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Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 36 (continued)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/338 and A/66/367)

Draft resolutions (A/66/L.19 and A/66/L.20)

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Yesterday the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened a meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. China's premier, Wen Jiabao, sent a message of congratulations to the meeting reiterating China's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's just cause of restoring their legitimate national rights.

The Middle East question not only has a major impact on the situation in the region but also has a bearing on international peace and stability. The question of Palestine is at the centre of the Middle East question. Against the backdrop of the profound transformations that are taking place in the region, the question of Palestine has once again become the focus of wide attention.

A political settlement of the question of Palestine is in keeping with the universal aspirations of all countries in the region and the rest of the international community, and is key to long-term peace and security in the Middle East.

At present, the Middle East peace process is stalled, and the peace talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis remain bogged down by issues such as the construction of settlements. China is deeply concerned at this development. We have always maintained that the parties concerned should resolve their disputes through political negotiations under the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Middle East road map for peace, with the ultimate goal of establishing an independent Palestinian State, in the framework of the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace.

China supports the efforts made by the Quartet to promote the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. We urge Israel to immediately cease the construction of settlements. We call on the Palestinians and the Israelis to work actively, in cooperation with the efforts of the international community, to promote peace and create conditions conducive to rebuilding mutual trust and breaking the impasse.

The Palestinian bid for United Nations membership recently won extensive understanding and respect from the international community. Palestine has become a formal member of UNESCO.

China has always supported the Palestinian people in their just cause to restore their legitimate national rights. China maintains that the establishment of an independent State is the lawful right of the Palestinian people and the basis for the implementation of the two-State solution. China supports the

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establishment of an independent Palestinian State that enjoys full sovereignty, with East Jerusalem as its capital and based on the 1967 borders. China supports Palestine's membership in the United Nations.

China also maintains that peace talks are the right way to ultimately achieve the two-State solution. China supports the appropriate settlement of final status issues by the Palestinians and the Israelis through political negotiations.

China welcomes the internal reconciliation agreement reached by the Palestinian factions. We hope that they will continue to bridge their differences through dialogue and consultation and advance the implementation of the reconciliation agreement.

China welcomes the prisoner swap agreement between Israel and Hamas and its implementation. This move is conducive to an easing of the situation.

The security and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remains a serious challenge. China hopes that the parties concerned will exercise restraint, avoid escalation of tension in the Gaza Strip, implement in good faith the relevant United Nations resolutions, lift all the blockades in the area and create favourable conditions for the early relaunching of peace talks.

The Syria-Israel track and the Lebanon-Israel track are important components of the Middle East peace process and play an indispensable role in the overall settlement of the Middle East question. China firmly supports the just causes of Syria and Lebanon to preserve their sovereignty and territorial integrity and recover their occupied territories.

China supports the strategic choice made by the Arab States in their pursuit of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

The Middle East question cannot be resolved without the strong support of the international community. In the light of the overall interests of maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East, the international community should redouble its efforts to promote peace, speed up the political process for the settlement of the Middle East question and avoid the escalation of turbulence in the region. China supports the United Nations in playing a bigger role in resolving the Middle East question.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and a country with a strong sense of responsibility,

China has made vigorous efforts to promote peace and negotiations in its own way and advance the Middle East peace process. China will continue to work with the international community and the parties concerned and to play a constructive role in the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I thank the President for convening this important meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East in the General Assembly.

As we all know, this year marks an unforgettable milestone for the Middle East and the North Africa region, with the occurrence of a series of movements towards democratization in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and, most recently, Yemen. The Arab Spring was realized by peoples' desire for freedom and democracy. I would like to take this opportunity to renew Japan's commitment to supporting reforms designed to achieve the transition to democracy in the region.

Japan is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of tensions between the parties caused by decisions of the Government of Israel, such as the acceleration of settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the temporary freeze on the transfer of tax revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. The settlement activities are a violation of international law, and the tax transfer freeze has worsened the Palestinian Authority's financial situation and the well-being of Palestinians in the affected areas. Japan therefore reiterates its strong call to Israel to reverse those decisions, which are exacerbating tensions between the parties.

Japan is also concerned about the provocations through the use of force between Israeli and Palestinian militants and calls upon both parties to exercise maximum self-restraint and to avoid causing further victims.

Japan has supported the efforts of the Palestinian Authority towards establishing statehood and is committed to continuously providing assistance to that end, including through the promotion of the "corridor for peace and prosperity" initiative.

The Middle East peace negotiations have been stalled for more than a year. Japan fully understands the Palestinians' earnest aspiration to build their own State and strongly endorses a two-State solution under which Israel and a future independent Palestinian State

would coexist side by side in peace and security. Japan shares the vision that in a two-State solution the borders should be defined through negotiations and based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps, in a way that will ensure the peaceful coexistence of a viable Palestinian State and the State of Israel, within secure and recognized borders.

In that connection, Japan highly appreciates the vigorous endeavours of the members of the Quartet, including the Quartet's statement of 23 September (see SG/2178) and its timetable. Japan welcomes the fact that separate meetings took place between the Quartet members and the Israeli and Palestinian parties on 26 October and 14 November, respectively. We strongly expect that those meetings will be an important step towards the resumption of direct negotiations. Japan is contributing to the efforts of the international community to bring about the realization of a two-State solution.

The year 2011 will also be remembered as a year of historic change by the people of Libya. Japan congratulates them on their achievement of freedom and democracy and will spare no effort to assist them in their endeavours to rebuild their nation. Japan welcomes the establishment, on 22 November, of the interim Government led by new Prime Minister Abdurrahim El-keib and has high hopes that the Government will pave the way for the reconstruction of the country, including through the preparations for elections to be held next June.

Finally, let me touch upon the ongoing situation in Syria. Japan is deeply concerned about the continuing bloodshed in that country and has repeatedly called on the Syrian authorities to immediately cease the use of force against its own people. It is extremely deplorable that the situation in Syria remains unresolved as of this date despite all the efforts undertaken by the international community, including the economic sanctions imposed by a number of countries. Japan emphatically urges the Syrian Government to accept the proposal of the Arab League and swiftly implement all items of the action plan set forth therein.

Mr. Mottaghi Nejad (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine and our admiration for their tireless efforts and unwavering

determination in pursuing their national aspirations and defending their inalienable rights to statehood and the exercise of sovereignty. I also wish to express our appreciation to the Chair and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the informative report they presented to us (A/66/35) and for their tireless efforts to address the onerous circumstances that the people of Palestine are enduring.

For the sake of brevity, I would like to present our views and perspectives on Palestine and the current situation in the Middle East in the following enumeration.

First, the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that a settlement of the Palestinian crisis can be achieved only if the inalienable rights of the people of occupied Palestine are fully recognized, restored and maintained. Regrettably, due to a lack of attention to its root causes, this crisis has remained unresolved for more than six decades. There have been numerous reasons for that failure. They include the Israeli regime's continued occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and its persistent violations of the Palestinian people's rights, among them the right to self-determination and especially the legitimate and inalienable right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland.

We believe that the only solution to the Palestinian issue and for achieving peace is the restoration of Palestine's sovereignty and ending the occupation. The Palestinian people should be allowed to freely express their opinions on their fate and future and on the kind of State and Government they want, through a referendum in which all Palestinians participate.

Second, we condemn the Israeli blockade of Gaza on land, sea and in the air. We believe it is an aggressive and savage action that breaches all international laws and norms, constitutes a crime against humanity and poses a serious threat to international peace and security, as well as to regional stability. The blockade also constitutes collective punishment, which is unconditionally prohibited in article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which deals with the rights and obligations of belligerent parties.

Third, the popular uprisings in the Middle East demonstrate a pressing need for change. The

aspirations of peoples to democracy, the rule of law and independence and their rejection of foreign domination, as well as their attachment to Islamic values, cannot remain unheeded. We believe that addressing the legitimate demands of the people through a peaceful and democratically led political process, without foreign intervention, is the only way to emerge from such crises and to avoid violence.

Fourth, one of our prime foreign policy objectives is to strengthen trust between the Islamic Republic of Iran and our neighbours and other countries in the region through active engagement, interaction and partnership. The countries of the Middle East have common interests in the region's security and long-term stability, and each should play its part in promoting regional socio-economic development. Obviously, a stable and economically flourishing and prosperous Middle East would create an ideal situation for every country in the region to progress along the path of development and economic growth. Our continued commitment to brotherly relations and engagement with our Arab neighbours and regional partners in the areas of trade, economic development and infrastructure projects is therefore a goal seriously pursued by my Government.

Fifth, arrogant Powers have made some attempts to sow discord and create divisions among nations in the Middle East. They try to divide peoples by fomenting sectarian, ethnic and religious differences, despite the fact that people in the region with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds have coexisted in harmony for centuries. They want to damage brotherly relations among people and States in the region by creating false fears, such as Iranophobia, with the purpose of selling to those countries more and more of their lethal and sophisticated armaments and unnecessarily militarizing the volatile Middle East. That is a very dangerous trend and should be strenuously avoided.

Sixth, any foreign military adventurism on the part of Powers from outside the Middle East, and any military intervention by countries within the region, should be avoided for the sake of regional peace and stability. We must avoid making the Middle East a platform for military adventurism and expansionist policies.

Seventh, Iran is among the nations that lead in rejecting and opposing all kinds of weapons of mass

destruction, including nuclear weapons. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Islamic Republic of Iran has on many occasions, including in this body, declared loudly and clearly that nuclear arms, as inhumane weapons, have no place in our defence mechanisms. Furthermore, Iran has striven to help realize a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East within the United Nations framework.

Finally, the Israeli regime unlawfully possesses nuclear weapons and is the unique source of destabilization in the Middle East, given its dark history of aggression and the crimes and atrocities that it has committed in the region over past decades. We expect that the Assembly will condemn the occupying regime for its possession of nuclear weapons, urge it to abandon such weapons, call on it to accede to the NPT without delay, and demand that it promptly place all of its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Indeed, peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East while Israel's massive nuclear arsenals continue to pose a threat to the region and beyond.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): I would like to thank the President for arranging today's meeting. For clarification for the many people who wonder why we are not talking of other issues of the Middle East, the reason is that agenda items 36 and 37 normally refer to the Middle East and the question of Palestine as they interact with Israel, Syria and Lebanon. As such, the matter remains within those parameters.

This is an annual remembrance. Let us remember, then. It is a remembrance of the protracted suffering, desolation and dispossession of the Palestinian people and their continuing ordeal and oppression under occupation.

Each year we gather to highlight the common underlying theme — our desire for lasting peace in the region. Such a peace never comes. Reprehensibly, our annual debates in the General Assembly coincide with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, but this Day reaffirms our collective inability with regard to the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

On this Day, the President of my country has issued a message. I would like to read part of it to the Assembly.

“Pakistan has a natural and historical affiliation with the cause of Palestine, which is reflected in our active participation in all the initiatives taken for a just and lasting resolution of this problem. Pakistan has a deep commitment to a just, peaceful and lasting settlement of all issues. The framework for such a solution already exists in the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

“Pakistan strongly commends the impressive march of the Palestinian people on the road to statehood. Important achievements in the areas of economic management, security and governance have established a solid edifice for the State of Palestine.

“We support the recognition of the State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations. Let there be no doubt on that. On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government and people of Pakistan reiterate their commitment to support their Palestinian brethren in their just struggle for self-determination and to have a State of their own, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.”

But those prospects remain unchanging and grim. The peace process leading to a final settlement is effectively stalled, as signified by the continuing expansionist policies of the Israelis. Sadly, the deterioration of living conditions in the occupied territories has not been reversed. Israeli defiance of the international community on the issue of settlement activity and the high level of impunity are completely halting the peace process and inflicting innumerable hardships on the Palestinian people under continued illegal occupation.

To make obstacles to peace insurmountable, the Israeli settlement policy continues unabated. The recent commissioning of 1,557 new housing units in East Jerusalem and 673 units elsewhere has provoked a stop of all activity of the peace process. Israel must stop building new settlements or using that activity as a political tool in the stalled peace process. That activity and the peace process will not move together. Palestinians should not be expected to negotiate when their land is being confiscated and annexed in the name of new settlements.

Let me express further consternation at recent reports that suggest that Israel is withholding revenue

amounting to two thirds of the total tax collection of the Palestinians. That amounts to fiscal strangulation of Palestine, which is a violation of basic human rights. We call upon Israel to release all Palestinian funds immediately and not to repeat this act of inhumane punishment. We also call upon Israel and the family of nations here to ease the blockade of Gaza and allow the free flow of people and commerce to the entire occupied Arab territories.

We believe that the present stalemate cannot be broken without sustained and meaningful engagement by the international community. The international community must promote the freezing of all Israeli settlement activity, help Palestinians strengthen their state-building institutions and ensure progress on Palestine’s United Nations membership status and its enjoyment of the benefits of civilization and civilized behaviour and life.

Our collective deliberations in the General Assembly should also send a strong message to the Security Council and to the Middle East Quartet, which has been inactive so long, on fulfilling their long-standing commitments with regard to a final settlement. The Quartet’s statement of 23 September (see SG/2178) may have been positive in intent, but the Quartet’s initiative has been neutralized by the Israeli decision to build new settlements in the occupied territories.

How long must the world wait? A lasting solution of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict is essential to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East. For that, it is imperative to address its root cause — the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. The solution therefore requires Israel’s complete withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and all other occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. Accordingly, parallel progress on the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel tracks is essential, and must be continuous in order to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

People of all races and religions in the Middle East have suffered for the past six decades. Many generations in the region have completed their life cycles in the shadows of extreme violence and absolute insecurity. Only our firm resolve, concerted action and, above all, political will to build lasting peace can save succeeding generations from further tragedies and

further tribulations such as those suffered by their ill-fated predecessors.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): The global agenda is currently full of important developments, among which the historic transition in the Middle East and North Africa comes to the fore, with its global ramifications. The people of the Middle East rightfully deserve a dignified life and the dividends of democracy and peace.

The Arab-Israeli conflict must be resolved and the Palestinian people must be able to fully exercise their inalienable rights. The course of change and transformation in the region spurred by the aspirations of the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa to freedom, democracy, human rights and higher standards of living has once again proved the fact that the just expectations of the Palestinian people can no longer go unanswered.

It is our foremost objective to find a solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as to ensure the realization of an independent Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. Ensuring national Palestinian unity is another main priority.

Turkey rejects violence in any shape or form, and by any party, as unacceptable. We believe that there is no genuine alternative to a negotiated settlement. There is no doubt that a meaningful engagement that inspires confidence in both Palestine and Israel cannot begin while settlement activity continues. We call on Israel to fulfil its responsibilities stemming from international law concerning lasting peace in the Middle East and to put an end to all its activities that are destroying the basis for peace.

Meanwhile, the situation in Gaza continues unabated, which is an embarrassment to the international community. The unlawful blockade of Gaza, which is keeping more than 1.5 million Palestinian men, women and children trapped, must end. The relevant Security Council resolutions must be implemented without further delay. The international community must ensure that there is accountability both for the blockade and for Israel's attack on the international humanitarian aid flotilla last year, which left nine civilians dead and many wounded on the high seas.

Turkey welcomes and strongly supports the Palestinian application for United Nations membership submitted by President Mahmoud Abbas on 23 September and believes that it is high time for Palestine to take its rightful place in the international arena among the community of nations. With that understanding, we congratulate the people of Palestine on their membership in UNESCO and hope that all sides concerned will duly take into account the will that the international community has displayed with regard to that membership.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies at the heart of all of the problems in the Middle East. There is no acceptable alternative to a just and comprehensive settlement. The status quo is not viable. Let me reaffirm once more Turkey's strong support for the realization of a just and lasting comprehensive peace in the region, based on the two-State solution.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): Allow me, at the outset, to express our sincere appreciation for the scheduling of this discussion on an important subject that demands our collective attention — the situation in the Middle East. Today's debate, following the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, are timely and appropriate.

The West Asian region, a cradle of human civilization, is of importance and concern to the entire international community, including India. The region is home to nearly 5 million Indians and is an important source for meeting India's energy needs. As a nation with age-old historic and cultural ties with the Middle East, India has an abiding interest in the early resolution of all pending issues that have troubled the region since the inception of the United Nations.

The situation in the region is quite different from what it was when we discussed this topic last year in the General Assembly. While the issue of Palestine has taken a decisive, historic turn since its application, on 23 September, for full membership in the United Nations, the region is also witnessing unprecedented events. People in many countries of the region are demanding the right to shape their own future.

Speaking a day after President Abbas filed the application, my Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, said in the General Assembly on 24 September (see A/66/PV.22) that India had been steadfast in its support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with

East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders side by side and at peace with Israel, as per the relevant resolutions of the Organization, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. The Prime Minister added that we looked forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal Member of the United Nations.

While the Security Council could not reach unanimity on the application of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations, the overwhelming vote in Paris on 31 October in favour of Palestine's membership in UNESCO demonstrated that the international community supported the recognition of Palestine as an equal member of the comity of nations. We remain convinced that Palestine meets all the criteria for United Nations membership, as set out in the United Nations Charter, and deserves to become a full-fledged Member of the Organization. We hope that the Council will be able to support that soon.

For peace and security on the ground, however, it is necessary that direct talks between Israel and Palestine resume without any further delay. In that regard, we are encouraged by the efforts of the Quartet. We hope that the Quartet will pursue with both parties the timeline set in its statement of 23 September (see SG/2178).

The biggest stumbling block to direct negotiations is the continuing settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. We call upon Israel to stop the settlement activities. That will facilitate the resumption of negotiations, in which all final status issues should be addressed.

We also call on Israel to release Palestinian tax revenue to the Palestinian Authority, which is already facing a severe shortage of funds.

Equally important is the implementation of a reconciliation agreement between Palestinian factions that leads to the formation of a unity Government.

We also welcome the negotiated prisoner swap between Israel and Hamas and hope that it will ease tensions and build confidence. It is also necessary that the cycle of violence between the Gaza Strip and southern Israel come to an end, given the security concerns of Israel. The blockade of Gaza has created difficult humanitarian conditions and needs to be lifted completely.

India, for its part, has continued its development support to the Palestinian Authority. In 2009 and 2010, we increased our annual contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to \$1 million, in addition to a special contribution of \$1 million to UNRWA in response to a flash appeal in 2010. This year, we have requested that UNRWA utilize the funds to provide a daily food assistance supplement for 50 school days to more than 76,000 students attending UNRWA schools in Gaza. For the past two years, India has also contributed \$10 million annually in untied budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority.

Progress on the Lebanese and the Syrian tracks is the essential core to achieving a comprehensive and durable peace in the region. Developments in the Middle East since February underline the need to reinvigorate the search for that comprehensive peace, while the countries in the region undertake inclusive political processes and implement reforms to meet the legitimate aspirations of their peoples. It is important that the grievances of the people are addressed through dialogue and negotiations, rather than by resorting to arms.

It is the responsibility of all countries to create conditions that enable their peoples to freely determine their pathways to development. That is the essence of democracy and fundamental human freedoms. No action should be taken from the outside that exacerbates problems and gives space for the rise of extremism. The international community should stand ready to assist countries in those efforts, while respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries.

As my Prime Minister said in the General Assembly on 24 September, societies cannot be reordered from outside through military force. Observance of the rule of law is as important in international affairs as it is within countries.

India is ready to play a supportive role in this collective endeavour to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia is deeply concerned about the continued deadlock in the Palestinian-Israeli track of the Middle East settlement. Bilaterally and multilaterally, including within the Quartet of international intermediaries, we are working actively to

break the deadlock and relaunch a substantive negotiation process to create an independent, territorially integrated and viable Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders, with agreed land swaps.

Based on our principled position, which is founded on our recognition in 1988 of Palestinian statehood, we support Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations and voted for the acceptance of Palestine into UNESCO. Russia remains a principled advocate of the political-diplomatic road to resolving the Palestinian issue. It is important that the Palestinians themselves consistently emphasize that their overtures to the United Nations do not remove from the agenda a negotiated settlement of the conflict with Israel.

As the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Medvedev, stressed in his letter to the head of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Abbas, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Palestine's achievement of national sovereignty with international recognition will make possible a comprehensive and fair solution in the Middle East.

Today our common task is to work to ensure the relaunching of the peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis on the basis of familiar international law. A significant role in that process should be played by the Quartet, which has proven itself a trustworthy part of the mechanism providing outside support for the Middle East peace process.

In its statement (see SG/2178) after its ministerial meeting in New York on 23 September, the Quartet sent an unambiguous signal on the need to relaunch negotiations as soon as possible. The New York statement sets out a platform based on international law and a timetable for achieving a settlement. The Quartet members are continuing to work intensively with the parties, regularly holding working meetings with them that aim to bring their positions closer together and to promote the resumption of dialogue. Recently, in October and November, special representatives of the Quartet met in Jerusalem with Palestinian and Israeli negotiators.

Russia's proposal to convene an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow, at an appropriate time agreed by the parties, is still on the table.

A proper atmosphere for renewed talks is not encouraged by Israel's settlements and its withholding of Palestinian tax and customs duties from the Palestinian National Authority. That is a counterproductive attempt to punish the Palestinians for their international activities and is contrary to all logic. Those measures are moving the Middle East further from peace, rather than closer to it.

Russia supports efforts to overcome internal Palestinian division. Without unity, no progress towards an Israeli-Palestinian settlement will be possible. We have made our contribution to consolidating Palestinian ranks by organizing an intra-Palestinian meeting in Russia in May. It is to be sincerely hoped that the Palestinians can succeed in taking serious steps to restore national unity on the basis of United Nations principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. That will garner the support of the international community.

Another important factor is the continued stalemate in Gaza. Terrorist attacks against the south of Israel and Israeli raids on the Gaza Strip are causing civilian suffering and must cease. We support Israel's steps to loosen the Gaza blockade somewhat, but relieving the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip will be possible, we believe, only if the blockade is completely ended.

In conclusion, I would like to note that no matter how great the turmoil we are seeing in the Middle East today, it must not distract us from the urgency of achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement. The necessary prerequisites for that exist in international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Al-Yarboey (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the important issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, an issue that has undergone radical changes over recent years.

There have been major political changes in the Middle East recently. At the beginning of this year, we saw a number of revolutions take place. Some of them succeeded in effecting real changes, while others continue to foster turmoil. The goal is one and the same, as the Middle East is brimming with great hopes and aspirations for reforms so that our peoples will be

able to take their rightful place in history and respond to the challenges facing us and humankind at large.

The State of Qatar strongly wishes to maintain friendly relations with all kindred Arab countries. We share a common vision of the most important issues in the Arab world. Qatar will always stand by any Arab people having urgent legitimate aspirations. We believe that the only way to ensure the stability of Arab States over the short and long terms is to adopt continuous reforms to respond to the aspirations of our peoples.

No State can live in isolation from current political movements and changes, because the peoples of the world have discovered that they are able to demand their rights to freedom, dignity and social justice and can courageously open channels of positive dialogue so as to engender much-needed reforms in a safe and gradual manner. Our hope is that Arab countries will be able to respond to the demands of their peoples. Still, we cannot impose our views on anyone.

While new topics have emerged, other, older ones remain the same, with no progress in sight. The most pressing question in the Middle East is the question of Palestine. It includes the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in the West Bank, the Syrian Golan and the Sheba'a farms in southern Lebanon, the stifling Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, the suffering of the people of Gaza under the occupation and Israel's continuous violations of their national and human rights.

We call on the international community to work towards putting a stop to Israel's repeated attacks on the Palestinian people and for the lifting of its cruel blockade of Gaza, where people are suffering under inhuman, tragic living conditions. Israel must also stop its continued settlement activity, accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and subject its military installations to international monitoring, as those issues continue to pose obstacles to lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

The State of Qatar holds the principled position that only a solution to the Palestinian question will ensure lasting peace and security in the Middle East and the rest of the world. We strongly support the right of the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable national rights and to establish their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

We also support Palestine's legitimate right to become a full Member of the United Nations. The people of Palestine should receive the support of all Member States. We congratulate the Palestinian people on having become full members of UNESCO. We reiterate our solidarity with the unity of the Palestinian people and call for the prompt formation of a Palestinian national unity Government in order to preserve the unity of Palestine and ensure the realization of the overall interests of the Palestinian people.

Finally, the State of Qatar, as part of the Gulf and Arab region, seeks, in its foreign policy, to participate actively with the international community to achieve peace, security and development on the basis of the values and principles of justice, respect for human rights and the peaceful settlement of international disputes, in accordance with international law and by ensuring the peaceful coexistence of all countries of the world in peace, security and prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I shall now give the floor to representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Falouh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are truly concerned about, and puzzled by, the attempts on the part of the delegations of Australia and Japan to insert the Syrian internal developments into today's debate, which is devoted to finding ways to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and stop Israel's aggressive and inhuman practices. That clearly shows that the objective of Australia and Japan is to divert attention from Israel's occupation and practices, which violate the most basic norms of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

We strongly condemn the fact that, in this Hall, the representative of Australia revoked all rules of diplomacy and blatantly interfered in the internal affairs of a sovereign State and a founding State Member of the United Nations, and has attacked a symbol of that nation's sovereignty, namely, the head of State. Such irresponsible statements, which are a serious precedent in the practices of the Organization, are an irresponsible incitement to violence. They send a negative message in support of armed terrorist groups that seek to destabilize Syria and the region. They are also a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and existing diplomatic norms.

The representative of Australia talked about Syria, Yemen, Iran, Egypt, Tunisia and Libya today. However, he pointedly abstained from addressing the item under consideration, which is putting an end to Israel's occupation of Arab lands, its inhuman and aggressive practices and its violation of all relevant international resolutions and international norms and instruments.

We had hoped to hear statements from the representatives of Australia and Japan condemning such Israeli violations, including the occupation of the Syrian Golan and the racist practices against the Golan's people. We also hoped that they would be just as keen to defend human rights and international legitimacy in their votes on the draft resolutions condemning the Israeli occupation and practices.

Regrettably, however, that has not happened. On the contrary, the representative of Australia spoke ardently about what he called Israel's security, the aggressor and the killer, while at the same time condemning and deploring the launching of rockets, without mentioning the inhuman blockade imposed on Gaza for years. He merely timidly said that more must be done to relax the blockade. Indeed, that is true hypocrisy, shows utter disregard for the principles of international justice and the United Nations, and represents a blatant application of double standards.

The President took the Chair.

Syria, which is determined to continue on the path of reform under the leadership of President Bashar Al-Assad, stresses that it will not allow any foreign intervention in its internal affairs. Furthermore, the reforms that we seek are in response to the will of the Syrian people, independent of any foreign pressure, evaluations and agencies that have no place whatsoever in our internal affairs.

Mr. Mostahkam (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation asked for the floor to clarify its views with regard to the reference made by one delegation in today's debate to the incident that occurred yesterday in front of the British embassy in Tehran.

In that regard, I would like to state that the Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its regret over those incidents and reaffirms its full commitment under the relevant international instruments to take all appropriate measures to protect the premises of diplomatic missions against intrusion or damage and to

prevent any attack on the persons of the staff members of the missions. Measures have already been taken by the judicial authorities to thoroughly investigate the incident in question and identify the culprits.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/66/L.15, A/66/L.16, A/66/L.17 and A/66/L.18)

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine", in order to take action on draft resolutions A/66/L.15, A/66/L.16, A/66/L.17 and A/66/L.18.

Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolutions one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote on all four draft resolutions before and after action is taken on all of them.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolutions A/66/L.15, A/66/L.16, A/66/L.17 and A/66/L.18.

We turn first to draft resolution A/66/L.15, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People". I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.15, or previously mentioned during its introduction, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/66/L.15: Belarus and Zimbabwe.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.15. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire,

Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/66/L.15 was adopted by 115 votes to 8, with 53 abstentions (resolution 66/14).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Croatia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/66/L.16, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat". I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.16, or previously mentioned during its introduction, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/66/L.16: Belarus and Zimbabwe.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.16. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/66/L.16 was adopted by 114 votes to 9, with 54 abstentions (resolution 66/15).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Croatia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/66/L.17, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat". I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.17, or previously mentioned during its introduction, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/66/L.17: Belarus and Zimbabwe.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.17. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Honduras, Tonga

Draft resolution A/66/L.17 was adopted by 168 votes to 8, with 3 abstentions (resolution 66/16).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Croatia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.18, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to inform the Assembly that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/66/L.18, Belarus and Zimbabwe have also become sponsors.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.18. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the

Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Tonga

Draft resolution A/66/L.18 was adopted by 167 votes to 7, with 4 abstentions (resolution 66/17).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Croatia indicated that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. White (Australia): Australia moved from a negative vote to an abstention on resolution 66/17, on a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, because we have been a consistent supporter of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine resulting in a negotiated two-State solution that allows a secure Israel to live side by side with a secure and independent Palestinian State, and because of our assessment that we are at a critical juncture when the international community needs to underline the imperative of a meaningful peace process.

Australia joins the calls for both parties to act on the basis of their previous agreements. Australia strongly supports references in the resolution to the Quartet process and its road map, the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Understanding of Annapolis and the Arab Peace Initiative. Each of those documents reflects

the commitment by the international community to seeing a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Such a peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the two parties. Negotiations should proceed on the basis of the 1967 borders and mutually agreed land swaps.

We do, however, have continuing concerns about the language in the resolution, which could be seen to pre-empt the results of negotiations between the parties. The resolution does not give sufficient recognition to Israel's legitimate security concerns. Israel continues to suffer from rocket attacks, and weapons continue to be smuggled through Gaza. Australia also believes that resolutions referring to the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the security barrier (see A/ES-10/273) should reflect its non-binding character.

Australia urges both parties to return to direct talks as a matter of urgency and to refrain from actions that prejudice the outcomes of negotiations or threaten to undermine the opportunity to achieve a durable peace. That includes the new construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and outposts, which are counterproductive to the peace process.

Mr. Erdman (United States of America): The United States remains troubled by the annual, repetitive and disproportionate number of one-sided resolutions in the Assembly condemning Israel. There are a total of 17 such resolutions this year, six of them under today's agenda items, all of them unbalanced in their explicit or implicit one-sided criticism of Israel.

All parties to the tragic conflict have direct responsibilities for ending it. We are disappointed that this body continually singles out Israel, without acknowledging the obligations and difficult steps required of both sides. In addition to their bias, the resolutions go against our collective efforts to advance a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The United States accepts the principle that the General Assembly may look into the practices of individual States. However, in contrast to the 17 annual resolutions against Israel, this body has this year only adopted six other resolutions critical of specific Member States, with four of those focused on severe human rights abuses.

I would like to highlight three annual resolutions that are particularly troubling, the Division for

Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat (resolution 66/15), the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (resolution 66/14) and the Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/C.4/66/L.13). Those three resolutions renew mandates for United Nations bodies established more than a generation ago, wasting valuable resources, expending limited time and perpetuating the perception of systematic and inherent United Nations bias against Israel.

We reiterate our call for all Member States to evaluate how the continued support and funding of those bodies actually contribute to a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. As President Obama said in this Hall two months ago,

“The measure of our actions must always be whether they advance the right of Israeli and Palestinian children to live lives of peace and security and dignity and opportunity. And we will succeed in that effort only if we can encourage the parties to sit down, to listen to each other and to understand each other's hopes and each other's fears.” (A/66/PV.11, p. 13)

It is impossible to see how support for those resolutions contributes to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. They undermine efforts to promote the resumption of negotiations, and therefore damage the institutional credibility of the United Nations. They presuppose the outcome of permanent status issues that properly belong in direct negotiations, making it that much more difficult for the parties to address them.

Those who support a Palestinian State should do all they can to support the parties' efforts to bring about a just and lasting peace and avoid actions that hinder them. The United States sees no contradiction between support for the Palestinian people and support for Israel. As President Obama also stated in September,

“the question is not the goal that we seek. The question is: How do we reach that goal? ... Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians who must live side by side. Ultimately it is the Israelis and the Palestinians — not us — who must reach agreement on the issues that divide

them: on borders and on security, on refugees and on Jerusalem.

“Ultimately, peace depends upon compromise among people who must live together long after our speeches are over, long after our votes have been tallied.” (*ibid.*, p. 12)

We cannot support those resolutions, but the United States will continue to work with the parties, with the Quartet and with our international partners to resume negotiations on the basis of the 23 September Quartet statement (see SG/2178), which provides a clear and credible path to the negotiating table.

Ms. Karim (Singapore): Singapore voted in favour of resolution 66/14. We voted in favour based on the understanding that the reference in paragraph 2 to “the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders” should be interpreted in the same manner as set out in paragraph 1 of resolution 66/17, namely, “the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders”.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

Agenda item 36 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Draft resolutions (A/66/L.19 and A/66/L.20)

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/66/L.19 and A/66/L.20.

The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/66/L.19 and A/66/L.20 .

The Assembly will turn first to draft resolution A/66/L.19, entitled “Jerusalem”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.19, in addition to those delegations listed in that document, the following countries have also become sponsors: Brunei Darussalam, Mali, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.19. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Panama, Tonga

Draft resolution A/66/L.19 was adopted by 164 votes to 7, with 5 abstentions (resolution 66/18).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Croatia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/66/L.20, entitled “The Syrian Golan”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): Since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.20, in addition to those delegations listed in that document, the following countries have also become sponsors: Brunei Darussalam, Mali, Oman and Zimbabwe.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.20. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru,

Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/66/L.20 was adopted by 119 votes to 7, with 53 abstentions (resolution 66/19).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Croatia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Díaz Bartolomé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Argentina and Brazil on the item “The situation in the Middle East”. In particular, I wish to explain the votes of the delegations of Brazil and

Argentina with respect to resolution 66/19, on the Syrian Golan.

Brazil and Argentina voted in favour of the resolution because they believed that its essential character is linked to the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of a State. That is an imperative standard of international law.

At the same time, I wish to clarify the position of our delegations with respect to paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote does not prejudice the content of that paragraph, in particular the reference therein to "the line of 4 June 1967". Brazil and Argentina believe that it is important to make progress on the Syrian-Israeli track of the Middle East conflict in order to put an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights.

On behalf of the Governments of Brazil and Argentina, I would therefore once again like to urge the Israeli and Syrian authorities to renew negotiations in order to find a permanent settlement to the situation in the Syrian Golan in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Mr. Mostahkam (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted in favour of the resolutions just adopted by the General Assembly under agenda items 36 and 37, on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, respectively. However, we would like to express our reservation on the parts of those resolutions that may be construed as recognition of Israel.

Furthermore, where there are references in those resolutions to the issues of the peace process and the two-State solution, although our views on those important matters have already been articulated in our statement during the debate on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, my delegation wishes to put its views on record once again. It is our view that a durable peace in Palestine will be possible only through justice, an end to discrimination, an end to the occupation of all Palestinian territories, the return of all Palestinian refugees, the use of democratic means to determine the wishes of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation expresses its deepest appreciation to the General Assembly for having adopted the resolution on the Syrian Golan yet again — as it has every year since 1981. That was the year when the Israeli occupation forces first imposed Israeli law on the occupied Syrian Golan, prompting the Security Council to adopt its famous resolution 497 (1981), declaring the Israeli decision to impose its laws there to be null and void and without any legal effect. Against that historical backdrop, let me once again thank the General Assembly for having stood up for right, justice and law by adopting resolution 66/19, entitled "The Syrian Golan", and the other resolutions under the two agenda items entitled "Question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East".

The continuing support from the international community for those important resolutions is an expression of how strongly Member States adhere to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. It is also an expression of their rejection of foreign occupation and their support of our right to regain lands occupied by Israel since 5 June 1967. There is no doubt that the vote for those resolutions by such an overwhelming majority sends a clear international message to Israel. The message is that occupation, killings, the policies of expansionism, aggression and racial discrimination, settlement construction and the building of separation walls in a quest to establish a *fait accompli*, as well as the annexation by force of lands belonging to others, have all been rejected by the international community as violations of all international norms and instruments, including first and foremost the United Nations Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. In that light, all those Israeli practices deserve nothing but the condemnation and denunciation of the international community as a whole.

The world agrees that a just and comprehensive peace will come about only if it is based on the implementation of the well-known terms of reference for peace, including resolutions of international legitimacy. That necessarily requires a return of all Arab occupied lands, including the occupied Syrian Golan, to the borders of 4 June 1967, and the

establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, because the ongoing occupation and the aggressive, inhumane practices on the part of Israel run contrary to the peace that we all desire. That demands the use of all possible means to end the heinous occupation and its practices as soon as possible.

Let me reiterate Syria's thanks to the States that sponsored the resolution on the Syrian Golan and those who voted in favour of it. I renew my country's call for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on resolutions of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. However, no peace can come about unless Israel becomes a partner that believes in the peace process and that can muster the political will to engage positively in it, rather than procrastinating and repeatedly wasting opportunities for peace.

I also stress that Syria strongly insists on the full liberation of the Golan from Israeli occupation, back to the lines of 4 June 1967, ridding it of settlements and the militias of armed settlers, by using all means available under international law, to which all of us here subscribe.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy and highly regrettable that some States that repeatedly speak about human rights and the protection of civilians, and actively encourage the imposition of sanctions and even a blockade against my country, have abstained in the voting when the issue involved protecting Syrian civilians suffering under the Israeli occupation of the Golan. Other States also voted against the resolution. That in itself confirms that statements by representatives of those States were not well-intentioned, nor were they statements of positions of principle. Such behaviour and practices have long been rightly called political hypocrisy. It exemplifies applying short-sighted double standards and utter bias to important issues like the Syrian Golan, the question of Palestine and Israel's policies in the territories it occupies, and reflects a skewed preconception regarding the use of aggression in international political relations.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): The resolutions that have just been adopted by the membership are consistent with the objective of peace, the two-State solution and upholding international law. That action is a huge investment in peace, and not against it. Upholding international law is, as I have said, a major contribution to peace, unlike obstructing the law through such actions as building illegal settlements.

Yesterday, one delegation exposed all of us to a distorted narrative of history. The answer to that distortion came loud and clear today from the Assembly's members through their massive positive vote in favour of those resolutions. We thank the Assembly for its vote and we are grateful for its support.

I must also express the gratitude of the people of Palestine and their leadership for yesterday's decision in the Icelandic Parliament to approve a recommendation that its Government recognize the State of Palestine. The march of recognition is continuing.

This session of the General Assembly is very memorable for us, the Palestinian people and our leadership; we will not forget it. The history of our region has been defined as before 23 September 2011 and after it. We have entered, as Palestinian people, the time of our nation's independence, the time of the independence of the State of Palestine and its inclusion in the community of nations as a Member State and as a Member of the United Nations. It is only a matter of time before we all succeed in accomplishing that objective. I hope that by next September I will be sitting according to alphabetical order in the General Assembly, as a representative of the State of Palestine, which will be a Member of the United Nations.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 36.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.