responsibility as the appropriate forum for negotiations with a view to finding a just solution to this question in accordance with international legitimacy. This can be achieved only by taking a firm stand against the Israeli obstinacy in rejecting the convening of the international peace conference to settle the Middle East conflict, with the Palestinian question at its core, in a just and lasting manner.

In the current climate of rapprochement and given the positive decisions of the Palestine National Council, we believe that the international peace conference on the Middle East must be convened immediately, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including, on behalf of the State of Palestine, the PLO on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council. We also believe that this is the only way to establish a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise national sovereignty in their independent State.

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Let us unite our efforts. Let the United Nations and the international community stand in support of Palestinian rights in order to establish a permanent peace based on justice and equity. Its achievement will fulfil one of the most important purposes and objectives of the United Nations.

Mr. BEMANANJARA (Madagascar) (interpretation from French): I welcome the presence in our midst of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who, despite the thoroughly predictable attitude taken by the United States of America, is today participating in our debate by virtue of the clearly expressed, virtually unanimous, will of the General Assembly. I thank the Secretary-General for convening this meeting in so short a time and take this opportunity to extend cordial congratulations and thanks to the Swiss authorities for their exemplary co-operation.

The question of Palestine has held the attention of our Organization since its creation. Through many resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, we have unequivocally affirmed and reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination without outside interference, to independence and national sovereignty, and to the creation of its own State in Palestine.

In keeping with the principle of the inadmissibility of territorial acquisition by force, we have condemned Israel's occupation of Arab territories, we have denounced its policy of oppression against the Palestinian people, and we have recognized the legitimacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

This year, however, the question has acquired special significance because of the Palestinians people's courageous uprising, which has been going on now for 12 months in the occupied territories, and the proclamation of the State of Palestine at the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council.

(Mr. Bemananjara, Madagascar)

We are faced, therefore, with a new situation, and the reactions that it prompts call for the urgent search for an effective process of negotiation with a view to an overall, just and lasting settlement to the problem of the Middle East, and, of course, to the core question of Palestine.

Like the international community at large, we have followed with growing indignation the repression unleashed by Israel against a defenseless civilian population in the occupied territories. These brutal and arbitrary reprisals call to mind the worst violence of what we had thought to be a bygone era, except in South Africa, the heir to colonialism and fascism and, moreover, a long-standing ally of the Zionists.

In resolution 605 (1987), the Security Council strongly deplored the policies and practices of Israel, which violate human rights in the occupied territories and, in particular, the action of the Israeli army, which kills and wounds defenseless Palestinian civilians.

On 3 November, this year, prior to the adoption of resolution 43/21, the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization gave us a poignant account of the daily atrocities perpetrated by the Israeli forces of occupation. In that regard the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People supplies irrefutable information about the repression going on in the occupied territories.

In fact, Israel, in suppressing the intifadah, is again endeavouring to deny what is evident. Indeed, it has always rejected the legitimacy of the Palestine national movement and its leadership.

Faced with the latest developments of the situation, no one can doubt any longer the determination of the Palestinians to forge their own destiny, despite all repression. The intifadah has manifestly consolidated the national unity of

(Mr. Bemananjara, Madagascar)

this martyred people which has been forcibly dispersed. The recent decisions of the Palestine National Council in Algiers are an eloquent response to the popular uprising in the occupied territories.

It is pointless to hark back to the representation of the Palestinian people: it has already been settled. The General Assembly itself, has in numerous resolutions, recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as that people's sole, legitimate representative.

It was with understandable joy, therefore, that the Democratic Republic of Madagascar learned of the Palestine National Council's proclamation of an independent State of Palestine on 18 November. We deem it an honour to have been amongst the first countries to recognize the new State.

In a message addressed to Yasser Arafat, Mr. Didier Ratsiraka, President of the Democratic Republic of Madagascar, emphasized inter alia:

"Madagascar, loyal to its commitment to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO, its sole and legitimate representative, warmly hails the birth of the new independent State that has emerged from the sovereign self-determination and legitimate aspirations of your courageous people.

"The Democratic Republic of Madagascar has therefore decided to recognize de jure, from this day on, the independent Palestinian State according to the relevant rules of international law."

The political declaration adopted by the Palestine National Council testifies to the acute sense of responsibility of the Palestinian leaders and to their realistic perception of the situation.

The proposals of the Palestine National Council are clear and decisive: peaceful coexistence between the two peoples, Jewish and Palestinian, on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations which recognize the right to

(Mr. Bemananjara, Madagascar)

existence in Palestine of both States, Jewish and Arab. The legitimacy of Israel is based on resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, which also contains the conditions for international legitimacy and guarantees the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty and independence.

To that end, the Palestine National Council advocates: the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East pursuant to the guidelines and other provisions contained in resolutions 38/58 C and 41/43 D of the General Assembly; demands, on the one hand, Israel's withdrawal from all of the territories it has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and, on the other, the abrogation of all annexation measures and, finally, the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

(Mr. Bemananjara, Madagascar)

To create a climate favourable to success in the negotiations, and to promote the conclusion of a comprehensive political settlement, the Security Council is called upon to take effective measures to ensure the security and protection of the Palestinian people. The international community has welcomed the historic decision of the Palestine National Council and considers it has created new opportunities for finding peace in the Middle East.

The recent statements of Mr. Yasser Arafat in Stockholm unequivocally confirmed the intentions of the PLO, and we find it reasonable and encouraging that the Swedish Government reacted immediately by recognizing the State of Palestine. But Israel and the United States have rejected the Palestinian peace offer, alleging that the moderate tone of the Palestinians is a hoax and rejecting the proclamation of the State of Palestine. They would subject the future of the occupied territories to negotiations to which the PLO would be admitted only if it met a number of preconditions, among them explicit recognition of the State of Israel and its right to exist and the renunciation of terrorism.

Need we yet again state that the Algiers declaration, like that made in Stockholm, quite clearly and unambiguously responds to those so-called conditions? Concerning recognition of the State of Israel, the Palestine National Council explicitly refers to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the basis for an international peace conference on the Middle East. We all know that resolution 242 (1967) guarantees the existence of the States of the region. Moreover the Israeli withdrawal required by the Palestine National Council is limited to the Arab and Palestinian territories Israel has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

(Mr. Bemananjara, Madagascar)

Concerning terrorism, the Algiers declaration explicitly reiterates the Palestinian people's repudiation and rejection of terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism.

Indeed it is clear there are double standards in certain circles as soon as the fate of the Palestinian people is involved. Palestinians are required to recognize Israel when their own existence is being denied. At present, the Palestinians are taking a moderate and realistic position, but the Israelis respond by saying they do not need to be recognized; they need no recognition by the Palestinians. But what is expected of the Palestinians? Are they expected to just disappear for ever and abandon their most basic and fundamental rights, their national identity and their right to self-determination?

Our Organization has a special responsibility towards the Palestinian people; it must right a wrong that has existed for more than 40 years. We must make specific constructive efforts to bring about the speedy convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East.

That is why my delegation supports the recommendations of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people contained in document A/43/35 and calls on the major Powers that are permanent members of the Security Council to use their influence to see that those recommendations are implemented.

Finally, on behalf of our President and my delegation I warmly congratulate Chairman Arafat for his very courageous and realistic address he made to this Organization today and, through it, to the world community. It was a message of peace full of wisdom addressed to all parties involved in the poignant question of the Middle East, at the core of which is the question of Palestine.

Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly has been the stage for a debate on the Palestinian question, one of the most just causes of our time. It is an issue in dire need of solution, an issue that tests the extent of the commitment of countries and organizations to, and their advocacy of, principles for which humanity has struggled: the right of peoples to freedom, self-determination and independence, and rejection of, and resistance against, occupation.

Today, in the beautiful and hospitable city of Geneva, we are discussing in all its dimensions the Palestinian issue and its impact on the peace, security and stability of the Middle East region and the world as a whole. But despite the dimensions of the issue and all the long years of debate in international forums, while the Palestinian people have continued to suffer increasingly under occupation and injustice, major world Powers have persistently worked with Israel to obstruct the peace process by closing the door to solution of the issue in accordance with international documents and relevant resolutions. It is as though those Powers have not found it sufficient to help the occupier and participate with it in usurping land, uprooting the Palestinian people and expelling and oppressing them; they have also neglected their special role and responsibilities under the Charter in the solution of international issues on a neutral and impartial basis, and they have gone to extremes in their pro-Israel bias, using various pretexts.

The General Assembly has come to Geneva to hear the statement of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in which he has offered a new endeavour towards peace for the Palestinian people inside and outside the occupied territories and explained the Palestinian position, which responds to changes in the international arena and embraces certain concepts and demands, as influential political powers had hoped.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

We are greatly surprised that those Powers, which presented certain conditions for the opening of dialogue with the PLO in an effort to give an impetus to the peace process, have now adopted a negative attitude towards the positive stand taken by the PLO and its National Council. The General Assembly has come to Geneva following the action of the present Administration of the United States, the Government of the country hosting United Nations Headquarters, in closing the door in the face of the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization - the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - using pretexts and reasons that are so invalid and unlawful that a major part of the American people, through the mass media, repudiated them even before the world community did so.

That illegal action by the United States Administration, in addition to openly violating the Host Country Agreement, contravened the very democratic values and traditions in which it takes pride, foremost among which are freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of access to other opinions, and freedom of debate.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

However, the power of righteousness and the sway of logic know no limits and cannot be blocked, for like the rays of bright sunlight dissipating darkness they penetrate to eliminate falseness.

The characterization of a people's struggle as terrorism is just a pretext to prevent a voice from being heard and to induce rejection of its cause. This is regrettable. We disapprove of it, for it constitutes a serious, far-reaching precedent, and we all bear the responsibility of standing up against it.

Throughout the years the Palestinian struggle has stood out as one that is consistent, diversified and unyielding. The latest honourable chapter of the struggle is the uprising, which a few days ago entered its second year, firmer, more vigorous and better armed. It is truly a historic event, one which can by no means be reversed. The uprising may be considered as a further step in man's struggle against coercion, despotism and occupation as well as in his unceasing determination to maintain his homeland, his integrity, his freedom and the restoration of his usurped rights.

The essence of the uprising is the struggle for a homeland, for man's dignity and freedom and for the restoration of rights. The foundation of all that is the relation between the man of the uprising and his land, and the faith in his inalienable rights, which has, since the dawn of freedom and dignity been beyond doubt. The uprising has assumed the basic characteristics of the decades-long struggle of the Palestinian people, because it is an all-out popular revolution that embodies the unanimity of a nation - the elderly, the youth, the children and the women - to reject the occupation and to restore their legitimate rights.

The generations of the uprising have dislocated all the wagers and illusions of the Palestinian people's enemies about turning occupation into a *fait accompli* and pushing the Palestinian cause into the shadow of oblivion and out-datedness.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

The steadfastness of the Palestinian people has thus endured in the face of all Israeli attempts to bury the Palestinian revolution. The generation of the uprising which has not been intimidated by their bones being broken or their being buried alive and has not been shackled by fear, is telling Israel that the continuation of the occupation is impossible.

The courageous Palestinian uprising has shaken the Zionist entity and thus made it behave erratically and commit brutal crimes against the Palestinian people.

Kuwait calls on the international community to condemn the coercive Israeli policies and its repressive practices in the occupied Arab lands in violation of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. The Israeli behaviour constitutes a flagrant violation of international laws and conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, of 1949.

It is no secret that the aim of the iron-fist policy and the terrorist acts committed continuously by Israel is in fact the progressive annexation of the Palestinian land as well as of the other occupied Arab lands in the Syrian Golan or in southern Lebanon. The atrocities perpetrated inside the occupied Arab lands are accompanied by terrorist aggression outside, against innocent civilian concentrations of population, both Palestinian and Lebanese. The latest Israeli military operation in Lebanon, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the independence and territorial integrity of that sisterly country, is but a recent manifestation of Israel's arrogance and intransigence, at a time when the whole international community opposes its shameful behaviour and its persistent rejection of efforts for peace aimed at the restoration of security and stability in the Middle East on the basis of justice and international legality.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

In spite of all those Israeli atrocities and terrorist acts, the uprising has managed to promote a deep national sentiment and strengthen the concept of Palestinian unity, a fact which has led not only Palestinians but also Arab countries and all the peace-loving nations of the world to rally behind the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and thus has asserted once again that the PLO is the sole, legitimate representative and the diplomatic arm of the Palestinian people. That fact was perfectly illustrated during the Palestine National Council session of the historic uprising recently held in Algeria.

We have listened to the historic speech of Mr. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO, in which he reviewed the important resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council on 15 November, foremost of which was the historic resolution establishing the independent Palestinian State.

The establishment of that State means the emergence of a new reality in international relations and balances. It was a step that represented victory for realism and maturity and a call for peace that seeks a way out of the whirlpool of destruction and bloodshed to the comfort of stability and peace.

The resolution declaring the Palestinian State has made the United Nations particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, face up to their historical responsibilities in the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions; especially General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which has not yet been fully implemented. It is considered a major shift on the Palestinian question, which is the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and it marks the beginning of a new phrase towards the political settlement of that significant issue.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

The PLO has always called for peace in return for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to establish their independent State with Holy Jerusalem its capital, whereas Israel has proved through its policies and continued aggression that it is against peace, and that even its appetite and greed for expansion at the expense of others are boundless.

Kuwait regards the Palestine National Council's declaration of a Palestinian State, with its political programme and realistic nature as a strong weapon which will give the Palestinian uprising and its masses the feeling that their precious sacrifices are not in vain and that they are producing positive results for the benefit of the Palestinian cause.

The majority of countries - about 87 - have so far recognized the Palestinian State, convinced of the justness of this cause and believing that declaring the State is a flexible step, characterized by moderation and realism; a move that rests on a solid foundation in international law.

Kuwait registers here its utmost appreciation of the countries that have set out to recognize this State, and it appeals to all other countries to follow suit. The experiences of nations that sought to attain independence and liberation and to join the United Nations through the fight for liberation and the popular struggle should motivate their prompt action, not only in recognizing the Palestinian State, but also in providing it with all forms of support to help it attain the freedom of its people and regain their usurped legitimate rights.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

Furthermore, Kuwait pays a tribute to the positive stance of the Twelve countries of the European Community towards the declaration of the independent Palestinian State, despite the inadequacy of that reserved position, for we were, and still are, hoping that their welcome will be upgraded to the level of recognition of the independent State, particularly since the Twelve recognized in their Venice Declaration of 1980 the legitimate Palestinian rights, including the right to self-determination.

(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

From this platform we call upon the United States, in particular, not to let this historic opportunity slip out of its hands because of unjust restrictions that it imposed on itself as a condition for talking with the PLO and its leaders. It did so for motives and interests that are blind to truth and justice, and is thus unable to consider the overall context and genuine dimensions of the issue.

We are at a crossroads, where history is pausing for crucial moments to observe the ability of all of us to overcome the hardships and seek to learn the facts and lessons of our age and to find inspiration from the struggle of its generations. The right to life and to a dignified living is a sacred right of all peoples, and the Palestinian people expect us all to help them attain that right. So let us work together to preserve this right. The path to that end is already mapped out and clear; it is the path of the international peace conference, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Security Council's permanent members and all the parties involved in the issue, including the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and within the context of the Political Declaration of the Algiers meeting and all the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), mentioned in that Declaration.

We also hope that the United States will realize that it stands alone in its adherence to Israeli concepts in sticking to the status quo and letting things stay as they are, with the aim of undermining any prospects for a just peace in the Middle East region.

A new atmosphere now prevails in the world community. It is characterized by détente and a true desire to solve intractable regional problems through the United Nations. Kuwait therefore calls upon the world Organization to extend its credibility to the Arab-Israeli conflict by pressuring Israel, which rejects

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international consensus, into complying with the international will, withdrawing from all occupied Arab territories, and providing the opportunity for the nascent, independent Palestinian State to carry out its role and responsibilities on its national soil.

Kuwait believes that, necessary and urgent as peace for the Middle East region is, the full rights of the Palestinian people are also the essence of, and condition for, that peace. Without those legitimate rights that peace becomes a deceptive mirage.

Finally, we wish to send to the Palestinian people an expression of pride and appreciation of their blessed, heroic intifadah, hoping soon to see the flag of Palestine fluttering alongside the flags of the other United Nations Member States. I am more than confident that the majority of Members attending these General Assembly meetings share that hope with me.

Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia): Although I had occasion during the general debate to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the forty-third session of the General Assembly, I cannot let this occasion pass without paying tribute to him for the outstanding leadership he has provided to our deliberations over the past three months. We are confident that at these meetings specifically devoted to a question of paramount importance to the international community he will again distinguish himself in guiding the proceedings to a fruitful conclusion.

I should also like to take this opportunity to join those who have already welcomed to our midst Chairman Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and to express our deep gratitude to him for his inspiring address and message of peace, which I am sure will make a singular contribution to the success of our meetings.

(Mr. Alatas, Indonesia)

The unprecedented decision to convene the General Assembly in Geneva in order to hear the views of Chairman Arafat is not only an appropriate honour bestowed on him, but is also a fitting homage to the PLO, recognized by the United Nations as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

These meetings, moreover, is an expression of international solidarity and support for the intifadah, the popular uprising in the Palestinian occupied territories in heroic defiance of the Israeli colonial occupation. And the presence here of so many delegations represented at the Ministerial level underscores the significance that we all attach to the heroic decisions taken at the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) held in Algiers last month.

The turbulent events of the past year have brought about a dramatic change in the occupied territories. The spontaneous protests that began in December 1987 have now become a sustained and widespread popular rebellion, pitting the brutal force of Israeli military might against the unflinching determination, unity and revolutionary fervour of the Palestinian masses.

The intifadah has effected a profound transformation in the strategic dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of its core issue, the Palestinian struggle for national liberation and independence. It is now universally acknowledged as a categorical repudiation by the Palestinian people of all strata, both inside and outside their homeland, of a status quo under Israeli colonial occupation. Indeed, having withstood every attempt to contain or suppress it, the intifadah constitutes irrefutable proof of the indomitable spirit and absolute faith of the Palestinian nation in attaining the restoration of its inalienable national rights to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish a

(Mr. Alatas, Indonesia)

sovereign, independent State in Palestine. And, Israel, by its own actions, has exposed before the world the moral and political bankruptcy of its aggressive and expansionist designs towards Palestine and the Arab nation as a whole.

To its lasting credit, the international community from the outset recognized the dire implications for international peace and security of Israel's methods in dealing with the uprising. The Security Council was virtually in continuous session from December to April last, and it has adopted a series of resolutions demanding Israel to desist forthwith from its policies and practices that are in such gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and other internationally accepted norms of civilized behaviour. Likewise, the Assembly, in a special plenary session held on 3 November, adopted resolution 43/21, which condemned Israel for violating the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people and urged the Security Council again to take up the situation in the occupied territories. By these decisions, the Member States have unambiguously pronounced their revulsion at the appalling dimensions of repression, deprivation and death to which the Palestinian population in the occupied territories have been subjected for over a year.

(Mr. Alatas, Indonesia)

Yet, despite all the condemnations, demands and appeals, Israel, with its customary response, continues to flout the will of the international community, encouraged, as it seems to feel, by the almost mechanical support extended by its allies and friends.

Deprived of any other recourse, the courageous Palestinians have pursued the only alternative open to them - that of continuing their legitimate and just struggle to regain their usurped rights.

In this struggle the Palestine Liberation Organization is unquestionably the supreme political embodiment of the Palestinian national revolution, and this fundamental fact cannot be changed by force of arms. Neither can Israel's propaganda machine, nor attempts to ban the PLO Observer Mission to the United Nations or to deny the Chairman of that Organization the opportunity to bring his peace proposals to the Organization diminish the reality that the PLO is and always has been the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and hence the principal party in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine. Consequently, any approach which ignores the PLO or denies it its rightful place as a full partner on an equal footing in the search for a solution will be an exercise in futility.

The irreversible intensification of the intifadah as well as the decision by the Kingdom of Jordan to sever its administrative and legal ties with the West Bank paved the way for the historic decisions taken by the PNC at its meeting on 15 November 1988 to proclaim the independent State of Palestine, in Palestine and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. By that proclamation, the Palestinian struggle for national liberation has risen to new heights of reality and authenticity. It has done so by also committing itself inter alia to pursue a comprehensive, political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and of the question of

(Mr. Alatas, Indonesia)

Palestine, as its core issue, within the framework of the United Nations Charter and all relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); to participate on an equal footing in negotiations within the context of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations and on the basis of acceptance of Palestinian national rights and aspirations as well as Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Arab Jerusalem; to support the establishment and assurance by the Security Council of arrangements for security and peace among all States in the region, including the Palestinian State; and to reject all forms of terrorism, including State terrorism, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, while retaining the legitimate right to resist foreign occupation, and to struggle for national independence.

These historic decisions speak with a clarity and realism that should thwart all attempts to portray the PLO as anything but a true national liberation movement, imbued with a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to the aspirations of its people.

It is deeply gratifying to Indonesia that these statesmanlike and constructive steps have been welcomed by an overwhelming majority of States, with a great many of them according de jure recognition to the new Palestinian State.

For its part, Indonesia has already - on 16 November 1988 - extended its recognition to the Palestinian State. This decision was as natural as it was logical, as the Palestinian cause has always been fully consistent with the principles of our own raison d'être, as enshrined in our Constitution, which declares:

(Mr. Alatas, Indonesia)

"Since independence is the right of every nation, any form of subjugation in this world is contrary to humanity and justice, and must therefore be abolished."

Moreover, how could we sanctify the principle of struggle for national independence and sovereignty for our own nation and not identify with similar struggles waged by genuine liberation movements, such as the PLO? We thus seek nothing more nor less for the Palestine nation than what we ourselves have achieved for our own people - independence and justice, in true freedom and human dignity.

It is evident that an arduous road still lies ahead in overcoming the legacy of decades of enmity, injustice and mutual suspicion prevailing in the region. However, we fully concur with the view expressed by our Secretary-General, as contained in his most recent report on the situation in the Middle East:

"The recent session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process and I believe it offers fresh opportunities for progress towards peace which should be seized."

We believe, as he does, that:

"Every gesture towards peace should be nurtured if we are to overcome the mistrust that is so deeply felt on all sides." (A/43/867, para. 37)

Thus bold initiatives are called for in order to break the deadlock on the convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East, as endorsed by General Assembly resolution 38/58 C. We believe that such efforts would be greatly facilitated by placing the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, under temporary United Nations supervision, as this would put an end to the intimidation and oppression against the Palestinian people and thereby create an atmosphere conducive to the success of the peace conference.

(Mr. Alatas, Indonesia)

By the decisions taken at the PNC meeting, the PLO has provided a tangible manifestation of its firm commitment to engage in negotiations for peace with Israel through the modality of the International Peace Conference. Likewise, at the Extraordinary Arab Summit last June in Algiers the Arab States renewed their support for the convening of the Conference. The International Peace Conference thus remains the only viable and effective negotiating framework to resolve the various interrelated aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the multiplicity of contending interests inherent to them, foremost among which is Palestinian national independence and sovereign statehood.

Clearly, the time has come for Israel seriously to reconsider its position and to realize that the only path to peace and to a viable guarantee of its own security is through a comprehensively negotiated and equitably conceived political solution, which would be in the interest of all the States in the region, including Israel. Likewise, we strongly urge Israel's supporters to recognize the new realities as they pertain to the Palestinian question and to change their present rigid policy to one of foresight and flexibility, by co-operating with the Secretary-General in his efforts to expedite the convening of the International Peace Conference. It is now more urgent than ever before to defuse the explosive situation by concentrating our collective efforts on giving peace a chance.

Finally, I reaffirm that Indonesia, within its means and abilities, will continue to render all possible assistance to the Palestinian people, led by the PLO, in the legitimate realization of their sacred cause - the effective exercise of their sovereignty in the newly proclaimed Palestinian State.

Mr. BESSAÏH (Algeria) (interpretation from Arabic): A year ago the Palestinian people entered a new phase in its national liberation struggle by rising up in the occupied territories against its oppressor, thus loudly proclaiming its rejection of occupation and faits accomplis.

The popular intifadah has been consolidated and expanded over the months, drawing new strength from the daily heroism of thousands of children, armed only with their faith in their sacred cause; through the intifadah the Palestinian people has wished to bear witness to its unquenchable determination to recover the national rights that have been wrenched from it and to establish itself as a free people on its liberated historic homeland.

By solemnly proclaiming, on 15 November at Algiers, the independent State of Palestine, with its capital at al-Quds al-Sharif, the Palestinian people has come closer to the day when it will be able again to come together in its recovered homeland and return to building a society marked by justice, coexistence and prosperity: a society the sons of Palestine, whether in their occupied homeland or in exile, have never renounced.

The conflict that has rent the Middle East for four decades, and which because of its persistence and many manifestations poses the gravest of threats to international peace and security, has always confronted us with what has always been its principal facet - the question of Palestine - in spite of attempts to reduce it to one or another of its components.

The question of Palestine is a people dispossessed of its land and national rights. It is also the persistent denial of those rights and the pursuit of a policy of the total zionization of the occupied Palestinian territories with a view to turning the occupation into an irreversible fait accompli.

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

It is to that end that the policy of annexation is actively pursued through the creation of new settlements, the massive transfer of settlers, the confiscation of Arab lands and the harassment of Palestinian landowners to force them into exile. We witness at the same time the methodical implementation of a programme to suppress Palestinian cultural, religious and historical identity, with its primary target the Holy City of al-Quds. The sacrilegious acts against the Holy Places of Islam - including the desecration of the al-Aqsa Mosque and other Holy Places symbolizing the ongoing Palestinian and Islamic presence through the centuries - have increased in number in recent months, prompting legitimate outrage by all those who are devoted to civilized values and consider these places of worship to be inviolable.

Indeed, this territorial and cultural dispossession is an aspect of one strategy intended to change radically the demographic composition, physical nature, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied territories with a view to their ultimate annexation.

Carried out with impunity and in deliberate breach of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, this constitutes a challenge to the international community and confirms - if confirmation were needed - the Zionist régime's aspiration to place itself outside universally accepted norms and create faits accomplis. That is why the uprising against the forces of oppression should be seen as the affirmation of the unalterable Palestinian nature of the occupied territories.

Thus, a new generation of Palestinians, born and raised under occupation, in promoting a new phase in the national liberation struggle, are firmly refuting the thinking of those who thought, or hoped, that in time the Palestinian people would grow accustomed to its situation and reconciled to its fate - as if time could make

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

the national rights of a people disappear, abolish that people's collective memory, and break down its desire to live in freedom.

Four decades of occupation and virulent repression and numerous attempts to stifle the Palestinian identity have not stemmed, indeed cannot stem, the irresistible impetus of freedom borne by Palestinians from generation to generation.

Nor will the daily martyrs, the banishments, the mass arrests - in sum, the policy of repression faced by the Palestinian people in its occupied homeland - or, much less, the repeated aggression by Zionist forces against it in the camps of southern Lebanon, prevail over the heroic uprising now that the Palestinian people feels more than ever that final victory is near and that the realization of its national aspirations is inevitable.

Through its intifadah the Palestinian people has reminded us that the Middle East conflict, whatever its ramifications, concerns and involves first and foremost the Palestinian people, and that the only true peace is peace based on the full restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people. That is a fundamental fact that no one can conceal and that cannot be repeated too often.

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

There can be no lasting peace in the Middle East if the Palestinian people are not involved and, a fortiori, if anything is imposed on them. That means that the national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination, must be restored. It means also that all the occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights, must be vacated. Finally, it means that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), its sole, legitimate representative, must be fully involved in all peace negotiations.

On the basis of those fundamental facts, the General Assembly made a rendezvous with history 14 years ago when it enshrined the national dimension of the Palestinian people, reaffirmed the illegality of the occupation of their territories and the need for Israel's forces to withdraw from them without delay, and recognized the status of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the indispensable partner in any negotiations on the Middle East problem.

Having made that right choice - which has since been confirmed at each session by the international community - the Assembly was able five years ago to define the elements of a solution to the conflict and determine the framework in which the negotiations should be held. That framework is the international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the conflict, including the PLO - the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - on a footing of equality with all the other parties.

In that connection, we can state today that the principle of the holding of this conference as well as the bases on which it must operate enjoys the widespread support of the international community.

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

For its part, the Arab nation, during the last Summit of Arab Heads of State, held in June in Algiers, endorsed the principle of the conference. During its historic meeting in Algiers, the Palestine National Council also solemnly endorsed the holding of the conference and the bases on which it must operate in order to achieve a just and final solution to the Middle East conflict.

In its clear pronouncement and its demonstration of a true awareness of its responsibilities regarding the convening of the international conference and the bases on which it should be structured, the Palestine National Council has undoubtedly given a new and decisive impetus to the process leading to the holding of the conference.

The proclamation of the State of Palestine and the definition of the elements that should be the bases for the negotiations to be initiated at the conference flow from the repeatedly demonstrated determination of the PLO truly to work for a just and final settlement of the Middle East conflict.

The profound satisfaction with which the international community welcomed the proclamation of the State of Palestine and the political declaration adopted by the Palestine National Council demonstrate that the decisions taken in Algiers were just and reasonable. That is demonstrated also by the broad movement towards recognition of the new State of Palestine, as well as by the firm support that has been expressed, particularly by President Mugabe on behalf of the Movement of Non-aligned Countries.

However, at the very moment when a consensus is emerging on the need to hold the international peace conference and when the eminently positive nature of the recent decisions by the Palestine National Council is being unanimously welcomed, the leaders of Israel, true to their policy of intransigence, persist in refusing

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

and rejecting any possibility of giving peace a chance - as is shown by the recent Zionist aggression against Lebanon.

At the same time, moving against the current of efforts required to strengthen the chances for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, and as if to thwart the peace momentum resulting from the Algiers decisions, the United States Government - in flagrant violation of its international obligations, particularly under its 1947 Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations - decided to prevent the Chairman of the PLO from coming to United Nations Headquarters to bring the international community the message of peace and hope contained in the Algiers decisions. That action, which is extremely damaging and which the General Assembly, almost unanimously, found to be reprehensible, must not in any way hinder the efforts to accelerate the convening of the international conference. In other words, these efforts must be pursued by everyone more than ever before, and, for its part, the Security Council must play its full role, in keeping with the mandate given it by the General Assembly, in the convening of the international conference and must do everything possible to remove the obstacles that have so far prevented this. The Council must resolutely carry out that task if it wishes to confirm its determination to regain full use of its authority in the settlement of conflicts threatening international peace and security and make its greatly desired contribution to the settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Pending such a settlement, the United Nations must seriously consider the possibility of exercising for a limited period a form of supervision over the occupied territories, in order to protect the civilian population from arbitrary acts by the occupier, which goes so far as to deny them the fundamental guarantees of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and in order to create a climate propitious to the success of the international conference and the conclusion of a just, comprehensive

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

and final solution to the conflict. In the same spirit, the General Assembly today has the historic chance of giving concrete expression to the international community's impatience at the continued denial of the national rights of the Palestinian people, by welcoming the State of Palestine in its midst.

The dangerous development of the Middle East conflict and the fact that it has spread in recent years to other geographical areas are evidence of the worsening of the conflict and its risks for international peace and security. Whether regarded as local or regional, this conflict, in spreading to the entire Mediterranean region, has proved that its developments could affect even regions most able to contain it or to protect themselves from its fallout.

However, at the very time when the Zionist régime seems to wish to extend its field of aggression to other places, the very core of occupied Palestine - which it had thought it had completely subjugated - has risen up against its laws and has been brutally proving to it that the force of arms, awesome as it may be, is doomed to defeat when confronted by the force of convictions.

My country, which wrested its independence at a very high price, knows that the struggle of peoples subjected to occupation can have no other outcome but the recovery of their freedom and dignity.

(Mr. Bessaih, Algeria)

On this occasion, Algeria, which has never spared either its support or its efforts for the consolidation of the unity of the ranks and the independence of the decisions of the Palestinian resistance and for the coming together of the Arab nation around the Palestinian cause, once again hails the people of the glorious intifadah and reiterates to them its steadfast support until the total achievement of their national rights.

Before concluding, I should like to pose a question from this rostrum. At a time when, under the auspices of the United Nations and thanks to the persevering efforts of the Secretary-General, hotbeds of discord and injustice are being stamped out in the world and regional conflicts are moving towards solution, can the international community afford to miss this unparalleled opportunity to put out the fire in the Middle East that threatens world security and to restore the rights of a people? No; we must act. Peace demands it; conscience dictates it; justice requires it.

Mr. PAPOULIAS (Greece) (spoke in Greek; English text furnished by the delegation): Through my presence here, the 12 members of the European Community want to underline the importance they attach to this debate. They have particularly profound and important historical, political, geographic, economic, religious, cultural and human links with the countries and the peoples of the Middle East. They, therefore, cannot but follow with the greatest interest events in a region so close to them and try to contribute, insofar as they can, towards finding a solution to the problems of the region. Among these problems, we note the urgency of the Palestinian question, the seriousness of the situation in the territories occupied by Israel and the absence of a peace process.

(Mr. Papoulias, Greece)

The Twelve have on several occasions expressed their deep concern with respect to the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories and the increasing feeling of disappointment and desperation among the population of these territories, which can only worsen if there is no prospect of a negotiated solution.

They believe that the international community has a political and moral responsibility to find a solution and that it must face it without delay.

In accordance with the fundamental principles which inspire their foreign policy, they believe firmly and profoundly in the role of the United Nations and consider that it is the appropriate forum in which a real dialogue between the parties concerned could take place.

The Twelve - which would have wished this debate to take place in its natural forum, New York - welcome nevertheless the fact that it is taking place with the direct participation of the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). They consider it important for the discussion to contribute towards the achievement of the only objective which counts, that is, the rapid start of a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution to the crisis.

In the Venice Declaration of 1980 and in their successive statements, the member States of the European Community have clearly and coherently defined the principles on which a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict has to be based. I should like here to summarize the essential elements: Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967 and the recognition of the right of all the States of the region, including Israel, to existence and security, on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the United Nations Security Council; and recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination with all that this implies.*

* Mr. Rana (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Papoulias, Greece)

From these statements, it is evident that the member States of the European Community attach the same importance to those two fundamental principles and that, in our view, they remain indivisible.

Wishing to contribute in a direct way to finding a solution in accordance with the principles which I have just outlined, the member States of the European Community have spared no effort to support the initiation of a negotiating process. In the same spirit, they declared in February 1987 that they favour the holding of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations. They have since endeavoured to contribute actively to bringing the positions of the parties closer with a view to convening such a conference which, in our view, would be the appropriate framework for the necessary negotiations between the parties directly concerned. Besides the parties concerned, all parties capable of making a direct and positive contribution to the peace and security of the region, as well as to its economic and social development, should take part in such a conference. We have spared no effort with the parties concerned so that they could at least accept the conditions likely to favour negotiations. In this same spirit, we have supported all efforts to give new impetus in the search towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

(Mr. Papoulias, Greece)

The Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories has brought the urgency and drama of the problem back to the centre of world attention. It has also shown that without the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people there will not be - there cannot be - for Israel, or for the other countries of the region, peace, security or a future. Likewise, the Palestinian right to self-determination could not be realized without the acceptance of Israel's right to a secure existence. We have repeatedly reaffirmed our conviction that the status quo in the occupied territories is not sustainable and we have spoken out against the repressive measures adopted by the Israeli authorities in those territories.

The European Community has worked for an improvement in the living conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories through development programmes, supplementary humanitarian aid, and efforts to promote direct exports of agricultural and industrial products from those territories to the Community market. Likewise, we reaffirm our position that any change in the demographic structure of the occupied territories is illegal under international law and hinders the peace process. Military occupation can only be considered as provisional and gives the occupying force no right to annex or extend its jurisdiction or administration in the occupied territory. Israeli policy towards the territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and consequently has no legal effect.

In this context we renew our appeal to Israel to fulfil its obligations as an occupying force and respect the terms of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 on the protection of civilians in time of war.

The Twelve attach particular importance to the decisions adopted by the Palestine National Council in Algiers, which reflect the will of the Palestinian

(Mr. Papoulias, Greece)

people to assert their national identity and include positive steps towards the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

In this respect we have welcomed the acceptance by the Palestine National Council of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a basis for an International Conference, which implies acceptance of the right of existence and of security of Israel as well as of all the other States of the region. Respect for this principle goes together with that of justice for the peoples of the region, in particular the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people with all that this implies. I wish to repeat here that for the Twelve this is a necessary condition for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, as they have repeatedly asserted since the Venice Declaration.

We have also welcomed with satisfaction the explicit condemnation and rejection of terrorism. We are pleased that this choice of moderation has received important and expected confirmation in the speech that Chairman Arafat has given in this forum. We look to all the parties concerned to discard violence as a way to progress in the Arab-Israeli dispute. We believe that this choice - the choice of negotiation rather than violence and of moderation rather than extremism - is a choice of reason for the people of the region who have already paid a considerable toll in suffering and bloodshed. However, this choice deserves, and indeed demands, an equally moderate and constructive response.

The Twelve wish therefore to appeal urgently to all the parties concerned, while refraining from any act of violence or other action that could aggravate the situation, to seize this opportunity and contribute in a positive way to the peace process. We hope that the Israelis will see recent events as an opening in the peace process with the acceptance of the International Peace Conference under the auspices of the United Nations. In the meantime violence and repression must stop

(Mr. Papoulias, Greece)

and security and respect for human rights must be re-established in the occupied territories.

In the spirit of sincere and deep friendship, which binds us to the peoples of the region, the Twelve wish here to reiterate an urgent and heartfelt appeal. There can be no security or real peace for any of the peoples of the region without a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement. All parties must recognize their common rights.

We believe that the competent organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council and the Secretary-General, have an important role to play. The Twelve wish that these organs might fully play their role as they have done so efficiently in resolving other regional conflicts. They are most actively committed to participating in and supporting all efforts in that direction.

The Member States of the European Community and I personally have never failed to let our Palestinian interlocutors know how much importance we attach to moderation and to the need for a moderate and constructive political programme. We shall continue to do so.

Let me renew to all the parties concerned - and thus also to the Israeli people - this appeal to find the courage of moderation, confidence and justice. Peace has to be found in the spirit and in the heart before it can be made at the negotiation table. Let me express the profound hope that this debate will mark the beginning of a new spirit and that a future of peace, justice, economic and social progress will open for all the peoples of the region. The European Community and its members are determined to contribute to this with all their strength.

Mr. BAGBENI ADEITO NZENGEYA (Zaire) (interpretation from French): Recent developments in the question of Palestine and the courageous positions adopted by the Palestinian leadership and supported by Palestinian activists show the important new prospects that could bring the United Nations to take a historic decision to constitute a State of Palestine in conformity with resolution 181 (II), which set out a Plan of Partition with Economic Union for a Jewish State and a Palestinian Arab State.

The conditions set in resolution 181 (II) should now apply in view of the statement made by King Hussein of Jordan in Amman on 31 July 1988 on the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the historic proclamation on 15 November 1988 of a State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council meeting at Algiers, and the recognition by the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in Stockholm on 7 December this year, of the State of Israel's right to exist. The courageous declaration on the comprehensive settlement of the problem on the basis of Security Council resolutions indicates the sense of responsibility of the provisional government of Palestine; it confirms earlier statements and should be endorsed both by the State of Israel and by all the States concerned in the conflict.

At its 128th plenary meeting, held on 29 November 1947, the General Assembly recommended to the United Kingdom, as the mandatory Power, and to all other Members of the United Nations the adoption and implementation, with regard to the future government of Palestine, of the Plan of Partition establishing a Jewish State and an Arab State. It requested the Security Council to take the necessary measures as provided for in the plan for its implementation, and it elected the five members of the United Nations Commission on Palestine: Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama and the Philippines.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya, Zaire)

By the terms of the Plan of Partition with Economic Union contained in resolution 181 (II), the armed forces of the mandatory Power for Palestine should be completely withdrawn not later than 1 August 1948 to ensure that an area situated in the territory of the Jewish State, including a seaport and hinterland adequate to provide facilities for a substantial immigration, be evacuated.

It was accepted that independent Arab and Jewish States should come into existence in Palestine two months after the evacuation of the armed forces of the mandatory Power had been completed, but in any case not later than 1 October 1948.

Under the steps preparatory to independence, it was agreed that as the mandatory Power withdrew its armed forces, the administration of Palestine should be progressively turned over to the United Nations Commission on Palestine, which would act in conformity with recommendations of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Resolution 181 (II) was very specific in calling on the United Nations Commission on Palestine, on its arrival in Palestine, to carry out measures for the establishment of the frontiers of the Jewish and Arab States in accordance with the recommendations of the General Assembly on the partition of Palestine.

Of course, the atmosphere at the time when this resolution, at that time draft resolution A/416, was considered could not lead to its immediate implementation, because of resistance by certain delegations. The result of the voting - 33 votes in favour, 13 against, with 9 abstentions - was interpreted by certain States as a sign of grave risks. When the resolution was adopted, certain delegations declared that some States would never recognize the new Jewish State.

Thirty-nine years have passed, during which that same intransigence has fostered rivalries that the United Nations should now ease in accordance with paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 605 (1987), which stresses the urgent need to reach a just, durable and peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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It is worth recalling that, despite its shortcomings, resolution 181 (II) recommend that no Jew should be permitted to establish residence in the area of the proposed Arab State or any Arab in the proposed Jewish State. Each State involved in the partition was also to accept the obligation to refrain in its international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of the other State.

Section F of part I of the Partition Plan entitled each State concerned to admission to membership in the United Nations in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter.

The quarreling, delays and controversies of 26 to 29 November 1947 at the second session of the General Assembly continued through 1987, thus preventing the implementation of resolution 181 (II). In December 1987 the popular Palestinian uprising reawakened Palestinian consciousness in the struggle against the annexation of Palestinian territories occupied by the State of Israel. This implicitly reawakened the nationalist instinct of the Palestinians to have a nation alongside the State of Israel; in other words, the acceptance of the plan to partition Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State.

The international status of Jerusalem, under United Nations administration, was proposed in the Plan of Partition of Palestine. After the 1967 occupation of the eastern sector of Jerusalem by Israel, the General Assembly and the Security Council reaffirmed their position on Jerusalem, declaring null and void the basic law adopted on 30 July 1980 by the Israeli Parliament, which declared Jerusalem to be the capital of the State of Israel. Member States were called on not to accept the basic law and to refrain from sending their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya, Zaire)

The reports of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other specialized agencies in the United Nations system are devastating with respect to the State of Israel, which is employing repressive measures to put down the popular Palestinian uprising, the intifadah. We congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on its work.

The uprising in the occupied territories affirms the determination of the Palestinians to reject the Israeli domination and occupation that began in 1967. Despite the very cruel acts perpetrated by Israel to end the uprising, including brutality against women and children, the uprising has clearly succeeded in challenging Israel's policies of domination and in preserving the identity of the Palestinian people and its devotion to the principles of self-determination with a view to establishing a Palestinian State.

Neither the assassination of the Palestine Liberation Organization leader, Abu Jihad - which took place in Tunisia on 16 April and which was accompanied on the same day by the massacre by Israeli armed forces of 13 Palestinians who were protesting that assassination - nor the murder of Yussef Mohammed Subaih, a 17-year-old activist who was participating in West Bank demonstrations on 8 December, the first anniversary of the popular Palestinian uprising, the intifadah, could dim the flame of liberation that inspires the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya,
Zaire)

The denial of the exercise of its right to independence, the confiscation of its lands, the expulsion of its residents and the ongoing occupation of its territory are all legitimate reasons for the Palestinian people to live on its own land as a community and national entity with its own social structure and economic life. Moreover, it is the collective will of the Palestinians, whether or not they live in Palestine, to consider the Palestine Liberation Organization as their sole legitimate representative.

Zaire believes that the following basic conditions are required to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

First, the State of Israel should be asked to recognize and respect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to a State, a government and a Palestinian nation in accordance with the partition plan contained in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947.

Secondly, the Arabs must also be brought to accept the State of Israel within internationally recognized boundaries.

Thirdly, the United Nations must play a primary role, through the Security Council and the Secretary-General. That role should be to convince all Member States, including the State of Israel, that they should accept the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East to be attended by the five permanent members of the Security Council, the representatives of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization representing the Palestinian people and all other parties directly concerned with the conflict, such as Lebanon and Syria in particular. That Conference should have as its aim the full implementation of resolution 181 (II) and the provision of guarantees of peace for all the States of the region, backed by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya,
Zaire)

Fourthly, a special representative of the Secretary-General should be appointed, responsible for closely following the situation in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel with a view to reporting to the Security Council pursuant to paragraph 6 of Security Council draft resolution S/19352, which, unfortunately, was amended at the 2770th meeting, on 22 December 1987.

My delegation appeals once again to Israel and to the Government of Israel, the Power occupying the Palestinian territories, to comply immediately and scrupulously with the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 and to put an end to the policy and practices that are contrary to the provisions of that Convention.

Zaire will continue fully to support the Palestinian people, which is fighting for its independence, its unity and its own identity, and we welcome the declaration made in Amman on 31 July 1988 by King Hussein Jordan on the status of the West Bank and the Gaza and the declaration of Algiers, of 15 November 1988, on the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine.

Mr. MALILE (Albania) (interpretation from French): Just as we were expecting the General Assembly to hold a constructive debate that was likely to open prospects for a solution to the Palestinian problem and to the problem of the Middle East as a whole, the Assembly was confronted with the unjust position taken by the United States, which, contrary both to obligations arising from its Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations and to the very interests of peace, has not allowed the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people to go to New York to speak before the Assembly. That step represents defiance of and lack of respect for the United Nations and, at the same time, has pitted the United States against the entire international community. The General Assembly justly opposed that arbitrary act and decided, almost unanimously, to transfer its work

(Mr. Malile, Albania)

from New York to Geneva, an event unique in the history of the United Nations. That attitude is proof positive of the support enjoyed by the Palestinian people and of the profound concern of the international community, which is called upon to find a just solution to this problem crucial to the fate of a people and to peace.

For over four decades, the United Nations has continued to consider the question of Palestine, particularly in the General Assembly, the Security Council and other bodies. Throughout the debates that have already taken place, the Member States have forcefully expressed their legitimate concern at the persistence of this terrible tragedy and the sufferings of the Palestinian people, the injustice perpetrated upon it and the imperative need to do away with that injustice.

The Middle East crisis, almost half a century old, has shown that that region of vast strategic importance and brimming with rich oil deposits has become an arena for repeated confrontation between the interests of the super-Powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, which have endeavoured to consolidate their presence there. Such conditions, as well as the expansionist policy of Israel against the Arab States, have entailed protracted aggression and almost cyclical armed conflicts in the region that have only brought untold sorrow and devastation to the people of the region.

The Palestinian problem is an integral part of the Middle East crisis, whose spectre has repeatedly threatened international peace and security. That crisis has been maintained by the profoundly anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab policy of imperialism and of Israel, which, following periodic aggression, has occupied the Arab territories and has cast from its lands an entire people, people with a culture and a civilization deeply rooted in the region - the Palestinian people - forcing it to lead the life of refugees. Entire generations of Palestinians have grown up under the tents of refugee camps, where they lead a life of unparalleled deprivation. Those camps have been subjected to savage attacks and extermination,

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of crimes and of vast massacres amounting to genocide. Despite sacrifice and great privation, the brave Palestinian people has never bowed its head. It has persisted in its struggle and its resolute efforts in its just cause.

Living proof of that growing resistance is the vast popular uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories, where this generation, born and raised under conditions of occupation, confronts with unparalleled heroism the military machine of the occupying Power. The heroic Palestinian youth and the whole population, including women and children, have met the fire of Israeli tanks with their very bodies and with any means at hand, such as stones. That shows that nothing can break the will and the unshakable confidence of the Palestinian people, resolved to put an end to the occupation and to have its national rights prevail. In its just struggle, it has never failed to enjoy the powerful support of the fraternal Arab peoples and of all people of the world.

The Middle East crisis and the Palestinian problem have constantly been the subject of debate at the United Nations. The resolutions of the United Nations and its main bodies, the General Assembly and the Security Council, on this problem are legion, but Israel's arrogance and aggressiveness, supported by all available means and in all forms by the United States of America have prevented the implementation of those resolutions, and the situation has deliberately and increasingly been complicated.

Accusations of terrorism against the Palestinian people and its legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, pursue the same target: to denigrate the liberation movement. Those who struggle for freedom and for their own land are not terrorists. Rather, those are terrorists who by force of arms have reduced an entire people to the status of refugees, who have perpetrated massacres in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut, whose airforce has bombed the area all the way to Tunis and now descends upon Lebanon.

(Mr. Malile, Albania)

Those who oppose solution of the Middle East crisis have from time to time presented various plans designed essentially to eliminate the question of Palestine. The so-called policy of secure boundaries, loudly touted by Israel, is a well-known tactic to deny the Palestinian people their own land and to perpetuate the occupation of Arab territories.

These dangerous plans have been rejected by the Palestinian people which, manifesting admirable resolve, is pursuing its struggle for the implementation of its national aspirations. These efforts make the Palestinian factor essential to any solution of the Middle East problem. No conference or forum can produce a positive result if the Palestinian problem is excluded from the discussion. There can be no just and lasting solution that can be achieved against the will of the Palestinians, or behind their backs. The long and heroic struggle waged by the Palestinian people, the uprising of vast popular masses in the West Bank and Gaza, and events in the Middle East itself have created a new situation that makes it urgent to settle the Palestinian problem once and for all. It is under these circumstances that the Palestine National Council has recently proclaimed the creation of the state of Palestine.

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania, a consistently firm supporter of the Palestinian people's just struggle against Israeli imperialist aggression and for freedom and self-determination, including exercising its right to independent statehood, welcomes and recognizes the State of Palestine. This historic decision of the Palestine National Council is consistent with the legitimate rights and aspirations of the courageous Palestinian people. At the same time, it contributes to settlement of conflict in the Middle East and to peace and security in the region.

(Mr. Malile, Albania)

The fact that the new State has been welcomed and recognized by many countries proves the international community's firm support for the just cause of the Palestinian people.

The interests of peace and security require that the Palestinian problem, the situation in Lebanon and the Middle East question as a whole be assessed in a spirit of political realism and in the context of current international developments. Recently, a few steps have been taken towards détente, in particular towards the settlement of a number of regional conflicts, such as that between Iran and Iraq. Gratified by such steps, the international public sincerely hopes to see progress towards peace in the Middle East as well.

In tackling this problem we must, above all, take into account the interests of the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples that have been victims of aggression. That is why a lasting solution can come only from the countries of the Middle East, which have a direct interest in the peace and security of the region. To entrust this problem to the super-Powers risks subordinating Middle East interest to the global policies of the super-Powers. As experience has shown, this can only perpetuate the conflict.

The Palestinian people has the right to live free and independent. We must not ignore the lesson of history that neither violence nor terror can ever break the will of a people resolved to fight for its freedom and its national rights.

The delegation of Albania therefore believes that the main purpose of the Assembly's consideration of this problem should be to mobilize strong support for the Palestinian people, for its right to self-determination, for recognition of its State and for withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied Arab territories.

(Mr. Malile, Albania)

Those are the fundamental requirements for a Middle East settlement and for peace in the region.

Mr. FILALI (Morocco) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly is taking up consideration of the question of Palestine this year in a special political context and in the framework of monumental events. Hence the Palestine question, which has beset the United Nations since its creation, now poses an even greater challenge as one of the most crucial issues facing the international community.

We condemn the circumstances that have obliged us to deal with this question here in Geneva. We note, however, that the same circumstances have given rise to a discernible sense of international solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people and with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat.

I shall not dwell on the details of the United States Secretary of State's refusal to grant a visa to Mr. Arafat to go to New York and address the General Assembly. Commenting on that decision at the time, Morocco called it a mistake and expressed profound astonishment.

We were particularly surprised because the major Power that took that step has special responsibility for maintaining international peace: it knew perfectly well that the Palestinian leader's purpose in visiting New York was to deliver a historic message of peace intended to re-establish stability and harmony in the Middle East region. It stemmed from the new Palestinian concept that emerged at the recent Palestine National Council meeting culminating in the proclamation of the Palestinian State and in the adoption of political resolutions that were both courageous and politically important.

(Mr. Filali, Morocco)

I do not think there is any need to remind those here of the trauma suffered by the Palestinian people or of human rights.

The files of the United Nations are replete with examples of Israeli practices that have been condemned by the world community and rejected by the norms of international behaviour.

(Mr. Filali, Morocco)

The General Assembly, which we regard as the conscience of the international community, has adopted dozens of resolutions condemning Israel's policy in the occupied Arab territories. It has also sponsored resolutions containing initiatives for putting an end to the conflict in the Middle East, on the basis of principles of justice and equity. However, Israel has stubbornly refused to comply with those resolutions or to go along with those initiatives. It has persisted in its policy of occupying the territories of others and creating settlements there. It has continued to destroy the homes of Arab inhabitants and lay waste to their crops. It has engaged in collective detentions. It has closed down educational institutions. It has massacred innocent, defenceless civilians.

The intifadah of the Palestinian people, now in its second year, is simply the logical result of the tragic conditions endured by the Palestinian people for 40 years. The intifadah has proved that a basic change has taken place in the attitude of the Palestinian people towards the Israeli occupation and the denial of their rights.

Morocco recognizes the real value of the great sacrifices made by the Palestinian people during the uprising. We appreciate also the way that the Palestinian leaders shouldered their responsibilities at the recent meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers. At that meeting the Palestinians showed great political awareness, tolerance and wisdom. The whole world welcomed the results achieved at the Palestine National Council meeting and regards it as a historic event capable of bringing an end to the conflict and the wars that have devastated the Middle East and removing the causes of tension. Everything depends on the good faith of the other party.

The Palestine National Council has clearly recognized Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It has accepted the idea of the convening

(Mr. Filali, Morocco)

of an international peace conference with the participation of all the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on a footing of equality, as well as the permanent members of the Security Council, with a view to resolving the conflict. All that clearly shows that the leaders of the Palestinian people have a genuine political will that propels them towards peace and tolerance. Furthermore, they have reaffirmed their rejection of all forms of international terrorism and, by asking the Security Council to provide guarantees for the protection of the security of all the countries of the Middle East, they have irrefutably proved their great sense of responsibility. We had hoped that these clear positions, which Israel and the United States had constantly demanded, would receive the welcome and support necessary to launch the process of settling the Middle East crisis. It is indeed regrettable that the leaders of Israel are taking no account of these responsible and courageous positions. Even worse, they have rejected them outright and continue to pursue their policy based on fanaticism and recourse to terror and oppression against the children of Palestine, some of whom each day become victims of the bullets of the Israeli occupying forces. It is equally regrettable that others also seek to minimize the importance of these Palestinian initiatives.

Israel's rejection is no surprise to anyone who knows that the unchanging elements of its policy are war, terror, expansion and occupation of the territory of others. In the past, Israel rejected the Arab peace plan adopted at the twelfth Arab summit conference, in Fez in 1982. That plan called for the establishment of peace based on justice, an end to the hostilities, and guarantees of peace given by the Security Council to all the States of the region.

(Mr. Filali, Morocco)

Israel's obstinacy means that the Middle East will continue to be threatened by war and armed confrontation. Hence, the Security Council must continue to focus its attention on this question. The Council's adoption this year of three successive resolutions designed to protect the Palestinian inhabitants after the uprising broke out confirms - if confirmation were indeed needed - that the question of Palestine is the core of the Middle East conflict and one of the most dangerous sources of tension in the world. It confirms, too, the special responsibility of the United Nations in regard to this problem.

Morocco salutes the intifadah of the Palestinian people within Palestine. It welcomes the positions recently taken by the Palestinian leaders, which opened the way to the proclamation of the State of Palestine and the recognition of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In that respect, Morocco confirms that it will continue to do everything in its power to help the Palestinian people regain their basic, inalienable rights, especially their right to self-determination, to return to their homeland and to establish an independent State on Palestinian soil. We are convinced that the current situation is propitious to a serious and responsible initiative to find a just and real solution to the Palestinian problem. It would be unwise to lose this opportunity.

The idea of an international conference to solve the question of Palestine and the Middle East problem has been accepted internationally. It enjoys the support and encouragement of the international community. In conjunction with the positions recently taken by the Palestine National Council, that conference offers the best framework for laying the foundations of a solution to the problem.

(Mr. Filali, Morocco)

It is an irony of fate to see a people that has suffered so much in the past from the ills of oppression, arbitrariness and shameful behaviour using the same practices against a peaceful and peace-loving people that wants only to live in freedom on its own land where its ancestors have lived for centuries. Hence it is futile for Israel, or any other country, to continue to reject the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - or to refuse to recognize it as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, particularly since its leaders have provided clear evidence of its sense of responsibility and expressed the political will to embark on a truly dynamic course which could lead to peace and understanding in the Middle East region that has evinced the admiration and respect of the entire world.

We hope that the General Assembly, which is meeting in these special political circumstances, will be able to draw the correct lessons from the latest developments, with all their political and human dimensions, and produce positive results that will open up broad prospects for peace in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine, thus putting an end to the tragedy of war and banishing the specter of devastation and destruction in a region that was the cradle of the world's revealed religions which urge coexistence, tolerance, peace and harmony.

Mr. TEWARY (India): I should like to join those speaking before me in extending a warm welcome to Chairman Yasser Arafat to the forty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva. In his address this afternoon, Chairman Arafat made an immeasurable contribution towards achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. This is an historic occasion for the people of Palestine, the people of the Middle East, and indeed the entire international community.

(Mr. Tewary, India)

Chairman Arafat's statement was one of courage and foresight. His call to the leaders of Israel to come here and join him in forging peace should now remove any doubt about the determination and sincerity of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to sit together and negotiate lasting peace with Israel. We commend the framework of the Palestinian peace initiative. We hope that this initiative will evoke a simultaneous and constructive response from Israel and that this genuine opportunity to establish lasting peace in the Middle East will not be lost.

The General Assembly on 30 November voted to consider the question of Palestine at the United Nations office at Geneva after the host country had decided not to grant a visa to Chairman Arafat. In the words of the Secretary-General, this decision was

"incompatible with the obligations of the host country under the Headquarters Agreement".

The General Assembly, in taking this decision, underlined the legal obligation of the host country, while rejecting any attempt to redefine it unilaterally. More important, the General Assembly's decision is a significant political statement of support to the process begun at Algiers last month by the Palestine National Council. It must make us all happy that today that decision has been vindicated in that Chairman Arafat has been enabled to move that process further forward.

On 15 November, at the end of its historic session in Algiers, the Palestine National Council declared the independence of the State of Palestine. The Declaration of Independence stated that the State of Palestine was committed to:

"the purposes and principles of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the policy and principles of non-alignment." (A/43/827, p. 15)

(Mr. Tewary, India)

It also declared that the State of Palestine was committed to peaceful co-existence, and rejects:

"the threat or use of force, violence and intimidation against its territorial integrity and political independence or those of any other State." (A/43/827, p. 16)

As of today, nearly 70 countries, including India, have accorded recognition to the State of Palestine. In his letter to Chairman Arafat, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi stated:

"I extend to you, on behalf of the Government and people of India and on my own behalf, our heartiest felicitations on the declaration of an independent State of Palestine, to which the Government of India has already extended formal recognition. This has been our cherished and single-minded objective all these years."

The struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable right to self-determination has been one of the epic sagas of our times. For a good part of the century, and against heavy odds, the Palestinians have fought for their independence and freedom. We in India have always considered their struggle to be part of the international historical fight against colonial rule and foreign domination. While almost all peoples have gained political independence, the Palestinian struggle remains an unfinished revolution.

Yet there is little sign of any diminished commitment to that revolution. For more than a year the intifadah has signalled a new phase of the struggle for independence. The intifadah resoundingly demonstrated that 20 years of occupation has not broken the spirit of nationalism of the Palestinian people; that 20 years of repressive measures has not suppressed the yearning for freedom or the dignity of the people. World opinion should note that this tide will never ebb.

(Mr. Tewary, India)

The intifadah cannot be put down by force. It is the collective voice of an entire people. It has caught the imagination of the world. It has become, in the words of the Secretary-General:

"a dominating factor in the political agenda of the Middle East". (A/43/867, para. 32)

And again in the words of the Secretary-General, it is:

"an integral part of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict with its many complex and interrelated issues". (A/43/867, para. 34)

The need for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem has never been greater than now.

(Mr. Tewary, India)

The acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) is an element of the framework of negotiations of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). We hope Israel's response will be positive and in line with its previous commitment to Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

The Middle East is a rich mosaic of peoples and nations whose lives and histories have been intertwined for thousands of years. Its thought and civilization have greatly enriched the world.

Today, the region is of great strategic importance and rich in natural resources, economic potential and the talent of its peoples. Conflict and tension divert their energies from development and from their rightful role in the comity of nations. Confrontation and strife not only increase tensions in the region but also provide for a volatile mix with potential ramifications for the entire world.

No amount of arms can guarantee security without an accompanying political settlement that is just and fair. Occupation and repression cannot but feed a growing spiral of hostility and opposition. Support for the survivability and well-being of any State should not extend to support of policies of territorial expansion and occupation.

The international situation has seen some encouraging signs of improvement. In the Middle East too, a new sense of pragmatism is being displayed. The Palestine National Council session in Algiers and subsequent elaboration of policies by the Palestinian leadership have been welcome developments. Chairman Arafat's statement this afternoon is a resounding affirmation of this pragmatism and is symbolic of the yearning of the Palestinian people to participate in full dignity in realizing the enormous potential of the Middle East.

The PLO has done all that has been asked of it. There must be an adequate and constructive response if the peace process is to move forward. There is justifiable expectation in the air; we need to put in place a credible peace

(Mr. Tewary, India)

process, the objective of which will be to address the fundamental issues involved in the conference: the attainment by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination and the recognition that all the States in the region, including the State of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours, have the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

There is a compelling need for statesmanship and courage at the highest levels for peace to be ushered in in the Middle East. Such courage and statesmanship have been amply demonstrated in recent months, leading to positive developments in regional conflicts around the world. Time is not on the side of peace in the Middle East. The world must grasp this opportunity with flexibility and openness. The alternative is too grim and tragic to contemplate.

Mr. TABONE (Malta): It is an honour for me to be here on this occasion - which we hope will mark a turning-point in the long, drawn-out and tragic Arab-Israeli conflict - to present once more Malta's consistent policy in favour of the peaceful coexistence of two States, one Arab and the other Jewish, in the land of Palestine as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 181 (II).

We look on this occasion as a memorable one because we have seen the hand of co-operation outstretched to an unprecedented limit and in an atmosphere of realism and understanding that cannot but impress us all. We see overwhelming world opinion putting all its weight behind this effort, which needed courage and faith.

Once again, on behalf of the people of Malta I wish to reaffirm our conviction that the Palestinian people have the inalienable right to a State of their own in Palestine, side by side and in peaceful coexistence with the State of Israel. It is for this reason that we have enthusiastically welcomed and expressed support for the declaration made in Algiers on 15 November 1988 by the Palestine National Council on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in Palestine.

(Mr. Tabone, Malta)

And now, I would refer to the commitment of Chairman Yasser Arafat earlier today, in which we join,

"to make every endeavour to embody the proclaimed Palestinian State so that it can take its place among the States of the world".

I have described this occasion as memorable, and indeed it is because we have witnessed today an extraordinary appeal by Chairman Yasser Arafat - an eloquent challenge, sincere and full of goodwill, a further enhancement of the Algiers declaration in unequivocal positive terms. Most of us must have been moved by his outstretched hand of friendship and peace and the repeated call for peace in the land of peace and, may I add, at a time of peace.

May I pay tribute to the leader of the Palestinian people, who throughout the years, through thick and thin, has upheld the rights of his people to a Palestinian State in the land of Palestine. Never before has the attainment of this goal seemed so possible and perhaps so near.

In our enthusiasm let us not overlook the significant steps that have been taken to justify that feeling. The acceptance by the PLO of relevant United Nations resolutions and, in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, and the unequivocal acceptance of the two-State solution are a realistic and, in our view, sincere contribution towards a lasting, just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Malta urges that these significant steps now be matched by all those genuinely committed to a peaceful solution of the Middle East conflict. In this context Israel should realize that it is still occupying Palestinian territory, using force against Palestinian people, those engaged in the intifadah, to whom the land

(Mr. Tabone, Malta)

rightfully belongs. They should therefore heed the almost universal consensus for a speedy and peaceful settlement of an unacceptable state of affairs which has persisted for far too long. We repeat to them the invitation we heard earlier today, to come and make peace.

(Mr. Tabone, Malta)

Malta supports the early convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, and every effort should be made by all of us to convince those who are still hesitant to accept that call that it is also in their own interest that negotiations should begin without delay within the framework of such a Conference.

Lately the United Nations has given birth to a number of peace initiatives which are bearing fruit and are changing for the better the atmosphere in many parts of the world. Why should this same spirit not be extended to the Middle East? It is the task of these meetings to ensure that this same attitude will prevail.

Chairman Arafat's eloquent and impassioned appeal for peace this afternoon should flow out of this Hall into the chancelleries of all States - especially of the permanent members of the Security Council and of Israel - and among the ordinary people of the world, to produce a positive response, to help the forces of the olive branch to break down the accumulated suspicion and mistrust spawned in the past 40 years.

The tragedy of Palestine has lasted far too long. It is time, in Chairman Arafat's words,

"to cast away fear and intimidation ... Leave behind the spectre of the wars". (A/43/PV.78, pp. 37-40)

In other words, let us grasp the hand of reconciliation and make peace.

Mr. NOGUEIRA-BATISTA (Brazil): Since December 1987 - soon after we last discussed the item "Question of Palestine" - the world has been witnessing an outburst of protest in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The Palestinian uprising - the intifadah, as it has become widely known - undoubtedly represents a legitimate reaction to long years of oppressive occupation and reflects the determination of a people to take the initiative in demanding the fulfilment of their aspirations to self-determination.

(Mr. Nogueira-Batista, Brazil)

No doubt also reflecting world public opinion's shock at the conditions prevailing in Gaza and the West Bank, the Security Council has been called upon to meet on several occasions since the beginning of the intifadah, the last being in April 1988. The Council was unable to deal with the fundamental cause of the unrest, nor was it able to address itself to the exploration of ways and means to bring about a negotiated settlement to the question of Palestine. The Security Council had to restrict itself to vigorous condemnation of the repressive measures taken by the Israeli forces in trying to curb the unrest. Such measures were widely perceived as being incompatible with the responsibilities of Israel, as an occupying Power under the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The Security Council's appeal to the occupying Power went unheeded; disproportionate repression continued to be the rule in those territories. It has nevertheless proved to be futile, since it has been unable to stop the unrest, as we learn in particular from the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/806), of 21 November 1988. This seems to confirm that such unrest, stemming from the frustration of legitimate aspirations, may be temporarily weakened, but is not easily suppressed.

The international community must renew efforts to ensure the co-operation of the Israeli authorities in applying immediate measures to alleviate the daily suffering of the Palestinian people in those territories. We must remain committed to the protection and safety of the civilian population in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel must be made to act, in all circumstances, in accordance with its obligations as an occupying Power and a party to the relevant 1949 Geneva Convention.

(Mr. Nogueira-Batista, Brazil)

The additional sacrifices the Palestinian people have had to make have not been in vain. The status quo in those territories has now become politically unsustainable, even if still militarily possible. The intifadah has undoubtedly brought about a renewed, sharp awareness of the urgent need to start a negotiating process towards a peaceful and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. Such a message has been undeniably conveyed to all of the parties directly involved in the dispute as well as to the international community at large.

Our presence here in Geneva today is to a large extent a result of the recognition that a new impetus must be given to the search for peace in the Middle East. We should have preferred to have this meeting take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York - as it should, in accordance with the Headquarters Agreement. The overwhelming sentiment of the membership of this world body was to ensure not only the rights of the Palestinian people to be heard through their highest leader, but also the right and interest of Member States to hear his message, at a time when events related to the Palestinian question may be reaching a decisive turn.

Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, in his report of 21 January 1988 (S/19443), possibly the most authoritative and balanced account of the situation in the Palestinian occupied territories, issued a strong appeal to both Israelis and Palestinians

"to exercise restraint and to bring about that change of attitudes which will be necessary if a settlement is to be negotiated". (S/19443, para. 54)

Decisions taken last November, in Algiers, by the Palestine National Council (PNC) represent a relevant step in that direction.

(Mr. Nogueira-Batista, Brazil)

The Brazilian Government, in a press communiqué issued in Brasília on 23 November 1988, acknowledged the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine and the Political Communiqué issued in Algiers at the closure of the PNC meeting. In conformity with its support for the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence in their own State, the Brazilian Government took note with satisfaction that those documents reaffirmed Palestinian adherence to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, condemned the threat of the use of force, violence and terrorism, and extolled the settlement of international conflicts by peaceful means.

(Mr. Nogueira-Batista, Brazil)

Brazil has also taken good note of the fact that the Palestine National Council has given indications, both in and after Algiers, of its willingness to work towards a peaceful and lasting settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That position has long been advocated by my country, which firmly believes that the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from all territories occupied since 1967, together with the recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Israel as well as a Palestinian State, to exist in security within internationally recognized borders, is the only basis for reaching a just peace in the area.

With those ideas and goals in mind, Brazil continues to support the holding of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all involved and interested parties, including the PLO, the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. We remain convinced that such an initiative offers the best chance for a successful, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We also believe that such an important endeavour must be well prepared in order to ensure the interests of all parties directly involved. There are still fears and suspicions to be allayed if we are to remove the obstacles still blocking the acceptance of the convening of such a conference.

The important statement made here in Geneva today to the General Assembly by Chairman Yasser Arafat represents in its essence a further clear and constructive step in the direction of creating an atmosphere appropriate to that end and in the direction of peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Nogueira-Batista, Brazil)

Let us hope that in our deliberations here in Geneva, by fully taking into account the views of all parties involved, we shall be making a positive contribution to the peace process in the Middle East. With that in view, it would be wise to take heed in our deliberations of the appeal made by the Secretary-General in his January report on the situation in the occupied territories:

"Each side must put aside the often justified resentment it feels at past wrongs and understand better the legitimate interests and legitimate grievances of the other. Such understanding is not assisted by invective and abuse nor by sheltering behind the illusion that the other side does not exist". (S/19443, para. 54)

Mr. KRAVETS (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): It is our profound conviction that the process of positive change under way in international relations, including the political settlement of regional conflicts, cannot and must not bypass the problem of Palestine. The Middle East conflict is among the oldest and most chronic of conflicts, but it is no less dangerous for that; rather it is fraught with a great threat to international peace and security - not to mention the untold sorrow and deprivation it has visited upon the peoples of the region.

Its speedy solution has become an imperative of our time. The continued explosive situation in the Middle East runs counter to positive changes in the international climate. The Ukrainian SSR believes that the favourable climate developing in the world should be used to gain a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem on the basis of the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter, the decisions of the Organization, and a balance among the interests of all parties.

(Mr. Kravets, Ukrainian SSR)

A crucial condition for such a settlement is the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories occupied since 1967. The Palestinian people must be guaranteed the right to self-determination, and all States and peoples in the region must be guaranteed the right to free development and a secure existence.

Today, the Palestinian people has shown the world its unshakeable determination to decide independently on its own future. The Palestinian uprising has had a serious influence on the entire Middle East situation, including the positions of the parties directly concerned. A fundamentally new element was added when the Government of Jordan decided to sever its legal and administrative links with the West Bank, and when the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) expressed its readiness to assume full responsibility for the administration of the occupied Palestinian territories.

The documents of the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council have become truly historic for the Palestinians. That body has displayed the political maturity and constructive spirit of the PLO and its readiness to engage in negotiations in the framework of the United Nations on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The declaration of independence adopted by the Palestine National Council at that session has drawn wide support from the international community, which seeks the earliest possible convening of an international conference on the Middle East in conformity with General Assembly resolutions.

We are convinced that such a conference could ensure a vital shift in the process of achieving a Middle East settlement and a solution to the Palestinian problem. The broad international support for such a conference is an important factor and has an impact on all the problems related to a settlement. The right conclusion to draw is that the international consensus in favour of convening a

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conference on the Middle East has grown into a virtually unanimous position of States Members of the United Nations.

The new situation in the region requires immediate practical measures to set in motion the machinery of a conference and the formulation of a specific strategy for establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We are convinced that the United Nations has both the prestige and the capabilities to do this. Obviously, a crucial role in this process must be played by the permanent members of the Security Council.

The delegation of the Ukrainian SSR believes that a Middle East conference must be a flexible machinery with powers and competence of its own, capable of developing mutually acceptable solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian question. In that connection, it is important that the mandate of the conference not be detrimental to the rights and interests of any of the parties to the conflict, but promote unconditional respect for their sovereignty and independence and for the right of all the peoples in the region to self-determination and independent development of their choice.

Of crucial importance is the question of representation at the conference. If the Palestinian question is a key factor in a Middle East settlement, the Palestine Liberation Organization should participate in the work of the conference on an equal footing. That organization enjoys prestige among Palestinians, which would guarantee the acceptability of agreements achieved with its participation on behalf of the Arab people of Palestine.

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Disregarding the opinions of the Palestinians is thus doomed to failure. Any attempt to exclude the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from participation in a settlement of the Middle East question is unacceptable. It must be noted, however, that such attempts continue even now.

We are all aware of the great efforts the Secretary-General and the International Court of Justice had to exert to prevent the closure by the United States authorities of the Permanent Observer Mission of the PLO in New York. Recently the State Department of the United States, acting in contradiction to the will of the international community, refused to give Yasser Arafat - the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, which has permanent observer status with the United Nations - the right to come to United Nations Headquarters. We express profound regret at that decision by the United States authorities, which made it necessary for the international community to decide to transfer the consideration of the question of Palestine here to Geneva.

Israel continues, using all kinds of contrived pretexts, to reject the idea of an international conference. It thereby hampers the achievement of a solution to the question of Palestine.

The reliance by Israel's ruling circles on confrontation is inhuman and futile. The high-handed attitude taken by Israel towards our Organization's decisions and its political short-sightedness in regard to the issues under discussion, as well as its reluctance to enter into any constructive compromise, are the salient features of Israel's position in the United Nations.

We take this opportunity of appealing to the Government of Israel to reconsider its position and join in the wide international consensus for the convening of a conference in the Middle East as well as in sincere international efforts to find a just and lasting peace to the Middle East question, in the interests of all the peoples of the region, including the people of Israel itself.

(Mr. Kravets, Ukrainian SSR)

On the question of Palestine, the Ukrainian SSR has acted in keeping with its principles, as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. It is in favour of an early political solution to the question of Palestine and the granting to the Palestinian people of the right to self-determination. The varied work done by the Committee contributes to mobilizing broad international opinion in support of United Nations efforts to achieve a settlement to the Middle East question.

In connection with the escalating uprising of the Palestinian people in the territories occupied by Israel, the Ukrainian SSR submitted last May a proposal for the acceleration of the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and for participation by the Committee in the immediate initiation of preparations for an international conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations and in keeping with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C.

The intifadah in the occupied territories has created a qualitatively new situation. As is pointed out in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,

"The uprising brought to a new level the understanding of the question of Palestine and support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of this long-standing conflict among public opinion internationally and within Israel itself." (A/43/35, para. 141)

Israel must stop its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and join in constructive negotiations with the PLO, on the basis of the relevant United Nations decisions.

The success achieved in solving the problem of Palestine as well as other complicated regional problems will demonstrate the degree of political maturity among States Members of the United Nations and will be a measure of the

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effectiveness of the Organization.

The co-ordination of the political efforts of, and mutual understanding among, the Arab States is crucial to a solution to the Middle East problem.

The Ukrainian SSR declares its full solidarity with the long-suffering, courageous people of Palestine, which has not been broken by its trials and tribulations and continues to raise the banner of its struggle for its inalienable national rights. If the Palestine question is not solved, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in keeping with the vital interests of all the peoples of the region, will be impossible. We are convinced that there is no alternative to collective political efforts on this issue.

Mr. AL-DALI (Democratic Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): Only one month ago no one could have imagined that the United Nations General Assembly would be meeting in Geneva. It appeared that things were progressing normally towards a positive political development on the political level with regard to many of the hotbeds of tension throughout the world. There was a strong feeling of hope and optimism about the possibility of ridding these regions of the climate of crisis and conflict and moving towards détente and the resolution of conflicts.

It would therefore have seemed illogical for the Middle East to remain the exception to this constructive tide towards world peace, particularly after the meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers and the historic decisions it adopted.

But there was one discordant voice which dashed our hopes in the midst of an overwhelming, universal welcome of the resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council on the Palestinian cause and the Middle East problem. This was a voice that was, as ever, jarring in its dissonance and its disruption of the new harmony. The United States Administration, in particular its Secretary of State, took a decision not to grant an entry visa to the Chairman of the Executive

(Mr. Al-Dali, Democratic Yemen)

Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and thereby barred him from coming to New York to make an important speech that the whole world wanted to hear, from the rostrum of the United Nations. That decision was taken in acquiescence of the Zionist policy of aggression and the Zionist posture of challenging the international community and flouting its resolutions. Such acquiescence could only lead to the host country's breaching the Headquarters Agreement.

It was very difficult for the international community to remain silent at this time or to retreat when confronted by a certain country's position denying the legitimate rights of people who have been struggling for self-determination. Hence, the international community, with all its political and geographic groupings, unanimously condemned that decision and rejected all the justifications and pretexts put forth to make it appear something that it was not. The international community simply upheld a right which refuses to be obliterated by the arrogance of power and by blackmail.

Thus, we have come to Geneva, the city of peace, which serves as host to many peaceful gatherings. Geneva has become a symbol of peace. We have opened a chapter in history to record that the age of domination has passed for ever, that the era of dependence and subservience has come to an end and that freedom, which has already dawned, will be the response to the cries for help by the oppressed and persecuted of the earth. This is a reaffirmation of the values and principles of the international Organization and a strengthening of its role, which is to put paid to injustice and hegemony and lay the foundations for a just peace and for stability.

What we have now, in effect, are two uprisings: the uprising of the Palestinian people against the occupation and the world uprising against the United States decision.

(Mr. Al-Dali, Democratic Yemen)

That is the reason why the international community has attached special importance to these meetings. The limelight has been focused on the cause of the struggling Palestinian people, who have been supported by the whole world at both the official and popular level, with the exception of those few voices which have tried to oppose the march of history and the nature of things. Thus, in Geneva we are witnessing, both historically and geographically, the dawn of a new era of dedication to justice and righteousness, which is manifested in a stand on the side of the long-suffering Palestinian people, who have been the target of every possible form of repression, persecution and displacement. It would not have been possible for the aggressive policy of Israel to continue without intensive and persistent United States assistance, which has reached the acme of exclusivity in the shape of a strategic alliance. Only a few days ago the ban on the delivery of cluster bombs to Israel was removed. This racist policy on the part of Israel is based on power, repression, expulsion, expansion and annexation in complete defiance of the international will and the resolutions of the United Nations. It is indeed ironic that Israel, which came into being as a result of a resolution of this international Organization, which presupposed absolute commitment to the values and principles of the United Nations, now finds that commitment unacceptable and totally ignores the behests of such commitment. That country is forging ahead with its repressive and terroristic policies and is carrying out piratical raids on the Palestinian and Arab occupied and non-occupied lands in a manner that has no precedent.

The sensibilities of people everywhere were shocked when people witnessed on film the methods of repression, torture, the breaking of children's bones and the forced abortion of pregnant women. They witnessed the hundreds who were killed or injured and the thousands who were arbitrarily arrested.

(Mr. Al-Dali, Democratic Yemen)

Many intricate factors and complex circumstances have led to the partitioning of Arab Palestine so that a part of it was given as a homeland to the Jews who came from all parts of the globe at the expense of the Palestinians, the owners of the land, who were thus deprived of their land. But the Palestinian people, who have many acts of heroism and sacrifice to their credit in the annals of their long history, are no longer able to endure further despotism and humiliation. They are resisting and facing up to the Israeli iron-fist policy. The Palestinian land is now celebrating the first anniversary of the uprising of its valiant people against occupation and the various manifestations of settler colonialism in order to reaffirm their legitimate right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State on their national soil. This is an uprising of the young people, the women, the children and the elderly. Their only weapon is their firm faith in the justice of their cause and the inevitability of victory. It is an uprising in which the stone-throwing children confront the most sophisticated modern weapons of destruction. It is the uprising of an unarmed people facing alone a settler-colonialist adversary armed to the teeth with awesome military arsenals.

Many and important indeed are the developments which have taken place over the past few months following the emergence of the Palestinian popular uprising as a reality that cannot be ignored, not only in the Middle East but also in the world at large. The intifadah has clearly unmasked the nature of Zionism and has shown its false claims and misleading propaganda. It has also confirmed the staunch nature and steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their fight for freedom and independence, regardless of the sacrifices.

The law which governs the struggles of colonized and persecuted peoples and those who are seeking freedom and liberation from their oppressors is one and the

(Mr. Al-Dali, Democratic Yemen)

same. The outcome is also one and the same. It is always defeat of the oppressor and the triumph of the freedom fighters. The intifadah session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers was the crowning success of all past efforts to delineate a new practical path within this framework. On 15 November, the Palestine Liberation Organization shouldered decisively its historic responsibility with confidence and ability. The National Council adopted its important resolutions in response to the requirements of the present stage of developments and in response to the appeals of the international community. It declared the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of historical and legal rights, international legitimacy and the resolutions adopted by the United Nations since 1947.

The world, in turn, responded to this positive development by prompt large-scale support for this step and the continuing recognition of the State and its leadership. The international community has also reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people in their attempt to regain their legitimate national rights of return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their national soil. What more is now required of the Palestinian people than what they have already offered, more than the blood spilled and the sacrifices made? What more can they give in order to pursue this path towards a resolution of the problem within the framework of United Nations resolutions so that peace and stability may prevail in the Middle East region? What more is required of them in order for the International Peace Conference on the Middle East to be convened? It is high time for the peace process to begin and for the United Nations to shoulder its responsibility and for the Security Council, particularly the permanent members, to perform their tasks in this respect.

(Mr. Al-Dali, Democratic Yemen)

This crisis, any crisis no matter how difficult it may be to settle, will find its way to a solution one day if the appropriate circumstances are created. At this juncture, the Middle East crisis is living through the labour pains that precede birth. If efforts are exerted on behalf of justice and peace, that objective could be achieved. This crisis, throughout its long and complicated history, has seen many stages in which hope was mingled with despair and optimism tempered with caution. Today, we stand at the historical crossroads on which we bear a special responsibility. There is no room for hesitation or inaction. We must seize this moment, indeed this historical and glorious moment, and the United States in particular, for all its support for its strategic ally, Israel, must reconsider its decision and its position and join the world march in order to advance the peace process and take a further step forward.

It is indeed opportune today, as we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to enable the Palestinian people to occupy their proper place among other peoples here and in their homeland, Palestine, and to enjoy their full legitimate rights. Their independent State should be established under the banner of the United Nations. In that way, this Organization would consolidate its credibility and strengthen its role in achieving the goals of freedom, justice, security and peace.

Mr. ABDULLAH FADZIL (Malaysia): We have travelled long distances to be in Geneva, to fulfil two tasks: first, to reaffirm our unswerving support for, and our solidarity with, our Palestinian brothers, especially at this momentous juncture after the Algiers declaration, and secondly, to affirm our collective political will to ensure that what was denied in New York will be rectified in full measure in Geneva.

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

For the United Nations, the Palestinian question stands foremost, inextricably linked to the evolution of the United Nations itself as the premier multilateral body. The Palestinian issue was created at a time of political-power complicity. Israel has since become a war-oriented society relentless in pursuing its aggressive ambitions. The Palestinians continue to struggle heroically for a national homeland in exercise of their inalienable rights. Clearly, the responsibilities accepted by the United Nations since the beginning have not been discharged.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, ably chaired by Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, and the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/867) are strong reminders of how much more has to be done by the United Nations. Both these documents chronicle Israeli wanton actions and untold Palestinian suffering and struggle. These documents - before us every year - also reflect the apparent helplessness of international efforts in the face of Israeli designs and machinations, protected by powerful friends.

For over 40 years now every conceivable means and opportunity have been employed by the Israelis to create so-called facts from figments of their own creation, preying on the centuries of guilt complex of the Western world. The creation of Israel was impelled by factors related to Western history, imposed on a land that belonged to the Palestinians. If guilt must lurk in the conscience of people, it is as a result of the dispossession of Palestinians. The original falsehood was to fabricate at that time the lie of Palestine being a "land without people".

The truth is that the existence of Palestinian Arabs was recognized as a separate and distinct identity with all the attributes of a national life by the Ottomans for centuries. With the collapse of the Ottoman State the international community, in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations in 1919, and in

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, recognized the Palestinian people as no different from other Arab people detached from the Ottoman State as free independent people. The infamous Balfour Declaration threw open the flood gates for mass and systematic Jewish immigration and colonization of Palestine, despite the existence of a Palestinian society with a deep-rooted political, social and cultural infrastructure whose accomplishments and heritage equal those of others in the region.

Israel has made persecution and repression of the Palestinians a natural condition. Only a few days ago we were aghast when Israeli forces transgressed Lebanese territory to try to exterminate a Palestinian camp. The latest violation comes in a series of many other similar actions of Israel in defiance of international opinion and norms. Clearly, this arrogance does not stem from within Israel alone. Neither is it only the natural extension of a burgeoning military power. The fact of the matter is that Israel's sense of impunity is predicated on the calculation that it can do no wrong because it has strong Powers that support and sustain it. Contemporary history is replete with actions that have led to the further consolidation of Israel because of major external support at critical times. The Palestinians are not fighting only the might of Israel. In their darkest hours they have to confront formidable enemies on all fronts. The battlefields include also a hostile Western press, lobby groups and vested interests.

Yet the second falsehood continues to be sustained - that the Jewish State of Israel is a fragile and delicate entity surrounded by bloodthirsty Palestinians and Arabs bent on its destruction. Thus, it seems, the continuing need for major countries to buttress Israel. The consolidation of the State of Israel in the last four decades has been on this basis, a product of an efficient propaganda machine.

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

It is a matter of some consolation and encouragement that realization is coming across that this premise is horribly flawed and fraudulent.

Israel, like South Africa, has built a mighty edifice of power that seeks to neutralize and destroy all around it by every means possible. It occupies the Golan Heights, the West Bank and southern Lebanon on the basis of this consideration. It cares not that these are spoils of war. The best buffer, in its calculation, is either a wasteland situation for the Arab countries and/or greater Israel by colonial annexation. The policy of annexation and colonial settlement has reached alarming proportions. As the report of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People states, the total area of land confiscated since 1967 is more than half the land area of the occupied Palestinian territories. There are some 170 Jewish settlements in the West Bank and 20 in the Gaza Strip.

The ultimate falsehood perpetuated against the Palestinians has been to label them as terrorists and the Palestinian Liberation Organization as a terrorist organization. The United Nations was witness recently to an affront levied on Chairman Yasser Arafat on the basis of being involved in terrorism which denied his entry to New York. All of us are outraged by this smear but, more importantly, this underlines the formidable adversaries and barriers standing in the way of an independent Palestinian State.

Over the past year, the international community has witnessed the sustained popular uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The intifadah is a heroic struggle against Israeli occupation, now in its twenty-first year, and an affirmation of the Palestinian people's commitment to achieve their right to self-determination and to a national homeland. The Israeli authorities have pursued the iron-fist policy of unrelenting savagery against the Palestinians to quell the uprising. Over 300 unarmed and innocent Palestinian children, youth,

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

men and women have been killed by the occupying forces since last December. Thousands have been arbitrarily arrested and detained in camps and prisons under inhuman conditions. Deportations and expulsions of Palestinians continue unabated. Demolition of houses and properties and collective punishment have been carried out against hapless Palestinians.

The Palestinian people, despite the inhuman acts and practices of repression and persecution, have been resolute and steadfast in their resistance and unwavering in their quest for their inalienable rights to self-determination and a national homeland. The intifadah, as the Secretary-General states in his report, "has... been a dominating factor in the political agenda in the Middle East. It was the focus of the Arab Summit Conference in Algiers last April and the inspiration behind the recent session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers." (A/43/867, para. 32)

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

The momentous decision of the Palestine National Council has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the international community. The decision has enhanced prospects for a comprehensive and durable settlement of the Palestinian question. My delegation fully supports the statement of the Secretary-General contained in his aforementioned report that

"The recent session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process and I believe it offers fresh opportunities for progress towards peace which should be seized."

(A/43/867, para. 37)

Such a momentum is urgently needed for progress to be made to enable the Secretary-General to undertake further efforts to implement resolution 38/58 C, on the convening of the International Conference on the Middle East.

Malaysia regrets to note that instead of extending support and co-operation to the Secretary-General, Israel and the United States have chosen to turn their backs on the concrete and constructive decisions of the Palestine National Council with unwarranted interpretations of the genuine desire of the Palestinians for peaceful settlement of the problem.

Malaysia is deeply disappointed that the United States, arguably the most influential country in the world, should choose to anchor its policies in the Middle East on the military preponderance of Israel. It is a matter of severe disappointment that the United States, which has the most potential for the greatest good towards resolving the Middle East conflict, should choose to do otherwise. What is the hold that Israel has on the United States? Malaysia urges the United States to recognize the injustices done to the Palestinian people, and we appeal to that country, as we did last year, to accept the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization on an equal footing with all parties concerned in the process of finding a durable solution to the Middle East issue.

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

Malaysia believes that the most appropriate negotiating framework for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the problem lies in the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C of 1983 with the full participation of all parties concerned including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing. The basis for such a conference remains Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It is only through such a framework that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, can be discussed. In this context Malaysia was delighted to welcome the announcement by the Palestine National Council at its Algiers meeting on 15 November 1988 of the declaration of the establishment of the State of Palestine and acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Malaysia is proud to be among the first to recognize the independent Palestinian State.

In pursuit of the objective of an international peace conference, Malaysia joins others in calling on the United Nations to formulate tangible steps for this purpose. In this regard the Security Council, particularly the permanent members, has clear responsibilities in the exercise of solving the core issue of the Middle East question. In the light of the Algiers decision and the renewed vigour that has characterized United Nations actions in the last year, the United Nations must fully discharge its responsibilities. Israel must be brought to the conference table to return Palestinian and Arab lands. Israel must desist from its intransigence and policies of armed might, which only secure for it illusions of peace and security in the short run while sowing the seeds of permanent tension and conflicts in the region. It has to show that it has the courage to embrace and sustain peace, which is the only basis for enduring security and stability for

(Mr. Abdullah Fadzil, Malaysia)

itself. The Palestinians have taken a giant step forward on the path of a negotiated political settlement. Israel will need to respond.

We have this afternoon heard the impassioned plea for peace from Chairman Yassir Arafat. It was a clear and unequivocal gesture from the heart, supported by peace-loving peoples all over the world. Malaysia calls on all parties to respond accordingly. We will support all efforts of the United Nations in that direction. Malaysia congratulates Chairman Yassir Arafat for his courage, vision and commitment to peace. Malaysia calls upon Israel specifically to respond with equal sincerity and dedication.

Finally, if the denial in New York was a concerted attempt to reduce or deaden the impact of the Algiers declaration, that misguided action has clearly failed. Geneva in strong resounding terms supports the Palestinian cause and underscores the impatience of the international community for an early solution on the basis of the inalienable rights and independent State of Palestine that will provide the guarantees for all States in the Middle East to live within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

Mr. LONCAR (Yugoslavia): The decision taken by the General Assembly in New York to move the consideration of its agenda item relating to the question of Palestine to Geneva has a special symbolic meaning. It is an expression of the respect of the overwhelming majority of the Member States of the United Nations for the determination of the Palestinian people, standing firmly behind the Palestine Liberation Organization and its leader, in their endeavours to reach a political solution of the Palestinian problem.

Nevertheless it is regrettable that the host country of the United Nations has denied the leader of the organization that is the sole legitimate representative of the people whose problem we are discussing here today the opportunity to present

(Mr. Loncar, Yugoslavia)

his views. That is why we have come here, and it gives me great pleasure to extend warm greetings to Mr. Yassir Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and to congratulate him on his inspiring and courageous statement today.

(Mr. Loncar, Yugoslavia)

Our goal at this point - in the wake of the decisions adopted by the Palestine National Council in Algiers, which represent a historic event for the just Palestinian cause and, I am confident, a turning-point in the process of the resolution of the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian question - is to look for ways of contributing effectively and urgently to its solution.

We should bear in mind that we are dealing here with one of the longest of world crises that continues to be the major source of tension in the world.

Far too long - for 40 years now - have lasted the suffering and tribulations of the Palestinian people living under occupation, deprived of their rights and subjected to repression. Far too long has this problem burdened international relations, posing a constant threat to international peace and security.

While we are justifiably satisfied that the world is entering an era in which, in some parts of the world, wars are coming to an end, agreements are being signed and troops withdrawn, for an entire year the uprising has been raging in the occupied Arab territories and fighters of the intifadah have been being killed. Those victims have dramatically drawn attention to the urgency of reaching a solution to the Palestinian problem and have greatly affected world public opinion. The uprising has dispelled all illusions that with time the situation created by the Israeli occupation will be legalized. It has demonstrated that there can be no peace and stability in the Middle East as long as the legitimate aspirations and interests of the Palestinian people are ignored and a dialogue with their legitimate representatives is rejected.

It is not by chance that this time again the response to the growing global trend of seeking solutions through dialogue and negotiations has come from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which testifies to its high political awareness and responsibility. We welcome the decisions of the Palestine National

(Mr. Loncar, Yugoslavia)

Council in Algiers, which were made in full compliance with the United Nations Charter, in conformity with the principles of non-alignment and with the convictions of the majority of the countries of the world. Those decisions, embodied in the declaration on the proclamation of the Palestinian State and in the Political Communiqué, constitute a major step forward and a constructive contribution by the Palestinian movement towards a comprehensive, lasting and just solution to the Palestinian question.

The fact that the supreme representative body of the Palestinian people has endorsed Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a basis for convening an international conference on the Middle East is of special significance. The PLO has thus recognized the right of every State in the area, including Israel, to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.

Those statesmanlike and wise decisions have met with the broad understanding and support of the international community. The independent Palestinian State has already been recognized by a large number of countries. The Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia decided that Yugoslavia, too, should be among the first to recognize the Palestinian State. We view its proclamation as a responsible act in the creation of conditions favourable to getting the Middle East peace process off the ground.

Reactions world-wide increasingly confirm that awareness of the justification and legitimacy of the Palestinian people's demands is greater than ever. That people rightfully expects that the international community will now translate its political support into action. The improved climate in international relations today not only facilitates the undertaking of necessary steps but also makes it incumbent upon all States on which the settlement of the Middle East crisis hinges

(Mr. Loncar, Yugoslavia)

to undertake them. In that connection, the declaration of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Community member States should be commended.

In the view of the vast majority of members of the international community, a lasting and just solution can only be achieved through the participation on an equal footing of all parties directly concerned, including the PLO. This session of the General Assembly has once again shown the widespread consensus that an early convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), is the most acceptable and realistic way of resolving the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian problem, which is at its core. By accepting those very resolutions, the PLO, for its part, has in our opinion satisfied the last requirement for making a decision on the convening of the conference.

In activities aimed at convening the conference, the role of the United Nations is irreplaceable. We believe that the Security Council provides the appropriate framework within which modalities for its convening, conduct, participants, mandate, and so on, could be explored.

Israel's intransigent attitude continues to be the main obstacle to a peaceful settlement. Refusal to join in the process of reaching a just and durable solution to the Palestinian problem based on meeting the Palestinian people's authentic aspirations, as well as Israel's legitimate interests, causes, inter alia, great damage to Israel and its position. We sincerely hope that the invitation extended today by Chairman Arafat to Israel to join in the peace process under United Nations auspices will, in the interests of peace and humanity, be accepted.

(Mr. Loncar, Yugoslavia)

In the meantime, the brutal and utterly inhuman acts perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian population impose an additional obligation upon the General Assembly to recommend urgent and concrete measures to ensure full compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the occupied territories and to resolutely demand that Israel abide by Security Council resolutions 605 (1997), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988).

(Mr. Loncar, Yugoslavia)

The Palestine National Council itself has explicitly asked the United Nations to protect the fundamental rights of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories and, to that end, to take measures to ensure the safety of the people and their property.

At this time we view the development of international political relations with hope and rising optimism. At long last there is an awareness that peace can be built only on respect for the freedoms and rights of all peoples. Thus the time has come, in the name of such convictions, to take decisive action with a view to a final resolution of this long-standing crisis and to ensure the freedom, peace and sovereignty of the Palestinian people. The question of Palestine must remain a priority preoccupation of the international community and of the United Nations until a lasting, just and comprehensive solution is found. In accordance with its consistent support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, Yugoslavia will support every effort towards the realization of that goal. In the same vein we pledge our support for all the efforts made by the Secretary-General.

We believe that our debate here will lead to concrete measures to convene the International Conference. We must be aware of the fact that any further delay will entail new risks, with perhaps serious consequences for international peace and security.

Mr. GURINOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): The United Nations General Assembly at this session has already adopted a set of resolutions on the problems of the Middle East, the conscientious and comprehensive implementation of which could lead to a just and early solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. As a result of the efforts taken at various levels - political, legal and humanitarian - the foundation has been laid and adopted for the settlement of the problem of the Middle East by political means, taking into

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account the legitimate interests of the peoples of Palestine and of the other States involved in the Middle East conflict. It is axiomatic that the seizure of other territories is inadmissible and also that attainment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East requires the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, sovereignty and the establishment of their own independent State.

The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR was one of the sponsors of the resolution adopted on the uprising of the Palestinian people and it supported, unconditionally, all the other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the question of the Middle East - and there were more than 20 of them.

The General Assembly recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and on the basis of its resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX) offered it the possibility of participating on an equal footing with other parties in the efforts of the international community to resolve this problem under the auspices of the United Nations. Because of the quite unjustified circumstances with which we are familiar, the debate on the question of Palestine has been moved to Geneva. Geographically this is closer to the Middle East and we would express the hope that this proximity and the decisions taken at the session of the Palestine National Council at Algiers have encouraged the other side to take a realistic position, and that we can find a positive outcome to the Middle East problem.

However, facts are facts; the Palestinian people are still deprived of statehood. Their rights are shamelessly flouted by the occupying Power. Trying by every possible means to prevent a positive solution to the Palestine problem, the Israeli authorities and their protectors have turned the region into an inextinguishable hotbed of war and conflict, and the recent military actions by

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Israel have become increasingly threatening. Those acts by Israel run counter to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and the generally recognized standards of international law, and they are having an adverse effect on the political atmosphere in the Middle East and in the world as a whole. This cannot be concealed by demagogic statements about security or references to the need to suppress terrorism. The invasion of the territories of others and the flouting of their rights have never provided security for anyone. Recent statements by the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization have once again shown they are not a party to the terrorist activities ascribed to them and they have pulled the rug out from under those who are trying to prove the contrary. It has become clear that relying on military force and hostility does not help to resolve a conflict. No one would be able to break the Palestinian people and destroy their political vanguard, the PLO, which is defending their legitimate interests. Confirmation of this is evident in the undiminished flame of the fight of the national uprising on occupied Palestinian territories, the intifadah which has been going on for some time. Israel and its friends should now understand that they have to abandon the policy of seizing other peoples' land and settling there through a sort of creeping annexation. As long as people think that way, there will be no prospect of a solution to the Middle East problem. In paragraph 141 of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/43/35) it is stated that the uprising brought a new level of understanding of the question of Palestine and support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to this long-standing conflict among public opinion internationally and within Israel itself.

There are even more grounds for a new and realistic approach on the part of all. We are thinking here of the situation as it is shaping up where those

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directly involved in the conflict fail to recognize that the road to peace and peaceful co-operation between the Arabs and the Israelis leads through negotiations based upon Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The whole set of resolutions adopted at the extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) showed that the PLO has openly stated that it is a serious and authoritative partner in peace talks. The political declaration of the PNC opens up new opportunities for the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination, the fight for a just and lasting peace in the region, and clears the way for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

The United Nations General Assembly must not let those favourable possibilities pass. In resolutions on the question of Palestine we should take account of the new circumstances and set forth measures that will ensure the continuity and irreversibility of the solution of the Palestine question and the comprehensive settlement of the problem of the Middle East.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

In its approach to any reasonable problem or conflict, including that of the Middle East, the Byelorussian SSR has always taken the position that peace is indivisible. A lasting peace can be guaranteed only on the basis of a comprehensive approach, recognition of the principles of freedom of choice and respect for human rights: the supremacy of the power of law, not of the law of power.

Recently, even in Israel itself, there is a growing realization among the public that the iron-fist policy followed by the Government has led the country up a blind alley. Realism should prevail at last over ambition and over an unwillingness to understand that the world has changed and is continuing to change for the better.

Unravelling the Middle East tangle would be possible only through a political dialogue that would take into account the special interests of all those involved in the conflict. The important thing is to initiate a practical movement towards a comprehensive and just settlement that will provide for the complete withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 as a sine qua non, the exercise by the Arab Palestinian people of its inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of its own independent State, and an assurance for all States in the region, including Israel, of a secure and independent existence and development.

The machinery for the achievement of this aim is clear: an independent international conference under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing. Such a conference, if it were convened, would provide a unique opportunity for Arabs and Israelis to sit down round a negotiating table to discuss all the thorny

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questions on a bilateral and multilateral basis, and thereby find mutually acceptable decisions within the framework of a comprehensive and just settlement.

The members of the Security Council, working individually or collectively, would help the parties to overcome the barriers of mistrust and to reach agreement, secured and guaranteed by the authority of the international community.

A change-over to a real search for peace at an international conference is an urgent requirement of our times. There is no alternative to a political solution, nor can there be. The time has come to set in motion the machinery for settlement of the problem so that the participants may be helped to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. One of the parties to the conflict has confirmed its willingness to have a political settlement. This is shown also by the statement made at this session of the Assembly by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat. It is now up to the other side to respond. The peoples of the world have seen that regional conflicts can be resolved where, on the basis of new political thinking, there is evidence of a reciprocal political will. This should provide positive results in the Middle East also.

Mr. AL-NOAIMI (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): The General Assembly is meeting today in Geneva inasmuch as it has been forced to leave United Nations Headquarters following the decision of the United States not to grant a visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Observer at the United Nations.

The General Assembly's decision to hold its debate on the question of Palestine here is a clear expression of the unanimous international stance and proof of international solidarity regarding international legal order. It is a token also of the solidarity that has been evinced with regard to the right of the PLO to express its opinion as this Organization deems fit.

(Mr. Al-Noaimi, United Arab Emirates)

The debate on the question of Palestine at this session is taking place 40 years after the beginning of the Palestinian drama, and coincides also with important developments that have had repercussions on the Palestinian Arabs in the international arena.

The most important of these developments, and one that has a great impact on the question of Palestine, is the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine and the political declaration which accompanied that declaration on 15 November last and which includes a strategy for the establishment of a just and lasting peace and for the solution of the problem of Palestine. The proclamation includes, inter alia, the programme I had mentioned and the fact that the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, their sole, legitimate representative, react positively and realistically to regional realities and to the international legitimacy expressed in United Nations resolutions relating to the question of Palestine and through the position taken by most States in the world.

The balance of forces still favours the Zionist power because of its alliance with a major foreign Power. The Palestinian people have always been heroically resolved to defend their homeland, their political identity, drawing inspiration from their attachment to their ancestral land.

The intifadah of this struggling people today is further evidence of the Palestinian resolve to realize the natural, historic and legislative right of the Palestinian Arab people in their homeland, Palestine.

Who amongst us can blame a people struggling with stones against an occupying army? Who can blame a people that is struggling to remain settled in their homes? Who can fail to understand a people aspiring to self-determination in the land of their fathers and forefathers? The famous British historian Arnold Toynbee has reminded us that right is right and that evil is evil, whether in Palestine or elsewhere.

(Mr. Al-Noaimi, United Arab Emirates)

However what is strange is that as far as Palestine is concerned the world listened to the party that committed the crime and remained deaf to the cries of its victim.

The proclamation of Palestinian national independence in accordance with international legitimacy is a proclamation of reality and moderation. It is a proclamation that asserts the natural rights of a people on their land. It is a declaration of peace because it is designed to achieve the exercise of those rights through negotiations within an international framework under United Nations auspices. It is a declaration of international legitimacy because it will lead to peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions adopted since 1947. It is a declaration of realism and balance because it takes into account physical realities and the aspirations of the international community to confront them.

It is the proclamation of a State that seeks to establish and strengthen peace - the proclamation of a State that has faith in peace, pluralism and the peaceful coexistence of all ethnic groups and religions, an Arab State that has faith in the principles and objectives of the United Nations, a State committed to the principle of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence that also desires to preserve well-being.

Thus to support this proclamation and take all necessary measures to implement it is to demonstrate support of peace, legitimacy, law and realism, which is tantamount to enshrining the principle of a peaceful, just and balanced solution; and to ignore this proclamation or claim it contains nothing new is to misinterpret all the Arab positions taken since the first Summit Meeting, in the autumn of 1982, and worse, means losing a historic opportunity to arrive at an equitable peace in the land of peace.

(Mr. Al-Noaimi, United Arab Emirates)

We salute all countries that have recognized the State of Palestine, and we welcome the positive positions of certain European countries. We hope that when certain positions on the question of Palestine are reviewed in the light of new developments, peace will result. We hope that American diplomacy will be able to overcome local, narrow traditional considerations that have prevented movement towards peace in the Middle East and to react positively in conformity with the responsibilities of the United States as a major Power.

We appeal to all Member States to create an international impetus towards the holding of an international conference as the only acceptable international machinery for the attainment of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem.

The meeting rose at 10.35 p.m.