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President: Mr. Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA
(Algeria).

AGENDA ITEM 8

Adoption of the agenda (*concluded*)*FOURTH REPORT OF THE GENERAL
COMMITTEE (A/9750/ADD.3)

1. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly has before it the fourth report of the General Committee [A/9750/Add.3] on the adoption of the agenda and allocation of items. In paragraph 2 (a) of its report, the General Committee has recommended the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item, entitled "Implementation by States of the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and measures to increase the number of parties to the Convention". In paragraph 2 (b) of its report, the General Committee recommends that the item should be allocated to the Sixth Committee.

2. The General Committee adopted these two recommendations without objection. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to do likewise?

It was so decided.

3. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): The Chairman of the Sixth Committee will be informed immediately of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 108

Question of Palestine (*continued*)

4. Baron VON WECHMAR (Federal Republic of Germany): The foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany is an active policy for peace, as my country's Minister for Foreign Affairs stated in this very forum on 23 September 1974 [2239th meeting]. To safeguard peace was also the objective of the statement issued on 6 November 1973 by the nine member States of the European Economic Community,¹

to which we continue to subscribe whole-heartedly. The points set forth in this statement, which in our opinion must be taken into account in a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict, concern essential aspects of the subject discussed in this debate—the question of Palestine.

5. In accordance with our policy of safeguarding peace we welcome the debate on the question of Palestine, since this question is one of the key problems of a peaceful solution in the Middle East and since the Palestinian people is among those most severely affected by the Middle East conflict. Without due regard for the rights and interests of the Palestinian people there will be no lasting peace settlement for the Middle East region, which, seemingly predestined for peace as a sacred place for three religions, looks back instead on a long and sad history of conflicts and strife.

6. During the past few days we have heard a great deal about the historic development of the Middle East conflict, whose individual aspects are seen in a different light by each observer according to his standpoint, which naturally leads to different conclusions. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has drawn the following basic conclusion from its own historic review of the situation.

7. For too long the Israeli-Arab conflict has been seen in an incomplete perspective, which focused on the territorial question, that is, the question of the withdrawal from occupied territories, disregarding the fate of the people. Today, we are all aware of the essential role the fate of the Palestinian people plays in a solution of the conflict. For too long this problem has been looked upon merely as a humanitarian question of providing relief for refugees.

8. On the basis of this awareness we can now express the hope that a settlement will be reached which is acceptable to all. In our opinion, it will hardly be helpful to indulge any longer in historic arguments concerning the development in the Middle East. The inexpediency of this kind of argumentation becomes apparent if one realizes that it can go on indefinitely and lead to the most varied conclusions depending on how far one goes back into history.

9. What should we do now? It is not for the Federal Republic of Germany to put forward a detailed plan for the settlement of the Palestinian question. But we can mention a few elements which, in our view, should form part of a solution to be worked out in the negotiations between the parties directly involved.

10. We support the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. For us Germans, with our own bitter experience, this is indeed only natural. It is inadmissible, in our view, to acquire territory by force, and we consider it necessary for Israel to end the territorial occupation it has maintained since the conflict

* Resumed from the 2280th meeting

of 1967. As a consequence of the right to self-determination, we recognize the right of the Palestinian people to decide itself whether to establish an independent authority on the territory vacated by Israel, as was decided at the Arab Summit Conference at Rabat,² and proposed this very morning here by the representative of the Ivory Coast [2290th meeting, paras. 94-122], or whether to choose another solution.

11. But we also think that the settlement to be reached in the Palestinian question must incorporate all the essential principles laid down in Security Council resolution 242 (1967). It must be based, above all, on respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of every State in the Middle East, as well as on the right of those States to live in peace within their recognized boundaries. The right to live, as well as a secure existence, must be guaranteed for all States in the area. This applies not least to Israel. In the opinion of the Federal Government, any resolution of the United Nations on the Middle East problem must be balanced with regard to the essential elements of a peace order in the area and take adequately into account the different parties' justified interests of which I have already spoken.

12. Much has been said here about justice during the past few days. Only if justice is done to all parties involved in the Middle East conflict, will there be a chance of a lasting peace in this region.

13. Mr. KUŁAGA (Poland) (*interpretation from French*): By placing on the agenda of this session the question of Palestine, the General Assembly has taken up a problem of considerable political significance. The problem is of the highest importance in itself because it concerns the undeniable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to existence, to national existence. Thus, the Assembly has added an extra dimension to the whole explosive situation in the Middle East. It is, in fact, dealing with a problem that should be resolved justly and peacefully with regard for the interests of States and of peoples directly concerned, the interests of the peace and security of this region and, hence, of the world, and also with regard for the interests of increasing *détente* and rationalizing international relations.

14. The decision to place the question of Palestine on the agenda of this session led, as a logical consequence, to an invitation to the representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] to participate in the debate [resolution 3210 (XXIX)]. This invitation was entirely justified, because it is impossible to deal effectively with the Palestinian problem without hearing the authentic representatives of the Arab people of Palestine, which is one of the principal parties directly concerned in a settlement of the Middle East conflict. The direct participation of representatives of the Palestinian people in the debate puts this problem into its proper context and provides the best conditions for discussing it and drawing the right conclusions.

15. On the basis of the fundamental principles of the foreign policy of Poland, a socialist State which has always favoured the right of peoples to self-determination and national liberation, we supported these two ideas. We favoured the inclusion of the question of Palestine as a separate item in the agenda. We became a sponsor of the draft resolution inviting

a delegation of the PLO to take part in the General Assembly debate on this item.

16. It was with particular interest that we listened to the very important and useful statement made by the Chairman of the PLO, Mr. Yasser Arafat, on 13 November [2282nd meeting].

17. That speech is a sign of the times. We hope, indeed we are convinced, that it will mark a historic turning-point in what since 1947 has been euphemistically termed the "Palestinian problem" but in fact for more than a quarter of a century has been nothing other than a tragedy afflicting a whole people condemned to live not as a nation but as refugees. The Palestinian problem was denied for far too long by some, minimized by others and distorted by others again. For more than a quarter of a century attempts were made to misrepresent this incorrectly as a purely humanitarian problem. In fact throughout that period it was a political problem concerning the right to self-determination of a nation that the expansionist and aggressive policy of Israel had deprived of its territory and had scattered throughout the neighbouring Arab countries, and deprived of the right to return home. This political problem has now acquired such importance that, unless it is solved, an equitable and lasting solution to the whole Middle East problem will be impossible.

18. Poland's position on this problem has always been clear and precise. We have always stressed that the problem of the Arab refugees of Palestine is not exclusively a humanitarian problem but is, above all, a political problem. Poland, with the Arab countries and the socialist countries, voted in favour of the first resolution of the General Assembly—2535 B (XXIV) of 10 December 1969—which confirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We then confirmed this position by voting in favour of all other resolutions adopted later on this problem.

19. We have always stressed Israel's responsibility for having created this problem and for having continuously aggravated it on all fronts. We pointed out that the source of this situation was the aggressiveness and expansionism of Israel and the support it receives from Zionist and imperialist forces. We have always condemned Israel's systematic and unacceptable boycott of the resolutions and decisions taken by the United Nations. Nothing has changed in this area. In the course of this very debate we have noted new acts of aggression on the part of Israel. Similarly, we have witnessed Israeli measures that are dangerously increasing the political and military tension in the Middle East.

20. Recently—last August, in fact—we had the pleasure of welcoming to Poland a delegation from the PLO and its leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. He had talks with important Polish statesmen. In the course of those talks, and from his own observation, he was able to perceive the high esteem we have in our country for the difficult, self-sacrificing and valiant struggle being waged by the PLO in order to restore the exercise of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine. In the talks held with the delegation from the PLO, Polish leaders stated once again that Poland will continue to support, in all areas, efforts aiming at a complete and peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem.

21. Poland has always firmly supported a just, equitable and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is impossible to attain that objective as long as Israel occupies the Arab territories conquered by means of aggression and as long as Israel persists in its policy of aggression and expansionism. It is absolutely necessary for Israel to withdraw its troops from all Arab occupied territories. This withdrawal is a fundamental condition for a lasting and peaceful settlement in the Middle East. But it is impossible to achieve such a settlement without recognition and respect for and total implementation of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination and national existence. We feel that this is an essential element in the Middle East situation. Recognition of this fact is necessary for a peaceful, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problems, while rejection of it makes such a solution difficult, if not impossible.

22. That is why we particularly appreciate the importance of the decisions taken at the Seventh Conference of Arab Heads of State at Rabat. The Conference confirmed the right of the Palestinian people to the restoration of its country, its right to self-determination and to the creation of an independent national authority under the leadership of the PLO, which is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This fact determines the scope of our debate and the resolutions we shall be adopting, which should promote the implementation of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine.

23. A peaceful and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem requires that the right of each State to exist within recognized frontiers should be conceded and that there should be respect for its territorial integrity. At this very rostrum, when he was stressing the great importance of the process of *détente* in limiting and eliminating local conflicts and clearing the ground for an equitable solution to controversies in accordance with the principles of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of nations, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Mr. Edward Gierek, stressed:

"Poland favours precisely such a permanent settlement of the Middle East conflict, which above all calls for completely eliminating the consequences of aggression and ensuring the Arab people of Palestine its legitimate rights." [2264th meeting, para. 12.]

24. We also call for the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East to be resumed as soon as possible, with the participation of representatives of the Palestinian people enjoying the same rights as the other parties directly involved. The events that have occurred in the region, including those of recent days, to which I have referred, confirm the urgency of this step. The Middle East is still a very dangerous source of tension. Israel is ceaselessly pursuing a policy of aggression and provocation. It is continuing to refuse to carry out the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations.

25. The Assembly took a major historic step when it decided to study the Palestinian problem with the participation of representatives of the PLO. Now, the Assembly must confirm by its resolutions the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and must contribute to the exercise of that right in accordance

with the Charter and Assembly resolutions and help to create conditions propitious to a peaceful, lasting and equitable settlement of the problems of the Middle East. This task is urgent.

26. It is with this in mind that we are taking part in this debate. These are the measures we should like to see this Assembly adopt. These are the measures we shall support.

27. Mr. MONGUNO (Nigeria): For the first time since the partition of Palestine in 1947 [see resolution 181 (II)], the General Assembly has now decided to focus attention on the search for meaningful ways of redressing the wrongs done to the Arab people of Palestine. In a humane and responsible reaction to the Nazi pogroms, which culminated in the genocide of millions of innocent Jews, the pressure for the creation of a homeland for the oppressed Jews of Europe became irresistible, even for those who had no great sympathy for Zionism. However, with the wisdom of hindsight, it could be said that the international community, in its anxiety to compensate the Jewish people, on the one hand, was seemingly willing to wrong the Palestinian Arabs, on the other hand.

28. From time immemorial, colonial Powers have contrived to deprive other peoples of their right to self-determination by a combination of methods, which included a cynical pretence at the protection of those rights. Thus the excuse given by Britain and France for getting into the Middle East at the end of the First World War was simply, as stated in the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918:

"... the complete and definite emancipation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national Governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations."

That commitment was never fulfilled. Instead, the Middle East was carved up, and Britain and France established their different spheres of influence in the area.

29. As if that imposed protection were not bad enough, the British Government sowed the seeds of the present conflict by bowing to the pressure of Zionists and issuing the Balfour Declaration.

"His Majesty's Government"—the Declaration stated—"views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people... it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine..."

Thus the Declaration acknowledged the existence of Arab communities in Palestine, but hoped that the proposed Jewish national home would by no means abridge the rights of the resident Palestinian Arabs. What the British Government failed to recognize was that a Jewish national home in Palestine, as distinct from Jewish settlement in an Arab Palestine, could not have been created without prejudicing the rights of the Palestinian Arabs.

30. Thus, when the United Nations, on 29 November 1947, gave expression to the Zionist demand for the partition of Palestine, it unwittingly created the question of Palestine. It must never be forgotten that the

Palestinians were not consulted before their homeland was partitioned. Such was the determination of the Western nations to salve their consciences by settling the Jewish problem. The question that needs to be answered is why this should have been done at the expense of the Arabs. It is on record that despite the sense of shock and outrage voiced at Nazi atrocities, these same Western countries imposed quotas severely limiting the immigration of the victims of the Nazi holocaust into their own countries.

31. Until recently, the United Nations has considered the question of Palestine strictly in terms of the refugees—displaced persons in the land of their own birth. My delegation finds it difficult to believe that the international community can accept indefinitely a situation in which over 3 million Palestinian Arabs, dispossessed of their homeland, could be virtually condemned to live out all their lives in tents—or, at best, in other countries—and be perpetual receivers of international charity.

32. The scales apparently began to fall from our eyes in 1969, when every successive session of the Assembly adopted resolutions asserting and upholding the right of those Palestinians to self-determination. That was as it should be, since the United Nations is dedicated to promoting self-determination, which is the inalienable right of all peoples. By inscribing the Palestinian question as a separate item on the agenda of this session, we have the opportunity of looking at it in its true perspective in order to seek a solution in this delicate matter.

33. Article 52 of the United Nations Charter acknowledges the important role of regional organizations in dealing with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security in the region. As far as the Middle East is concerned, the Arab League, at its latest Summit Conference at Rabat,² accorded unanimous recognition to the PLO as the sole authentic spokesman for the Palestinian Arabs. Thus, no discussion of the Palestinian question can be meaningful without the full participation of the PLO. It is therefore in keeping with this reality that General Assembly resolution 3210 (XXIX) should be hailed as a major contribution to the search for peace in the Middle East.

34. In his statement before the General Assembly on 13 November 1974 [2282nd meeting], Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO, told this Assembly that he had brought with him an olive branch and a freedom-fighter's gun. My delegation hopes that the Assembly will ensure that the olive branch of peace is accepted from the PLO. The alternative would be catastrophic for peace, not only in the Middle East but in the world at large. That is why my delegation believes that this Organization has no choice but to seek a just and lasting peace quickly.

35. The Nigerian Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, gave an indication of my Government's vision of the structure of a solution in his address to this Assembly on 5 October 1973. He said:

"Members of the Organization of African Unity desire peace in the Middle East—peace based on equity, peace that does not insist on acquisition of other people's territory as a pre-condition, peace that acknowledges the right of all nations in the area to exist in security, peace that places a premium

on respect for cultural diversity; peace that upholds the dignity of man and draws sustenance from the principles enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations."

36. To achieve this elusive peace, my delegation believes that the following facts should be borne in mind.

37. First, the right of the Palestinian Arabs to choose their own representatives and their own spokesmen must be held sacred. In other words, they shall determine who shall rule their ancestral land in their own interest. No one nation or group of nations should press that the interests of the Palestinian Arabs should be subordinated to other nations' conceptions of Palestinian needs. Briefly, we have to reaffirm, and strain every nerve to uphold, their right to self-determination.

38. Secondly, the reality of the existence of Israel as a sovereign State should be acknowledged. A realistic search for peace in the area demands that the Israelis be guaranteed security within agreed borders.

39. Thirdly, Israel should reconsider and change some of its policies and attitudes in the area. We think it unfortunate and ultimately self-defeating for Israel to continue to seek consciously to prove that its own security can be maintained primarily by denying the rights of others to exist. A more realistic attitude is now overdue—an attitude based on coexistence with its neighbours as co-equals in a spirit of tolerance and respect. To insist, as the leaders of Israel have so far done, that they will not talk to the PLO, is to belie their protestations of desiring a peaceful solution.

40. Flowing from that, Israel should withdraw from occupied Arab lands in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

41. Before the outbreak of war in the Middle East last year, Israel had resisted all efforts to persuade it to withdraw, claiming that more territory gave assurance of greater security. The war of October 1973 completely nullified that argument, as it proved that extensive real estate acquired as spoils of war was by no means a security blanket of any value. In other words, it underscored the need for the solution of the problems of the area, a solution which, while taking account of the existence of Israel, would also satisfy the long-thwarted and denied national aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs and others in the area. The solution we envisage would do all that and, equally important, remove all traces of humiliation for the Arab peoples.

42. If any peoples deserve peace, they are the peoples of the Middle East. They have been distracted too long by tension, injustice, threats of war and the horrors of combat. Now is the time for negotiation, and the forum is already there. I mean the Geneva Peace Conference. My delegation counsels that it be resumed without further delay. In doing so we are not unmindful of the constructive role which personal and bilateral efforts have played. However, we believe that, in the face of recent developments, the Conference of all interested parties should now reconvene.

43. Mr. LONGERSTAFY (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*) The Assembly is today faced with one

of the most important decisions in its history. It is called upon to make what could be a decisive contribution to the settlement of a problem that has long been before it. Hence, the hour is grave and the resolution that will eventually be adopted by the Assembly either could impede the search for a peaceful solution or could help to promote the chances of success—which is what I most earnestly hope for.

44. The primary aim of the United Nations as stated in the Charter is precisely to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, the settlement of international situations that might lead to a breach of the peace. It is in that spirit that I am speaking, in the very earnest hope that the rectifying of what has often been called an injustice will not be brought about by committing another injustice that would be equally intolerable. This Assembly must be faithful to the tradition of equity, which gives it alone the right to speak in the name of the world's conscience. Consequently, it is necessary that the basic elements of the question of Palestine should be borne in mind if we wish to lay the foundations of a lasting settlement.

45. In the view of my Government it is essential that the draft resolution to be put to the vote in this Assembly does not call into question the territorial integrity or the political independence of any State at present existing in the Middle East or give formal recognition to the acquisition of territory by one of those States by force. But it must give some definition to the lawful rights of the Palestinians, particularly the right to self-determination and to return.

46. The complexity and the various implications of the problem before us certainly do not make it easy for us to think in terms of an immediate and total settlement. It is high time, however, that they are spelled out here, so that a situation that has caused too much suffering and continues to be a threat to peace may be brought to an end. It is high time for this Assembly to give some hope to those who have too long been deprived of hope, that they may be allowed in the near future to see the beginning of an era of coexistence and closer and more constructive co-operation.

47. As our colleague, Mr. Baroody, told us at the 2286th meeting [*para.* 89] the last words spoken to him by the late Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia were words of hope. "I am happy . . .", he had said, "because we are at the threshold of peace". I should like to echo the wise words of hope left to us by a great statesman. I do so in the conviction that this will guide all delegations anxious to find a settlement to the Palestinian problem. Such a solution can be sought only in accordance with the principles of equity and the rules recognized by international law. It is essential that we remain faithful to the Charter drawn up by the founders of this Organization.

48. Mr. ASHTAL (Democratic Yemen): For the first time in a quarter of a century the General Assembly has decided to deal with the question of Palestine—a question of a people uprooted from its homeland and denied the exercise of its basic rights to independence and freedom—not in piecemeal and eclectic deliberations but in its totality. Since the partition of Palestine, its people has been subjected to a life of national deprivation and outright Zionist colonialism. Those

Palestinians who are now living in their country are relegated to the status of second-class citizens; others have been forcibly evicted, only to be replaced by waves of settlers, nationals of alien States. Indeed, the people of Palestine has lost not only political control over its country, but also physical occupation of that country. It has been deprived not only of its inalienable right to self-determination and statehood but also of its elemental right to exist on its own land.

49. Today, we are faced not with certain aspects of the Palestinian question, but with the cause of their tragedy, namely, the Zionist usurpation of their homeland. The question of Palestine is a purely political one. It is a conflict between the indigenous people of Palestine and colonialism in its cruellest manifestation, that is, zionism.

50. Predicated on concepts of racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy, the Zionist ideology is a new facet of nazism. Its basic myth is the popularization of equating obligations to zionism with Judaism. Indeed, this synonymous treatment of zionism and Judaism, encouraged and explicitly promoted by Zionist spokesmen, has erroneously given the impression that zionism is an intrinsic core of Judaism. Zionism is a colonial movement whose victims are both the people of Palestine and world Jewry.

51. The emergence of the PLO—the sole representative of the Palestinian people—is the culmination of a long history of persistent resistance to British colonialism and Zionist incursions. Ever since their homeland became a target for vicious Zionist designs, the Palestinians have valiantly struggled to repel foreign intruders and to defend their country. They did so under the most adverse conditions, in the face of an enemy vehemently supported by colonial and imperialist forces. Nevertheless, the Palestinian people have withstood the misery of systematic Zionist brutality and mass eviction. It is to the credit of a proud Palestinian people that a large number of its youngsters, born in refugee camps outside Palestine, now carry arms and join the march to resist Zionist occupation and fight for their freedom. Their brethren inside Palestine have demonstrated to the world that they are a living people, ready to sacrifice themselves for their freedom and independence. Only yesterday, the Zionist chieftains dispatched their army to subdue mass Palestinian rallies supporting the PLO. Even the Palestinian Jews, who are also victims of Zionist occupation, are raising their voices against foreign intruders who hail from distant countries. We salute the active Palestinian resistance and identify with their just cause—a cause supported by all freedom-fighters and peace-loving countries.

52. Palestine is not a disposable piece of land, nor is it a pawn on a chess-board. It is a homeland for the Palestinians; it is their history and their culture; it is their destiny and their life. Conquerors and usurpers have come and gone, but Palestine has always been there. They may forget where Palestine is, but never will the Palestinians. Its usurpers have been haunted even by its very name. The Zionists may pretend that Palestine is a fiction, or they may suppose that it had drifted away from Jerusalem. Whatever their fantasies, Palestine is there and Jerusalem is its living heart.

When the Zionist hooligans yell, "Arafat, go home," they should know that "home" is Palestine.

53. When the General Assembly decided to partition Palestine, under severe Zionist pressure, many peoples in Africa and Asia were languishing under colonialism. The United Nations, at that time, was under the direct influence of colonial Powers, notably the United States. It was in that setting that the General Assembly endorsed the inception of a Zionist State in Palestine. Since that time, the Palestine question has been buried under heaps of United Nations documents, conveniently treating the Palestine question as a humanitarian issue. At the same time, the Zionist usurpers waged wars of aggression and occupied, not only the whole of Palestine, but also territories of two sister States, Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic.

54. Disillusioned by the United Nations, the Palestine people have resorted to armed struggle under the leadership of the Palestine resistance movement. It is thanks to their unrelenting resistance and to the overwhelming support of the Arab and other peoples that they have gained international recognition for their just cause. We salute the PLO representatives now in our midst, and salute their revolutionary leadership. The appearance in the General Assembly of Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO, is symbolic of a new reality: the decline of imperialism, colonialism and Zionism, and the irreversible tide for independence, self-determination and progress. For the Palestine people and its leadership, 14 October 1974 marks the beginning of a long military and political struggle by all means to establish in their homeland a democratic secular Palestinian state. Only then will the olive branch blossom and peace reign in the Holy Land.

55. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, the Foreign Minister of Madagascar himself has already expressed his feelings of pride as an African in seeing you preside over this session of the General Assembly. On behalf of my delegation, however, I should like to pay tribute to your objectivity and impartiality during these past few weeks, and to the way that you have stated and supported law as it stems from the Charter, which, being the charter of the people of the United Nations, should primarily serve the legitimate cause of those peoples.

56. It took the international community more than 25 years to realize that the injustice perpetrated against the Palestinians, despite the provisions of the Charter relating to the rights of peoples and the rights of nations, brazenly served selfish national interests bent on the maintenance of colonialism and imperialism. Throughout that entire period, with the assistance of propaganda, we closed our eyes to realities, to the requirements of law, to historical principles, to the appeals of people who were suffering, and we allowed ourselves, alas, to support an ideology based on antithetic principles.

57. Aware of the harm that our hesitation and compromising with principle did to the Palestinian cause, it is thus high time that we should have more generous sentiments and see things in their proper light, and finally reach certain conclusions more in keeping with the legitimate interests of the Palestinians. One of the

merits of this historic debate, the moderate and conciliatory tone of which was set by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO will be to bring the Palestinian people at last out of the state of limbo into which they were originally relegated by our decisions and our votes.

58. No one can be unaware of what the Palestinian people have suffered, in despair and humiliation. No one can remain unmoved by the proposal that, after being homeless wanderers against their will since 1948, the Palestinians should recover their civil, economic, social and political rights. No one can deny the fact that the Palestinians, like all other peoples, have aspirations, and in the final analysis they are the only ones who should decide what means should be used to make those aspirations a reality.

59. It might be objected, however, that the Palestinians should submit to the rules governing relations among nations, as those rules are set forth in the Charter and international law. But can that condition, essential though it may seem in the eyes of some, be considered equitable, when the rights of Palestinians have not been satisfactorily defined or universally recognized? Furthermore, the partition of Palestine, the surreptitious creation of a Jewish State following the establishment of a Jewish national homeland, the expulsion of more than a million Palestinians from their homeland to States euphemistically termed "transit States", the arrogant and irresponsible denial of their existence—are all those acts in accordance with international law and the principles of the Charter?

60. The Palestinians faced an exceptional situation, born of injustice and endless misunderstandings, and that is one of the reasons why we understand the Palestinian revolution and its fight against any form of domination, colonialism or neo-colonialism.

61. In some quarters, both in the United Nations and in world public opinion, an attempt is made to present the Palestinian question in terms that defy common sense and contradict recent or remote historical and political facts. Those of us who have been subjected to colonialism do not need long speeches and clever arguments to establish the colonial character of a given situation. But since we need to present arguments in support of our position, we might well ask whether the independence of Palestine, the inevitable result of the end of the British Mandate, was brought about for the benefit of the Palestinians or to their detriment. Was there any regard for their wishes, their well-being or their rights? What of the Government of Palestine provided for in article 28 of the Mandate?²⁴ Have the guarantees of territorial integrity and independence from any foreign control, as stipulated in article 5 of the same Mandate, been fulfilled by the administering Power? Were the necessary steps taken to prevent anything happening that could lead to the breaking-up of the country's political, geographical and administrative structure?

62. It would be difficult indeed to answer those questions by any argument based on more than mere rhetoric and semantics. The truth is that the Palestinian people, victims of a most unhappy fate, have passed through the hands of one colonizing group after another.

63. Our Organization, unfortunately, has its share of the responsibility. At times of difficulty for various nations, we have accepted the terms of two major Powers, one wishing to thrust an increasingly inconvenient responsibility on to the shoulders of the international community, and the other deliberately seeking to bend the will of nations to the requirements of its internal policies.

64. An automatic majority was used to ensure that the United Nations disposed of Palestine despite the Palestinians, circumvented Chapter XI of the Charter concerning Non-Self-Governing Territories, and created a new State, ignoring the right to self-determination of the people concerned. If those are the pseudo-legal bases on which the Organization has relied to justify its role in the question of Palestine it would be better to forget them, for they are in contravention of the principles of the Charter.

65. The legacy of the past 25 years is a heavy burden, and in a new world guided much more by the principles of justice and equity than by the gaining of passing and incidental advantages, the Palestinian question must be reviewed with a more revolutionary and genuine approach. We must bear in mind, first, that ideas and attitudes have changed and, secondly, that the Palestinians are determined to recover their national identity.

66. We no longer have to accept any obscure or obscurantist *diktat*. Relations among nations and peoples are now based on equality and mutual respect, and not on considerations in which the desire for hegemony takes on a romantic or sentimental disguise in bad faith. The solution of a problem depends more on recognition of its specific nature than on a forced notion of interdependence that can lead to abuse of the law. Lastly, nations have learned that it is more important to act in accordance with the requirements of justice and their own interests than in accordance with schemes designed to defend certain other interests, but quite devoid of any intellectual honesty.

67. Furthermore, the Palestinian people, thanks to their revolutionary struggle, have overcome their differences. They have successfully, courageously and decisively dealt with intimidation and a desire to annihilate them. For the past 10 years the national identity of the Palestinians has been asserted, not at the expense of others but on the basis of their own inherent justification. And now the international community has no choice but to take note of the positive and constructive spirit underlying the Palestinian revolution. In a word, we are now better prepared to exercise our critical faculties in considering Palestinian objectives, helping them in the formulation, recognition, respect for and safeguarding of their rights.

68. In defence of the Organization, it should be said that since 1969 we have no longer considered Palestinians solely as refugees. That was the year the Palestinians' right to self-determination was reaffirmed. Over the years they have received increasing support, which has shown that it is no longer a matter of mobilizing automatic majorities, but that there has been a change of attitude resulting from better and more responsible information.

69. Of course, we should not expect a favourable reaction from the Zionists, who have maintained and

who still maintain that if one accepts the Palestinian right to self-determination one also recognizes the colonial situation prevailing in Palestine and denies the existence of the Jewish State. If one follows that rather special form of logic, one reaches two conclusions: first, that the State of Israel has had the exclusive right to represent Palestine since the British Mandate ended; secondly, that belief in the existence of Israel presupposes the annihilation of the Palestinian people. Those two conclusions, justified *a posteriori* by religious, historical and political arguments, are so absurd that one wonders if they do not arise from some form of panic resulting from a blind devotion to theories of exclusiveness that are now outmoded.

70. There is a new situation now, at least in the United Nations. The right of the Palestinians to self-determination can no longer be denied them, for it is only natural that they should assume that right. Our sole duty is to act in such a way that this right is actually exercised, and one must forget recriminations and acrimony, which would only marginally serve the cause of justice.

71. Is it not right to support, in a Palestine that is, above all, humane, the idea of a democratic State, a State free of discrimination, free of the consequences of exclusiveness and fanaticism, free of fratricidal warfare? Is it not right to consider that it is within such a framework that the Palestinians can best assume their own destiny and make their contribution to peace? Lastly, is it not right to put an end to the claims and counterclaims that have been made by proposing a solution that is imaginative, courageous and above all generous? Strict respect for the principles of the Charter would make it possible for the Organization to share with the Palestinians a decisive role in determining the future of Palestine.

72. That vision of a new Palestine perhaps may not take into account certain facts of today's world, but if those facts have been imposed on us by the economic, political, military and strategic interests of others, they are of no help in understanding the true situation in Palestine, which, now more than ever before, must be rectified. Obviously, any approach to the problem must accord with reality; it cannot be abstract, unless one wishes to lean towards the absurd by taking distorted truths into account. In saying this, we do not wish to conceal the fundamental complexity of the problem. The Palestinians have been demanding international recognition of their identity. The Jews cannot rid themselves of their complex regarding their own destruction. Reconciliation of those two attitudes, which are not even paradoxical, can only be achieved between Palestinians and Jews. That, essentially, is how we define the concept of a democratic State in Palestine.

73. Zionist expansionism is also a part of what one might call present reality, as is the dispersion of the Palestinian people, who have definite legal rights over Palestine. But is that any reason for our Organization to violate the Charter and accept this expansionism and this dispersion? That would betray the hopes the Palestinians have placed in us. There will be a long march and a difficult one, but with every step towards their goals they will expect us to consolidate their victories over themselves and others and assure them that never again will the principles of equality,

freedom and justice set forth in the Charter be applied in such a way as not to take them into account.

74. That, we believe, is the commitment our Organization can and must undertake towards the Palestinians so that they are no longer a forgotten people.

75. One cannot speak of the Palestinian problem without speaking of its importance in a search for a lasting solution in the Middle East. It would not be presumptuous to say that, because the international community did not recognize that essential factor in time, all the peace initiatives undertaken so far have been doomed to semi-failure, to partial, even timid, results, and, in spite of their merits, to situations that remain precarious.

76. The Palestinians were not allowed to take part in talks on the Middle East because they did not exist; because there was nothing to offer them and because they had nothing to offer; because they were terrorists; because they represented only themselves and not the Palestinian people. The most diverse allegations were brought forward, the most alarming and fanciful arguments were presented to stifle the voice of justice and freedom. All those false considerations fell by the wayside, one after the other, as the Palestinian revolution was confirmed and strengthened, driving its detractors into an isolation that speaks for itself.

77. For the past 25 years the United Nations has taken a first-things-first approach, and in spite of itself it has had to move towards solutions, not facile ones—for one must pay a tribute to what has been done to keep the Palestinian question and the hopes of the Palestinians alive—but limited solutions, for the interests involved, because their commitments and intransigence left us no other choice.

78. The Palestinian renaissance has not eliminated or diminished those commitments and that intransigence, but the situation is now such that it is possible for the international community to take the offensive once again and to require that the question of Palestine justifiably be given priority in the search for an overall and, we would hope, definitive solution to the problem of the Middle East.

79. Thinking has changed; the balance of power has changed; there have been developments in the situation, or, rather, the situations in the Middle East; the political and diplomatic presence of Palestine must now be borne in mind; and our deliberations are under way. As this will make it possible for our Organization to strengthen recognition of the identity and legitimate national rights of the Palestinians. It will now be possible for us properly to support their struggle for liberation, to promote the ideals of tolerance and justice in a democratic State and to place in perspective the Palestinian contribution to our peace-making efforts.

80. Of course, there will be problems, there will be opposition. Reactionaries will say that the Organization is not being realistic, that it is trying to do the impossible. But we, for our part, believe that any liberation, any evolution, any revolution, must have vision and be forward-looking. If the cause is to triumph, we must go beyond what is merely possible or even reasonable and act in support of causes that are worthwhile. Our Organization is already com-

mitted. There can be no better cause at the present time than that of Palestine and the Palestinians.

81. Mr. RAMPHUL (Mauritius): In deciding to hold this debate, the Assembly has shown its determination to do justice to a great people, the Palestinians, who for decades have suffered through exile from their homeland, the deprivation and misery of refugee camps and foreign occupation. The Assembly has also shown great wisdom in finally realizing that it should tackle the question of Palestine with all its political implications in order to bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

82. Mauritius firmly believes that, if this debate is conducted in a constructive manner, it will greatly contribute to a peaceful settlement of the difficult problem of the Middle East. Mauritius was therefore pleased to support the decision of the General Assembly to examine the question of Palestine and to invite the PLO to participate in the debate.

83. I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the PLO representatives and, through them, to pay tribute to all the Palestinians for their will to survive as a people and to struggle for their legitimate rights and the basic freedoms enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

84. The position of Mauritius regarding the question of the Middle East is well known. Suffice it to say that we stand for the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) in its entirety. We shall therefore continue to insist on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all the Arab territories Israel has occupied since the war of 1967. The demonstrations that have recently taken place on the West Bank should serve as a warning to the effect that a colonial-type occupation of Arab lands cannot continue indefinitely. Israel has always insisted that any settlement regarding the West Bank must be negotiated by Jordan. In this regard, we assumed that after the Rabat Conference,² which decided on an independent national authority to be set up on any liberated Palestinian land, the position of the Government of Israel would change. We were therefore disappointed that the representative of Israel stated the opposition of his Government to any dealings with the PLO. We urge Israel to consider that the PLO has emerged as a force to be reckoned with in any settlement of the Middle East problem. Israel should radically change its position and regard the PLO as a genuine liberation movement and not a terrorist organization. We should all remember that in the past such people, among others, as Washington, Gandhi, Nehru, De Valera, Nkrumah, Kenyatta and, more recently, Cabral, who were branded as terrorists, were later recognized as responsible leaders of their peoples. We submit that, after hearing Yasser Arafat at this rostrum last week, it is difficult to continue to treat him as a terrorist and not as the leader of his people. His statement has shown that his organization, the PLO, is not the terrorist organization whose avowed aim is Israel's destruction. His proposal for a democratic Palestine should serve as a broad framework for a long-term settlement of the Middle East problem and all the attendant complex problems of the right of Israel to exist as an entity, the exercise of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and the right of

those Palestinians who have been uprooted and dispersed to return to their homes.

85. For a long time the political rights of the Palestinian people have been ignored. Now it appears that no solution of the Middle East question can be found without taking into account those rights. And as long as Israel refuses to deal with the PLO and the Chairman of its Executive Committee, the United Nations will find itself in an impasse. Mauritius, which still has friendly relations with Israel, would like to take this opportunity solemnly to appeal to the Israeli Government to change its attitude so that Arafat does not let the olive branch drop from his hand.

86. After the Rabat Conference and the historic decision of this Assembly to hear the voice of the Palestinian people, we believe that a drastic reappraisal of Israeli policies is called for. We are now confronted with a situation requiring a great amount of goodwill and a spirit of co-operation from all parties concerned.

87. Israel was created in accordance with a General Assembly resolution. It is a fact that it exists as a State Member of this Organization. Another fact that should now be taken into account is that the legitimate

rights of the Palestinians have for long been ignored and should therefore be restored.

88. It is with those two elements in mind that Mauritius is participating in this debate and will pronounce itself on any draft resolution that may be submitted.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

NOTES

¹ *Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-eighth Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1973, document S/11081. Also circulated under the symbol A/9285.*

² *Seventh Conference of Arab Heads of State, held at Rabat from 26 to 29 October 1974.*

³ *Report of a Committee set up to consider certain correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916, Cmd. 5974 (London, HM Stationery Office, 1939), p. 50.*

⁴ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 1¹, vol. 1, document A/364, annex 19.*

⁵ *Ibid., Twenty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 2141st meeting, para. 39.*

⁶ *Ibid., First Special Session, Plenary Meetings, Annexes, annex 7 (A/292).*