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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 21 July 2006, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. ČEKUOLIS (Lithuania)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Hachami (Tunisia), Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (continued) (E/2006/32 (Part I) and E/2006/L.7)

Draft decision III: Application of the Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to resume its consideration of the draft decisions contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2006 regular session (E/2006/32 (Part I)). With regard to draft decision III on the granting of consultative status to the Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians, it had before it a proposal, made at the previous meeting by the representative of Guinea-Bissau, to refer the issue back to the Committee for its reconsideration as early as possible in accordance with resolution 1996/31.

Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that referring the issue back to the Committee was definitely not the correct approach. The Council must adopt decisions on the action taken by the Committee instead of shying away by referring questions back. He called on the Council to vote on the recommendations made by the Committee.

Mr. AHO-GLELÉ (Benin) said that subsidiary bodies like the Committee were established to handle certain substantive issues, thereby obviating the need for the Council to do so and expediting its proceedings. In 2002 and 2003, the Council had referred issues on which it disagreed back to the Committee. Sending the issue back was thus an established procedure and the Council must follow that precedent.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said that the only decision the Council could take was to refer the issue back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations: firstly, because the Council had delegated to it the authority to consider applications from NGOs, and second, because to act otherwise would be to deviate from standard procedure and would necessitate the introduction in the Council itself of machinery to consider applications from NGOs.

Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Mauritania) endorsed the remarks just made.

The Council had rejected a decision taken by one of its subsidiary bodies, and there was no other solution than to refer the question back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. Even that was a concession, since the Council could simply have invited the non-governmental organization concerned to submit another application to the Committee sometime in the future. In the spirit of compromise, however, a judicious proposal had been made, and it was to be hoped it would form the basis of a consensus so as to prevent the Council from losing any more time on a question to which there could be only one solution.

Mr. LA Yifan (China) said that just before the close of the previous meeting, the Council had started taking action on a concrete proposal. Once such a process began, no other matters should disrupt its continuation and completion. The Council must go back to where it had left off without complicating the whole process further by bringing in any elements other than the proposal put forward by Guinea-Bissau. It was perfectly obvious that the application in question must be referred back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, on grounds of consistency with precedents in the Council's deliberations.

Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said it was hard to believe that the Council was incapable of finding some procedural mechanism to enable it to take a decision on a contentious issue that had been studied extensively by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. At the previous meeting it had been argued that the Council could not vote twice on the same matter. However, the Council had voted on a proposal that no decision should be taken on his own delegation's proposal to amend draft decision III and had subsequently voted on the draft decision itself, but it had not yet voted on granting consultative status to the non-governmental organization in question.

Mr. LA Yifan (China), speaking on a point of order, said that once a concrete proposal had been made, delegations should be entitled to speak either for or against it, and then action must immediately be taken. Only afterwards could other proposals be dealt with. He again called for the Council to revert to the proposal made at the previous meeting and pursue without delay the process of taking action on it.

Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany) requested a roll-call vote on the proposal.

Mr. SETH (Secretary of the Council), responding to a request from Mr. AHO-GLELÉ (Benin) for clarification on the proposal's consequences in terms of the Council's relations with its subsidiary bodies, said that the Council had full authority to act on, and indeed to overturn, any decision emanating from its subsidiary bodies. However, subsidiary bodies were created to help guide the Council in its work, and it was also possible for the Council to refer their recommendations back to them for reconsideration.

Mr. MNATSAKANIAN (Armenia), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that at the previous meeting, his delegation had voted against draft decisions II and III on the grounds that further consideration was required so as to ensure that the two applications for consultative status by NGOs received non-discriminatory and fair treatment. For the decision now pending, the Council apparently intended to waive the 24-hour rule. Due process was in danger of being undermined, and his delegation would therefore vote in favour of the proposal.

At the request of the representative of Germany, a vote was taken by roll-call on the proposal by the representative of Guinea-Bissau to refer the application of the Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for its reconsideration as early as possible in accordance with resolution 1996/31.

Albania, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Angola, Armenia, Benin, China, Cuba, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against: Albania, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Panama, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Belize, Costa Rica, Guyana, India, Japan, Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey.

The proposal by Guinea-Bissau was rejected by 20 votes to 20, with 9 abstentions.

Mr. CABRAL (Guinea-Bissau) said that now that a vote had been taken on his proposal, the Council could surely dispense with any further discussion of the issue.

Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that at least one step forward had been taken: the procedural wrangle was over and the Council could now vote on the substantive matter at hand, namely whether or not to grant consultative status to the Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians. The Council had the authority to act on recommendations made by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and now, after all avenues had been explored in order to hinder, postpone or otherwise obstruct such action, a democratic vote could be taken.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said that no attempts had been made to obstruct a democratic vote: it had simply been necessary to apply the proper procedures. It was obvious, however, that the Council had reached an impasse. Quoting resolution 1996/31, which defined the rules of procedure and work of NGOs, he said that, absent a recommendation by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, the Council could not take a decision to grant or not to grant consultative status to an NGO. If the delegation of Germany nevertheless pressed for the Council to proceed further on the matter, he himself would invoke rule 54 of the Council's Rules of Procedure and demand to see a written amendment, translated into all six official languages of the United Nations, to facilitate meaningful consideration of the issue and consultation with his country's capital. It might also be useful for the NGO in question to come before the Council to present its case, if it wished to be taken seriously.

After a procedural discussion in which the PRESIDENT, Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany), Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation), Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Mauritania), Mr. SETH (Secretary of the Council), Mr. DUQUE ESTRADA MEYER (Brazil), Mr. CABRAL (Guinea-Bissau) and Ms. BROWN (Canada) took part, Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Mauritania) cited rule 50 of the Council's Rules of Procedure and proposed that discussion be adjourned until more information was available so as to enable delegations to form an opinion on the substance of the request for consultative status and on the precedents relevant to the relations between the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

The PRESIDENT reminded delegates that, in accordance with parliamentary procedure, the proposal under rule 50 must be addressed forthwith and the only delegations permitted to take the floor were two to speak in favour of the proposal, and two against.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) and Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) supported the proposal by the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany) and Mr. DUQUE ESTRADA MEYER (Brazil) opposed the proposal.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, requested clarification as to whether under rule 50, the discussion was to be adjourned for the entire session, or just for the current meeting.

Mr. LA Yifan (China), speaking on a point of order, concurred with the idea that the legal implications of rule 50 needed to be clarified.

Mr. SETH (Secretary of the Council) said that under rule 50, the discussion would be adjourned through the end of the meeting and a recommendation would be made by the Bureau on when it might subsequently be recommenced, depending on the work remaining to be done before the end of the session.

Mr. OULD MOHAMED LEMINE (Mauritania) called for a roll-call vote on his proposal.

At the request of the representative of Mauritania, a vote was taken by roll-call on his proposal to adjourn discussion on draft decision III.

Denmark, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against: Albania, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Panama, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Belize, Costa Rica, Japan, Turkey.

The proposal by Mauritania was adopted by 28 votes to 20, with 4 abstentions.

Draft decision IV: Application of the non-governmental organization People in Need

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) requested a roll-call vote on the draft decision.

Ms. HERREA CASEIRO (Cuba) said the Council's recent tendency to try to reverse decisions taken by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, one of its subsidiary bodies, was a source of real concern. The Committee had determined that People in Need did not fulfil the requirements set out in resolution 1996/31. It was not independent, since it was financed, staffed and directed by governments, and substantiated evidence linked it with terrorist organizations. In the interests of the credibility of the Committee as well as of the community of NGOs, which did a great deal of constructive work, she called on the Council to uphold the Committee's decision not to grant consultative status to People in Need.

Mr. BAMABOSE (Nigeria) supported those remarks. The Committee had done a thorough job of studying the application and there was no need to reopen debate on its decision.

Mr. LA Yifan (China) said that in view of the financial support received from governments by the organization in question, the links it entertained with them and the imperative of respecting the credibility and decisions of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, he went along with the Cuban position that the Council must not reopen debate but should adopt the draft decision put forward by the Committee.

Mr. AHO-GLELÉ (Benin) said that a subsidiary body was fully entitled to propose a substantive decision. Now the Council was being asked to go against such a proposal. A delegation had just explained that the non-governmental organization in question engaged in

terrorist activities. That argument should be sufficient in itself for the Council to uphold the Committee's decision not to grant it consultative status. His delegation saw no need to put the issue to a vote, but if one was taken, Benin would vote in favour of the decision of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

At the request of the representative of the United States, a vote was taken by roll-call on draft decision IV.

Armenia, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against: Albania, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Armenia, Belize, Guyana, Paraguay, Thailand, Turkey.

The draft decision was adopted by 25 votes to 18, with 6 abstentions.

Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa) said that her country fully supported the participation of NGOs in the work of the United Nations and appreciated their contribution to that work. The main point at issue, however, was respect for the credibility and procedures of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which the Council had mandated to deal with NGOs applications. For those reasons, South Africa had voted in favour of the draft decision.

Mr. SAJDA (Czech Republic) said his delegation had voted against the draft decision. It had been shocked to hear certain parties try to link the activities of the NGO in question with terrorism. People in Need was one of the foremost charitable organizations providing assistance in disasters and conflict situations and had been one of the prominent

players in delivering humanitarian aid after the tsunami in Asia. It was unfortunate that some of its projects relating to the development of Cuban society were unpopular with that country's Government, but in future, the Cuban delegation should adhere to the proper tone of parliamentary discourse in its remarks.

Mr. DIALLO (Guinea) said his delegation had voted in favour of the draft decision recommending not to accord consultative status to People in Need. After extensive discussion, and based on well grounded analysis, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had voted to reject that organization's application for consultative status. The results of today's voting not only reinforced the position of non-governmental organizations that had consultative status with the Council but also preserved the credibility of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and of the Council.

Draft decision V: Withdrawal of status of the Islamic African Relief Agency

Draft decision V was adopted.

E/2006/L.7: Excerpt from the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its resumed 2006 session

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on four draft decisions contained in document E/2006/L.7, entitled "Excerpt from the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its resumed 2006 session". Draft decision I was entitled "Applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification received from non-governmental organizations".

Draft decision I was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on draft decision II, entitled "Application of the Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany".

Mr. SCHRÖER (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, called for a vote on the draft decision.

Mr. O'BRIEN (Australia) suggested that the vote should be taken by roll-call.

At the request of the representative of Australia, a vote was taken by roll-call.

Mauritania, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Panama, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Belize, Guyana, India, Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey.

Draft decision II was rejected by 20 votes to 23, with 7 abstentions.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said his delegation had voted in favour of the draft decision, regretted the fact that it had not been adopted and proposed that the matter should be referred back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for reconsideration.

Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa) said her country had voted in favour of the draft decision. It fully supported the work done by NGOs in the United Nations but saw the issue as a matter of procedure in that the Committee had been mandated by the Council to deal with applications by NGOs and its decisions must be respected.

Mr. MÉRORÈS (Haiti) subscribed entirely to those remarks and said that for the same reasons, his delegation had voted in favour of the draft decision.

Mr. HOEFER-WISSING (Germany) said that for the reasons discussed extensively in connection with draft decision III of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations concerning the application of the Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians, the Council should postpone further consideration of the issue.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said that he had no objection to postponing the debate on the understanding that when consideration of the issue resumed, his delegation's proposal to refer the question back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for reconsideration would be given priority.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take up draft decision III, entitled "Application of the International Lesbian and Gay Association - Europe".

Mr. HOEFER-WISSING (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, called for a roll-call vote on the draft decision.

At the request of the representative of Germany, a vote was taken by roll-call.

Guinea, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, China, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Panama, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Belize, Guyana, Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey.

The draft decision was rejected by 22 votes to 22, with 6 abstentions.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said his country had voted in favour of the draft decision and proposed that the matter should be referred back to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for reconsideration.

Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa) said her delegation had voted in favour of the draft decision. South Africa fully supported the work of NGOs but saw the issue from the perspective of procedure and the credibility of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

Mr. HOEFER-WISSING (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, suggested that further consideration of the issue be postponed.

The PRESIDENT, responding to a query by Mr. CABRAL (Guinea-Bissau), stipulated that postponement of the current discussion did not preclude further action by the Council at a later stage during the current session.

He invited the Council to take up draft decision IV, entitled “Dates of the 2007 session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and provisional agenda”.

Draft decision IV was adopted.

REGIONAL COOPERATION (continued) (A/60/853-E/2006/75, E/2006/15 and Add.1, E/2006/16, E/2006/17, E/2006/18, E/2006/19 and E/2006/20)

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (continued)(A/61/67-E/2006/13)

Mr. RAHMAN (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (A/61/67-E/2006/15 and Add.1), said that an important part of the work of the regional commissions during the reporting period had been reform and restructuring, initiatives launched by both United Nations Headquarters and the regional commissions’ own Member States. In the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the process was finished and had yielded a draft resolution that was before the Council for action. In the other regional commissions, the process was ongoing and was described briefly in document E/2006/15.

In early 2006, all five regional commissions had had meetings at the ministerial level. The main results of those sessions were presented in document E/2006/15/Add.1. Three draft resolutions had been submitted for action by the Council: the one already mentioned, on ECE reform; another, on membership of Japan in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; and a third, on the Dominican Republic's offer to host the Commission's thirty-second session in 2008.

Speaking on behalf of Ms. Tallawy, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), he introduced a note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2006/13). The note was submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/51 and General Assembly resolution 60/183. It clearly indicated that the socio-economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory was deteriorating. Continued settlement expansion and construction by Israel of the barrier in the West Bank had gravely compromised the establishment of a viable Palestinian State and the two-State solution. Israeli measures, including military operations and the closure system, remained primary causes of poverty and humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. They restricted Palestinian access to health and educational services, employment, markets and social and religious networks.

Unemployment and poverty rates remained high, estimated at 23 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively. Malnutrition and other health problems afflicted a growing number of Palestinians at a time of curtailed access to needed services. Chronic malnutrition affected 350,000 children under the age of five. Exacerbating the suffering of the population was the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army throughout the occupied territory.

As of 2005, Israeli settlers had occupied 33 settlements in the Syrian Golan. The Arab population there was generally unable to travel to the Syrian Arab Republic to visit family members and had experienced growing limitations on land use owing to military and environmental zoning restrictions imposed by Israel. A large amount of acreage traditionally used for pasture had been lost, resulting in changing production, commercial and land use patterns.

Recent events in the Middle East, the perpetuation of the conflict and the suffering of the Palestinian and Syrian populations under occupation only proved that there was no military solution. The only path remained that of a negotiated settlement that would achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law.

Ms. EKWALL (Observer for Switzerland) said her country welcomed the reforms of the Economic Commission for Europe. In the rapidly changing situation on the continent, such reforms were necessary in order to avert the Commission's marginalization. They had allowed the Commission to eliminate from its programme of work some activities that had become obsolete and to strengthen its capacity to react to requests by member States. Through concrete activities in such areas as pan-European and worldwide standard-setting and cooperation with economies in transition, the cohesion of the region would be strengthened. The Commission was now well equipped to face the region's challenges in coming years. It was up to the Council to provide an adequate framework for ECE and the other regional commissions to enable them to maintain the flexibility required to adapt to the particular needs of member States and the challenges specific to each region and to seek complementarity and synergy with other United Nations actors at the regional level, in particular operational entities.

Mr. CHULKOV (Russian Federation) said his delegation welcomed the report on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2006/15 and Add.1). Within their respective mandates and with due consideration for the unique features of the various regions, the regional commissions were carrying out measures geared towards specific States and also regions in general. The considerations outlined in the report showed that regional approaches must be applied as a matter of priority to the solution of the employment problem. Regional commissions, together with the International Labour Office (ILO) and other regional and national entities concerned, should identify countries that had similar labour market problems and develop, using comparative analysis, common recommendations on employment policy correction. For that purpose, close interaction between all regional commissions was needed.

As a member of both ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Russian Federation welcomed the reform of ECE, aimed at considerably streamlining its management structure, improving transparency and accountability and restructuring the programme of work based on priorities agreed on by member States. It had special hopes for the newly established Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration which, owing to the enlargement of the European Union, was called upon to help eliminate the lines of division in Europe and foster the formation of a common European economic space.

His country appreciated the work done by ESCAP and attached special importance to the creation of advanced transport, information and communication infrastructures in the Asia and Pacific region. The adoption in April 2006 of a draft intergovernmental agreement on a trans-Asian rail network was a major success. The Russian Federation was prepared to contribute to a new energy mix in the region, which would allow energy consumers there to diversify their energy import sources on the basis of prospects for expanding their economies.

The regional economic commissions must continue to function as regional outposts of the United Nations and, through coordination with international organizations as well as with the United Nations funds and programmes represented in the regions, assist member States in adapting to the changing conditions of the globalized world and full integration into the world economy.

Mr. ANNAN (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that what was now being shown on satellite television was the true picture of the situation in the Syrian Golan where, for over thirty years of Israeli occupation, crimes worse than war crimes or crimes against humanity had been committed. Hundreds of children had recently been murdered, and laboratory analyses of their corpses revealed severe burns due to Israel's use of prohibited weapons. Israel had also targeted the ambulances and civilian vehicles of the Lebanese Red Cross. Even orphanages had not been spared by Israeli air raids.

The report before the Council inaccurately counted Israeli settlements as numbering 33, whereas the 44 cited in the previous year's report was still the accurate figure. Similarly, the current report made no reference to racial discrimination against the Syrian population with respect to employment, water supply and other services. It did not mention the arrest and unjust

sentencing of dozens of individuals. It did not speak of Israel's use of border areas between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Golan to dispose of nuclear wastes, sparking fears about radioactivity and a future ecological crisis. Israel had still not complied with the relevant international agreements and refused to allow international monitoring of such areas.

Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan had left 121 villages and 250 farms in ruins. Israel continued to flout the historical heritage of the region, disregard all relevant international conventions and hoard all the water resources of the Golan. It had placed landmines in about 40 per cent of the Golan, hemming in populated areas owing to displacement of the mines by torrential rains. To date, 66 mines had exploded, killing or mutilating many people, including children playing near their homes. Israel had recently announced that it wanted to sell 30,000 hectares in the Golan for the construction of tourist establishments, but only Jewish enterprises were entitled to buy. A Syrian citizen living in the occupied Golan did not have the right to acquire land in his or her own country.

There were now over 500,000 Arabs from the occupied Syrian Golan living as refugees in other regions of the country, unable to return to their homes and villages until decisions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations bodies were implemented. It was unacceptable for Israel to remain exempt from application of that arsenal of decisions of the international community while its armies made incursions into neighbouring countries and devastated them under the pretext of implementing one single General Assembly resolution. How long would a State that 59 per cent of the population of Europe said constituted the greatest threat to international peace and security remain exempt from resolutions adopted by all the members of the Security Council - even the United States, which had long provided the necessary political, economic and other cover so that Israel could perpetrate its crimes against humanity in Israel and in Palestine? How long would the United Nations continue to adopt resolutions and decisions which immediately became a dead letter?

The international community was now at a crossroads. The credibility and legitimacy of the United Nations was under threat owing to the Israeli exception, a form of political immunity accorded to it by the American veto, which was now the basic cause of the chaos reigning in international relations, instead of being an instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, he said that the interests of peoples throughout the world were imperilled by useless ideological wars. Intolerance was spreading and urgent steps must be taken to promote rapprochement so as to move towards peace and prosperity for all peoples through the application of all the decisions of the international community, failing which the entire world would be at the mercy of interminable wars.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) recalled that the Palestinians and other Arab populations had been living under foreign occupation for almost 30 years. In recent years, hope had been generated by the vision of a two-State solution and the implementation of the road map to peace. Unfortunately, the latter had been delayed by continued violence and attacks against Palestinian civilians, the construction of the illegal separation wall, restrictions on the movement of Palestinians and a continued decline in socio-economic and humanitarian conditions. While Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza had temporarily raised hopes that the peace process might be revived, those hopes had been quashed, ironically, following the democratic elections in the occupied Palestinian territories, after which the flow of revenue and financing for the Palestinians had dried up and violence, including aerial attacks and targeted executions, had resurged.

The Council was discussing the issue at a poignant moment for the entire Middle East. The latest Israeli intervention in Gaza, together with the economic siege of the Palestinian people, had worsened conditions immeasurably. The result could be seen in the increasing number of casualties, deaths and injury among civilians, including innocent women and children, and the destruction of vital public utility infrastructure, power plants and water supply systems. Clearly, those actions were a gross violation of the rules of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. They could not be allowed to continue with impunity.

The latest Israeli incursion into Palestinian territories and Lebanon had undermined hopes for peace in the region. The situation demanded restraint and a return to diplomacy and negotiations. The Security Council, the major Powers and the quartet must act immediately and resolutely to stop the attacks and the spiralling violence and put the peace process back on track. His delegation hoped that hostilities would soon cease and that the plight of the Palestinian people would be addressed through a resolute and collective effort by the international community.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.