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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVIS IONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHTIETH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 14 December 1988, at 3 p.m.

President:

later:

later:

later:

Mr. CABRAL (Vice-President)

Mr. DLAMINI (Vice-President)

Mr. ESSY (Vice-President)

Mr. CAPUTO (President)

(Guinea-Bissau)

(Swaziland)

(Côte d'Ivoire)

(Argentina)

- Question of Palestine [37] (continued)

(a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

(b) Reports of the Secretary-General

(c) Draft resolutions

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Cabral (Guineau-Bissau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 37 (continued)

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

Mr. AL-ROWAS (Oman) (interpretation from Arabic): I am pleased to convey to the Assembly greetings from the Sultan and the people of Oman and to express their best wishes for the success of our meetings.

The Sultanate of Oman advocates the principle of dialogue and is convinced that regional conflicts should be settled by peaceful means.

This year it has been possible to find solutions to a considerable number of international and regional problems. The question of Palestine is one of the most important problems facing us. It affects the people not only of the Middle East but of the world. It is one of the most important items on the agenda of the General Assembly. It is considered every year. Indeed, it was the first substantive question that the United Nations had to face when it was established.

Particularly in the light of the clear decision made by the Palestine National Council in Algiers and the welcome given it by the international community, the international situation is riper now than it has been in the past for a speedy, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

On behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, I take this opportunity of welcoming the historic statement made yesterday here by the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. That statement contains the essential elements for a solution to the problem that would provide for secure boundaries for all the parties concerned.

(Mr. Al-Rowas, Oman)

The vote by the overwhelming majority of the countries of the world to transfer the General Assembly session to Geneva to discuss the Palestinian question is additional proof, if proof were needed, of international support on the Palestinian question. What must be stressed here is the emergence of new factors related to the Palestinian struggle, which the international community must take into account so that the International Conference on the Middle East may be held as soon as possible.

First there is the intifadah, the peaceful uprising against occupation of unarmed civilians using stones - civilians that aspire to a better future in which they, like other peoples, can live in peace and enjoy independence. Then there is the new political thinking that inspired the convening of the Palestine National Council, and the PLO's support for the holding of a peace conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions. This has made the Palestinian position with regard to the convening of the Conference much more clear and precise, and the parties concerned have been reassured as to the credibility of the Arab side and its genuine desire to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

With regard to the resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council at its Algiers meetings, the Sultanate of Oman sees them as a clear sign of its Palestinian brothers' desire to take positive measures to create favourable conditions for the convening of the Peace Conference. The Sultanate of Oman unreservedly supports those decisions and resolutions and in so doing recognizes the independent Palestinian State in conformity with international law and General Assembly resolution 181 (II). For that State is legally and socially capable of protecting human rights and the rights of the Palestinian people in the present circumstances, particularly since Jordan severed its legal and administrative links with the West Bank.

(Mr. Al-Rowas, Omar.)

Israel continues its rejection of those peaceful solutions and its arbitrary policy against the unarmed Palestinian people, as can be seen from the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Arab territories which asserts that Israel is continuing its iron-fist policy against the unarmed Palestinian people and thus violating all international norms and standards, in particular the 1949 Geneva Convention. The Committee's report is an international document providing proof of the horrendous practices perpetrated by Israel against unarmed civilians in occupied Arab territories.

A few days ago the international community celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In so doing it has taken another step towards affirmation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the creation of an independent State.

Through the United Nations and the General Assembly we appeal to the whole world to increase its efforts in response to the Palestinian initiative and to work towards the achievement of peace based on justice and equity and the relevant United Nations resolutions, so that the peoples of the Middle East may live in stability and peace, like other peoples throughout the world.

Mr. SALIH (Sudan) (interpretation from Arabic): I am honoured to address the General Assembly for the second time at the current session as it resumes its work at the European Headquarters of this international Organization. For the first time, extraordinary circumstances have prevented the General Assembly from continuing its work at its principal Headquarters. This has resulted from the failure of the host country to reverse its decision denying Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), access to the United Nations in New York.

(Mr. Salih, Sudan)

Our meeting here in Geneva reflects the consensus of the international community and its insistence on hearing the Palestinian viewpoint as represented in the statement of the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. The General Assembly resolutions of last November also clearly demonstrated the solidarity of the international will, and the international community's commitment to respect for international agreements and its desire to meet its obligations. The General Assembly also expressed indignation and regret at the host country's decision.

However, what is even more important is success in the struggle of peoples to free themselves from aggression and racism no matter how relentless they may be.

The PLO is almost 25 years old, and it has suffered one murder after another inside the occupied territories. The leaders of the Palestinian people have now taken the initiative of political dialogue within the framework of the United Nations and regional forums. In the international arena they have always extended the olive branch and sought peace despite all the obstacles that have been put in their way. The efforts of the PLO and its perseverance in the face of the many difficulties it has encountered have never faltered, and they have always enjoyed the confidence of all Palestinian people within and outside the occupied territories. The Palestinian people have expressed their confidence in the PLO as their sole and legitimate representative and have pursued their intifadah for more than a year. This intifadah has astonished the world and lifted the veil used by the forces of aggression and racism in an effort to persuade public opinion that the Palestinian people had surrendered to their fate.

The revolution of the stones came about because unarmed Palestinian children had but one weapon: their belief in the sanctity and necessity of struggle. The intifadah came to shake all the strategies used against them. It roused the international community from the sleep into which it had been lulled by the forces

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of those who wanted to suppress the freedom and dignity of the Palestinian people. The demonstrations grew more intense and finally found expression in the resolutions adopted by the Palestinian National Council in Algiers last November.

(Mr. Salih, Sudan)

As the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Yasser Arafat, said in his comprehensive, historic statement yesterday before this international gathering, those resolutions constituted an important turning-point and an unprecedented positive development in the Palestinian revolution, invoking as they did the inherent and historical rights of the Palestinian people based on international legitimacy, and the political statement by the Palestine National Council (PNC) contained a peace initiative on behalf of the Palestinians that recognized resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and also referred to the importance of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

The General Assembly has been considering the question of Palestine at many sessions. The origins and the dimensions of the question have become clear and the international community is fully aware of them all, since the General Assembly has on a number of occasions adopted resolutions on the subject that form part of the documentation of the international Organization. The immediate recognition of the fledgling Palestinian State reaffirms that the international community is convinced of the legitimacy and the justice of the Palestinian cause and that the elements for the establishment of a State are in place, for the Palestinians who are not refugees; they are the people of Palestine. Hence the subjugation of the Gaza Strip or the West Bank to the sovereignty of any State is illogical and cannot be accepted within the current political framework; and the Israeli military occupation cannot put an end to Palestinian sovereignty and cause a new sovereignty to emerge. The Israeli occupation could only be limited to temporary administrative practices.

The resolutions of the PNC embody a new and sincere initiative to create a

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better climate and provide the necessary and positive regional and international conditions. In turn, this would promote efforts aimed at finding a peaceful settlement to this question, which has long threatened international peace and security. It is now incumbent upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and bring pressure to bear on the Israeli military machine to compel it to accept the optimum formula for solving the problem through the prompt convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Palestinian State on an equal footing with the other parties concerned.

It remains for the newly elected United States Administration to take an objective look at the initiative put forward by the Palestinian people in the resolutions of the PNC. Therefore, we call upon that Administration to undertake a thorough study of the Palestinian question, including all the new factors, and for the United States to play its role as a super-Power by beginning a new and responsible dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization and making serious endeavours to bring about peace by achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to this dispute.

The position of the people and the Government of Sudan in favour of the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people has been clear and resolute since 1947. We have given unstinting support to the Palestine Liberation Organization, which we have recognized as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in all political, economic, international and regional forums. This recognition reflects our national and political commitment to the Palestinian people. We have supported the sacred Palestinian uprising, which is still continuing in the occupied territories. This support is in keeping with our political credibility and has expressed our firm belief in the legitimate rights of

(Mr. Salih, Sudan)

the Palestinian people to voice their full rejection of occupation and Israeli domination and their aspirations to freedom and emancipation. Undoubtedly, this uprising, the rebellion using stones, has brought the question of Palestine into a new phase requiring speedy and serious efforts to establish a Palestinian State. On the same premise, Khartoum was in the vanguard of capitals that recognized the independent Palestinian State, and we have increased the level of our representation to that of full embassy.

In conclusion, from this rostrum we urge the entire international community to support the resolutions of the General Assembly at its current session, which call for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. The five permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the dispute, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, would participate on an equal footing, so that the Conference might have a full opportunity to achieve a just and comprehensive solution on the basis of the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories, including Holy Jerusalem, and from all other occupied Arab territories. The Conference should also guarantee the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with the United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.

In this respect we reaffirm our call for establishing a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of its permanent members, in order to take the measures necessary for the convening of the Conference as quickly as possible. We strongly support and call for international supervision by the United Nations in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza.

(Mr. Salih, Sudan)

Therefore, as was said in the statement of the Palestine Liberation Organization delivered by Mr. Yasser Arafat yesterday, there should be an offer to establish the necessary conditions in preparation for the International Peace Conference. That would also ensure protection to Palestinian citizens against expulsion, repression, terrorism and displacement -- all policies exercised by Israel.

Mr. DAZA (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): Consideration of the item entitled "Question of Palestine" by the United Nations General Assembly takes on a very special character on this occasion, not only because of the circumstances that have led us to hold the debate here, but also because of recent developments that have a direct bearing on the issue.

Over the last year, the uprising of the Palestinian people on the West Bank of the Jordan and in Gaza has shown the international community that the situation of the Palestinian people is without any doubt the very core of the conflict in the Middle East. This problem cannot be resolved if the legitimate and just aspirations of the Palestinian people are not recognized and satisfied. It will not be possible to achieve lasting peace in the region as long as there is no redress of an unjust situation which runs counter to the basic rights of millions of Palestinians and which, if maintained, will only give rise to greater resentment and more violence between two communities which must find a formula for peaceful co-existence.

In that context, my country attaches particular importance to statements by the representatives of the Palestinian people recognizing the right of the State of Israel to exist and condemning the use of terrorist methods for the achievement of their objectives. Those positive statements, coupled with the decisions taken by

(Mr. Daza, Chile)

the Palestine National Council in its meetings in Algeria last month, establish a framework for moderation and realism that should be made use of in the search for solutions to the Middle East problem, solutions that might be appropriate and acceptable to all the parties involved.

Of particular significance and value in the pursuit of peace is the rejection of terrorism in all its forms. We are convinced that political objectives are achieved by political means.

This year, unlike earlier occasions, the United Nations General Assembly began on a note of optimism. Our hopes for peace found concrete expressions of realization in the resolution of several international conflicts which had for many years been of concern to our Organization.

There is a new climate, which must also be extended to the Middle East situation, a region of special concern to Chile, which has welcomed to its land men and women of the two communities in conflict.

There is yet another concept we should like to stress on this occasion. The course of recent developments has contributed to strengthening the role of the United Nations in its main responsibility, the maintenance of international peace and security. We maintain that in the Middle East conflict, the United Nations should play a paramount role, particularly through the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

Consistent with its traditional attachment to the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes, Chile has always supported any initiative with a view to a negotiated settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

In that context, I should like on this occasion to reaffirm Chile's view that the solution to the problem of the Palestinian people, and thus to a large extent

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to the Middle East conflict, can be found in the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In conformity with the provisions of those resolutions, the settlement would be obtained through an agreement entailing Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through the establishment of a sovereign State and the guarantee of the right of all States of the region, including the State of Israel, to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

I should like to add, finally, that we know that that is no easy task and that there are still many obstacles remaining to the achievement of those purposes. However, the many descendants of the Arab and Jewish peoples who have settled in my country over the years and who have made a valuable contribution to its development and progress, have shown us Chileans their wisdom, their civic spirit and their great will to confront and overcome adversity. We trust that those qualities will also be demonstrated by their brethren in the Middle East in the implementation of the noble objective of a just and lasting peace in the region.

Mr. KLESTIL (Austria): Having listened yesterday to the important political statement of the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), I regret all the more the fact that his conciliatory message could not have been delivered to the international community at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the General Assembly from the very beginning of our Organization and is a sore reminder of our common failure to arrive at a just and lasting settlement of that problem.

(Mr. Klestil, Austria)

Already in General Assembly resolution 181 (II), one of the most important United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine, it was clearly stated that: "the present situation in Palestine is one which is likely to impair the general welfare and friendly relations among nations".

The issue of Palestine has been a focal point of United Nations activities ever since. The United Nations has held special sessions, emergency special sessions, conferences and seminars on Palestine. So far, however, the question of Palestine has - for reasons of which we are all aware - eluded any settlement.

After decades that brought about no basic change, the last 12 months have witnessed important new events that highlight the urgency of finding a just and lasting political solution to the core issue of the Middle East problem. The date 9 December 1987 marked the beginning of the intifadah, the uprising of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which so far has been and continues to be a dominating factor in the political agenda of the Middle East.

The intifadah is a direct result of the stalemate in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has shown that even 20 years of occupation cannot destroy the aspirations of a people.

Austria has consistently recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to a State of its own. Furthermore, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, my country has recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. It is therefore only consistent with that position that we welcome the decision of the Palestine National Council of 15 November 1988 to proclaim the creation of a Palestinian State. In that context, let me state the following: Austria recognizes that

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proclamation as the exercise of the right to self-determination by the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Political Communiqué and the Declaration of Independence of Algiers, linked as they are to the implicit recognition of Israel, are considered by Austria as a positive step in the search for a solution to the conflict. The decisions of Algiers constitute proof of the responsible attitude of the PLO. We have also noted with satisfaction the recent statement of Chairman Arafat in Stockholm. It is to be hoped that those positive developments will find an encouraging response from the other parties to the Middle East conflict.

This is a unique opportunity, which must be seized with a view to initiating a peace process, as Chairman Arafat so clearly articulated in his speech yesterday. The fact that members of the Jewish community have reacted favourably gives us reason to hope that that message will find an even wider response in the near future. The peace initiative, as put forward yesterday before the Assembly by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, would constitute the basis for the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. Let me specifically mention in that context the proposal that the PLO would seek a comprehensive settlement among the parties concerned on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), so as to guarantee the right of all to exist in peace and security.

We find it equally encouraging that Chairman Arafat condemned terrorism in all its forms and emphasized his determination to strive for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination by peaceful means within the framework of the International Conference under the auspices of the United Nations and in accordance with its Charter and resolutions.

Austria shares the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the situation in the Middle East that:

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"the recent session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process". (A/43/867, para. 37)

The decision taken at Algiers offers new opportunities for progress towards peace that must be grasped. If they were ignored, the momentum towards peace would again be lost. It is high time that the parties concerned reached out through this new window of opportunity and demonstrated their readiness to talk to each other.

Fifteen years after the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 338 (1973), we should begin implementing its core provisions. The resolution calls for the initiation of negotiations between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace. In our view, the "parties concerned" referred to in the resolution include the PLO. The situation will have to be reviewed if and when a Palestinian government is established which will act on behalf of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

There is only one way out of the present dangerous spiral of violence and repression in the occupied territories and that is by respecting international law and abiding by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We therefore consider Chairman Arafat's reference yesterday to those resolutions, which, inter alia, recognize the right of all States, including Israel, to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, as an important step towards a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Austria has consistently advocated the holding of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all other parties concerned. Austria continues to believe that such a conference is the only way to a just and peaceful solution to one of the most enduring and tragic conflicts of

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our time. In view of the progress made recently by the United Nations towards political solutions to a number of regional conflicts, we hope that the parties to the Middle East conflict will now agree with the principle that such a conference be held, so that the United Nations might be entrusted with its organization.

Not only has the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO referred clearly and unequivocally to those important Security Council resolutions, he has also extended his hand in an offer of peace and reconciliation, with, in his words, an "olive branch". Let us hope that his solemn call will not go unheeded.

Mr. VACEK (Czechoslovakia): We have gathered here in unusual circumstances to consider one of the most critical questions on the agenda of this - as we can say today without hesitation - very successful session of the General Assembly.

However, one very bad scar will remain on the face of the forty-third session - the fact that the host country of the United Nations made it impossible for Mr. Yasser Arafat, the highest representative of the Palestinian people and of the newly proclaimed Palestinian State, to deliver a statement of principle at the Headquarters of our Organization.

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On the other hand, the question of Palestine has again made headlines recently, and that has not been due only to this violation by the host country of its obligations. The reason lies primarily in the spontaneous outbreak of discontent on the part of the Palestinian population in the territories brutally occupied by Israel.

In the 12 months that it has lasted, the mass uprising of the Palestinians has grown to be a most significant phenomenon, which demonstrates that the status quo in the Middle East is totally unbearable. It reveals that the lack of a solution for the destiny of the Palestinian people is insufferable. The Palestinian uprising and Israel's way of acting, attempting to thwart it by force, constitute today the most important factor, which pushes to the foreground the question of a general settlement in the Middle East and simultaneously gives a strong impetus to the international efforts aimed at seeking ways for a practical solution to the whole Middle East crisis.

Our Organization has adopted dozens of resolutions recognizing the inalienable national rights of the Palestinians, including the right to self-determination and to the establishment of their own independent State, and stipulating unambiguously the foundations of a just solution to the Palestinian question. And, while Israel has always been able to reject those resolutions, today a time has undoubtedly come when there can be a considerable influence on the process of solution. Recently the international community has had an opportunity to note a substantial movement in the solution to many other hotbeds of tension in today's world - and in many instances and to a considerable degree the United Nations has played a role in this. A distinctive step, which not only created new, substantially more favourable conditions for the realization of the process of the implementation of

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Palestinian rights but is already a part of it, was the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State.

In the framework of our Organization a quite clear understanding exists of the need for this process to continue. It is unequivocally conceded that a just solution to the Palestinian question is needed without delay. The United Nations has a great historical responsibility to the Palestinian people, whose tragic destiny casts a dark shadow on the entire international community. We are convinced that the convening of an international Middle East conference, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and of the parties concerned, including representatives of Palestine and Israel, constitutes not only the greatest but practically the only opportunity in this regard. The chances of such a conference are growing, due, inter alia, to the approval by the Palestine National Council of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which demand recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the Middle East. The condition, of course, is that the other side responds to this act of realism in an equally realistic manner. At the same time, we are aware that the relations between Israel and the Palestinians are extremely complicated. The burden of many decades of mutual mistrust and hatred is very heavy. There is no doubt that a solution will not be easy. Yet real hope is emerging.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has already expressed its position on the implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people on a number of occasions. In the forum of the General Assembly it did so most recently early last month, when Czechoslovakia co-sponsored resolution 43/21, denouncing the actions of Israel in suppressing the uprising of the Palestinian people. Proceeding from its position

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of unchanged support for the just struggle of the Arab people of Palestine, led by their own representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for their legitimate rights, Czechoslovakia has also recognized the proclamation of the State of Palestine. We are convinced that it is an essential component of a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East situation. This decision is in full harmony with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which provides for the establishment of both a Palestinian and an Israeli State.

With a view to promoting the process of the peaceful settlement of the crisis and facilitating the convening of an international conference on the Middle East, a model international conference on the Middle East, at the non-governmental level, was held in Prague last week, on the initiative of eminent representatives of Czechoslovak scientific and public life. It was attended by about 50 personalities from the countries directly involved in the conflict, especially from among Palestinian and Israeli ranks, as well as from countries holding permanent seats in the Security Council and States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and international organizations.

The Prague meeting clearly confirmed the feasibility of settling this regional conflict through negotiations within an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations. On that essential point, unequivocal agreement was reached at the Prague talks among all participants. They expressed that opinion also in a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who had himself sent a message to the conference which was received with the greatest interest.

The constructive and businesslike nature of the discussions was remarkable. That was in keeping with the new political thinking that has been gaining ever-broader ground in the solution to both global and regional problems. We

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attach particular importance to the open exchange of views between participants from Israel and representatives of the Palestinians. We believe that the results of the deliberations at the Prague model international conference on the Middle East constitute a valuable intellectual and political potential that can make an important contribution to the practical efforts exerted, especially by the United Nations, in seeking a solution to the Middle East conflict by means of the convening of an international Middle East conference.

The results of the Prague conference have reaffirmed the need for all parties involved in the conflict to show active political will. The Palestine National Council has done its part already. That was proved again by Mr. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO, in his constructive, realistic and responsible speech, which met with profound interest, understanding and support from us.

Now it is up to Israel, whose inflexible position has made it impossible thus far to reach any progress in the settlement of the Middle East situation. It is indeed high time that Israel itself made up its mind about how it wants to provide for its further existence in the community of the Middle East nations, to ensure peace and security for further development. The choice is obvious: to make its policy and its approach to the other side more realistic; to abandon its policy of force and oppression; to show a willingness to seek political solutions. Failing to respond to this urgent call of the day would mean acting against the basic interests of not only the Palestinian but also the Israeli people, adding fuel to the dangerous hotbed of tension in the region and in the world, poisoning the atmosphere in international relations, and posing a threat to regional and world peace.

Mr. TALHI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (interpretation from Arabic): I wish to congratulate the President on the sincere efforts he is making to ensure that these meetings take place in an exemplary manner.

To the Swiss people we express our great esteem and our appreciation for their hospitality. We thank the Swiss Government, also, for what it has done to ensure that all the necessary steps are taken to make these meetings a success.

I pay a tribute to all the countries that demonstrated the courage to reject the illegal stand taken by the host country - the country where the Headquarters of the United Nations is located, a country that has flouted justice. I thank all those who voted in favour of the very significant resolution in this regard.

Transferring these meetings of the General Assembly to Geneva has been a step in the right direction of moving the Headquarters of the United Nations to a place where it would be easier for world leaders to do their work - far from the pressures exerted by the United States and from its hegemony.

We have come to this splendid city, far from United Nations Headquarters, because we have been compelled to do so. This is probably the first time that delegations have been forced to leave the host country because of a refusal to listen to a people setting forth its cause. And this is a cause which affects not only the peoples concerned but international peace and stability. It is a cause that has been before us for more than a quarter of a century. This matter is a blot on the conscience of mankind. There have been so many martyrs, so much death, exile, destruction and violence. The boundaries of other countries have been violated.

This cause has remained the same from the very beginning. What is involved is basically occupation, expansionism, killing and suffering. The developments in regard to the cause grow more serious every day. A region which, because of its

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history and religion, is a symbol for the entire world is now threatened. It is a region which was the cradle of world civilization. There is a constant risk that this situation will lead to an even broader conflagration. We need only look at the grave events of the last year. Thousands of men, women and children have been facing, with bare hands, a wicked, evil military machine that seeks to trample all values under foot. We see soldiers armed to the teeth who have no compunction about hurling themselves at defenceless persons. This is a deliberate policy of extermination, which the world condemns. Everyone has sympathy for its victims.

But the host country feels that it would not be right to allow the representatives of the suffering people to address us on the tragedy that has befallen those people. Despite all the appeals made to it, that country refused to listen to reason. We see a country trying to exterminate a people. We see other countries subjected to the threat of extermination. We see an area of conflict and confrontation, where peace is threatened as never before. And yet the host country made so bold as to oppose the will of the international community and refuse to let a man speak.

It is a dangerous world when a great Power can behave in such an unconscionable way. Perhaps what has happened will make us understand better the root of the cause with which we are concerned today. For if we look at all the conflicts in the world now, we see the same underlying causes. We find a great Power that supposedly champions international morality and ethics refusing to shoulder its international humanitarian obligations. As God says in the Holy Book, even mighty kings shall be laid low. All kinds of despots, all those who do evil will eventually be brought down by those who work for justice.

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We are witnessing a situation of injustice and all the suffering that results from it. The basic cause is that a number of States desire to exercise hegemony and flout international law and refuse to meet the aspirations of mankind.

One need only remember what happened at the beginning of the century, when the land of Palestine was taken from the people of Palestine and given to persons who did not deserve it. Britain, the colonial Power in Palestine, made a promise to a racist movement that had grown out of other racist movements in Europe. It promised to grant Palestine to that movement as a homeland. Britain carried out its promise.

(Mr. Talhi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

They came from all parts of the world to that country, whatever their nationality or ethnic background. All kinds of reasons were presented. Sometimes they said it was to compensate for a historical injustice; sometimes they invoked divine right; religion and history were distorted; sometimes they said it was terra nullius, land without an owner; sometimes they said it was land without a people for a people without a land. Thus, those who had absolutely no right of ownership usurped the land of Palestine to the detriment of its rightful owners. When the United Kingdom pressed ahead and succeeded in its policy, the situation gave rise to confrontation. When, in 1947, the situation was considered in the General Assembly, the injustice was endorsed and enshrined in General Assembly resolution 181 (II). In so doing, the international community turned injustice into total malfeasance. And this was done by an Organization in which mankind, as the Charter eloquently attests, had placed great hopes. Unfortunately, in so far as the Palestine question is concerned, those hopes remain unfulfilled. I shall not, however, dwell on the details.

The Balfour Declaration was the beginning of the unjust design. In 1947, as I say, General Assembly resolution 181 (II) endorsed injustice. A people was deprived of its land and driven into exile, harassed and attacked on all sides. When the United Kingdom, a great Power, left Palestine another great Power came and applied different procedures. It aided and abetted the expulsion of the Palestinians by providing money, weapons and other forms of support and by preventing the international Organization from proclaiming the truth and applying the law; it turned a deaf ear to the truth so that even those who suffered were not heard. In short, it thus helped drive a people from its land and prevented the Palestinian people even of its right to resist. Today not only is that people being denied the right to speak, but the world is being denied the right to hear it speak.

(Mr. Talhi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Is there a crime worse than driving a people from its homeland? This is what God Almighty had to say in his Holy Book about driving people from their homeland:

"God forbids you not,

With regard to those who

Fight you not for (your) Faith

Nor drive you out

Of your homes,

From dealing kindly and justly

With them: For God loveth

Those who are just.

"God only forbids you,

With regard to those who

Fight you for (your) Faith,

And drive you out

Of your homes, and support

(Others) in driving you out,

From turning to them

(For friendship and protection).

It is such as turn to them

(In these circumstances),

That do wrong." (The Holy Koran, LX: 8-9)

We are faced here with continuing aggression against not only a region but an entire human community, an entire segment of mankind. Suffice it to look at the

(Mr. Talhi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

arguments put forward and the plans that are made. How can one reconcile permitting the Zionist entity to achieve a nuclear capability without a single voice, not even a warning, being raised against it? How can the Zionist entity be allowed to stockpile chemical weapons without anything being said in any international forum, merely because it is the Zionist entity that is involved? Certain Arab countries have acquired defensive missiles, and people have spoken out against it. Yet those same people continue to provide funds and support to the Zionist entity, which is threatening other countries. Without outside help it could not even feed its own people. What, then, is the meaning of this strategic alliance between Israel and the United States?

Incidentally, a few days before this meeting, the embargo on the shipment of cluster bombs to that entity was lifted. Such supplies are now granted to it.

One hears a lot of talk about "secure boundaries". How can there be any talk of secure boundaries when the Zionist entity invokes "divine rights"? Many questions could be asked, and the answers are fairly obvious. The truth is that the world has often raised its voice in protest in this Assembly, but the aggressor has ignored it. It has responded by continuing to defy the Organization and pursuing a policy of aggression.

Now we have the situation of the intifadah - an uprising in which civilians are facing the most sophisticated military machine in the world. An army of children is facing that military machine with their bare hands and stones; women and children are being killed. It has not gone unnoticed: mankind has expressed its position in Security Council resolutions 605 (1987), 607 (1987) and 608 (1987) and in resolutions of the General Assembly, the latest of which was adopted early last month.

(Mr. Taihi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

What has been the attitude of the Zionist entity and the United States? I do not believe I could ever find the words to describe their ignorance and defiance of human values and basic humanity.

There are three basic elements to Israeli practices: first, no entity based on injustice can have any value in law. Secondly, we are dealing here with a question of colonialism and racist settlement. The fact is that what is going on now in Palestine is exactly the same as what took place in Rhodesia and what is now taking place in South Africa. It affects not only the occupied Palestinian territories but a whole race and its very existence. Thirdly, since this policy of colonization through the establishment of settlements has the full support of the United States in all its practices, the United States itself has become an aggressor - in fact, the principle aggressor.

(Mr. Talhi, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

For more than 40 years this issue has been dealt with by the United Nations and everyone has spoken about peace. Yet we see the aggressors persisting in their aggression, expansionism, occupation and extermination. Faced with this situation, my country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, believes that the international community bears a great moral responsibility and that the least it should do is to support the Arab people of Palestine in its struggle to recover its land and its legitimate rights through armed struggle and to extend its rights over all its land.

My delegation believes that the convening of an international peace conference is just another ploy to perpetuate this historical injustice and finally to eliminate the Palestinian cause, particularly if the United States were to play an important role in that conference. My country was a victim of colonialist settlement. But injustice, however long it may persist, will finally be defeated and countries that struggle to that end will prevail.

I cannot fail before this Assembly to convey our greetings to the fraternal people of Palestine for their uprising, which has now entered its second year. We know that only its persistence in the struggle will enable it to earn the respect of the world and the recognition of all its legitimate rights. The United Nations has a special responsibility with respect to this question and it is high time the United Nations assumed that responsibility if it wishes to retain any credibility and effectiveness.

I am aware that some of my brothers present here might feel somewhat embarrassed or put out by the way I am speaking. They may even smile a little in coming to this rostrum to denounce what we have said. But we feel one should never be afraid to tell the truth. We feel that honesty is not a crime, even if the aggressor may deem it so.

(Mr. Talhi, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

I believe in full sincerity that, as God has said, everything that is taken away by force must be seized by force.

Mr. WINTER (German Democratic Republic) (interpretation from French):

The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly dealt with the question of Palestine. And many times the overwhelming majority of Member States advocated the implementation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, as well as a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. Yet, the suffering of the Palestinian people and, consequently, also its struggle for the implementation of its inalienable rights, continue.

Special hopes for progress in the search for solutions to one of the most complicated and protracted regional conflicts, one which poses the greatest threat to international security, are placed particularly in this year's debate on the question of Palestine.

The trend towards improved international relations is encouraging to all those who are committed to the use of political means in the pursuit of just settlements for international disputes in the interests of all parties concerned and in the interests of regional security and international peace. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has made it perfectly clear that it ranks among those forces.

All the more incomprehensible is the attempt to prevent, in violation of the Headquarters Agreement between the United States and the United Nations, the participation of the leading representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, in the debate on the question of Palestine. It is obvious that such a move is not conducive to promotion of the peace process in the Middle East, since the world Organization has come to play an ever increasing role in the settlement of regional conflicts. Therefore, the German Democratic Republic

(Mr. Winter, German Democratic Republic)

welcomes the fact that nearly all States Members of the United Nations represented in the General Assembly demonstrated their joint determination to support the search for constructive solutions in the Middle East by way of political dialogue between all parties concerned and to enable the participation of Yasser Arafat in this debate.

We followed Yasser Arafat's statement with great attention and sympathy. It shows, impressively and irrefutably, that the Palestinian movement genuinely seeks a just settlement to the question of Palestine as well as peace and security for all States and peoples in the region.

Like many other States, the German Democratic Republic has welcomed the results of the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers. It recognizes in terms of international law the State of Palestine which was proclaimed. This decision was made in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the relevant United Nations resolutions and corresponds to the high level of relations between the German Democratic Republic and the PLO. Since it is the fundamental position of principle of the German Democratic Republic that conflicts - whatever the region and whatever the States and peoples involved - must be solved exclusively by peaceful means, my country was highly appreciative of the decisions taken at Algiers. We are convinced that these decisions will stimulate the initiation of the desired process of finding a lasting and just solution to the Middle East conflict.

(Mr. Winter, German Democratic Republic)

The realism and good will underlying the decisions have met with a broad positive response. Special significance attaches to the PLO's statement that in solving the conflict the legitimate interests of all States and peoples of the region must be guaranteed. Now the ball is in the court of all those who have so far opposed such a solution, and Israel, in particular. They are expected to join in the efforts for a constructive settlement. It is now more than ever imperative for the parties involved to acknowledge the need to meet each other half-way in good faith and to work in a business-like manner towards the accommodation of interests.

The recent developments are further testimony to the great support the PLO enjoys among the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The PLO's international activities - for instance, Yasser Arafat's visit to Strasbourg and the Stockholm dialogue, made possible thanks to the arrangements of the Swedish Government - clearly show the PLO's strong sense of political responsibility for the fate of the Palestinian people as its sole, legitimate representative.

Discussing the question of Palestine, one cannot help but note a great number of positive and encouraging changes in international relations and in the settlement of conflicts - changes that are encouraging indeed for all peoples. Though much remains to be done to make the world a safer place, a process has been set in motion to turn from confrontation to détente. The significant proposals submitted by General Secretary Gorbachev in New York give fresh impetus to that process. They are an encouragement to move further down the road opened up by the first genuine disarmament agreement, the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, the INF Treaty. The peace-promoting

(Mr. Winter, German Democratic Republic)

effect of such a policy is manifest also in the progress achieved in resolving a number of complicated, long-lasting and costly regional conflicts. Developments have begun that only recently still seemed impossible.

Obviously, the will for political understanding and recognition of and respect for mutual interests are fundamental prerequisites for political solutions. To that end, readiness for dialogue and compromise, a sense of reality and judgement are required.

Given these developments and the increasingly successful involvement of the United Nations, in particular its Secretary-General, which is widely appreciated and acknowledged, there is reason for great hope. If this positive trend is to maintain its momentum, all States, in particular those involved in the conflict and the permanent members of the Security Council, must support it.

The incipient process of positive developments in international relations can, however, be continued successfully only if no region is left out. Accordingly, the encouraging developments have also increased the attention of States and the international public to those problems on which so far progress has failed to come about - such as the Middle East conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, which has remained unresolved for more than 40 years. Action is required so that a settlement can be achieved in conformity with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

For generations the Palestinian people has suffered aggression, terror and expulsion. Now as before it is being denied a peoples' right to self-determination under the United Nations Charter. The now one-year-old mass uprising of the Palestinian people, the intifadah, is striking evidence that after more than 20 years of occupation the Palestinian people's desire for peace and freedom can be

(Mr. Winter, German Democratic Republic)

neither suppressed nor extinguished. Especially the young generation does not accept a situation contrary to international law. Israel's action in the occupied Palestinian territories has provoked justified public indignation in almost all countries. Those who place their hopes in the time factor or in a gradual recognition of the status quo have not understood the signs of our time.

We share the opinion expressed in the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Middle East:

"The violence in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continue unabated and underline the need for progress on the diplomatic front. The continuing occupation of those territories is not acceptable to their inhabitants and will not become so. It is necessary therefore to find a political solution which will satisfy both the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people and the right of Israel, like other States in the area, to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force."

The use of armed force against the Palestinian people cannot bring about peace. What is really needed is negotiations between equals on the basis of United Nations resolutions, a matter-of-fact constructive dialogue, and a common endeavour for an assured future of all States and peoples in the region. Those who are unwilling to follow this kind of logic have to be asked whether they have an interest in the peace the Palestinian people, the Arab countries, and not least Israel, really need. Peace in that region is necessary for the strengthening of international peace and security. If there is a will to come to an understanding, a mechanism will be found with which to realize it and reach agreement. The German Democratic Republic holds the view that an international peace conference on the

(Mr. Winter, German Democratic Republic)

Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, would be the best way to find a comprehensive, just and hence lasting settlement to that protracted and extremely complex conflict. Now it is essential that specific steps be taken for its convening. It therefore seems to be fitting for the Security Council to prepare a negotiating mechanism.

(Mr. Winter, German
Democratic Republic)

The call for such a conference by the majority of States Members of the United Nations, the League of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries is gaining ground since such a conference would bring to the negotiating table, on an equal footing, all parties directly involved, that is the Arab States, the Palestinian people represented by the PLO, Israel and the five permanent members of the Security Council. It would involve the United Nations and would make use of its experience and authority in the interest of a peaceful settlement. It would ensure that all problems of the region should be considered in their diversity and interdependence and that a constructive solution should be found which would meet the legitimate interests of all parties involved, including both the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and respect for Israel's right to exist.

The German Democratic Republic welcomes and supports the Palestinian peace initiative, which the Chairman of the Executive Council of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, announced yesterday, aimed at achieving peace for all States and peoples of the region.

As a member of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the German Democratic Republic makes its contribution towards heightening awareness of the need for a political settlement and for the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and Palestine. It was therefore a great honour and challenge for my country to host the fourth European regional seminar on the question of Palestine in Berlin last April. The regional seminar has helped to make public opinion in Europe more perceptive with regard to the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Winter, German
Democratic Republic)

Our solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people is unwavering. This was clearly manifest in the great variety of activities undertaken by social forces in the German Democratic Republic on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which included also material assistance, such as granting opportunities for vocational training or higher education, providing medical treatment, and sending Palestinian children to holiday camps. Shipments of urgently needed goods and materials, financed by donations from the people of the German Democratic Republic, have also continued.

The Palestinian people can continue to count on the solidarity of the German Democratic Republic in its efforts to achieve its rights and justice.

Mr. OULD SIDIYA (Mauritania) (interpretation from Arabic): Allow me at the outset to renew our congratulations to Mr. Dante Caputo on his election to the presidency of the forty-third session of the General Assembly. We congratulate him on the exemplary way in which he has guided our deliberations and on the firm stance that he and the General Assembly have taken to safeguard the right of the Palestinian leadership to express its views on a question of vital importance to it, the question of Palestine.

The resolution by which the debate of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine was transferred from New York to Geneva constitutes a victory for justice, legitimacy and international solidarity. It is an expression of the firm support of the members of the international community for the struggle of the Palestinian people.

On this occasion, I should like to extend thanks and appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for its extensive and successful efforts to ensure the convening of our meeting in the best possible circumstances.

(Mr. Ould Sidiya, Mauritania)

Our debates are going on at a time when far-reaching developments are taking place in the Palestinian arena, especially in relation to the fate of the Palestinian people and the future of peace and stability in the Middle East. In particular, the Palestinian masses are currently celebrating the first anniversary of their glorious uprising against the Israeli occupation, the intifadah, which could be considered one of the most important examples of resistance and sacrifice. Today, more than one year has elapsed since the start of this epic struggle and certain facts have now emerged.

The intifadah has proved the Palestinian people's categorical rejection of the Israeli occupation and its expansionist policies. It has demonstrated that the Palestinian people is determined, despite all efforts to displace and oppress it, to regain its rights which have been usurped. The intifadah has also brought out the horrible truth of the Israeli repressive policies and practices in the occupied territories. It has shown that the source of violence and terrorism is indeed the Zionist occupation forces and not the Palestinian masses.

The intifadah has rallied round its leadership inside and outside the territory. The intifadah and the masses have adhered to the daily directives of the leadership, which proves that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the entity that embodies the national unity of the Palestinians.

Through making these basic facts clear, the intifadah has participated in an effective manner in advancing the Palestinian cause and bringing it to the fore. There has been more understanding of the justice of this cause, and it has received more support and more attention from States and peoples all over the world. On the other hand, Israel's isolation has become more apparent and its criminal practices have increasingly been condemned.

(Mr. Ould Sidiya, Mauritania)

If through the intifadah the Palestinian people has asserted its insistence on achieving its freedom and independence, however great the sacrifice may be, it has at the same time affirmed its willingness to participate seriously and responsibly in the peace process in the Middle East.

(Mr. Ould Sidiya, Mauritania)

Indeed, this was attested to by the Palestine National Council, which convened its special nineteenth session in Algiers, 12-15 November 1988. The resolutions of that session affirmed beyond any doubt the dedication of the Palestinian leadership to international legitimacy and its keenness on achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute on the basis of recognition of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people - its right to return, to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on its national soil - and on the basis of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, in keeping with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the provisions of the resolutions of the United Nations and the principles and provisions of international law.

The Council has adopted the framework approved by our Organization in order to find a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Middle East. This framework is the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of five permanent members of the Security Council, as well as all parties to the dispute, on an equal footing, including the Palestine Liberation Organization in its capacity as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Hence it is not surprising that within this context the international community has supported the brave and courageous resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council. The declaration of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the soil of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, has met with wide international support. The growing recognition that has been won by the independent Palestinian State since its declaration attests to the solidarity of the international community with the Arab Palestinian people and the support by the

(Mr. Ould Sidiya, Mauritania)

international community for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty over its land.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is proud to have been one of the first to recognize the independent Palestinian State, on the day it was declared. This was in line with our firm position of support for the decisions of the Palestinian leadership in order to retrieve the usurped rights of the Palestinian people and to embody their legitimate aspirations.

At the beginning of our work we heard the message addressed to us by the struggling Palestinian people through its special envoy, Mr. Yasser Arafat. It was a message of peace and good will adhering to international legitimacy. But each day we receive the messages of the Israeli authorities from the occupied territories. Those are messages of terrorism, repression, murder and imprisonment. They show contempt for the international Organization and violate its laws and norms. The international community, as represented by the United Nations, must firmly assume its responsibilities, support justice and oppose occupation and the violation of human rights, so that peace and stability may prevail in the Middle East region.

Before concluding my brief statement, I should like to extend warm congratulations and sincere thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to thank and congratulate its Chairman, the representative of Senegal, for the excellent work done by this Committee in the interests of the Palestinian people and its just cause.

Mr. PENALOSA (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): Today, we are here at Geneva caught between two feelings, one of concern and one of satisfaction. My delegation is especially concerned with one fact which has forced

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

us to meet here in Geneva to consider agenda item 37, the refusal of the host country to allow the representative of a movement to address the Organization at which it has Observer status. The situation thus created in not allowing Mr. Yasser Arafat to come to United Nations Headquarters in New York is very disturbing indeed, for two reasons: first, this refusal introduces additional elements into a situation which is in itself delicate and polarized, complicating the search for just and lasting solution; and, secondly, the host country's reiterating a position which disregards the implementation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States as the host country of the Organization.*

Our feeling of satisfaction is to have been able to welcome and hear the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Yasser Arafat, at a time when the Organization has raised new hopes for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. Peaceful coexistence between peoples and the promotion of friendship among nations, a friendship based on respect for the principles of the equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples, constitute the fundamental elements of the Charter of our Organization. On the question of Palestine, these principles were at the very core of resolution 181 (II), which clearly establishes the creation of two States, one Arab and one Jewish, guaranteeing their right to live within secure boundaries.

* Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland), Vice President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

Colombia was very gratified by the position adopted by the Palestine National Council, reaffirming the commitment of the Palestinian people to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It also condemns the threat or use of force, violence and terrorism, and indeed is in favour of the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. We heard with satisfaction the reaffirmation of these principles in the statements made by Mr. Arafat in Stockholm last week, and especially those he made yesterday before this Assembly, where with great realism and courage, which we applaud, he invited all parties to the conflict, and especially Israel, under the auspices of the United Nations, to forge peace in the region with dignity, freedom and security for all States.

Colombia has always felt that the Middle East situation, so ominously charged, will hold greater promise of a solution to the degree in so far as that we revert to the spirit and letter of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which 21 years after its adoption, continues to be a good point of departure for the assurance of peace in the region.

Since the establishment of the United Nations, Colombia has maintained a balanced and equitable position with regard to the Middle East problem. The aforementioned resolution implies a recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from all occupied territories, termination of all states of belligerence, and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.

Since it was first suggested, we have supported the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

Nations, on the bases of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The indefinite postponement of the Conference has created great difficulties for all States in the region. Let us not continue to postpone it indefinitely, under the pretext that we cannot believe in the good faith of the other party. Let us prove that good faith at the negotiating table.

The demand for a just solution deserves world attention. Our country believes that any positive and constructive action coming from either of the parties to the conflict should be received with a sincere feeling of good faith. We are convinced that the way of dialogue in search of peace is long and difficult, but any obstacle removed therefrom should be viewed as real progress, rather than abruptly rejected, as gestures and acts of trust will inevitably bring others in their wake. There has been much too much bloodshed and suffering. We hope that the parties to the conflict will choose negotiation over violence, moderation over extremism, and constructive response over abrupt rejection. These are our best wishes.

It is now up to the United Nations to help create a propitious climate for the prompt establishment of the Palestinian State in the occupied territories and to create propitious conditions for the harmonious development of the two nations which for centuries have coexisted on this self-same territory.

Mr. WALTERS (United States of America): The search for peace in the Middle East has been a constant feature of United States policy. American efforts have helped bring about the disengagement of forces, agreements between Israel and Egypt, and between Israel and Syria. American efforts helped bring about the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. The United States remains an active, committed partner in the search for a comprehensive settlement achieved through negotiations.

(Mr. Walters, United States)

In helping willing parties negotiate their differences, the United States has always kept in mind a simple, but abiding reality - namely, that no outside party can want peace more than the parties themselves want and need peace. As such, the United States has always opposed efforts to impose solutions from outside, concentrating instead on eliciting movement from the parties on the critical issues involved in the negotiations. It is for these reasons that the United States will vote against the draft resolutions submitted during this debate.

In seeking to advance the prospects for negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement, this year the United States advanced a set of proposals that represent the core requirements of a successful process of accommodation.

The objective is a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict through negotiations. There is no substitute for direct negotiations between the parties concerned. The parties to negotiations must accept to negotiate with each other. An international conference may be useful, in so far as it helps launch and support direct negotiations; but a conference must not pre-empt or substitute for the direct negotiations.

The United Nations Security Council established the basis of the negotiating process in its resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Each party may have other positions and preferences that it wishes to bring to the negotiations, consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), but none can limit or avoid accepting Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the basis for negotiations.

Negotiations must proceed in an atmosphere free of terrorism, violence and intimidation.

These are valuable and enduring principles that need to be at the core of efforts to resolve the dispute. Additionally, there should be a period of

(Mr. Walters, United States)

transition between the status quo and a final settlement. The transitional period will help build confidence among the parties that negotiations work. It will give the parties time to adjust to a new situation, and it will allow the parties to deal with each other differently, gradually, in the light of an agreement freely negotiated.

Movement towards peace starts with movement by the parties. Each side needs to adopt constructive policies aimed at realistic and pragmatic progress towards peace.

For Israel, the choice is clear, albeit difficult. In order to achieve the security it deserves and requires, Israel must face up to the need for withdrawal from occupied territories and to the need to accommodate legitimate Palestinian political rights. The extent, shape and form of these issues need to be hammered out through negotiations; but they must be addressed squarely.*

* The President returned to the Chair.

(Mr. Walters, United States)

For Palestinians, the choice is equally clear, and equally difficult. In order to achieve the legitimate political rights they deserve and require, Palestinian demands will have to accommodate the reality of Israel's existence and security needs, and they will have to commit themselves to negotiations with Israel.

For the other Arabs, the choices are equally important. Jordan, Syria and Lebanon have a conflict with Israel to resolve through negotiations. Their conflict will not be solved otherwise. Other Arab States can help by sending signals of acceptance and reconciliation to Israel. They must talk to Israel. The absence of dialogue means continued stalemate.

For outside parties, support and encouragement are the necessary elements. A role for outside parties in peace making is not a right; it must be earned. It is time for the Soviet Union to restore full diplomatic relations with Israel. It is time for the People's Republic of China to recognize Israel. The parties need support to bring them together, and the international community can provide that support.

These fundamental elements of a successful peace process can be encouraged through accommodations and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. This is not an easy task to accomplish. It is very difficult for the parties to overcome prejudices and blind spots about each other; it is sometimes equally difficult for the international community to lay aside political preferences and expediencies and to accept a realistic course towards a comprehensive settlement. But the international community must speak with a realistic, pragmatic voice.

We must tell the parties that their dispute is resolvable. We must tell them that we are tired of this conflict and tired of their unwillingness to make fair

(Mr. Walters, United States)

compromises. We must tell them the time has come to agree that a negotiated settlement is required.

So let us channel the energy that has gone into this debate in a positive and realistic direction. Unbalanced resolutions are not the answer. One-sided statements are not the answer.

The answer is commitment to comprehensive peace. The answer is negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The answer is renunciation of violence and terrorism. My Government stands ready as always to assist in moving ahead in the search for peace.

Mr. DAH (Burkina Faso) (interpretation from French): Burkina Faso very much appreciates the readiness of the Swiss authorities to facilitate the holding of this plenary session of the General Assembly in Geneva. At a time when the dove of peace is carrying the olive branch across our globe our meeting on the question of Palestine requires that the prime political official of one of the parties to a conflict that has gone on for far too long be able to express his views. Switzerland, by its decision authorizing Mr. Arafat to come to Geneva to participate in the debates, which are of primary concern to him, thereby expresses its desire to contribute to the search for peace in that region of the Middle East. Accordingly, Switzerland, faithful to its tradition of neutrality and hospitality, is putting into practice the goal our world Organization has been constantly pursuing - the maintenance of international peace and security.

Like Switzerland, Burkina Faso, a small country situated south of the Sahara, with a hard-working and courageous people, adds its voice to the concert of peace-loving nations aware of the dangers facing our world as a result of a protracted conflict which at any time can take on incalculable proportions. My

(Mr. Dah, Burkina Faso)

country wonders about the conduct of the most powerful nation on Earth which furthermore holds the key to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We have become accustomed to professions of freedom, democracy and peace from that nation, in the name of which twice in one century that great Power has intervened in Europe to help halt tyranny and defend peace and justice. Its militant support for the cause of peace and freedom was so strong that the sacrifice of its sons who shed their blood has left its mark on our world, a fact to which even today we cannot be indifferent.

My delegation considers that by virtue of its position as de facto world leader, the United States should uphold the rule of law. Its refusal to grant a visa to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is, of course, an act of sovereignty of the United States, but it nevertheless remains subject to criticism from the standpoint of its international obligations as the host country of United Nations Headquarters.

Burkina Faso wonders about its attitude in consistently supporting one of the parties to the conflict while proclaiming its desire to help find a final definitive solution to the conflict.

The question of Palestine as it stands today goes back to the time when Palestine was the responsibility of the League of Nations, the precursor of the United Nations. The question merits a brief attempt to place it in its geopolitical context.

The country was placed under mandate, and the Covenant of the League of Nations provided for the wishes of the Palestinian community to be taken into account, yet nothing was done in that regard. Perhaps here we should also mention the British commitment to the Zionist organization promising the establishment of a

(Mr. Dah, Burkina Faso)

national Jewish homeland in Palestine, a country with which the Zionist leaders had historical ties, their ancestors having lived there 2,000 years before the diaspora. I am of course referring to the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

The autochthonous population, whose ancestors had also lived in Palestine for almost 2,000 years, considered that the establishment of this national Jewish homeland in its land violated its natural and inalienable rights.

Those two historical truths corroborate the tradition that Abraham was the common ancestor of the Jews and the Arabs.

The indigenous population - the Palestinians - felt that the Jewish settlement was contrary to the independence the allied Powers had promised the Arab leaders in exchange for their support during the war.

In February 1947, the complexity of the international situation - in particular the plight of the Jews who had come from Nazi camps, the creation of the League of Arab States, and the terrorist campaigns waged by the Irgun and the Haganah in Palestine - obliged Great Britain to place the question of Palestine in the hands of the United Nations.

The British Mandate came to an end in confusion and in the war of 1948. The armistice agreements that followed did not put an end to the Arabs' challenge of Israel's right to exist or to the desire of the exiled populations to return to their homeland and recover their property. Now things have changed, and considerably. Yesterday we heard the statement of the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, which provides us with a glimmer of hope for peace and a political settlement.

(Mr. Dah, Burkina Faso)

The change involves two dimensions or phases. First, there is the arrogance and intransigence of the Jews. In Israeli society, with repression, violence became the order of the day and the majority of Israelis have adjusted to it. Now we know that all acts of terrorism, which may be referred to as violence, if we are to tone down the language, which have affected and which are still striking the imagination of people around the world, have been and continue to be offensive actions or defensive actions, as the case may be. If they are part of an offensive strategy, experience has demonstrated that they are always doomed to failure.

The offensive terrorism practised by the State of Israel - there is no more appropriate word - through its armed forces with weapons turned against the populations of the occupied territories is a scandal, and a shame to our civilization. It is therefore inevitable that it will fail, just as the genocide carried out by the Nazis failed and was overcome. If, on the other hand, acts of terrorism are part of a defensive strategy, they can, as experience has shown, be successful. From that point of view, victory, according to Guy Debord, goes to those who have created disorder but not out of love of it. The intifadah is the just reaction to Israel's aggression in plundering the Arab territories.

In its second phase, which has just been initiated at the meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), realism, flexibility and moderation have prevailed. The roles have thus been reversed and Palestinians are being converted back, with a view to achieving victory. The premises are precisely the historic decisions of the PNC, which therefore assume greater saliency because the supreme body of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) endorses Security Council resolution 242 (1967) as a basis for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East and adopts this new courageous stance admitting peaceful coexistence.

(Mr. Dah, Burkina Faso)

Today, it is Israel which is rejecting those proposals with a series of "No's" to the international conference, "No" to talks with the PLO, "No" to restoring even an inch of the land conquered in 1967, and "No" to a Palestinian State. That was apparently the platform that enabled Mr. Shamir to win the last election.

My Government sincerely hopes that the hostility of the majority of the people of Israel will be abandoned soon and that its leaders will then demonstrate pragmatism. My delegation hopes that, as we say in Africa:

"peace may reign in the world; the gourd may fit into the pot; beasts may get along; and any bad word may get lost in the bushes".

That dream is our dream of peace. It requires good will on the part of all parties and a commitment to reach a compromise because only peace can safeguard respect for human beings in a healthy environment.

My Government has always supported the existence of two States and favours the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. Of course, we already recognize the Palestinian State that has just been established.

Furthermore, Burkina Faso appeals to the great Powers to exert pressure to bring Israel to take the hand outstretched by the PLO. Rejection of that offer would indicate the failure of movement towards moderation. Can we imagine what might happen then? Can we expect the Palestinians to sit back with their arms folded while the Israelis offer them no hope whatsoever?

The presence of my delegation in Geneva shows the interest my country has in the Palestinian question and my Government's desire to take part in any activity that might promote peace under the auspices of the United Nations. The 1988 Nobel Peace Prize awarded the United Nations peace-keeping forces is a splendid illustration and justification of the existence of the United Nations.

(Mr. Dah, Burkina Faso)

Lastly, my country lends its support to the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. SULAIMAN (Brunei Darussalam): I join other speakers in commending Chairman Yasser Arafat for his important and enlightening address to the General Assembly yesterday. He offered a unique opportunity for peace. His impassioned plea should not go unheeded.

We are meeting here in Geneva in rather unfortunate circumstances. In the normal course of events this debate would have been held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It is regrettable that the United States refused the visa application of the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Chairman Arafat is the key to the debate on this question, because he represents the people of Palestine, the people most concerned in this matter. The refusal to grant him a visa is a clear violation of the Headquarters Agreement signed between the United States and the United Nations. This is not a healthy precedent. If such a decision is repeated, the United Nations cannot carry out its functions properly and will lose its effectiveness as a world body.

Brunei Darussalam has always given firm support to the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. We feel it is crucial for the PLO to be heard and allowed to participate in the debate on this question. Yesterday's address by Mr. Arafat has proved us right.

The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations since 1947: it is almost as old as the United Nations itself. This is a gentle reminder perhaps of how urgent the problem has become. However, we have recently seen the best chances of resolving the problem when the leaders of the Palestinian people took the bold step of accepting Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We welcome this courageous step. It is a step in the right direction.

(Mr. Sulaiman, Brunei Darussalam)

The leaders of the people of Palestine have shown that they can be flexible. They have expressed a genuine desire for peace - peace which has eluded them for 40 long years. They have gone a long way in their search for peace. They have even gone to the extent of giving up one of their most cherished principles. However, it is disappointing and regrettable that this good and noble intention, this genuine offer of peace, has met with scepticism. Instead of responding favourably, Israel has chosen the path of confrontation. Israel chose to strengthen its grip on both Gaza and the West Bank. It has failed to match the bold step towards peace taken by the PLO.

The decision recently adopted by the Palestine National Council (PNC) in Algiers must be taken seriously. It has been endorsed overwhelmingly by the international community. It constitutes a realistic approach to a peaceful solution to the problem. The declaration of an independent Palestinian State is perhaps the most important step in the direction of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The world has a moral obligation and a duty to give the PLO a chance. We welcome the new independent State of Palestine and extend our recognition to it. The Palestinians must be given a permanent home of their own, as provided by the General Assembly in 1947. Israel and its allies must realize that the problem of Palestine can be resolved only by peaceful means. Forty years of fighting have more than proved that, as Chairman Arafat and the PNC have demonstrated.

(Mr. Sulaiman, Brunei Darussalam)

We hailed the Algiers declaration. It is a historic document for peace. It provides a realistic and attainable alternative which can ensure peace and stability in the region. My delegation supports the convening of an international conference where all the parties involved, including the PLO, should be allowed to participate on an equal footing. We feel that that is the only way to resolve the problem. Israel must have realized by now that the use of force cannot resolve the problem. It has tried for 40 long years. A heavy price has been paid by both sides. Its actions to suppress the intifadah, the heroic uprising of the people of Palestine in the occupied territories, not only have triggered more anger but have sustained the efforts to fight the aggression. The continued killing of innocent civilians - women and children alike - have not dampened the spirits of the Palestinians. If anything, it has aroused and strengthened their resolve and desire to continue to fight for their inalienable right to a homeland.

Within the context of the United Nations, my delegation noted that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has made a number of recommendations specifically designed to enable the Palestinian people to attain and exercise its rights in Palestine, including its appeal to the Security Council to take appropriate action to convene an international peace conference. I wish to place on record my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, as well as to its other members, for their untiring efforts in carrying out the task mandated to them by the Assembly.

The forty-third session of the General Assembly started in September with optimism that the "outbreak of peace" in many regions augured well for the future, a future of peace. Let us keep up this momentum. My delegation calls on all

(Mr. Sulaiman, Brunei Darussalam)

Member States to put pressure on Israel to accept the peace proposal so genuinely offered by the PLO. This is a unique opportunity and Israel cannot afford to miss it. There may not be another chance in the future.

The recent statements by the PLO leadership in Stockholm and the historic address by Chairman Arafat to the General Assembly yesterday on the recognition of Israel and the renunciation of terrorism in all its forms have shown beyond doubt the sincerity of the PLO. By addressing the two fundamental problems, the PLO unilaterally removes the main obstacles to peace in the Middle East. That is a giant step, a positive step in the peace process. But the fundamental question is to restore the dignity and the rightful land to the Palestinian people and let it decide its own future in its own State of Palestine. There can be no other way. It is our mandated obligation to seek a peaceful solution to the problem. In this respect, Brunei Darussalam joins others in calling upon all Members of the United Nations to continue to work and to formulate tangible and meaningful steps to achieve this objective.

Mr. DIAKITE (Mali) (interpretation from French): There are issues that cannot be tackled without referring to history, because very often history helps us not only to understand the present but also to organize our future. The question of Palestine is among those issues.

As we debate this question here in Geneva we are reminded of the League of Nations and, particularly, of the Palestine Mandate which it approved. Indeed we should recall that, at the end of World War I, Palestine was one of the Arab territories formerly under Ottoman domination that were turned into Mandated Territories by the League.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

With the exception of Palestine, all the Mandated Territories whose independence had been provisionally recognized became fully independent as contemplated in Article 22 of the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

I shall not rehearse all those events: they are sufficiently well known. My delegation does not intend to judge the League of Nations; we simply wish to place the facts in their historic context. Indeed, the Mandate régime established by the League of Nations is at the source of the Palestinian problem and that organization died without being able to solve it.

The United Nations, which inherited the problem, immediately attempted to find a solution. Since its second session, in 1947, the General Assembly, in resolution 181 (II), recommended the partition of Palestine and the creation of two States: one Arab, the other Jewish. Thus, the United Nations has a historic responsibility which it cannot shirk.

The transfer of the General Assembly to Geneva and the events that motivated that transfer have shown the extent to which international public opinion is sensitive to the Palestinian problem. They have also demonstrated the international community's growing support for the Palestinian cause and for the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The 1974 General Assembly decision to involve the PLO in its deliberations is based on the profound conviction that the United Nations is the embodiment of the will of the Palestinian people and that the Palestinian problem cannot be discussed without the effective participation of the PLO.

For a long time an attempt was made to conceal the question of Palestine, pretending that the Middle East problem could be solved without reference to the

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

issue. But developments have shown that the crux of the Middle East problem is the question of Palestine and that, consequently, a lasting peace cannot be established in the region without the restoration of the national, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to return to its homeland and to establish there a sovereign and independent State.

It is to help the Palestinian people to exercise those rights that the General Assembly created the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, of which Mali is a member. My country's participation in the work of that Committee is a matter of steadfast principle.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

These principles have their roots in the long and rich history of my country which has forged the ethic of the Malian people, an ethic which rejects any form of domination and oppression of peoples and requires support for the struggle of peoples to recover their freedom and independence.

Since its establishment, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has every year studied and recommended to the General Assembly a programme whose implementation should enable the Palestinian people to realize its national rights. Today, more than ever, the international community must increase its determination and make intensive efforts to help the Palestinian people in their just struggle.

This imperative need has not escaped the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The programme that it has recommended this year to the General Assembly, in its report in document A/43/35, sets forth specific, concrete and complementary action, integrated in a strategy whose effective implementation would undoubtedly enable the international community to take a decisive step in the search for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem. That is why my delegation is convinced that the General Assembly will give particular attention to the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The year 1988 is an important turning-point in the life of the Palestinian people. It has shown that the intifadah, far from being a passing uprising, is indeed a popular movement of rebellion against the denial of the rights of the Palestinian people and against the occupation of its territory. As the Algiers Declaration of the Palestine National Council states, the great Palestinian uprising constitutes the most significant episode in the history of the contemporary revolution of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

Indeed, the popular uprising in the occupied territories and its continuation despite repression, reflects the resolve of the Palestinian people to recover its national rights. Iron-fist policies, massacres and imprisonment will never prevail over the resolve of the Palestinian people, because a people fighting for its freedom and independence is invincible.

The international community is duty-bound to grasp the meaning of the intifadah in its full sense. To grasp the meaning of the intifadah does not mean to shake with compassion when watching televised scenes of those children in the occupied territories facing bullets with stones, or of women attacking tanks with sticks. To grasp the meaning of the intifadah is not to evoke the memory of Palestinian martyrs with a certain feeling of pity. A clear conscience cannot be acquired by simply paying lip-service to the drama of the Palestinian people.

To grasp the meaning of the intifadah it is necessary to understand that the Palestinian people, which has long suffered foreign occupation, is more than ever resolute to rid itself of that occupation.

Finally, to grasp the meaning of the intifadah is to understand that the Palestinian people, which has long been in exile and thrown this way and that by the vicissitudes of history, has resolved to return to its homeland. It is this will that gave rise to the PLO's proclamation of the State of Palestine on 15 November last. This development, unprecedented in the history of this martyred people, is an important step towards peace.

The proclamation of the Palestinian State conforms with the national right of all peoples freely to dispose of their homeland, the land that has forged their identity and their culture. It is justified with respect to the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and of all resolutions of the

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

United Nations beginning with resolution 181 (II). That is why my country, Mali, has recognized the Palestinian State since its proclamation. The proclamation of the State of Palestine constitutes a major and very significant landmark in the struggle of the Palestinian people.

The international community is duty-bound to support the Declaration of Independence of Palestine because that proclamation of the State of Palestine is in conformity with the programme of action for the realization of the rights of the Palestinians adopted at the Geneva Conference on the question of Palestine, held from 29 August to 7 September 1983. That programme of action recommends helping the Palestinian people to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

The Geneva Conference to which I have just referred was also a turning-point in the efforts of the international community to find a solution to the Palestinian problem. It is in the Declaration adopted by that Conference that we find the idea of the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. The idea of that conference is based on an in-depth and exhaustive analysis of the Middle East situation. That analysis has revealed that the problem of the region is not a bilateral one; it is an international problem in the fullest sense of the term. It also revealed that the United Nations bears prime responsibility with respect to this problem and that, consequently, it cannot be dealt with outside the framework of the United Nations.

In recommending the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation on an equal footing of all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, as well as the United States and the Soviet Union, the Geneva Conference conducted a searching analysis of the situation in the region. The General Assembly has endorsed the

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

idea of convening that conference and has committed itself to its implementation. But there are obstacles in the way of the convening of that conference, and they must be removed in the interest of international peace and security. To defer the holding of that conference would be to defer the chances for peace in the Middle East.

On 15 November last in Algiers, the Palestinian leaders gave the entire world proof of their political maturity. The two documents of Algiers, the Political Communiqué and the Declaration of Independence, reflect the will for peace of the Palestinian people. The peace process thus begun must necessarily be encouraged and supported. The time has therefore come to do away with prejudice and distrust. The important message of Mr. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, is indeed revealing to that end. The recognition of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the commitments entered into by the Palestine National Council in Algiers constitute, in the view of my delegation, a realistic and courageous approach.

Taking those positive developments into account, we appeal to all States, particularly those that assume special responsibility for the maintenance of peace, to grasp the occasion offered us to support a dialogue between all the parties to the conflict, particularly between Israel and the new Palestinian State.

We live in a world which is constantly changing, a world marked for some time by dialogue and political détente. The prevailing international atmosphere should guide all States, large and small, in the search for peace.

Mr. AL-THANI (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): In addressing this international forum on this historic occasion, Mr. President, I should like to start by thanking you for all your difficult work associated with holding these meetings of the General Assembly of the United Nations in Geneva. It reflects your earnest desire and that of the international community to hear the voice of the Palestinian people represented by its leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. I also thank the Secretary-General and his assistants for their efforts in organizing these meetings on such short notice.

This measure was inevitable after the regrettable attempt of the host country to prevent the international community from hearing the voice of the Palestinian people. We are pleased that the international community unanimously expressed a strong desire to give that struggling people an opportunity to express its views and its position in favour of peace and stability in a sensitive region whose own security is linked to international peace and security.

The host country's behaviour was in flagrant violation of international commitments to the United Nations and in open defiance of the principles of international law - principles which we still hope will be respected, especially by the super-Powers. We trust that that behaviour will not be repeated, for it would seriously threaten the international Organization and relations between States and international bodies in a manner that could gravely damage the international community.

The period between the last session and the current one witnessed two historically important events that will have positive repercussions on the question of Palestine and its peaceful settlement: the intifadah of the heroic Palestinian people in the occupied territories, which has just entered its second year; and the decisions by the Palestine National Council in Algiers last month.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

The intifadah has entered its second year with stronger resistance and fiercer determination to achieve victory. All Israeli attempts to subdue the intifadah have been foiled, and all efforts to put out its fire have failed. This intifadah is not merely a reaction against Zionist practices. It is indeed the outcome of the continuing historical struggle waged by the Palestinian people since the early days of the Zionist invasion and occupation. The resistance struggle is not only a rejection of occupation but the legitimate right of a struggling people.

There was a time when the Zionist movement had attempted, through the media, to give the world a false impression that the Palestinian people had surrendered to occupation and ceased to resist. It had also tried to deny the very existence of the Palestinians. Then came the intifadah, and matters were put into perspective. The willingness of so many Palestinians to accept sacrifices and martyrdom showed not only that the Palestinian people did exist but that it totally rejected occupation and was willing to fight it. Indeed, the Palestinian people remains willing to endure whatever sacrifice it takes to achieve its ultimate goal of exercising its right to freedom, independence and statehood on its own soil.

This clear perception of the conduct of the intifadah and the way it is continuing confirms the passions behind this expression of the rights and aspirations of the Palestinians. It stems from bitter experience and from their long, unremitting struggle to achieve their legitimate goals - a struggle that now enjoys nearly unanimous international support.

I turn now to the second major development that has taken place: the decisions adopted by the Palestine National Council in Algiers on 15 November 1988 and the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of international law and the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

The Declaration of Algiers is the implementation and embodiment of the spirit of the United Nations Charter, which proclaims the right of peoples to self-determination and independence. The historic decisions taken in Algiers advocate equity, justice and peace. The international community is therefore duty-bound to support them.

The clear statement made yesterday before the General Assembly by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat reconfirms that those decisions are directed towards the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace. It should therefore dispel any unfounded doubts about those decisions cast by some quarters with a view to tampering with the peace process that has now been set in motion. Mr. Arafat was explicit in setting forth the Palestinian peace initiative. He called, first, for the convening of a preparatory committee for the international peace conference on the Middle East, to be held under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General; secondly, for placing the Palestinian Arab territories under the temporary supervision of the United Nations; thirdly, for the stationing of international peace forces in the region to ensure the Palestinian people's protection and safety until achievement of a comprehensive settlement in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

The proclamation of the Palestinian State, issued during the meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers, and the increasing number of countries recognizing that State, are proof positive that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood on its own soil has become one of the basic accepted facts of contemporary international life. Any idea of preventing that from taking place is illusory. The representatives of the Palestinian people have displayed their eagerness to achieve peace based on legitimate rights and justice.

(Mr. Al-Thani, Qatar)

They have declared their readiness to attend the international conference to be held under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as well as the permanent States members of the Security Council. Thus they have reinforced their faith in the United Nations and have displayed the strong conviction that the United Nations is capable of solving international problems by peaceful means.

The rejection of that initiative by Israel, its allies and supporters is tantamount to a clear and explicit disregard of the international Organization and its decisions. We can only hope that those parties will reconsider their positions so as to reinforce the Organization's credibility and strengthen international peace and justice. Qatar, which recognizes the State of Palestine with the Holy City of Jerusalem as its capital, reaffirms that it will always support justice, righteousness and peace around the world. We also reaffirm our continued support of and solidarity with the brother people of Palestine, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole and legitimate representative.

Mr. POPOV (Bulgaria): The discussion of the question of Palestine, within the framework of the forty-third session of the General Assembly, is taking place in conditions of enhanced hopes for a peaceful and political settlement of the Middle East problem. The circumstances which necessitated the discussion of this central issue of our agenda being held outside United Nations Headquarters are well known. They need no additional comment. Suffice it to point out that the unconstructive and unlawful action of the United States has been explicitly disavowed by the international community at large. Furthermore, these circumstances have once again afforded the nations of the world the opportunity of displaying its full and unreserved support for the just cause of the Palestinian people.

It is high time for each and every one of us to comprehend clearly that there is no power or obstacle capable of arresting the yearning of the Arab people of Palestine for freedom and national independence. This has been brilliantly reaffirmed by the year-old heroic uprising of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories - an uprising that is still going strong. There can be no doubt any longer that it will go on until peace in the Middle East - so long awaited and so much desired - is achieved. The resolute struggle of the Palestinian people to implement its legitimate national rights has greatly increased the sympathy and respect this people enjoys from the peoples of the world and has augmented trust in the righteousness of its cause.

In this connection, it is hardly necessary to state that, particularly over the past few years, we have all been witnessing the emergence of an exceptionally broad, almost total international consensus on the principles and the mechanism of the settlement of the problem of Palestine. This evolution has been reflected in numerous resolutions and decisions adopted by the United Nations. It enjoys the

(Mr. Popov, Bulgaria)

active support of the socialist countries, the non-aligned movement and world public opinion, as well as the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States. Actually, the international community has long been convinced that a lasting and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict can see the light of day only if each of the peoples in the Middle East is guaranteed the inalienable right to an independent existence and free development.

It is well known that the continuing lack of a solution to the problem of Palestine is the primary cause of the four-decade-long explosive situation in the Middle East and that short of a solution to it peace in that part of the world is unthinkable. Any attempt to circumvent this problem or replace a settlement of it with separatist deals, disregarding the interests of the Palestinian people, leads only to a greater tightening of the knot of problems and to a blocking of the Middle East settlement process.

The proclamation on 15 November last by the Palestine National Council of an independent State of Palestine has become the categorical expression of the Palestinian people's unbending will to have a State of its own. The Palestine National Council decisions stress that the State is being created in pursuance of the natural and historical rights of the Palestinian people. In evaluating the significance of this political declaration, one cannot and should not overlook its constructive elements: the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which provides for two States in Palestine - an Arab State and a Jewish State; recognition of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), coupled with implementation of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, as the basis for the convening of an international conference for the establishment of peace in the Middle East; and rejection of terrorism in all its forms.

(Mr. Popov, Bulgaria)

The realistic and moderate approach adopted by the Palestine National Council was confirmed both in the Stockholm declaration of 7 December this year and in the eloquent and constructive address delivered yesterday by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria has welcomed and actively supported the historic decisions of the Palestine National Council. With its very favourable assessment of the realistic and constructive approach of the leadership of the Palestinian struggle, the Bulgarian delegation takes the view that in their entirety these decisions of the Palestine National Council represent a substantial contribution to the process of the just political settlement of the situation in the Middle East. Giving due consideration to what I have just said and proceeding from its own position of principle, on 25 November last the People's Republic of Bulgaria officially recognized the proclaimed independent State of Palestine. It is a matter of satisfaction that the proclamation of the Palestinian State enjoys broad international support.

The historic decisions of the Palestine National Council session at Algiers reinforce the conviction that there exist real opportunities for a settlement of the Middle East conflict in the near future. It is necessary to exert utmost efforts to do away with that dangerous hotbed of international tension. To achieve that objective the world Organization has been called upon to play a paramount role - a role dictated by the Organization's particular responsibility for the destiny of the Palestinian people and for the establishment of a just peace in that part of the world. That is so because the past few years have seen a most satisfactory, indeed remarkable, evolution - that is, the growing United Nations role and prestige as it takes part ever more actively and successfully in the

(Mr. Popov, Bulgaria)

regulation of some of the most explosive and long-simmering hotbeds of international tension.

We feel encouraged in our conviction - namely, that the achievement of a political settlement of the Middle East conflict is feasible - by the positive changes in the international political climate and the progress reached in the efforts to solve other regional conflicts.

In this context we commend the new Palestinian initiative announced yesterday by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Yasser Arafat. We believe that it is high time for the Israeli leadership to take the hand extended to it and co-operate in the peace process, which would fully correspond to the basic and best interests of the people of Israel themselves.

(Mr. Popov, Bulgaria)

It is for that reason that my country is following with keen interest the processes initiated in the Middle East. My delegation hopes that they will lead to the settlement of this burning problem, thus opening up a new, bright page in the tragic history of the Palestinian people.

Beyond any doubt, the cardinal way to the practical implementation of this noble and humane goal is the convening of an international conference on the Middle East, under United Nations auspices and with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all interested parties, including representatives of the newly created State of Palestine.

To conclude, let me state that the People's Republic of Bulgaria believes in the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine. We are convinced that its rights will be attained.

Mr. AL-ERYANI (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): On behalf of the Arab Republic of Yemen and its President, Government and people, I extend to the President of the Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, and the Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, our thanks for the tremendous efforts they have made to ensure the success of these important meetings in the city of Geneva, under the auspices of the Swiss Government and the noble Swiss people. Throughout the centuries Switzerland has been a beacon of freedom, providing refuge for hundreds and thousands of persons who had been persecuted and driven from their homes. We express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Switzerland.

The international community, made up of so many different peoples and Governments that advocate differing policies, was united as never before in

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

this Organization in deciding to hold these meetings of the General Assembly away from Headquarters. The Assembly has undoubtedly regained its international prestige by taking this historic decision to transfer these meetings from the Organization's Headquarters in New York to Geneva, in order that our comrade-in-arms, Mr. Yasser Arafat, could address the Assembly and set forth his just cause. Indeed, the words of justice and peace that he repeated were heard by the entire world. Only those who are arrogant and stubborn can fail to heed those words.

The historic decision was taken after the United States Administration adopted the shameful course of refusing to grant comrade-in-arms Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, a visa to enter the United States in order to come to the Headquarters of the United Nations. That Administration took that decision in spite of a binding international Agreement.

As we meet together here today, we are overjoyed that the era of arrogance has passed forever and that words of justice will not have to be ignored simply because of a selfish whim.

The world heard the historic statement made yesterday by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, calling on the international community to help him carry the olive branch of peace, before it withered, to the land and city of peace. We can only urge those who have doubts about the sincerity of the intention to move towards a just and lasting peace for all parties to the conflict in the Middle East - a peace guaranteed by the international community - to heed those words. Can anyone really think that they were prejudicial in any way or to the detriment of any party? We do not believe that anyone in the international community or a Member of the international

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Organization could think they were - unless we have lost confidence in the Organization, or in our humanity, our sense of justice, and the sincerity of the behaviour of our sons.

We can only say to those who try to sow doubt that they are condemned before the bar of mankind when they show contempt for mankind's wisdom and justice and for the just resolutions adopted by the United Nations and its bodies.

All kinds of pretexts are used, various documents are mentioned and excuses are made by those who do not really want peace. But the international community cannot abandon its traditional procedures merely because a comma, an adverb, a word, is not to the liking of those who use these excuses and pretexts. They show contempt for the wisdom of the Organization - even though they are one of its pioneers and one of those who created and who support and protect this entity.

We should like to say to the United States and all those in its orbit who use various subterfuges that by failing to recognize the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and independence they are not even protecting Israel.

The Jewish society that was born in Palestine stands out by the ghetto mentality that has characterized successive generations since their establishment during the Middle Ages in European cities, where they were the victims of the most horrible kinds of oppression and injustice at the hands of Europeans.

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

Today we find the Jewish State doing things even the Nazi butchers did not do. An aim of the intifadah is to demonstrate the falsity of the notion that Israel was founded by a group of people who sought refuge in a land to find good and justice. Women and children armed with stones are fighting Israeli oppression, an oppression that belies the false notion that Israel is a bastion of peace and justice in the Middle East.

People are being buried alive, and we hear the entity falsely claiming that it is only trying to protect itself from what it calls Palestinian terrorism. What are we to believe in these circumstances?

For more than a year, the Palestinian combatants have rejected occupation and oppression through the intifadah. The Palestinian movement has appealed for peace through the Palestine National Council's call for peace and its establishment of an independent State based on international legitimacy and with a Palestinian State side by side with a Jewish State, as established by General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947. The Palestine National Council has reaffirmed its recognition of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Yesterday, our brother in arms, Yasser Arafat, stated that from this rostrum. Has not the PLO adopted resolutions calling for an end to this situation? Did it not endorse the Vance-Gromyko statement? Did it not endorse the 1947 agreement? Did it not support the Fez plan? Did it not support the Brezhnev proposals for peace in the Middle East? Mr. Arafat said that Palestinians were fully prepared to sit down at the negotiating table in conformity with all those initiatives, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

How could that ever lead to the destruction of a State Member of this Organization? That could take place only if that State feared peace, hated freedom and departed from the path of legality. Such is the State of Israel - a State which can count on some among us to support its destructive policy, unaware that

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

they are thereby placing themselves in jeopardy.

The Yemen Arab Republic considers that today we are all here at a historic turning-point. We are all here to speak words of peace and justice and to work together to adopt decisions that will ensure justice and equality for all, and guarantee the rights of all parties to the conflicts. If we do not do this, the olive branch will eventually wither and there will be conflagration in the world, for one day right, justice and equality will triumph over oppression and injustice. On that day the oppressor will suffer the consequences of his actions. May peace be with those who have chosen the path of peace and righteousness.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): At the outset I wish to express our satisfaction that since yesterday intense and fruitful discussion of the question of Palestine has been under way at these plenary meetings, with the participation of Mr. Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Since the beginning of the year, thanks to the efforts of the Secretary-General as well as those of the countries concerned, clues to the solution of the world's long-standing major conflicts have been found, one after the other. Although it is true that the problem of peace in the Middle East has been deemed to be the most deep-rooted and difficult issue among those major conflicts, I wish to draw attention to the fact that important changes have occurred in the Middle East peace problem as well, particularly with respect to the issue of Palestine. Those changes include the intifadah in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the ensuing Palestine National Council session held recently.

We listened with great interest to the speech by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, and were impressed by his serious and forward-looking posture in search of peace. He explained the PLO's position on the Palestinian issue based on the results of the most recent session of the Palestine National Council.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

The Government of Japan places great importance on the PLO's positive posture, which should contribute to the advance towards peace in the Middle East. In particular, the Government of Japan welcomes as an important step towards the realization of peace the fact that Mr. Arafat called for a comprehensive settlement among the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict

"within the framework of the international peace conference on the Middle East, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1974), so as to guarantee equality and the balance of interests, especially our people's rights to freedom and national independence, and respect for the right of all the parties to the conflict to exist in peace and security".

(A/43/PV.78; p. 34-35)

It may be pointed out that the intifadah, which is now entering its second year, has made a great impact on the basic framework of the Palestine issue, and that it has formed an important basis for the new approach expressed in yesterday's speech by Mr. Arafat.

It was one year ago this month that the intifadah began. Who could have imagined last December that the outrage would not be quelled and that it would affect the political situation in the region in very significant ways? For it is no exaggeration to say that Jordan's decision to change its policy on the West Bank and the developments at the recent session of the Palestine National Council were brought about, at least in part, by the uprising. By showing the world that a policy of force and repression cannot ensure any degree of calm in the area, the Palestinians in the occupied territories have focused our attention on the urgent need for a negotiated peace. Moreover, the uprising has strengthened the Palestinian people's sense of identity and their conviction that they are entitled to the right of self-determination.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

According to various reports, there were more than 300 victims during the first year of the intifadah; over 5,000 Palestinians are still being detained. We find it deplorable that Israel, in utter disregard of Security Council resolutions 607 (1988) and 608 (1988), continues to insist that the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War does not apply to the situation in the occupied territories. Also deplorable is Israel's refusal to reconsider its position on the deportation of Palestinians. As the Secretary-General stated in his report of 21 January 1988, Israel must accept the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories and protect the civilian population there.

Furthermore, I wish to reiterate my Government's condemnation of the excessive use of force by the Israeli authorities against Palestinian civilians, including the use of plastic bullets and the arbitrary detention of civilians.

Japan recognizes that the Palestinian issue lies at the core of the Middle East peace problem, and considers that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East should be achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Hence, the Government of Japan has taken the stance that peace in the Middle East should be achieved on the basis of the following three principles: the withdrawal of Israel from all the territories occupied as a result of the 1967 war; recognition of Israel's right to exist; and recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State.

Needless to say, peace based on those principles should be achieved not through unilateral action or force, but through negotiations by the parties

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

concerned, fully taking into account the aspirations of all the parties concerned in the Middle East, including the Palestinians, and the legitimate security requirements of every State in the region.

With such basic considerations in mind, Japan has consistently supported the convening of an international conference on the Middle East peace problem at an early date, and has appealed to the countries concerned to convene such a conference. Japan also considers that the Palestine Liberation Organization, which represents the Palestinian people, is a party directly concerned with the Palestinian issue, and that its participation in the international conference, in some way or other, should be secured.

Foreign Minister Uno has enunciated that principle in talks he has had with leaders of Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Israel when he visited those countries last June. Foreign Minister Uno made that visit, first, in order to elucidate Japan's basic position on the issue of peace in the Middle East and, secondly, to urge each of those countries to adopt a realistic and flexible approach so that an international conference can be convened with a view to resolving the issue peacefully.

The recent developments on the Palestinian side, as set forth in the political statement of the Palestine National Council (PNC), give us reason to hope that progress is being made towards that goal. I should like to add that the visit to Japan of Mr. Kaddoumi, head of the political department of the PLO, immediately prior to the convening of the PNC session in Algiers last month was extremely useful in terms of exploring ways and means to advance the peace process.

Those political efforts aside, we can never forget the fact that at this very moment, when we are meeting in Geneva, many Palestinians are facing economic

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

hardship in refugee camps. While making efforts towards the political solution of the Palestinian issue, the international community must, as a humanitarian obligation, extend assistance to those Palestinian refugees and to distressed Palestinian residents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In that regard, I should like to reaffirm that Japan will continue its efforts to assist the Palestinian people through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and to announce that Japan has recently established a Japan-Palestinian Development Fund within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with Japanese financial contributions in this fiscal year.

In closing I wish to echo the many voices heard at the current debate on the Palestine issue, demonstrating eloquently that the desire for a prompt solution of the Middle East peace issue, and especially the Palestine issue, has become the common platform of international public opinion.

Although, regrettably, there exist conflicting views among the parties concerned about the convening of an international conference on peace in the Middle East, I wish to urge the parties to make the best use of these plenary meetings in Geneva as a precious occasion to establish common ground, making the convening of an international conference possible.

Fully sharing the view expressed by the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, that as a result of the PNC session fresh opportunities now exist for progress towards peace, I wish to express our sincere wish that a Middle East peace can be realized as soon as possible through the early convening of an international conference, without losing the new momentum to that end generated by recent developments in the situation.

Mr. INGLES (Philippines): The Philippine delegation renews its congratulations to the President as the General Assembly continues its work in the beautiful city of Geneva. This city has been witness to breakthroughs towards the settlement of major conflicts. We hope that this Geneva spirit will pervade our consideration of the question of Palestine, which is the heart of the most tragic conflict that has plagued the United Nations almost since its inception.

The problem of Palestine is tragic in more ways than one. The United Nations, the embodiment of the universal conscience, has been the first casualty in that tragedy.

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

It has come to pass that the United Nations has not been able to conduct the business at hand properly in New York because of the failure of the host country to honour the Headquarters Agreement. Nothing daunted, we are met here today to proceed with our appointed task and contribute our share to the maintenance of international peace and security, which is the main purpose of the United Nations.

I can say without fear of contradiction that the Palestine problem has called into question the very efficacy of the United Nations itself - whether and how the Charter can be implemented or made workable in this day and age.

The Palestine problem also brings into focus the need to give substance to the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fortieth anniversary we celebrated last Saturday, 10 December. For the Palestinian people it has been 40 years without having been able to exercise their right to return to their homes and property, to exercise their right of self-determination or to achieve national independence and sovereignty. A generation of Palestinians has suffered under the yoke of Israeli occupation. Because their primary right to self-determination has been violated, the Palestinian people suffer consequent violations of other human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This year's report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People documents unabated violations by the Israeli authorities of virtually all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration, such as the right to life, liberty and physical integrity, and freedom of expression, association and education. There are in all the history of mankind very few instances of more tragic human conditions. What pains us most is the condition of the youth, who must have known nothing in all their young lives but occupation and

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

war, harassment, humiliation, sorrow and suffering. As documented by the Committee's report and as seen by the world through television, young children - schoolchildren - have been shot, maimed or beaten to death.

Is that the proper response to what the Acting Permanent Representative of Israel admits are the "slingshots, bricks and stones" hurled by those children? Are Palestinian children fair game for the Israeli army of occupation? Are the Israelis free to kill Palestinian children without trial under the law of Israel or the law of nations? Does not Israel feel bound by the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War?

What needs to be done is very clear. We have spelled it out year in and year out in resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. It involves essentially: the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories to secure and internationally recognized borders; the exercise by the Palestinians of their inherent right of self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State; and recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and freely and fully to enjoy the inalienable rights enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Philippines voted in favour of resolution 181 (II), on the future Government of Palestine, adopted by the General Assembly on 29 November 1947, providing for the establishment in Palestine of an Arab State and a Jewish State and the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem. In fact, the Philippines was one of five members elected to the United Nations Commission established by the General Assembly on the same day to implement the so-called Plan of Partition with

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

Economic Union. Having in view the declaration that the United Kingdom, as a mandatory of the League of Nations, should complete its evacuation of Palestine by 1 August 1948, the Commission was asked to complete the establishment of Provisional Councils of Government of the Arab and Jewish States within two months thereafter.

As a member of the Trusteeship Council, we also participated on behalf of the Philippine delegation in the drafting of the Statute for the international city of Jerusalem as a corpus separatum administered by the Trusteeship Council.

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

Unfortunately, all those elaborate plans, which were the result of long and careful study, were aborted when Israel proclaimed its independence in the area assigned to the Jewish State and unilaterally annexed West Jerusalem as its capital. While the Palestine Arabs initially rejected the General Assembly resolution because it would mutilate their homeland, they have now opted for an independent State in the remaining area reserved to them, in the same manner that Israel has proclaimed an independent State in the area reserved to the Jewish State.

The Palestinian people have realized that unless they have their own independent State, they will remain strangers in their own homeland. Israel and other States must realize that there can be no peace in the Middle East unless the legitimate rights of the Palestine Arabs are duly recognized, including their inherent right to self-determination.

As we have repeatedly stated, it is passing strange that Israel, which is the product of self-determination, should deny that same right of self-determination to the Palestinian Arabs in the area of Palestine reserved to them by the General Assembly. After having made use of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) as the basis of its declaration of independence, Israel now disdainfully discards the same resolution as out-moded.

The Philippine delegation supported General Assembly resolution 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 inviting the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer. In the light of the said resolution, and speaking on behalf of the Philippine delegation, we supported the right of Chairman Arafat to be accorded the same privilege of speaking before the Commission on Human Rights on 19 February this year, as was accorded him by the General Assembly in 1974.

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

Since 1967, the Philippines has joined common cause with the international community in advocating the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories and the implementation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. It views Israeli occupation of the Palestine Arab territories as a continuing aggression, which has been carried out, moreover, in violation of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949. Together with the international community, it has urged Israel without success to abide by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 505 (1987), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988).

The Philippines deplores the escalating violence and increasing violations of human rights in Israeli-occupied Arab territories in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

It is with a sense of gratification that we welcome the statement made yesterday by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Mr. Yasser Arafat, outlining the PLO peace initiative and the readiness and willingness of the PLO to negotiate with Israel on an equal footing. We believe it to be a realistic and constructive step in the long and arduous search for a political solution to the Palestine problem. The PLO has now come round to recognizing explicitly and unequivocally Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the right of Israel to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries. Similarly, we endorse Chairman Arafat's categorical repudiation of terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism. In our view, those assurances squarely meet the two pre-conditions laid down by the United States and Israel for direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

Normally, any negotiation should begin without any pre-conditions, which should properly be the subject of negotiation. Since Chairman Arafat and the PLO

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

have demonstrated their good will to satisfy the pre-conditions unilaterally set by the other side, it remains for the other side to do likewise by renouncing its continuing aggression against the Palestinian people. As the saying goes, it takes two sides to negotiate in earnest. Yet it is Israel that is now loud in its protestations against any pre-conditions to negotiation based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We welcome the political declaration of the Palestine National Council in Algiers on 15 November as well as the interpretation of it by Chairman Arafat in the Stockholm communiqué of 7 December 1988.

We therefore fully endorse the recommendation of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people that

"the General Assembly should call once again for additional concrete and constructive efforts by all Governments, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, for the convening of the Conference and for setting up the preparatory committee for the Conference in accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/43 D; and renew the mandate of the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the Conference." (A/43/35, para. 146)

We hope that that will be the beginning of meaningful negotiations by the parties concerned for the establishment of a just and durable peace in the Middle East that will guarantee the territorial inviolability and political independence of all States in the region, including both Israel and Palestine. As in the past, the Philippines will lend its support to all efforts towards the attainment of peace and progress in the Middle East.

(Mr. Ingles, Philippines)

The Philippines notes with optimism the encouraging report of the Secretary-General that all of the members of the Security Council now believe it desirable to convene an international conference on the Middle East and that they have invited the Secretary-General to pursue his efforts and consultations in that regard. We share his confidence that, with the full support of the Security Council, and in particular the co-operation of the major Powers, progress can be made towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

As we said in New York on 25 November this year, let us not miss this golden opportunity to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question, which is at the heart of the Middle East conflict. Let no one derail the peace process being undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations or denigrate the central role of the United Nations in the settlement of the situation in the Middle East.

It was in Geneva in 1983 that the international community adopted the Geneva Declaration on Palestine and the Programme of Action for the Achievement of Palestinian Rights. It was in Geneva that the remarkable spirit of co-operation between the two super-Powers had its beginnings a year ago. Those have spawned beneficent winds of change in the settlement of many of the major conflicts in the world. Let us, in the name of the United Nations and in the name of the world's three great monotheistic religions, which are the spiritual legacy of Palestine, pool the ultimate good will in the hearts of all its peoples and bring peace and joy at long last to that Holy Land.

Mr. MAHMUD (Bangladesh): Year after year, the United Nations General Assembly has addressed the question of Palestine. It has grappled with the task of bringing peace to a troubled land.

(Mr. Mahmud, Bangladesh)

Its lack of success is due to the intransigence of a single entity, Israel, which has defied global public opinion and mocked the voice of reason.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the valiant Palestinians have themselves assumed in a non-violent way the responsibility of thrusting aside the yoke of oppression and setting their people free.

We deeply regret that we were unable to listen to Chairman Arafat in New York.

Several factors have contributed to the importance of this session in Geneva. First is the presence of Chairman Arafat. Through him we are able to hear the voice of Palestine. His call for peace was most touching. His arguments for following the path to a lasting solution charted by him are most convincing.

Secondly, this meeting takes place in the wake of the historic Declaration of the Independence of Palestine. Reactions amply attest to the fact that the world approves of the decision, which doubtless will contribute to the peace process.

Thirdly, as we deliberate in Geneva, the intifadah rages unabated. It is truly a glowing example of a nation's valour and determination to shape its own destiny. Sparks from the uprising have not only set the torch of liberty alight in the Holy Land, but have also inspired peoples everywhere who value freedom and abhor tyranny. The martyrdom of those who have died is the bravest manifestation of human dignity.

Israel has perpetrated such ruthless savagery in the occupied territories that its horrific nature will forever be recalled with disdain and dismay. It has indiscriminately killed men, women and children and forcibly evicted innocent people from what has always been their home. It has illegally detained many more. It has terrorized its neighbours and committed acts of aggression against them with impunity.

(Mr. Mahmud, Bangladesh)

The tragedy of Palestine is unparalleled not only in magnitude but also in duration. It is inexplicable how Israel could be doing to others what was so brutally done to its own people by the fist of fascism less than half a century ago. It is painful to see ourselves so ineffective against such abhorrent conduct.

We are gathered here once again to focus our minds and hearts on this crucial issue, which is at the core of the problem in the Middle East.

There is indeed a way out of the impasse. Its essential elements have also been identified. Israel must withdraw completely from all occupied Arab territories. The Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including the right of self-determination, must be restored to them. They must be allowed to chart the course of their own future and have an independent State in their home with the city of Al Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

In the achievement of that, the United Nations has a role to play in the context of the call for an international conference on the Middle East endorsed in General Assembly resolution 38/58 C and repeated thereafter. We are heartened to perceive an emerging consensus among the Security Council members that such a conference is not only desirable but necessary.

Sadly, however, there still exist differences on details. In his report in document A/43/867 the Secretary-General has aptly observed that in the prevailing circumstances it is insufficient to concentrate on procedural matters rather than address fundamental questions. We firmly believe that it is now time to set up a preparatory committee within the framework of the Security Council to undertake necessary measures to that end.

(Mr. Mahmud, Bangladesh)

The permanent members of the Council have a special responsibility in that regard. The world looks up to them for an initiative on the matter. If Palestine smoulders much longer, the world will stand threatened with a fire of immeasurable magnitude.

The Proclamation of 15 November 1988 by the Palestine National Council is a significant event. We in Bangladesh have welcomed that historic Declaration of Independence. It is our firm conviction that it is a step forward in the fulfilment of Palestinian aspirations. Our early recognition of the State of Palestine attests to our solidarity with that glorious cause. We believe that it has generated a new momentum towards peace that must not be allowed to peter away.

I should like to add that Bangladesh's position on the issue is clear and unambiguous. We have time and again underscored the need for a durable and comprehensive settlement based on justice and honour. Our active membership in the Non-Aligned Committee of Nine on Palestine and in the Al Quds al-Sharif Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference reaffirms our determination to pursue the objectives of a lasting solution.

(Mr. Mahmud, Bangladesh)

Bangladesh commends the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General in the quest for peace. We are always prepared to extend to him our fullest support in his endeavours. Let us here in Geneva, in the city whose name is synonymous with peace, pledge to make a massive attempt to bring the suffering of Palestine to an end. This can be done. This must be done. This body in the recent past has succeeded in ending many intractable conflicts. There is a growing spirit of optimism today that has come over the international community. Let us not deny the Palestinians a share in this. Let us not deprive them of the realization of their wishes and aspirations in a just and legitimate cause. Let the land from where the message of love and peace originated return once again to blissful tranquility. May God be with us and bless our efforts.

Mr. KOVACS (Hungary): The past year has seen tangible progress towards the solution of most of the regional conflicts in the world with the exception of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which continues to threaten international peace and security. It has long been accepted that the core issue of the conflict is the Palestine question, which cannot be solved until Israel withdraws from the territories occupied in 1967 and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, are recognized and implemented.

The necessity to make progress in those areas was emphasized dramatically by the intifadah, the unarmed struggle of the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation. The outbreak and the continuation for over a year of this popular uprising is convincing proof - if, indeed, any proof were needed - that the Palestinians have not accepted, nor will they ever accept, Israel's occupation of their territories and that they do not shrink from making the greatest personal sacrifices, including the loss of their lives, to attain their inalienable rights.

(Mr. Kovacs, Hungary)

The valiant and unarmed struggle of the Palestinian people has evoked great respect and admiration throughout the world, but it has also evoked the harshest imaginable repressive measures on the part of the Israeli occupiers.

It would unduly prolong my statement if I were to give even a partial list of the atrocities committed by the occupying army against the unarmed population, such as the killing and wounding of defenceless civilians, the demolition of their homes, the arbitrary arrests, deportations and collective punishments. There is a long and sad record of concrete events in the annex to the report by the Secretary-General (A/43/806). Those measures have rightly been condemned by the General Assembly in its resolution 43/21, adopted on 3 November 1988.

The violence against the Palestinian Arab population cannot bring the results hoped for by Israel; it will not ensure peace in the occupied territories. On the contrary, it is likely to increase hatred and stiffen the resistance of the Arab population. A realistic and lasting solution has to be political; it can only be found in the recognition both of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian Arab people and of the right of Israel to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

From the point of view of further developing and clarifying Palestinian positions regarding the political settlement of the conflict, the session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) held recently in Algiers was an event of outstanding importance. It proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine - a proclamation which the Hungarian People's Republic recognized. It reaffirmed the determination of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to reach a comprehensive political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the spirit of the United Nations Charter on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Organization.

(Mr. Kovacs, Hungary)

Speaking about the need of the convening of the international conference on the Middle East, the political communiqué emphasized that that conference should be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - a realistic and constructive position with far-reaching implications that, together with the rejection of terrorism in all its forms, has been widely welcomed and supported by the international community.

The Hungarian People's Republic considers that the decisions of the Palestine National Council's sessions represent important steps towards both the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian Arab people and a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict. Hungary, as in the past, expresses its solidarity with the Palestinians in their just struggle for the exercise of their right to self-determination.

We share the assessment of the Secretary-General of our Organization that

"The recent session of the Palestine National Council in Algiers has generated a new momentum in the diplomatic process." (A/43/867, para. 37)

We agree with him that

"it offers fresh opportunities for progress towards peace which should be seized".

But in order to seize this opportunity we have to open doors, not to close them. We have to engage in a dialogue to know and understand each other's position and interests better, dispel mistrust and create the necessary trust upon which relations can be built. Hungary does its utmost both through its bilateral relations and in international forums to promote a constructive dialogue among all the parties concerned. We appeal to them not to let this opportunity pass, but to let diplomacy take over.

(Mr. Kovacs, Hungary)

The framework for a settlement that enjoys the widest support is the convening of an international conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council. The Hungarian delegation welcomes and fully supports the peace initiatives put forward yesterday by Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

We are convinced that in the improved international climate, with the co-operation and support of the major Powers and the Security Council, progress can finally be made towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. FORTUNE (New Zealand): New Zealand last spoke on the question of Palestine at the special session in 1982. Much has happened since then, but the parties to this dispute, and those who have a direct role in reaching a settlement, still appear to be far apart in their respective positions.

We regret the actions that led to the General Assembly debate on this important issue being transferred to Geneva. Peace in the Middle East requires the projection of statesmanship from all who can contribute to a resolution. This means that concessions have to be made and at times unduly legalistic interpretations put to one side. Four weeks ago we saw evidence that one side was prepared to move. At its meeting in Algiers the Palestine National Council (PNC) made a significant gesture in terms of Israel's right to exist. New Zealand has welcomed this announcement.

New Zealand has long held that Security Council resolution 242 (1967) provides the basis for a just, durable and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. The Palestine National Council's endorsement of this resolution, and support for an international peace conference, provides a foundation on which to build a negotiated settlement. Delegates to this meeting are well aware of the contents of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which affirms that every State has the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. Last week in Stockholm Mr. Arafat said that the Palestine National Council explicitly accepted the existence of Israel. This was a courageous statement and one which was particularly welcomed by New Zealand.

The Palestinian people has shown over the last year through its spontaneous uprising that it rejects 21 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza - territories to which Israel has no right under international law. We have seen those expression of Palestinian hopes and wishes turned into a political initiative which exhibits much of the flexibility and compromise necessary if the rights of

(Mr. Fortune, New Zealand)

all parties are to be respected. The other parties must now come to terms with this changing situation and not step away from the positive moves made. Progress depends as much on the creation of a climate of confidence as on seeking appropriate formulas.

In the light of moves by the Palestine National Council and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), it is important that Israel now recognize that the Palestinian people has a right to a national homeland. This is a fundamental element of the right to self-determination. How this right is expressed is a matter for the Palestinians themselves to decide. The Algiers Declaration included the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State, with its capital as Jerusalem. There can be no clearer sign that Palestinians reject Israel's policies and practices in the occupied territories. New Zealand has long held that the Palestinians have the right to establish their own State if that is their wish. The final status of those territories, and of Jerusalem, will have to be determined, however, in the context of an overall peace settlement.

The United Nations has, since its inception, addressed many seemingly intractable disputes. The Palestine question is one of the most long-standing of these and one with which the United Nations has had a long historical involvement. This year the beneficial role that the United Nations can play in contributing to world peace through conflict resolution has been clearly demonstrated.

It seems that the only way forward to a negotiated settlement is through the convening of an international peace conference under United Nations auspices. We support the participation of all parties directly involved and of all others that have a contribution to make to the successful outcome of the negotiations. No settlement will be acceptable without the participation of representatives of the Palestinian people. It is for the Palestinians themselves, and not the other

(Mr. Fortune, New Zealand)

parties to the dispute, to determine who those representatives should be. Israel, by its actions in the occupied territories, has attempted to stifle the growth of Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and Gaza. But in spite of this, one body has come to reflect Palestinian aspirations and represent Palestinian opinion. This must be accepted and recognized by all. The Palestine Liberation Organization has accepted Israel's right to exist.

It is now time for Israel to adopt an imaginative response. A start could be made by Israel's accepting that it will have to negotiate directly with the Palestinian people and that this must include the Palestine Liberation Organization. That Israel can find no Palestinian leaders acceptable on its terms is a problem of its own creation.

Israel's rights in the West Bank and Gaza are those of an occupying Power only. Israel is obliged under international law to act in accordance with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel's response to the intifadah has failed to address the political causes of the unrest and can only serve to deepen hatred and mistrust. It is our hope that Israel will take the opportunity to respond positively to the Palestine National Council initiative and so demonstrate its commitment to Middle East peace. New Zealand appeals to all parties to move towards each other in a spirit that seeks a just and durable solution to the wrongs the Palestinians have suffered for too long.

Mr. MAHBUBANI (Singapore): This is the first time that Singapore has participated in the debate on the question of Palestine. We do so not only to register our disappointment with the host country's violation of the Headquarters Agreement signed with the United Nations in New York, but primarily because a rare opportunity for peace has presented itself in the Middle East. As Shakespeare said,

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries." (Julius Caesar: IV.iii 217)
That tide has come now to the Middle East.

Two new trends have emerged surrounding the core issue of the Middle East problem, namely, the question of Palestine. First, there is a global trend towards the resolution of regional conflicts. Secondly, there have been remarkable statements made recently both by the Palestine National Council and by Mr. Yasser Arafat. It would be tragic to waste the opportunity that has presented itself. That is why this year's debate on the question of Palestine is especially significant.

A major obstacle to peace in the Middle East is Israel's refusal to accept a fully independent and sovereign Palestinian State. On the other hand, the perceived absence of a clear and unequivocal acceptance of the existence of Israel presents another obstacle. Nevertheless, recent decisions by the Palestine National Council lend hope that this could be overcome soon.

Several proposals for autonomy or limited self-determination for the Palestinians have been put forward, but none of them will work. It is inevitable that a Palestinian State will be created. The sooner Israel accepts its inevitability the better off it will be in the long run.

We speak here today as a friend of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Our hearts go out to the Palestinians in their hour of suffering and we welcome the strong and courageous statements made by Mr. Yasser Arafat and the Palestine National Council. Today, however, we should like to address our remarks to the people of Israel and suggest why the establishment of a Palestinian State is in Israel's interest.

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

First, the Palestinian people exist. They have clearly announced their desire for a separate nation. Israel can neither wish nor wash away this fundamental reality. Despite the current denials, wiser Israeli leaders have in the past accepted this essential fact. David Ben-Gurion, one of the founders of modern-day Israel, is reported to have recognized that the Arabs of Palestine were a nation distinct from other Arabs, not merely a part of the greater Arab people, and, as he said, they

"should enjoy all the rights of citizens and all political rights, not only as individuals, but as a national community, just like the Jews".

Recently, one of Mr. Menachem Begin's former aides, who was also a former chief of military intelligence, Mr. Yehoshafat Harkabi, published a book entitled Israel's Fateful Hour on why Israel should begin negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to establish an independent Palestinian State.

Secondly, it is not in Israel's long-term interest to annex the occupied territories. While demographers disagree on details, the main trends are clear. By the year 2015 the total population of Arabs and Jews in Israel and the occupied territories will be about equal. After that, the Jewish population will become a minority if Israel decides to annex the territories. The Jewish population will then have a very painful dilemma to resolve: either retain democracy and accept a minority status in the government or reject democracy and create a new form of segregated society. Even without annexation, Israel has paid a heavy political price for its denial of Palestinian statehood. The brutal efforts to suppress the intifadah - a word that has become as much a global household word as perestroika and glasnost - have caused dismay and disillusionment among Israel's friends. How much longer can such killings and beatings continue before eroding the moral fibre of the Israeli nation?

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

Thirdly, the main security argument for hanging on to the territories is no longer valid today. Buffer zones have become irrelevant in the era of long-range artillery and missiles. Certainly such zones are of little use if they become populated with one's own citizens. As recently as 30 May 1988 the Hebrew newspaper Ma'ariv reported that Major-General Ifrayem Sneh, the former commander in charge of the occupied West Bank, told a press conference in Tel Aviv that the majority of Israeli army generals wanted a withdrawal from the occupied West Bank so that the security of Israel would not be undermined. As Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev told the United Nations last week,

"What is more, one-sided reliance on military power ultimately weakens other components of national security". (A/43/PV.72, p. 11)

Fourthly, in today's interdependent world, no man, no nation can remain an island. It is not in Israel's interest to increase its isolation. When over four-fifths of the United Nations Member States begin to vote regularly together on current Palestinian and Middle East resolutions, Israel should pay some heed to their views. History has taught us, after all, the dangers of any small State relying on one great Power for its security. The pendulum of history swings relentlessly. The absolute support of today can disappear tomorrow, especially when the interests of a small State and a great Power begin to diverge, as they surely will some day.

Fifthly, it has also been suggested that a Palestinian State created in the occupied territories is inherently unstable or unviable because it will create a densely populated State with few natural resources. Here, we hope that Singapore's experience may be helpful. If a Palestinian State is created today in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, its total land area will be almost 10 times that of

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

Singapore's but its population will be much smaller than Singapore's. Even the Gaza Strip on its own is only half as densely populated as Singapore. Yet Singapore's total foreign trade is second to none in the developing world. One lesson we have learned in East Asia is that when States commit themselves to economic development and growth they have a powerful vested interest in peace and stability. If an independent Palestinian State develops into something like the Singapore of the Middle East, it will have an interest even greater than that of Israel in peace and stability.

I am aware that the Middle East problem and its core issue, the question of Palestine, are incredibly complex. The arguments I have suggested here may appear to be too simplistic to those who know the issue well. But, as my Prime Minister said recently, in a reference to the Middle East issue in his National Day Rally remarks,

"I've heard the whole argument. I've read long articles on it. There are books written on the matter. It's so complex, it goes back so long ... some time, some place, somebody has got to say: 'Look, this is not worth it. Let's take a risk, have peace. Because the other way is to risk another war'."

We believe that the Palestine National Council has sent a clear signal of its desire for peace. We were impressed by the Council's Political Communiqué of 15 November 1988 issued in Algiers, and my Government said in response in its official statement:

"The Singapore Government reiterates its support for United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which should form the framework for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in which every state in the region, including Israel, can live in peace within secure and

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

recognized boundaries. The Palestine National Council's support for an international conference in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the explicit rejection of terrorism were significant and important advances toward a durable solution of the Palestinian problem.

"The Singapore Government supports the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. In this regard, it welcomes the proclamation of an independent Palestinian State and sees it as a major first step in realizing the aspirations of the Palestinian people and towards peace in the Middle East."

(Mr. Mahbubani, Singapore)

We were pleased to see that there were at least some positive reactions from elements of the American Jewish community that met Mr. Yasser Arafat in Stockholm on 6 and 7 December. Mrs. Rita Hauser, a participant, said after the meeting:

"We hope deeply that the United States Government will now open a dialogue with the PLO. The PLO has stated what the United States has demanded since 1975".

Finally, each year, in our explanation of vote before the voting on the Assembly's annual resolutions on the question of Palestine, we have consistently been calling for a dialogue between the PLO and Israel. Since this call is still relevant, we should like to repeat it once again this year:

"My delegation is of the view that a just and durable solution of the question of Palestine must, at one and the same time, recognize the rights of the State of Israel. In this regard we would suggest the exchange of recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In order to encourage Israel and the PLO to move in this direction, the international community should urge them to pursue a course of mutual accommodation and compromise. Those who continue to urge Israel not to have any dialogue with the PLO are not helping the process of mutual accommodation. On the other hand, those States which continue to deny the right of Israel to exist are also not helping the cause of peace. My delegation therefore appeals to both Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to recognize each other's legitimate rights". (A/42/PV.89, p. 38)

We call upon both sides to recognize each other's legitimate right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries, and to agree to the early convening of an international conference to bring about durable and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. DJERMAKOYE (Niger) (interpretation from French): This year, exceptional circumstances have prompted us to consider here in Geneva, in the Palais des Nations - another eminent place for the international community to meet and engage in dialogue - the agenda item now before the Assembly.

Since the last session there has been a notable development that deserves to be followed with the greatest attention and the keenest interest. The Palestinian people has taken the historic decision to establish a State. Thus, in the spirit of responsibility so characteristic of great peoples, it has decided to embark on the path of constructive dialogue by accepting the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That is an important step which in our view deserves commendation. But what do we see in response?

Israel, violating the most elementary rules and principles of international law and showing contempt for the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, persists in its policy of aggression, illegal occupation and spoliation in Palestine and the Middle East.

At a time when a new wind of peace is blowing in various arenas of conflict, the tragedy of the Palestinian people is as terrible as ever. The heroism and dignity with which that people is resisting and rising up in the occupied territories proves that the Palestinian phenomenon continues to be ever more real, that brutal force has not vanquished the determination of that people, which has not abdicated its national rights or its claims to a State in the land of its ancestors.

Is not the growing awareness among the youngest sectors of the people of the occupied territories both moving and striking? Should not this uprising - this intifadah - of children whose only weapons are stones and the faith of their youth be a warning to Israel that should induce it to agree to open direct negotiations

(Mr. Djermakoye, Niger)

with the legitimate representative of that people, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)?

This uprising and the struggle that the people of Palestine have been waging for 40 years poses, in all its clarity, the problem of and the conditions for the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. For let there be no mistake about it: the question of Palestine is the core of the Middle East conflict; the tragedy of the Palestinian people remains the tragedy of this century; no credible or lasting peace can be established in the Middle East without the involvement of the Palestinian people and its legitimate representative, the PLO; no serious solution is conceivable in that region that does not include the Palestinian people and the PLO or, a fortiori, is imposed against them.

We are familiar with - because for several decades we have been attentive witness of - the commendable initiatives taken by the United Nations in an attempt to find a just and lasting solution to this painful conflict. We are familiar with and support the praiseworthy efforts made, with tenacity and a spirit of responsibility, by the Security Council. We are familiar with and support the personal action by the Secretary-General designed to achieve progress on this thorny issue, create the conditions for resolving this tragedy and put an end to the suffering and wandering of the courageous Palestinian people.

But the arrogance that characterizes Israel's attitude towards the entire international community has thus far hindered - and even blocked - any noteworthy progress on this issue. It is precisely that attitude which, a few days ago in New York during the consideration by the plenary Assembly of the draft resolution under which the decision would be taken to transfer this debate on item 37 to Geneva, prompted the representative of Israel - in exercise of what he claimed was his right of reply - to say that once again the Palestinians, as had become their

(Mr. Djermakoye, Niger)

habit, wished to sidetrack all the delegations, all our States, and force them to meet in Geneva. To that scornful and defiant attitude towards the authority of the United Nations, the only valid response is the firmness and unanimity that has led us to meet here in Geneva.

We think that this is no longer the time for speeches and condemnation. Israel has heard enough of that. Moreover, the question of Palestine is so old and its contours are so well known that there is no longer any need to delay by engaging in recriminations and invective. Deeds must accompany words.

Each State Member of the United Nations must, in all responsibility, ask itself the only question that, in our view, counts: what has it done so far and what can it do to make a contribution to the solution of the problem of Palestine and help the Palestinian people recover their rights? Each Member State must become convinced that the comprehensive and final settlement of the problem of Palestine, on the basis and within the framework envisaged in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), will make an essential contribution to international peace and security.

(Mr. Djermakoye, Niger)

Every State - particularly Israel and all its friends - must work towards the speedy convening under United Nations auspices of an international conference on peace in the Middle East with the participation of the representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO, alongside the other parties to the conflict. That conference ought not to be a tribunal to condemn any party; it should rather be a framework for global dialogue and negotiations. Acceptance of that principle constitutes a positive step and a willingness to seek peace. We must ensure that such a conference succeeds.

Every State must recognize that the rights of the Palestinian people are legitimate and inalienable, like its own, and that the right of peoples to self-determination must be the same throughout the world.

Every State here must see that not to recognize that right is truly a grave injustice. In that regard, Israel and its friends should look back and remember the context of Israel's own birth 40 years ago. Israel may have forgotten what history cannot erase: that each people has its sacred land and will dream of returning there one day.

As one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian State proclaimed by the Palestine National Council on 23 November, Niger, with its President, General Ali Saibou, welcomes the emergence of the new State and congratulates its leaders. We reiterate our active solidarity with and unswerving support for the heroic struggle waged by the Palestinian people.

But Niger does not mean to stop there. In the context of fraternal Afro-Arab co-operation, in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement and in our bilateral relations, the Government of Niger will work tirelessly for the consolidation and de jure

(Mr. Diermakoye, Niger)

recognition of the new State, so it may recover all its rights. We shall thus be working to end the Palestinian nightmare. That is indispensable for the maintenance of world peace.

The entire international community must shoulder all its responsibilities with respect to Palestine. We believe that its credibility, its future and world peace are at stake. Never has a solution to the Palestinian problem been so close. Yet there remains the fear that, owing to Israel's customary intransigence, we could be at the brink of a conflict for which Israel will bear sole responsibility.

Only yesterday the world heard Chairman Arafat's appeal for peace and harmony; today Israel has rejected all proposals for a settlement, including mutual recognition by both parties to the conflict, on the grounds that it alone allegedly holds the key to the truth of this complicated issue affecting all the peoples of the region. How can Israel hope to win a match in which it refuses to participate?

Now, the ball is in Israel's court.

Mr. MOLMIN (Comoros) (interpretation from French): This year has been marked by a wave of peace-making and conciliation, easing crises and conflicts in various regions of the world. The Government and the people of the Comoros welcome these positive developments, which bear hope for a better future for all mankind.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian people has not benefited from a trend that in certain areas has given us reasonable hope of finding peace or easing disputes. It is even more regrettable that the Middle East remains a source of great danger and instability for the entire world.

Recent and present events in occupied Palestine add further to the concern of all peoples and Governments that cherish peace, justice and law. The international community must work vigorously to resolve a conflict whose persistence is unacceptable.

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

The Palestinian intifadah has shocked the world conscience, reminding it that the tragedy of the Palestinian people cannot indefinitely be met with total indifference. The formidable impetus of the intifadah cannot be regarded as a brief outburst. The Palestinian population of the occupied territories is inspired by its rejection of the humiliation, the exactions and the constant denial of their rights imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities.

In addition to the well-tested repressive arsenal of administrative internment, expulsion and the destruction of houses, there is a systematic policy of beatings and the use of rubber bullets, which are often fatal, against demonstrators irrespective of age or sex. We all know the large number of deaths and serious injuries that have resulted. In fact, as the scope and depth of the Palestinian uprising has become apparent, Israel has become determined to break it by any means, including the use of methods and practices that recall behaviour we thought had gone for ever.

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

But the general condemnation of those methods has not reduced or eliminated them. The Israeli forces blithely continue along the same path. In that connection, certain recent statements by Israeli politicians are particularly worrisome, given the history of those who have uttered them.

The brutality and heightened repression will not deal with the real problems behind the uprising. It is a movement for dignity and the just demands of the Palestinian people. Beatings, tear-gas, guns and the ill-treatment that has become institutionalized cannot hide that fact. Such methods of pacification have always failed.

The true question and the right answer have nothing to do with pacification in the illusory and unstable police or military sense. They deal rather with the quest for and implementation of an appropriate process towards a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the region.

The Government and people of the Comoros support the just struggle of the Palestinian people for recognition of its legitimate right to self-determination and a sovereign national future. In that spirit, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros has recognized the Palestinian State proclaimed at Algiers on 15 November 1988 by the Palestine National Council, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The PLO is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The peace process in the Middle East cannot proceed without the participation of the PLO as a party directly concerned and properly representative.

The Comoros delegation is aware of the complexity of the Middle East problem. However, we cannot accept an Israeli policy based on rigidity and the status quo. Such a status quo causes suffering and hardship for an entire people.

(Mr. Mbumin, Comoros)

The decisions taken by the PLO at Algiers, and the statement made yesterday by Mr. Arafat clarifying various points of the Algiers decisions, show a will to achieve peace on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and on the basis of recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

This is a remarkable evolution of the PLO towards realism, which could finally enable a viable peace process to get under way. But we must observe that the Israeli leaders prefer to pursue a policy of repression rather than trying to change their comfortable mentality and contemplate practical measures for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The intifadah shows the national cohesion of the Palestinians and reaffirms their devotion to the Palestine Liberation Organization. All parties concerned should take note of this.

History shows that war and hatred among peoples is not preordained. A commitment to conciliation and reconciliation among the peoples of the Middle East is more than ever necessary, for violence breeds violence; injustice and domination lead to revolt.

The failure to resolve the Palestinian question threatens world peace and stability; it condemns a region to devoting a very large part of its resources to military expenditure, diverting them from social and economic development and the well-being of the peoples. No one can find this acceptable.

Courage is needed to make peace; one does not discuss peace with one's friends, but with one's adversaries. Israel's rejection, and its persistence in wanting to choose a negotiating partner of its liking, are an easy way for it not to face the question of peace in a genuine, concrete way. No one can be deceived

(Mr. Moumin, Comoros)

by that attitude. The PLO's realism and willingness to compromise should be reciprocated by the other party.

The Government and people of the Comoros strongly support all initiatives towards a just and lasting peace, such as those outlined in the relevant resolutions of our Organization, which would ensure respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the security of all peoples and States of the region.

The Government of the Comoros regrets the United States decision not to grant a visa to His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat to go to New York and participate in the debate on Palestine, which runs counter to the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America. Moreover, the United States decision is itself a dangerous precedent with respect to the universality of the work of the General Assembly and does not promote the search for a solution to the problems of the Middle East. Depriving a just cause of a forum in which positions may be expressed does not foster a peaceful evolution of the problem.

Mr. DELPECH (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): The first special session of the General Assembly, held in 1947, was devoted to the question of Palestine. Nothing could better reflect the importance this Organization attaches and has always attached to this question, which the United Nations has been discussing virtually since its inception; the question has been on our agenda practically from the outset. This shows the Organization's commitment and special responsibility with regard to this subject.

Unfortunately, more than 40 years have passed, with the situation of the Palestinian people only deteriorating as a result of the worsening of the conflict. The Middle East must not continue to be a flash-point; what happens in that region obviously affects international peace and security.

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

History has taught us time and again that no right is more sacred to a people than the free exercise of its right of self-determination. That principle, enshrined in the United Nations Charter, can no longer be denied to the Palestinian people, unless we are ready to perpetuate the instability in the Middle East.

The Argentine Government firmly supports the need to settle all conflicts peacefully. That principle, which is now being applied in many areas, must guide us in dealing with the question we are considering today. It is unacceptable that at the end of the twentieth century the international community should be unable to find a viable formula for solving a problem which on account of its moral and political dimensions long ago transcended regional boundaries.

The Argentine Government has consistently supported the need to find a permanent solution to the question of Palestine on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Adopted unanimously at times when the Argentine Republic was a non-permanent member of the Security Council, those resolutions contain the fundamental elements for achieving a just and lasting peace. In its resolution 242 (1967) the Security Council unequivocally recognized the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries. That principle must be implemented as soon as possible to put an end once and for all to the current cycle of violence that only increases the suffering and pain of all the peoples of the region.

In that connection, the Argentine Government is extremely concerned at the events that have been taking place in the occupied territories over the past year. The uprising of the Palestinian people is in large measure the reaction of a people that no longer wants or is able to live under foreign occupation. This new element of tension, which has persisted for more than a year now, makes it all the more urgent to find a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

(Mr. Dalpech, Argentina)

The declaration of independence of the Palestinian State issued by the Palestine National Council at Algiers on 15 November constituted a step towards regional and international peace. The decision taken by the Palestinian people through its organizations represented in Algiers adds a positive element to the Palestinian equation which must not be ignored.

In that connection, the statement of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is another very positive element to be considered. My delegation is glad that Mr. Arafat was enabled to present the message of the Palestine National Council to this Assembly.

More than ever before, it is necessary to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. In this connection, my delegation feels that the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of all the parties directly concerned, is an effective and viable option.

The United Nations has brilliantly shown in practice its capacity to help in the peaceful settlement of major conflicts. It is interesting that the year now drawing to a close was particularly fruitful in terms of the achievement of negotiated solutions. The United Nations was at the centre of the settlement of such critical conflicts as the question of Afghanistan and the war between Iran and Iraq. Moreover, the Organization is involved in such significant peace processes as those in Cyprus, Namibia and Western Sahara.

It is therefore even more difficult to understand why the question of Palestine has been bypassed by this tide of peace. The international community has a special responsibility to find peaceful means of overcoming all these bitter rivalries once and for all. To do this it has at its disposal all the United

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

Nations machinery that has served the noble cause of peace so effectively under the wise, able and outstanding guidance of the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar.

The Argentine Government today renews its commitment to work tirelessly for a just and lasting solution finally enabling all the peoples of the region without exception to live in peace.

Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana): "Man was born free; yet everywhere he is in chains." That was the observation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the illustrious philosopher of Geneva, some two centuries ago. Today, of course, the human condition is much improved and most peoples released from colonial bondage have won their freedom and independence. A sad exception, however, is the Palestinians, who remain deprived of their fundamental human rights and are condemned to live in a political wilderness.

Were he alive today, Rousseau would most certainly have come forward to champion the cause of the Palestinian people. So strong was his abhorrence of oppression that he advocated the adoption of a social contract which, based on the general will, would guarantee all men freedom from injustice. We, the United Nations, have such a contract today: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fortieth anniversary we celebrated only a few days ago.

As we are all aware, that document was conceived as the basic international statement of the inalienable and inviolable rights of all members of the human family. It was intended to serve as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations in the effort to secure universal and effective recognition and observance of the rights and freedoms which it enshrines. And indeed it has proved to be the beacon by which many have sought and found their fundamental human rights.

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

For the Palestinian people, however, the Declaration is nothing more than an empty document, a pious statement which has yet to be translated into reality. Happily, however, the Palestinian struggle now appears to be within sight of victory. The intifadah, which began a little over a year ago, has served not only to inspire the campaign against injustice but to impress upon the international community the deep yearning the Palestinians have for a homeland and an identity of their own. That popular passion was certainly reflected in the recent declaration in Algiers of the independent State of Palestine and in the unfailing pursuit of Palestinian nationhood.

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

These significant events compel greater attention to the problems of the Middle East and to the need for an urgent political solution. The question of Palestine lies at the heart of the region's instability and is consequently a major obstacle to a peaceful and definitive settlement. Unless it is quickly resolved, the prevailing conflict is likely to escalate even further. It is imperative therefore that the major Powers and all concerned parties in the region - and, indeed, the international community as a whole - should now make a renewed effort to bring about an end to the prevailing hostility. We cannot safely allow the hatred and suspicion that now separate the parties to become engrained.

In addressing itself in recent years to the situation in the Middle East, the General Assembly has condemned the continuing occupation of Arab territories, underscored the need for resolving the core issue of Palestine and appealed to all States to refrain from any action that would aggravate matters. Specific resolutions have reaffirmed the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and called for international assistance to their cause. The situation, however, has now become more acute and thus demands a concerted effort to bring it under control. We must therefore attempt to devise ways and means of giving effect to the relevant resolutions that have sought to address the problem.

The peace process, which has been at best sporadic and tentative, must be revived and stimulated into reaching a rapid conclusion. The Palestinian people, through their National Council and their liberation organization, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), have signalled their willingness to work towards a political settlement. Those assurances, which were reiterated yesterday by Mr. Yasser Arafat, can only be seen as a genuine desire for peace and should therefore be welcomed as a basis for serious negotiation. To deride and dismiss them would be poor diplomacy and result in the loss of a unique opportunity for making a breakthrough to peace.

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

The intifadah has demonstrated by its fervour that foreign occupation and control cannot be tolerated as a way of life by a people intent on freedom. The United Nations is therefore obliged to uphold its protest against policies and practices that, by their inequity and illegality, impose unbearable hardships on the Palestinian people. There has to be an end to the settlement programme in the occupied territories; there has to be a halt in the systematic destruction of Palestinian homes and in the deportation and expulsion of Palestinians: for until such steps are taken, there can be no hope for peace.

It must also be accepted a priori that all peoples in the region have the right to independence and survival. This principle requires the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State to be respected and the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to be recognized: that is, the right to self-determination and the right to return to establish their own independent State in Palestine.

In recognition of those principles and of the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the problems of the Middle East, the General Assembly has called for the convening of the international peace conference in conformity with provisions of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C and has requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the conference as quickly as possible. Guyana reiterates its support for such a conference and in this regard we note that there is virtual consensus that participation in such a forum should involve all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing, in addition to the permanent members of the Security Council. We should therefore not unduly delay the holding of such a conference, for to do so is to postpone an excellent opportunity to resolve the Palestinian question through peaceful dialogue and negotiation.

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

In the interim, we should keep the Palestinian problem at the forefront of international public opinion. The most powerful weapon in the armoury of the Palestinians is the justice of their cause and the support of international public opinion. It is important therefore that their tragic story be told to the world. To that end, the United Nations should be asked to expand its role in the dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information on the Palestinian issue. There is an obvious need to promote a better image and understanding of the Palestinians. Far too often they are portrayed as the terrorists instead of the terrorized.

The intifadah has launched the Palestinian movement on a path from which there can be no turning back. It has created a momentum which, if maintained and accelerated, can impel the Palestinians forward to their goal. The Assembly must therefore be ready to support the thrust of their aspirations.

We have been obliged by the force of circumstances to meet in Geneva instead of our traditional venue in New York. It is to be hoped that the change of ambience will inspire us, as it did the French writer Voltaire, who also came to Geneva to seek "the best of all possible worlds" in which each nation, including the Palestinians, may be allowed to cultivate a garden of its own.

Mr. PERERA (Sri Lanka): It is sometimes more difficult a struggle to make peace than to wage war and more complex a task to build on positive overtures than to negate promising developments. We are meeting in historic circumstances when the promise of peace seems nearer.

It is a little over a year ago since the intifadah, nurtured over the years in the anguish and sacrifice of an entire people, began to crystallize into a sweeping, inexorable national movement, embracing all the Palestinian people in common resolve to regain their usurped birth-right as a nation. At the forty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights 10 months ago, a session

(Mr. Perera Sri Lanka)

distinguished by the address of Chairman Arafat, at a time when the intifadah was gathering momentum, Sri Lanka stated that the heavy weight of military might must not be advocate and judge in international relations. Military force deployed against just causes has not endured. Humble stones hurled by youthful hands have brought down and prevailed over mighty Goliaths. In a sense, what the physical disparity of conflicting forces revealed in the First Book of Samuel was the limit of military might. History is repeating itself in modern Palestine in a curiously ironic way, teaching those who would learn the same ineluctable lesson.

We are meeting today a month after the conclusion of the 19th extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council (PNC), appropriately called the session of the intifadah. Its crowning achievement, the proclamation by the PNC of the State of Palestine on 15 November, is now part of history.

(Mr. Perera, Sri Lanka)

A political declaration adopted by the PNC by a vote of 253 to 46 with 10 abstentions describes in some detail a comprehensive political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine within the framework of the United Nations Charter, the rules of international law and United Nations resolutions. A central element is the convening of an international conference on the Middle East on the basis of, inter alia, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The prerequisites for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East clearly include the withdrawal of Israel from the territories it occupies, the annulment of all illegal measures taken by Israel in the occupied territories, including the dismantling of settlements established in those territories, the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish an independent State in Palestine without external pressure, and arrangements to guarantee the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the region, including the Palestinian State and Israel. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, must be represented as an equal partner in any negotiations or conference on the question of Palestine. Those conditions, which are self-evident, have long constituted the basis of the position held by the non-aligned States, including Sri Lanka.

In practical expression of Sri Lanka's acceptance of and commitment to those principles, the Sri Lanka Government formally extended diplomatic recognition to the PLO in 1982 and a PLO embassy was established in Colombo. Following the proclamation of the State of Palestine on 15 November 1988, Sri Lanka recognized the new State of Palestine.

(Mr. Perera, Sri Lanka)

I believe that over 60 countries have now formally recognized the proclamation of the State of Palestine, while many others are actively considering doing so.

The momentum for peace has indeed moved forward in the last month. Here in Geneva and in Stockholm, Chairman Arafat has made further clarifications that have helped create a propitious political climate in which the potential for peace can be advanced.

In the proclamation of 15 November 1988, the State of Palestine exhorts the United Nations to take upon itself a special responsibility for the Palestinian people and to put an end to the tragedy its people are suffering by providing them with security and endeavouring to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. In a sense, the Palestinian people's exhortation is one which, if implemented, would bring peace to more than Palestine. The problem of Palestine constitutes the core issue in the instability that has for so long plagued the Middle East region.

Looking peace in the face may intimidate those who wish to reverse the momentum of positive developments and thwart their inevitable outcome. The shibboleths of the past must not slay the emerging hope for a real breakthrough in the Middle East, one that has been widely welcomed throughout the world. To let this opportunity pass would be to permit the perpetuation of the tragic cycle of repression, resistance and violence in the Middle East.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): The people of Papua New Guinea have come to know that the Middle East region was the "cradle of civilization" and through the Bible we have also learned that Palestine was the holy land where Jesus Christ was born. For many of us, Jesus Christ is a symbol of love and peace on earth and in Palestine and the Middle East, and yet for decades that Holy Land has been a

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

land of deep suffering and conflicts. The General Assembly is once again considering the question of Palestine, and it is doing so with the knowledge of the Algiers Declaration of Independence of Palestine proclaimed by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988.

As a distant observer of the Palestine question, Papua New Guinea has monitored with keen interest the developments in the occupied territories that culminated in the Algiers Declaration of Independence.

The declaration of Palestine's independence by its National Council came after the 11-month long uprising by the Palestinians - the intifadah - in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where more than 300 lives - both Arab and Israeli - have been lost. The uprising is nothing more than a manifestation of the Palestinians' humiliation and indignation over Israeli domination.

The move by the Palestine National Council also came three and a half months after Jordan had renounced all claims to administer the affairs of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation. That, perhaps, was the turning point in the history of the Palestinian people. It was also an opportunity for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to determine the political future of its people on their behalf.

Papua New Guinea pleads with Israel and its supporters to let the Palestinian people go and to set it free from every form of domination and oppression.

The Palestine National Council's endorsement of the crucial Security Council resolution 242 (1967) is a welcome development. Papua New Guinea believes that that resolution forms the basis for peace in the Middle East.

The most important provision of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) calls for:

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

"Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force".

Papua New Guinea firmly believes that the key to peace in the Middle East is a change in attitude by all the parties to the conflict.

Israel must recognize the role of the PLO and must accept the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Any attempt to drive a wedge between the PLO and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is doomed to failure.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

Furthermore, branding the PLO a terrorist organization does not do justice to the cause of the just struggle. It is wrong to criminalize the Palestinian people, who hail the PLO as their legitimate representative and leader. Papua New Guinea regards such a stance as politically and morally wrong.

While we call on the Israelis and their allies to make concessions, the onus for making such concessions does not fall on Israel alone. The Arabs must also make concessions, because it is our belief that peace in the Middle East is just as important for the Arabs as for the Jews. The real test of the Arabs' peaceful intentions will be their willingness and readiness to accept Israel's right to exist.

The Algiers Declaration, in calling for a two-State arrangement, is a genuine gesture by the Palestinians as a people who want a homeland and who want to live in peace and harmony with Israel. Papua New Guinea sees this as a very significant and important first step. Since a political solution of the conflict involves territories which are inhabited by Palestinians, any political settlement must include Palestinians.

Papua New Guinea endorses the observations contained in the Secretary-General's reports of 21 January 1988 (S/19443) and 30 September 1988 (A/43/691). We stand ready to support any efforts by the United Nations to bring together all the parties directly concerned to negotiate a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of this long-standing conflict.

I wish to pay tribute to the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization, including Chairman Arafat. They deserve credit for this timely move, taking advantage of the change in the international climate. They have also won our admiration for being able to make a breakthrough with a proposal acceptable to all the important factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Because of

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

our colonial experience, Papua New Guinea shares the nationalist spirit and the strong sense of identity of the Palestinians. We sincerely hope that the Palestinian people will be treated as equals by those around them and throughout the world, and that their aspirations to a homeland will be realized.

The opportunity exists for this international orchestra to play in tune and for us to sing in harmony.

Papua New Guinea, as a developing country, regrets the unfortunate incident which forced the General Assembly to move to Geneva this week to address the question of Palestine. We certainly hope that this will not be repeated; it should not be regarded as a precedent.

Finally, the Government and people of Papua New Guinea express their deep sympathy with, and sorrow for, the Government and the people of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the unfortunate and tragic loss of life and destruction of property as a result of the recent earthquake in Armenia. We wish all those affected an early and successful recovery. May God's blessings be upon those thousands who have lost their lives and upon their surviving relatives.

Mr. FORTIER (Canada) (interpretation from French): In the past year the question of Palestine, as the agenda item before us is entitled, has taken on a new seriousness and urgency. The Israeli-Palestinian confrontation has intensified and caused an ever more serious spiral of violence.

My Government has insisted on, at the very least, the need for the human rights of the Palestinians to be respected and on the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories. Canada has spoken out forcefully on the matter, and it will continue to join the rest of the international community in appealing for respect for the rights of the people of the West Bank and Gaza.

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

Similar concerns, more than a generation ago, led Canada to take an active role in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We have intensified that support and we have broadened our efforts to assist the Palestinians through development programmes in the occupied territories and throughout the Near East. Canadians have insisted on such efforts, not only to assist people who are in need but also as an affirmation of their personal and collective dignity. It is impossible to envisage peace without each party being convinced of the other's dignity and according it the necessary respect.

Assistance of any kind, essential as it is, remains a stop-gap in the absence of a settlement. The need for progress is becoming more and more pressing. While the international environment has undoubtedly improved, thus reducing the prospects of a global catastrophe originating in the Near East, the human, moral and material costs in the region itself have become unbearable.

Canada has refrained from prescribing to the parties directly concerned what the nature of a settlement should be. My Government believes that outsiders can sometimes play a helpful role in bringing parties together or in providing arrangements to facilitate an agreement. Canada has participated in every peace-keeping force in the region, and our experience reinforces our belief in the usefulness of external confidence-building measures. Similarly, my Government believes that an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations would be the appropriate framework for negotiations between the parties, as a means of demonstrating international support for a peaceful settlement.

Of necessity, however, a lasting settlement requires the kind of commitment which can come only from the conviction of each of the parties that such a settlement is in keeping with its interests. The content of any agreement must be

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

left to negotiations between the parties directly concerned. Canada is committed not to prejudge the outcome.

It is the long-standing Canadian position that the Palestinians are among the parties with a right to play a full part in negotiations affecting their future. Those negotiations will constitute the appropriate setting for the parties to come to agreement on the terms for peace, including the future status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In one way, however, Canada did join the entire world community in setting the conditions for a settlement. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) is one of the best examples of the statesmanship of which our Organization is capable. The only common bases for an agreement remain those which it provides: withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 and the right of all States in the region to live within secure and recognized boundaries - in other words, the right of all States, including Israel, to live in peace. The resolution has been the corner-stone of the Canadian conception of a comprehensive settlement.

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

For that reason, Canada welcomes the acceptance in Algiers by the Palestine National Council (PNC) of that resolution, as well as resolution 338 (1973), as a basis for an international conference on the Middle East. Canada has long called for an indication of the Palestinians' willingness to accept the underlying principle of those resolutions. The realization of the Palestinian homeland, whatever status is agreed in negotiations in which both Israel and the Palestinians themselves participate, cannot be dissociated from a settlement which also guarantees the security and well-being of Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Acknowledgement of such a connection offers the promise of possibly significant movement, of the kind we have all striven so hard to encourage. The Algiers meeting of the PNC may have begun to break the log-jam which has paralysed prospects for peace.

That is why the Canadian Government publicly supported a visit to New York by the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and why we supported the move by the General Assembly to hear him in Geneva. In his remarks in Stockholm and in his statements here yesterday, he has improved the prospects of progress towards a peaceful solution. By so doing, Mr. Arafat is addressing critical elements of Canadian concern in the Middle East. These statements of the PLO position give new reason for hope in a situation which has provided so little in the recent past.

Hope is a fundamental requirement in the present Near East situation. We need a constructive focus to stimulate and channel the deep-seated longing for peace which exists throughout the region. My Government assures the Secretary-General of its full support in the Security Council in order to make progress towards a just and lasting settlement. We must be ready to explore all avenues for peace. We also completely share the Secretary-General's view of the importance of nurturing

(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

every gesture in that direction if we are to overcome the mistrust that is so deeply felt on both sides.

What is needed at this stage is determination to encourage the negotiating process, combined with sensitivity to the complex and fundamental interests of both Israelis and Arabs. This patient determination is grounded in the conviction that it has never been so clear that the status quo is a threat to what each side holds dear, and that the present situation demands that each party clearly decide what is in its true interests.

Mr. LEGWAILA (Botswana): This historic debate on the question of Palestine is taking place here in Geneva because it could not, for reasons we all know, take place in New York, at United Nations Headquarters, where it legitimately belongs and should have taken place. On its own, or by itself, the expensive and disruptive journey to Geneva to avail ourselves of the rare opportunity to listen to Chairman Arafat plead the case of his colonized nation and occupied land is immensely symbolic of the United Nations commitment to the liberation of the people of Palestine and their land. On the other hand, our presence here adds a great deal of poignancy to the monumental tragedy that is the homelessness of the people of Palestine: the fact that their leader - a man who embodies all those longings and aspirations - can be denied a visa to speak of these longings and aspirations in peace. There seems to be no limit to man's inhumanity to man.

Whether one surveys it from this European vantage point or from a North American perspective, the world has changed a great deal since our last General Assembly debate on Palestine. The ideological war of nerves between the East and the West has given way on what seems to be a sustained basis to a co-operative spirit of rapprochement, evidenced by the facility with which the super-Powers, in particular, are able to meet and talk peace.

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

In Africa, Asia and elsewhere the signs of the times point to a rapidly changing world, a world weary of the follies of its past, a world ready to give new meaning to the time-honoured and tested principles of peaceful coexistence.

Yet there remain undaunted, ossified and frozen in immobility, two rogue elephants in the family of nations, two black marks on the face of this, our otherwise beautiful, Earth. To Israel and South Africa the world remains the same, unchangeable. Nothing seems capable of changing their inhuman ways and practices. The injustice that is being perpetrated in the Palestinian lands of the West Bank and Gaza, the brutal breaking of the limbs of innocent Palestinians as they demonstrate unarmed for their freedom, the bulldozing of their houses, expulsions and various other acts of brutality perpetrated against the Palestinian people by Israel, stand out in stark relief against the mood of the times.

In apartheid South Africa, too, the callousness, the indifference, the brutality, are the same. Apartheid, too, is seemingly impervious to change.

The tragedy of Palestine is a heart-rending one, to say the least. Not only are the Palestinian people oppressed, occupied, shot and killed in their own West Bank and Gaza, but there is naught for their comfort and peace, even in the refugee camps, particularly in the tortured country of Lebanon, where Israel has no qualms in pursuing them and raining death on them. And we all seem so utterly helpless in the face of such inhumanity.

The Palestine National Council (PNC) has spoken, and spoken with conviction and sincerity, we believe. The recent Algiers Declaration is not as ambiguous as its detractors may think in its advocacy of a negotiated settlement of the Palestinian issue. We cannot take lightly the momentous acceptance by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967)

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

and 338 (1973) in all their over-arching implications. It must have taken a great deal of courage, wisdom and statesmanship for the leadership of the PLO to make the historic decision they made in Algiers - to embark on an epic journey of faith into the future. In Stockholm last week Chairman Arafat repeated his movement's acceptance of Israel's existence and its readiness

"to enter into peace negotiations at an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations".

The Chairman repeated his rejection and condemnation of terrorism

"in all its forms, including State terrorism".

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

Yesterday we listened, spellbound, to Chairman Arafat speaking from this rostrum. Who can say that the Chairman's speech was not a powerful reaffirmation of the historic Algiers Declaration? On what basis can it be suggested that the PLO has not made concessions? The United States Secretary of State said the other day that the United States had for a long time stipulated certain conditions which were to be met by the PLO if the United States was to have dialogue with the PLO. Those conditions, according to the Secretary of State, are: first, the acceptance by the PLO of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as a basis for negotiation of Mid-East peace; secondly, recognition of Israel's right to exist; and, thirdly, the denunciation of terrorism in all its forms.

Surely, the PLO has met all those conditions; yesterday we heard a repetition of its acceptance of all of them. It has accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and it is ready to negotiate peace with Israel. It has recognized the right of the State of Israel to exist alongside a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, and it has renounced and denounced terrorism in all its forms.

And yet it is still said that the PLO has not gone far enough, that it has not earned the qualification to be a participant in the negotiations for Mid-East peace. The question we are forced to ask is whether the intentions of those who insist on more concessions from the PLO beyond the momentous ones it has made are now to call for total Palestinian capitulation as a price for acceptance of the PLO as a negotiating partner. Is that the intention? Is it being suggested that the Palestinian people should, as an irreducible minimum demand, forgo or abandon their aspirations and their right to freedom and independence in their own separate State? By what moral standard are we measuring the right to freedom and

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

independence? By what logic is it morally permissible for the Jewish people of Israel to have a country of their own in which their national aspirations can in security and peace find free expression, while the same is denied to the Palestinian nation? We cannot understand this twisted logic.

The Palestinian people are in every respect entitled to a home of their own, not as an appendage of someone else's country or home, but a country or home of their very own in which to enjoy in full measure the very same freedoms and liberties as are enjoyed by the Jewish people in Israel. Any approach to the Palestinian question which proceeds from the premise that the Palestinian people can be pressured into accepting anything less, anything less than what they and the rest of the international community know and believe they are inalienably entitled to as human beings, is a non-starter and a dangerous delusion.

My country remains adamant in its conviction that peace in the Middle East in unalterably synonymous with the reconciliation of the aspirations of the Jewish and Palestinian people, who have been brought together by fate and history to share space, willy-nilly, in a common ancestral land.

My country has never doubted the legitimacy of Israel's right to exist. We have on several occasions voted at the United Nations for a motion designed to defer action on a proposal or amendment to reject the credentials of Israel. We have done so because we truly believe that the people of Israel have every right, like any people anywhere else, to have a home they can call their own. It is in this context that our unyielding support for the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence in a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza must be understood. We will remain unmoved in our refusal to accept the perverse view that only the Jewish people are entitled to national freedom and independence in Palestine. We will not accept that kind of logic.

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

Salvation for both Israel and the Palestinians lies in a negotiated settlement of their conflict. The State of Israel will never know peace or security with the presence on its immediate periphery of millions of Palestinians seething with decades-old bitterness. In fact, the more the Jewish people of Israel resist negotiation, the more their sandwiched State will become beleaguered, and the more threatened will be its very survival. In the long run the people of Israel will have to pay dearly for their indifference to the lessons of history.

And what does the daily carnage in the West Bank and Gaza do to the moral well-being of the Jewish people? Have they ever stopped to imagine the kind of injustice they are doing to their own tragic history? Should we not expect them to be second to none in compassion and tolerance? Having lived under Hitler and endured the unspeakable trauma of the Holocaust, the Jewish people ought to know better, surely, the agony and pain of statelessness and homelessness, of life and insecurity in the diaspora.

The time has come for reason unencumbered by religious and ideological considerations to prevail across the board in the Middle East. The overwhelming majority of the Arab countries have endorsed the Algiers Declaration. They have welcomed and recognized the Palestinian State born of that Declaration. They have welcomed and accepted the acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) by the PLO. They have accepted and welcomed the PLO's readiness to negotiate peace with Israel. Across the globe more than 80 countries have welcomed and recognized the Palestinian State. This is an unprecedented development within such a short space of time, and the international community would be damned if it did not take advantage of it and push harder for a negotiated settlement of the Middle East conflict.

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

Israel must be left in no doubt as to where the international community stands on the new concessions by the PLO. The challenge in the Middle East is no longer one of persuading the Arab world to accept the permanent and indestructible reality that is the State of Israel; rather, it is one of persuading, or pressuring, Israel to come to terms with the unrealism and negativism of seeking the perpetuation of the statelessness and homelessness of the Palestinian people as the price for peace in the Middle East. The price of peace in the Middle East can never be confirmation of the intolerable status quo. The status quo is good neither for Israel nor for the Palestinians.

The Palestinians have made concessions, we insist. It is now Israel's turn to make concessions. The two sides must walk towards each other to meet each other half-way and negotiate common ground. Neither side should be asked to concede more than its share, and Israel and its friends cannot expect the Palestinians to concede more than their share, just as the Israelis should not, and cannot, be asked to make more than their share of concessions. Each party is being asked to compromise for peace in the Middle East.

The backers of the two sides are also being asked to counsel moderation and realism, not rejectionism and intransigence. To encourage Israel to see nothing but chicanery and bad faith in the positive and conciliatory pronouncements of the Chairman of the PLO is to counsel rejectionism and intransigence on the part of Israel.

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

Finally, let me repeat this on behalf of my country. We harbour no ill intentions towards the Jewish people or the State of Israel. We wish them very well indeed, as always, but we shall not allow our goodwill towards the State of Israel to be abused and misunderstood. Botswana is a freedom-loving, peace-loving and justice-loving country, and we cannot, if we are to continue to leave in peace with our conscience, give succour to Israeli practices and policies in the occupied lands, give succour to the Israelis' breaking of limbs, shooting to kill of children armed with stones, very much like South Africa - or does the breaking of limbs make South Africa look like an angel?

The golden opportunity to embark now on a journey to peace and stability in the Middle East is within Israel's grasp. Why not call the PLO's bluff if it is believed that the PLO is bluffing? Why not give peace a chance, if Israel really wants peace? Why the intransigence?

Mr. CUADRA (Nicaragua) (interpretation from Spanish): For the past 40 years the question of Palestine has had an important place on the General Assembly's agenda. Today we are dealing with the subject once again, at a critical juncture, resulting from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine made by the Palestine National Council on 15 November.

The circumstances in which the General Assembly has had to deal with this crucial issue for peace in the Middle East in the world are also exceptional. The regrettable decision of the United States Government has brought us together in Geneva for three days to deal with the matter. Although we greatly appreciate the warm hospitality of the people and Government of Switzerland, their even handedness and neutrality which provide an appropriate climate for an in-depth and calm debate of the problem, we must express our concern at that action by the United States

(Mr. Cuadra, Nicaragua)

Government, which, while violating the rights of the countries concerned, is also an attack against the Organization, preventing it from carrying out its functions in the normal way and in the usual circumstances.

For exactly the same unjust reasons, affecting the composition of the Nicaraguan delegation, the President of Nicaragua twice had to cancel his participation in the current session of the General Assembly.

On behalf of the people and Government of Nicaragua, one of the first countries officially to recognize the new State of Palestine, we repeat here our joy over this historic event and again express our militant solidarity with the heroic people of Palestine, its vanguard body, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the PLO's Chairman, Yasser Arafat.

The question of Palestine has been widely recognized within the international community as the basic cause of the Middle East problem. General Assembly resolutions on the matter have always clearly stated that a just and lasting peace in the region can be attained only when the Palestinian people is guaranteed the full exercise of its inalienable rights and when Israel has totally and unconditionally withdrawn from all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories. Indeed, in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to independence and sovereignty, and the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and have their property restored.

More than two decades have passed since Israel occupied Palestinian territory by force. Since then that suffering people has not been able to enjoy its basic rights, which are recognized in various international instruments - particularly in

(Mr. Cuadra, Nicaragua)

the 1949 Geneva Conventions relative to occupied territories. It is well known that Israel's systematic refusal to apply those instruments to the occupied Palestinian territories results simply from the fact that it has not the slightest intention of withdrawing from them. On the contrary, it is seeking ways and means to consolidate its occupation with new settlements, its expropriation of land, the transfer of Israeli settlements to occupied territories and other kinds of pressure designed to force the Palestinian population to leave its land.

Oppression and suffering are a constant in the life of the Palestinian people. The destruction of their homes, mass arrests, the expulsion of leaders, deportation, closure of universities and schools and attacks on refugee camps, cities, towns and neighbourhoods and even religious centres are daily practices of the occupying Power, whose attitude is a flagrant violation of the norms of international law and all the principles of the Charter of our Organization, to which Israel owes its own existence.

Having decided to put an end once and for all to the Israeli occupation and the resulting suffering and injustice, the Palestinian people a year ago started the great popular uprising, rejecting the occupation and fighting for its overthrow and termination.

Referring to that historic popular insurrection, the Secretary-General, in his report on the situation in the Middle East, stated:

"Born of the frustration and despair of a population that has lived under occupation for more than 20 years, the intifadah is a direct result of the stalemate in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian people have endured great suffering; the perseverance of the intifadah is evidence of their commitment to exercise their legitimate rights, including self-determination." (A.43/867, para. 32)

(Mr. Cuadra, Nicaragua)

The just aspirations of the Palestinian people to their independence and self-determination took concrete form in the historic Declaration of Independence of 15 November. We welcome the statement by the Palestine National Council about the need to convene an international conference on the Middle East problem, and particularly the question of Palestine, under United Nations auspices, with the participation on an equal footing of the permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the conflict in the region, including, of course, the PLO, as the most appropriate means to seek final agreement enabling the establishment of a stable and lasting peace in the region. The basis of the conference must be Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the guarantee of the national rights of the Palestinian people - particularly the right to self-determination.

(Mr. Cuadra, Nicaragua)

We now have a historic opportunity that we must not waste. Therefore, we give every encouragement to the Secretary-General to continue his efforts and consultations with regard to the convening of the International Conference. It is time for the Israeli régime to realize that it cannot swim against the tide of history; it is time for it to accept the fact that the Palestinian people has a right to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty over its territory.

Yesterday Yasser Arafat, in a historic statement, made the following appeal for peace to Israel:

"Come, let us make peace. Let us make the peace of the bold, of the courageous, far from the arrogance of power and the weapons of destruction, far from occupation and oppression and humiliation and murder and torture."

(A/43/PV.78; p. 37-40)

Unfortunately, the replies have been negative, putting dark storm clouds on the bright horizon created yesterday by the words of the leader of the PLO.

However, we are sure that the conviction, heroism and justice shown in the struggle of the Palestinian people will make this dream and ideal a reality and that, as Arafat said:

"The dawn approaches. Victory is at hand." (ibid.)

Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand): The year 1988 marks the beginning of a new and encouraging trend towards peace and accommodation in international relations. We have witnessed the emergence of a global trend towards what my Minister of Foreign Affairs has called a new world order of peace and justice.

The prospects of a peaceful settlement of regional conflicts around the world have become real this year. Suddenly lights at the end of many of the world's long

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

tunnels have become visible. Yet with this new sense of optimism came new challenges to tackle and to overcome. A new world order of peace and justice seems within reach, but yet not close enough to touch.

No one can deny that 1988 has brought us great opportunities. But opportunities alone do not guarantee peace. Opportunities, no matter how great, are meaningless unless we make good use of them. We must make sure that this year's great opportunities do not become lost opportunities for future historians to try to learn from our mistakes.

In our interdependent world regional conflicts affect all of us. Regional conflicts will disappear only with the existence of a political will on all sides to work together for a peaceful future, in the spirit of accommodation and respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Like many other regional conflicts, the question of Palestine has been with us for far too long. The continuation of the conflict in the Middle East benefits no one. It can only bring pain and endless suffering to all involved. The intifadah during the past year in the occupied territories is a sad reminder of this fact.

The question of Palestine threatens regional as well as international peace and security. For over 40 years it has remained the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Thailand has been and continues to be firm in its opposition to acts which are contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law. Thus my delegation would like to reaffirm its steadfast support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights, including its inalienable right to self-determination. The acquisition of territory by force is illegal and

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

unacceptable. Therefore, Arab sovereignty over the occupied Arab territories must be restored. The legitimate security concerns of all States in the region must also be met.

Thailand fully supports the growing international consensus in favour of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on an equal footing. We firmly believe that a peaceful, comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict in the Middle East should be based on relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

On 15 November 1988 in Algiers the Palestine National Council (PNC) proclaimed an independent State of Palestine. The PNC also declared its decision to accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Indeed, my Prime Minister, General Chatichai Choonhavan, has referred to this decision as a significant and constructive effort towards the long-awaited peace in the Middle East. This decision is in line with the momentum towards a new world order of peace and justice.

As we see it, strict observance of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law is at the heart of this new world order. The unconditional acceptance of binding Security Council resolutions is a major step towards this end. In this same light, we also welcome the PLO's recent clarification in Stockholm that, in Algiers, the Palestine National Council accepted the existence of Israel as a State in the region and declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all forms.

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

My delegation listened very carefully to the important address by Chairman Yasser Arafat yesterday at this gathering. We hope that the proposals he made will be given urgent consideration by the parties concerned and that those proposals will give added impetus to the process towards understanding and accommodation so that a just and durable settlement of the question of Palestine can finally be realized.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I shall now have to suspend the meeting for at least half an hour, because we have been in the process of negotiations which have prompted amendments to draft resolutions to be put before the Assembly tomorrow. The negotiations have been completed, but the translations have not; if we wish to proceed to a vote tomorrow and abide by the rules, decisions will have to be taken today.

The meeting was suspended at 9.40 p.m. and resumed at 10.30 p.m.

Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu): As we meet here in Geneva to debate agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine", our delegation does so with mixed emotions. On the one hand, it is always nice to visit the beautiful and pleasant city of Geneva, a charming and historic landmark in the history of multilateral diplomacy.

On the other hand, this debate, this issue - indeed, these General Assembly meetings - belong in New York at United Nations Headquarters. Regrettably, a most unfortunate decision was made by the host country of the United Nations, which meant that we could not hold this debate in New York, if we chose to listen to the authentic voice of the people of Palestine.

It was not the United Nations which chose Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to be the representative voice of the Palestinian people. Nor was it any individual member of the United Nations, or any group of Member States which made that decision.

It should, by now, be clear to all that the voice and the leadership of a struggling people emerge from within that people. Others may object, but they will never be able to determine or define the voice of the Palestinians. Only those people themselves have that right.

The United Nations and most members of the international community with an appreciation of reality recognize the stature accorded to the PLO by the people of Palestine themselves. It is that stature, and that stature alone, which makes Mr. Arafat the legitimate voice of a people that has for far too long been denied its birthright. It is that stature, and the international community's need to hear of recent developments first hand, which brings us to Geneva.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Unfortunately, some seem not to want to hear the words of Chairman Arafat. What is even more unfortunate is that they would also like to close our ears to his words. Some not able to believe what the rest of us hear. Some seem even to fear the hope borne by his message.

At the outset the Palestinians were denied their land. Then they were denied their identity. Eventually, there were even cruel attempts to deny their very existence. Through their efforts, and their efforts alone, it became impossible for all but the most myopic observers to deny their existence. It has now also become impossible to deny them their identity. However, some still apparently harbour the illusion that if the Palestinians, and their struggle, can be denied their voice, then the denial of their land and the denial of their legitimate aspirations can be continued.

Fortunately for those who cherish justice and equality, nothing could be further from the truth. Fortunately for those who appreciate the fact that the value of a human being and the rights of a citizen cannot be determined by the colour of one's skin, the faith one professes, the gender of one's birth, or the wealth of one's family, the Palestinian people will not be denied its voice - not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

Those who would attempt to deny that people its voice might enjoy better success attempting to hold back the waters of a mighty ocean with their bare hands. They might have better success attempting to silence the thunder of an impending storm. They might even have better success attempting to catch a bolt of lightning, and hurl it back at the heavens in anger and frustration.

No, the Palestinians will not be denied their voice. They will not be denied their land. They will not be denied their dignity. And we will not be denied the opportunity to hear their message.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

For more than four decades the United Nations has been preoccupied with the question of Palestine. When this matter was first brought to the attention of the world body not everyone would have imagined that it would today continue to be so far from a just and lasting solution. Not everyone would have imagined the extent of the heartache, the suffering, the bitterness that has been generated on both sides of this long conflict. Not everyone would have imagined how much interest would develop in every corner of the globe in the intricacies and nuances of the political drama being acted out in the ancient land of Palestine. Four decades ago not everyone would have imagined how much the rest of the world would today pray for the emergence of individuals wise enough, compassionate enough and with enough strength to devise an effective solution to this issue.

Four decades ago, of course, most of the States represented here today were Non-Self-Governing Territories, in one form or another. Those who made the decisions which affected most of the world's population seldom consulted most of the world's people. There is no doubt that the history of post-Second World War Palestine would be different were its preface and its early chapters to be written by today's United Nations. However, we understand that the passage of time cannot be erased, and history cannot be rewritten. What we cannot allow is one or even two or three members of the international community to take it upon themselves to create tomorrow's history by presenting the rest of the world with "facts" which they and they alone determine.

The words of Chairman Arafat, which we were all privileged to hear in the course of this debate, indicate in a clear and unambiguous manner that the people of Palestine, and their representative organization, the PLO, also understand that history cannot be undone. The statesmanlike tone of the remarks by Mr. Arafat

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

afford the world a long-sought opportunity to begin earnest and sincere efforts to resolve what has long been one of the international community's most intractable problems. All that is lacking is an expression of willingness by the other side to engage in a process of dialogue in the search for justice and peace.

Those of us who support the Palestinian people in what we believe to be its just cause have often been told that we were being "unrealistic", and that we were "living in the past". Now we ask: in refusing to consider the evolution of the PLO's views, who is being unrealistic? Who is living in the past by stubbornly refusing to engage the PLO in dialogue? Why should not there be an international conference involving the parties to the conflict, and those who are in a position to provide effective guarantees for the future well-being of the parties?

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Vanuatu is a long way from Palestine and the attendant conflicts in the Middle East. However, like all other members of the international family of nations, we have a great stake in the restoration of peace and stability in that region.

For far too many years the people of Palestine have been denied not only their birthright, but also the right effectively to seek redress of their grievances. By necessity, they have been forced to turn to the only other avenue left open to them in their effort to regain what is rightfully theirs.

Everyone has a right to his or her own identity. Everyone has a right to his or her own dreams. Everyone has a right, and a duty, to struggle for freedom and democratic principles. More than four decades ago we codified these beliefs. Today, we are still struggling to lift the very beautiful-sounding words we have all subscribed to from the pages of the paper they are written on and breathe life into those words.

Right now, in Palestine, we have a chance to do exactly that. The PLO has afforded us that opportunity. The bravery of those who are participating in the intifadah affords us that opportunity.

Let us not miss this opportunity. Let us encourage those who look to the future in Palestine. Let us help begin the next step in the long journey to bring justice and peace to the people of Palestine and all the people of that region. Let us today help make history that future generations will be proud to recall. Let us today proclaim that in spirit we are all Palestinians.

Mr. PHOOFOLO (Lesotho): To our host country, the Swiss Confederation, and its Government and people, we pay a well-deserved special tribute for hosting these very important meetings in the 1988 session of the General Assembly. Once more the warm and charming people of the Swiss Confederation have assured the international community that whenever the subject of peace is at the centre of man's concerns no impediments whatsoever should be created or tolerated. We salute them as true, proven champions of freedom of speech and liberty.

It is very regrettable that, contrary to the spirit that established the Organization, unforeseen additional expense has had to be incurred by the United Nations and its members in the current session, through no deliberate and planned decision of the Members, save the United States, the host country. It is particularly regrettable during the current trying times in the life of the United Nations.

The 1947 Headquarters Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America concerning the legal obligation of the host country has been violated, notwithstanding all the formalities that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman, Mr. Yasser Arafat, observed to facilitate his address to the General Assembly.

Contrary to three pertinent sections of the Agreement - sections 11, 12 and 13 - Mr. Arafat, the leader of an organization recognized by the United Nations and with Permanent Observer status, was denied entry to the United States for very unconvincing reasons, involving disregard for the legal obligations of the United States. Contrary to the provisions of section 13, all the guaranteed privileges entrenched in section 11 of the Agreement have been interfered with.

The whole world was shaken by that well-conceived and calculated move deliberately disregarding one of the fundamental tenets of the United Nations. It

(Mr. Phoofolo, Lesotho)

feels disbelief, and asks: Whither the United Nations, with its Headquarters at New York? Who is next? Are freedom of speech and freedom of movement still the basic essentials of what we are constantly lectured about as the corner-stone of Western democracy?

To Chairman Yasser Arafat, we say, "Do not be disheartened. Your arm and your voice of peace and regional reconciliation have been strengthened. They have been our main source of inspiration and a moving spirit, testified to by our overwhelming response in coming to listen to your message of peace at this proven citadel of peace, where liberty of movement and freedom of speech are respected and not infringed upon."

The brilliant address Chairman Arafat so ably and convincingly delivered to the Assembly will always remain in our minds as a most welcome and timely message of peace and the brotherhood of man. He and all his gallant followers in the PLO have risen to commanding heights to attain peace and resolve the Middle East problem.

As recently as the last non-aligned Foreign Ministers' conference, held in Niccsia, Cyprus, in September this year, the Ministers stressed that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problem of the Middle East could not be achieved without Israel's total and unconditional withdrawal from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

The Ministers further stressed that a solution was possible only if the Palestinians regained and exercised their legitimate and inalienable rights, including the right to return to their homes, the right of self-determination without external interference and the right to national independence, as well as the right to establish a sovereign independent State in Palestine, in conformity with the principles of the Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions.

(Mr. Phoofofo, Lesotho)

The latest Declaration of the Palestine National Council - in Algiers on 15 November - was a reaffirmation of the noble principles that the Foreign Ministers emphasized. It is noteworthy that those noble principles were again endorsed by the General Assembly when resolutions on the question of the Middle East were adopted last week.

The cardinal foreign policy of the Kingdom of Lesotho is founded on peace. Pursuant to this policy, we have persistently supported contact and dialogue in resolving regional and international differences. Hence the Kingdom of Lesotho support in principle the call for an international peace conference on the Middle East's protracted and daunting tragedy. The participants in such a conference must include all the involved parties, including the PLO, as decided by our Organization.

The 9 December 1987 intifadah is a logical consequence and expression of the justifiable Palestinian explosion, brought about by great human suffering and tragic loss of life and destruction of property as a result of occupation by the State of Israel. The intifadah is a total commitment of the Palestinians to exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights, including self-determination, leading to a Palestinian homeland, inclusive of statehood.

We say to the State of Israel: "In as much as we recognize your right to exist within secure borders, the Palestinian people has a similar right to existence within its borders without occupation and the application of brutal force."

In his report to the General Assembly, dated 28 November 1988, under agenda item 40, "The Situation in The Middle East", the Secretary-General observes:

(Mr. Phoofolo, Lesotho)

"I am well aware that any initiative concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict - be it in regard to questions of procedure or substance - is bound to encounter difficulty. ... I am confident that with the full support of the Security Council, and in particular the co-operation of the major Powers, progress can be made towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Recent months have seen tangible progress towards the settlement of several regional conflicts; the protracted and explosive nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict makes it all the more urgent that we now concentrate our efforts in this area." (A/43/867, para. 36)

(Mr. Phoofolo, Lesotho)

The Kingdom of Lesotho joins other peace-loving countries in appealing to the major Powers to accord the essential support to the Secretary-General. If the support requested is not forthcoming from those who have it in their power to give it, let them know that the innocent blood of the Palestinians shall be sought from them on the day of reckoning.

The Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Yasser Arafat, has eloquently and ably outlined the path of peace and mutual accommodation, as contained in the Palestine National Council's Algiers Declaration of 15 November. A new era has been ushered in for all those who yearn for a lasting and durable solution to the Middle East problem.

It is the considered view of the Kingdom of Lesotho that continued consideration and use of military options as the only means of achieving the desired peace would be tragic and would only exacerbate the problem of the Middle East region. Such options are at best diametrically opposed to and inconsistent with the spirit and objectives of the Charter and all the relevant United Nations resolutions on peaceful coexistence between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis.

Five American Jews of good intentions, dedicated to peace in the Middle East, met Chairman Arafat and a PLO delegation in Stockholm on 7 December 1988 and heard from the PLO that it accepted the existence of Israel as a State in the region and declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms.

The internationally applauded 15 November 1988 Algiers Palestine National Council Declaration has provided the complete recipe for peace in the Middle East. In its body and content the Declaration is unambiguous, explicit and crystal-clear.

A meal based on the essential recipe for a lasting and durable peace in the Middle East has now been served, and it only remains for peace-lovers to partake of

(Mr. Phoofofo, Lesotho)

it. Those that choose from the menu of the peace process cannot suffer the contradictions of any further impediments to a direct dialogue and negotiations between the PLO and other involved parties on the opposing sides of the Palestine-Arab and Israeli axis on peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

To the PLO, and particularly to Chairman Arafat, we say that the flag of peace that they carry is well received and appreciated by all the progressive forces of peace and brotherhood of man. The road to freedom and the happiness of mankind is always full of obstacles, particularly to the last steps towards the cherished and noble goal of independence and sovereignty.

The Kingdom of Lesotho looks forward to the early resolution of the Palestinian problem.

We thank Mr. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, for his history-making explanation of the Palestine National Council's Algiers Declaration.

Once again we express our gratitude and appreciation to the magnanimous peace-loving people and Government of the Swiss Confederation for having so graciously, and typically of Swiss hospitality, facilitated the convening of these meetings in their beautiful city of Geneva.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), of 10 October 1975, I now call on the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. PIRZADA (Organization of the Islamic Conference): It is a special privilege to address the General Assembly, which is meeting in Geneva to consider the question of Palestine at a time when a unique opportunity for peace in the Middle East has been afforded by the recent decisions of the Palestinian

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the Islamic Conference)

leadership. If this opportunity is seized, the momentous developments of the past few weeks could well mark a turning-point in the efforts to resolve this problem, which continues to pose a serious threat to the peace and security not only of the region, but of the whole world.

After the adoption of the important Declaration by the Palestine National Council in Algiers recently, the international community was eagerly awaiting Chairman Yasser Arafat's address to the General Assembly. We were disappointed and saddened at the refusal of a visa to Mr. Arafat by the United States. This decision was in contravention of United States obligations under the Agreement it signed as the country hosting the United Nations Headquarters. We cannot but deplore the failure of the host country to honour its legal obligations and its flagrant disregard of the wishes of the international community, expressed in resolution 43/48 of 30 November 1988. The General Assembly was thus obliged to take the extraordinary step of considering the question of Palestine in Geneva.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government of Switzerland, who responded in a remarkable manner to the call of the international community by organizing these special meetings at the United Nations Office in Geneva. We appreciate the arrangements made for the success of the General Assembly's deliberations on this important question.

The United Nations has a special responsibility towards the people of Palestine. The eviction of the Palestinians from their homes and from their soil, their immense sufferings and travails, all originated from the decisions taken by the General Assembly some 40 years ago. It is also pertinent to recall that General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947, which is one of the earliest on this issue, envisaged the establishment of a Palestinian State.

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the Islamic Conference)

Yet for decades the international community ignored the identity of the Palestinian people, treating their national tragedy as a question of refugees. Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, its incessant persecution of the Palestinian people, and its gross and flagrant denial of their inalienable rights did not evoke an international response commensurate with the gravity of the crimes perpetrated by the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people.

Twenty years after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip a new generation of Palestinians, who had seen nothing but the overweening pride of Israeli occupying forces and Zionist colonial settlers, had come of age. No amount of terror and intimidation could suppress the flame of liberty and freedom which their youthful spirits yearned for. Thus on 8 December 1987 Palestinian youth cast the first stone against the armed might of the Israeli occupying forces. It heralded the glorious intifadah, which has at last jolted the conscience of the international community. The visual images of Palestinian youth defending their dignity and honour barehanded against the bullets and armoured vehicles of the occupying forces have been flashed around the world on television screens and have evoked deep sentiments of sympathy from all people who value freedom, liberty and humanity. The intifadah symbolizes the assertion of the Palestinian national identity.

(Mr. Pirzada, Organization
of the Islamic Conference)

We salute the undaunted spirit of these brave people for freedom and liberty. We admire their courage and determination and pay tribute to their heroic spirit of sacrifice.

The Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988, in Algiers, took the historic decision to proclaim the independence of a Palestinian State. The Declaration and resolutions adopted by it constitute a landmark in the search for a peaceful solution to the Middle East problem, and, indeed, are an eloquent tribute to the sagacity, political acumen and statesmanship of the Palestinian leadership.

We listened with close attention to the illuminating statement made by Chairman Yasser Arafat on the important political and diplomatic initiatives taken by the PLO to reach a just and equitable settlement of the Palestine question. On behalf of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I congratulate Chairman Yasser Arafat on his eloquent address, and again assure him of the steadfast support of the Organization of the Islamic Conference for the just struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The decisions taken by the Palestinian leadership in Algiers have dispelled any doubts about the PLO's objectives; served to crystallize the political situation; and translated into declared policy the PLO's desire to establish peace on a just and equitable basis, and, most important, to fashion for the Palestinian people a glorious destiny based on the full restitution of their inalienable national rights.

The PLO's approach, as is evident from the Algiers communiqué, is realistic and pragmatic. The categorical affirmation of the PLO's acceptance of all United Nations resolutions pertaining to the Palestine issue, particularly Security

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Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), together with a firm and unequivocal demand for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State of their own in their homeland, meets fully the demands of those who were prevaricating and not taking an honourable position on the Palestine issue.

The PLO has also reaffirmed in categorical terms its ardent desire to reach a comprehensive political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core issue of which is the Palestine question. The Palestinian leadership has called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties directly concerned, including the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing. The conference should guarantee to the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, as well as Israel's withdrawal from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds al-Sharif.

The PLO has clarified its position on all important aspects of the Middle East problem, which should evoke a positive response from all concerned. It has in no uncertain terms pronounced itself for peace - a just and durable peace for all the States and peoples in the region. It is now for the other parties concerned to reciprocate in good faith the PLO's noble gesture.

The international community has hailed the Declaration of Independence, and a large number of States have already recognized the Palestinian State. It is encouraging to note that more and more States are now convinced of the legitimacy of the PLO's struggle for peace and justice.

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of the Islamic Conference)

The official reaction of the European Economic Community countries to the Algiers Declaration has been encouraging. The overwhelming solidarity and support for the PLO exhibited by public opinion in those countries is also a matter of satisfaction. Even Israeli public opinion is becoming acutely aware of the hazards of pursuing a bigoted, unprincipled and immoral policy of the ruling Zionist clique.

The cause of the Palestinian people and the liberation of Al-Quds al-Sharif are the foremost objectives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Islamic Ummah is steadfastly committed to the realization of these goals. The Seventeenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Amman this year, hailed with pride the heroic uprising of the Palestinian Arab people against the heinous Israeli occupation forces in defence of their homeland and their inalienable national rights. It reaffirmed the unflinching stand of the Islamic States to support the Palestinian people in their ongoing struggle until the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Palestinian territories.

The Conference also reaffirmed its rejection of any partial and individual solutions which would disregard the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people or ignore the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Conference condemned Israel's expansionist policy and the continued occupation of Arab lands, and denounced its coercive measures in violation of human rights.

We call upon the parties directly concerned to seize the opportunity offered by the PLO to promote a just and durable peace in the Middle East. We invoke the blessings of Almighty Allah to crown the steadfast resolve of the Palestinian people, expressed in their recent Declaration, with the early establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

(Mr. Pirzada, Organization
of the Islamic Conference)

I appeal to the international community to extend its fullest support to the Palestinian people in their just struggle for peace and freedom. The full weight of the international community must be brought to bear on the Zionist régime to end its intransigence and illegal conduct.

Special responsibility devolves on those States which are in a position to influence Israel to restore peace in the region. The ardent commitment of those States to the protection and promotion of human rights for all peoples must be applied in full vigour to upholding and ensuring those rights for the Palestinian people.

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm the steadfast support of the Organization of the Islamic Conference for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon must be vacated. We are confident that the people of Lebanon will succeed in their efforts to promote national unity and build a harmonious society in which the rights of all citizens are equally safeguarded.

The positive trends which have transformed the East-West political climate during the past few months have augured well for the resolution of regional conflicts in various parts of the world and for the relaxation of international tensions. We hope that these trends will also have a salutary effect on the efforts to evolve a comprehensive, just and negotiated settlement of the Middle East problem.

These special meetings of the General Assembly on Palestine, held in Geneva, constitute another milestone in our collective efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East. The relentless struggle of the

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of the Islamic Conference)

Palestinian people and their yearning for freedom and liberty have manifested themselves clearly in the Declaration of Independence establishing a Palestinian State and in their strategy for peace. The international community must whole-heartedly endorse them and act effectively before it is too late.

The meeting rose at 11.10 p.m.