



Press Release

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SUPPORT EXPRESSED IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR EFFORTS

TO RESOLVE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Delegates also Note Need for Normal Relations Between Israel, Syria and Lebanon

While expressing support for international efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, speakers in the General Assembly today noted that genuine peace in the Middle East also involved normal relations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

As the Assembly continued its consideration of the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East, several delegations stressed the principle of land for peace as a basis for negotiations. They also reaffirmed their support for efforts such as the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted in Beirut, and the "[road map](#)," proposed by the "Quartet" – the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

Expressing appreciation for the efforts of such international actors as the Quartet, Namibia's representative emphasized that the correct approach to achieving peace must be comprehensive, dealing simultaneously with the political, economic and security dimensions, and agreeing on the final outcome from the very beginning. In that process, the United Nations should retain its natural role, through the adoption of appropriate resolutions in the Security Council.

Reaffirming the Palestinians' right to an independent State and Israel's right to a safe and peaceful existence within internationally recognized borders, the representative of the Russian Federation called on the leadership of both sides to cooperate closely with international mediators to achieve a peaceful settlement on the basis of two States. A comprehensive settlement was achievable only on the basis of the relevant Council resolutions. Furthermore, genuine peace was impossible without the re-establishment of normal relations between Israel, Lebanon and Syria.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, Denmark's representative said that peace must also include a final Israeli settlement with Syria and Lebanon, based on relevant United Nations resolutions and on the Madrid terms of reference, in particular the principle of land for peace. The Union also supported the Arab peace initiative outlined at the Beirut Summit held last March.

The representative of Turkey was convinced that the road map developed by the Quartet could play a vital role in ending violence and promoting peaceful resolution of the situation. Such a road map should contain all details for a two-State outcome and address the needs, demands and concerns of the parties, in an equal and balanced manner. Turkey was prepared to host a peace conference, as envisioned in the road map.

The Arab Initiative was the most viable, most appropriate path for the region because it was of the region, stated Syria's representative. However, Israel had responded with incursions into Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps, and had defied any international efforts for a just and lasting peace. The road to peace was crystal clear – the implementation of resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

It was Syria's right, he continued, to regain all of the Golan to the lines prior to 4 June 1967. Israel knew that the Golan was an indivisible part of Syria and that it would return to the "motherland", however long it took and whatever the military might of the occupying Power.

The historical experience of Egypt in the peaceful settlement of issues, on the basis of the principle of land for peace, had proved the validity of that principle in solving disputes, noted its representative. Thus, he supported the right of Syria and Lebanon to regain occupied territory as a condition for peace between themselves and Israel.

Also speaking in today's discussion were the representatives of Lao People's Democratic Republic, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Iraq, India, Guyana, Yemen, Indonesia, New Zealand, Japan, Switzerland, Viet Nam, Cuba, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Norway, Sudan, Jordan, Argentina, Jamaica, Chile, Ukraine and Belarus. The Observer of Palestine also spoke.

The Assembly will continue its consideration of the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 3 December.

Background

The General Assembly met this morning to continue its consideration of the question of Palestine. For background, see Press Release [GA/10109](#) of 29 November.

It was also expected to begin its consideration of the situation in the Middle East. The report of the Secretary-General on the [situation in the Middle East](#) (document [A/57/470](#)) contains replies from Member States to the Secretary-General's note verbale of 27 June concerning implementation of the relevant provisions of Assembly resolutions [56/31](#), entitled "Jerusalem," and [56/32](#), entitled "The Syrian Golan," of 3 December 2001. As of 11 October, replies had been received from the Gambia, Israel, Japan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. Those replies are reproduced in section II of the present report.

The report of the Secretary-General on the [peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine](#) (document [A/57/621](#)) contains the observations of the Secretary-General on the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on international efforts to revive the peace process with a view to achieving a peaceful solution. Over the past year, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has deteriorated further, according to the report, eroding many of the achievements of the peace process. The ongoing cycle of violence and retaliation has further inflamed political tensions and caused a significant death toll on both sides. The international community, united in its support for the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, has continued to develop initiatives aimed at stopping the violence and bringing the parties back to the negotiating table.

For its part, the report states, the United Nations will continue to support the resumption of a meaningful peace process and will remain at the forefront of efforts to alleviate the severe economic and social hardships of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General calls on the international community to provide the necessary resources in support of United Nations programmes to address the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, and especially to provide adequate funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), so that it can continue to deliver the necessary services to Palestinian refugees.

A draft resolution on [Jerusalem](#) (document [A/57/L.44](#)) would have the Assembly deplore the transfer by some States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem in violation of Security Council resolution [478 \(1980\)](#), and call once more on those States to abide by the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions, in conformity with the Charter. Also, the Assembly would stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to holy places by the people of all religions and nationalities.

The Assembly, by the terms of a draft resolution on [the Syrian Golan](#) (document [A/57/L.45](#)), would demand, once more, that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. It would determine, once more, that the continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and its de facto annexation constitute a stumbling block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In addition, the Assembly would call on Israel to resume the talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, and to respect the commitments and undertakings reached during previous talks.

Statements

ALOUNKÈO KITTIKHOUN ([Lao People's Democratic Republic](#)) said he shared the international community's deep concern that the prospects for the peace process in the Middle East remained grim. Israel's reoccupation of Palestinian territory had led to a new cycle of violence, which had brought the process to a complete halt. Further, Israel's equation of its action with the overall struggle against terrorism was disturbing.

He called for complete and unconditional compliance with the ceasefire agreement of 17 October 2000 and all relevant United Nations resolutions. He urged all parties to return to the negotiating table, in order to find a political solution to the lingering and tragic conflict. Only a politically negotiated solution acceptable to all parties under international supervision and the principle of sovereign equality could bring an end to the conflict. Such a solution had to be based on respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

SAEED H. S. AL-JOMAE ([Saudi Arabia](#)) said that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories had been deteriorating, year after year, for over 50 years now. The Israeli Government's settlement policy and use of excessive force to physically "liquidate" the Palestinian people and their leadership flew in the face of all international laws. The explosive situation in the territories required an immediate and urgent solution to put an end to the violence. The international community could not go on watching the situation deteriorating. It was incumbent on the United Nations to assume its full responsibility, ensure that Israel put an end to its aggressive practices and provide protection to the Palestinian people.

Saudi Arabia, out of its conviction and support for efforts to realize peace, called on the international community to demand that Israel immediately and unequivocally return to the negotiating table and the peace process. The Arab Initiative of the Beirut Summit had provided proposals for a just and comprehensive peace which would restore security to the region and the rest of the world.

CHITHAMBARANATHAN MAHENDRAN ([Sri Lanka](#)) said that the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict was the question of Palestine and the main issue the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory. The Palestinian people had lived too long under occupation and conditions not in keeping with the norms of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The laws, regulations and administrative measures implemented to achieve Israel's objectives in the occupied territories affected important aspects of the Palestinians' lives.

He said that the escalation of violence, loss of life on both sides, bombings in Israeli towns and consequent military attacks on Palestinian areas and the destruction of property had contributed to the further escalation of violence. Thus, essential principles for a lasting solution of the question of Palestine included the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territory, respect for the right of all States to live in peace and security and recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Sri Lanka's position on that question remained unchanged, he said. Its solution should be achieved on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The events of the past year were distressing, he concluded, but there had been some significant

developments for the peace process, such as the adoption of Security Council resolution [1397 \(2002\)](#), the Arab Summit peace initiative and the efforts of the Quartet (the United Nations, United States, European Union and the Russian Federation). It was hoped that the international community would continue to be engaged in the effort to bring peace to the region.

GERHARD THERON ([Namibia](#)) said he was deeply concerned about the extremely harsh and repressive measures being used by the occupying Power, which had profound negative effects on each and every aspect of Palestinian life, such as health, education, freedom of movement and economic and social activities. More importantly, those measures were serious violations of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people, as well as grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

He also deplored the ongoing attempts to destroy the Palestinian Authority, including the humiliation of President Arafat and the calls for his expulsion. Those acts were counterproductive to the peace process, since the very institutions with which a peace agreement should be reached were undermined and left incapable of functioning. Peace would never be achieved through the mere use of force and without a political agreement between the parties.

Expressing appreciation for the efforts of such international actors as the Quartet, particularly the so-called "road map", he said, however, that the correct approach to achieving peace must be comprehensive, dealing simultaneously with the political, economic and security dimensions, and agreeing on the final outcome from the very beginning. In that process, the United Nations should retain its natural role, through the adoption of appropriate resolutions in the Security Council.

SAIF AL-SHAMISI ([United Arab Emirates](#)) said that although General Assembly resolution 181 had divided Palestine into two independent States, only the State of Israel had been established. The Israeli State had been built on the ruins of the Palestinian State and the bodies of thousands of innocent Palestinians. The international community had taken no action to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, nor to end Israel's continued violations of international and humanitarian law. Since the latest outbreak of violence, in September 2000, more than 2,000 civilians had been martyred.

Reaffirming his country's material and moral support for the Palestinians' struggle, he said the United Arab Emirates condemned anew the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the war crimes committed by Israel. As the core of the Middle East problem, a comprehensive, just and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine required collective, effective effort from the international community. Such efforts must include condemning State terrorism and war crimes committed by Israel, and Israeli settlement building; affirming the United Nations role in implementing legal international resolutions; compelling Israel to abide by all legal obligations stipulated in peace agreements with the Palestinians; reaffirming General Assembly resolution 194 as the basis for the solution of the problem of refugees; holding Israel fully responsible for the adverse consequences of its aggression; demanding that Israel free all Palestinian and Lebanese hostages in Israeli detention centres; and exerting pressure on Israel to destroy its weapons of mass destruction.

The United Arab Emirates condemned any attempt to defame the Palestinian struggle for freedom and to associate it with terrorism, he concluded. The Palestinian intifada was a response to Israel's State terrorism and policies of occupation. The international community should exert its authority to end the massacres and destruction committed against Palestinians, and to compel Israel to accept a peace settlement based on international laws.

NOUREDDINE MEJDOUB ([Tunisia](#)) said that while the General Assembly had been examining the Palestinian question, the situation in the region had dangerously deteriorated, to the point where there was a total halt to the peace process. That tragic situation, which worsened by the day, was the result of Israeli actions that targeted the Palestinian people and their leaders.

He said that the situation in the Palestinian territories portended a grave humanitarian catastrophe, because of a ruined economy, the spread of disease and a decline in health and security infrastructure. Despite the international community's repeated calls for peace in the Middle East, the Palestinians continued to suffer the worst forms of violence committed by Israel in violation of international humanitarian law. Further, and in total disregard of the pertinent Security Council resolutions, Israel persisted in its repressive policies and, by so doing, ignored all international conventions and shirked the agreements that it had made.

With such Israeli actions, aimed at forcing the fait accompli of occupation in violation of international law, the situation was likely to continue as long as there was no comprehensive solution to the cause of tension and hostility – which was the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Reaffirming Tunisia's continued support for the Palestinian people, he called on the Security Council to play an effective role ensuring the protection of the Palestinian people. He reiterated the call made by Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali at the Cairo Arab Summit in 1998, for international observers to be sent to the region.

He said that faced with Israel's declaration that it was no longer bound by any agreement in its dealings with the Palestinians, it was clear that it was the Israeli Government which was neglecting its commitments, reneging on the accords it had signed and endangering the whole region. Such denial of international agreements constituted a real cause for concern. It should incite the co-sponsors of the peace process, as well as the European Union and the rest of the international community, to increase their efforts to urge Israel to choose the path of peace and comply with Security Council resolutions [242](#) and [338](#).

MOHAMMED A. ALDOURI ([Iraq](#)) said that while he welcomed the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, it should have reflected in more detail what was really going on in occupied Palestine. Over the past 50 years, the Palestinian people had been exposed to horrendous acts by the occupying Zionist entity, which had uprooted Palestinians from their land and denied them their basic rights. Millions of Palestinians lived in refugee camps, denied their right to return to their homeland.

Occupation forces, he continued, had built a security wall on the pretext of protecting settlements, while only seeking to annex more Palestinian land. They had also destroyed the Palestinian infrastructure to force the Palestinian Authority to respond to its demands. The United States Government had given its blessing to the Zionist entity in carrying out its policies. Iraq called on the Assembly to bring pressure to bear on that criminal entity and stop its violations of international law.

The entity had also refused to withdraw from the Syrian Golan, and taken measures to steal land and build more settlements there, he said. Lebanon, too, had suffered from daily Israeli violations of its air space. The Assembly was called upon to show its responsibility to remove the injustices against the Palestinian people and take steps to end the occupation. In addition, the Security Council should show its moral and legal responsibility regarding the question of Palestine.

A. GOPINATHAN ([India](#)) stated his commitment to a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region, based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1397. He remained convinced that the Palestinian people, under President Arafat, stood on the threshold of a new era. India was ready to assist in whatever way it could. However, the recent tragic events were a cause of grave concern. They had not enhanced Israel's security and had not served the cause of peace. Israeli acts had done little more than endanger civilian lives.

He said the extent of the continued humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza had put the economy there in severe depression. Indeed, without international assistance, those economies faced the possibility of complete collapse. He urged Israel to lift its closures and blockades, in order to alleviate the social and economic plight of the Palestinian population. In addition to political support for the peace process, attention had to be paid to the multifaceted tasks of nation-building. He applauded the Palestinian National Authority for initiating a process of necessary reforms. India, he went on, had been contributing to infrastructural and human resources development in Palestine.

GEORGE TALBOT (Guyana) called for an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, which was at the heart of the human tragedy in the Middle East. He said violence would not lead to peace and condemned all forms of terrorism. Despite the prevalent despair, he could discern some glimmer of hope for the peace process, reflected in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). There, for the first time, the Council affirmed a vision of a region where two States – Israel and Palestine – coexisted within secure and recognized borders. That vision would be realized only if leadership on both sides displayed boldness and strength and grasped the opportunities presented to them.

Equally important was popular support for reason over irrationality in promoting a new spirit of mutual tolerance and trust between the two parties. He called on them both to eschew further confrontation and return to the negotiating table. He also expressed support for the diplomatic initiative of the Quartet and for the Arab peace initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit.

ABDULLAH M. ALSAIDI (Yemen) said that Israel was trying to create a new fait accompli by perpetrating control over the Palestinians and their land. In that respect, Israel had resisted the Quartet's efforts to establish the "road map" so that it would have enough time to complete its plans. The lack of Israeli commitment towards the Palestinian people had always been the key to greater problems in the Middle East – in spite of the promulgation of dozens of resolutions invalidating the Israeli occupation.

Yet, he asked, how could one expect Israel to pay attention to United Nations resolutions when the Security Council had been unable to implement a mere procedural resolution for the fact-finding mission to investigate the recent massacre at the Jenin refugee camp? Israel had exploited the silence of the United Nations. Some members of the Security Council wanted to please Israel at all costs, instead of forcing the occupation authorities to examine their legal obligations. Moreover, Israel had tried to distort international legal and political concepts to serve its expansionist policies. However, an appeasement policy vis-à-vis the Israeli occupier would make the situation worse and would not contribute to a peaceful settlement.

Yemen held that peace and coexistence in the Middle East had become a necessity, he added. Thus, the Arab Summit initiative had been an expression of Arab will to reach a comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict. Yemen, which followed seriously the Quartet's efforts to establish its "road map", including the establishment within three years of a sovereign Palestinian State, called for the United Nations to shoulder its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people. Secretary-General Kofi Annan should redouble his efforts to force Israel to desist from its aggressive policies in the occupied lands and to push forward the peace process.

MOCHAMAD S. HIDAYAT (Indonesia) said that rather than invest in peace, Israel had embarked on the path of State terrorism, taking and retaking entire towns and villages, deliberately destroying infrastructure, blockading, starving and terrorizing the entire population, and imposing unilateral closures and curfews, among other things. The peace process was put in danger, the humanitarian situation and the economic life of Palestinians continued to worsen, and human rights violations became the order of the day. It was the responsibility of the international community, especially the Security Council, to continue to search for the road to peace in the Middle East.

Israel must make a commitment to the implementation of Council resolutions, he said. It must avoid the temptation to close the roads back to the peace process through the deliberate use of policies that negated peace. He was pleased at the work of the Council in the past year, including its widely acknowledged vision of two States – Palestine and Israel. That vision could end the cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. Similarly, he recognized and encouraged the efforts of the Quartet, as well as the Arab Initiative.

He reiterated his call on Israel to recognize that there could be no military solution to the situation in Palestine. The path to peace and stability lay in the implementation of United Nations resolutions and working within the ambit of the international community.

The Situation in the Middle East

AHMED ABOUL GHEIT (Egypt) introduced the two draft resolutions on Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. He said that in addition to the resolution of the question of Palestine, there were other elements which needed to be addressed regarding the situation in the Middle East. Among them was the necessity for Israel to end its occupation of Arab lands in Syria and Lebanon. It should also respond positively to peace initiatives and refrain from acts which would jeopardize the peace process. In exchange, security arrangements guaranteeing security for all States in the region could be established, as well as normal relations between the countries of the region and Israel.

The efforts of the international community had come up against the categorical refusal of Israeli Governments regarding peace efforts and the continuation of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian, Arab, Syrian and Lebanese territories. The violence of Israeli forces had reached the point of violating the provisions of humanitarian law in their efforts to break down resistance to occupation. In spite of that, Israel and its armed forces had failed to break the Palestinian resistance. That failure showed that such policies and practices should not continue.

The historical experience of Egypt in the peaceful settlement of issues, on the basis of the principle of land for peace, had proved the validity of that principle in solving disputes, he said. Egypt, therefore, supported categorically the right of Syria to regain occupied territory as a condition for peace between Israel and Syria. He also confirmed that same solidarity with Lebanon in regaining territory from Israel. He awaited a gesture of good will from Israel to demonstrate real willingness to resolve the issue.

ELLEN MARGRETHE LØJ (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, said the Union remained committed to continue to work within the Middle East Quartet framework on a concrete, three-phased road map towards the final Israeli-Palestinian settlement by June 2005. Peace must also include a final Israeli settlement with Syria and Lebanon, based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1397, and on the Madrid terms of reference, in particular the principle of land for peace. The Union also supported the Arab peace initiative outlined at the Beirut Summit held last March.

In May 2000, Israel had unilaterally withdrawn from south Lebanon in line with Security Council resolution [425 \(1978\)](#), she said. The Lebanese Government needed to reinstate its effective authority over that area and Israel should stop its repeated air and other violations of the Blue Line. She called on both parties to ensure the safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) personnel there.

The Union was also deeply interested in the development of the whole Mediterranean region. Through the Barcelona Process, the Union aimed to play its full part in promoting peace, stability and security, as well as sustainable, balanced economic and social development in that region. She said that last April, at the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers Conference in Valencia, all the parties had reconfirmed their commitment to the process and its value as an instrument for cooperation.

TIM McIVOR (New Zealand) said that his country was saddened by the continued, unabated violence of the past months and the bleaker than ever prospects for peace. New Zealand utterly rejected all acts of violence from whatever quarter; violence bred further hatred and distrust and drove the two sides further apart.

The Israelis were entitled to live safely within secure, recognized borders, he said, but that would not be achieved through occupation, settlements or undermining the role and capacity of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian economy, which simply fed extremist determination. Similarly, the Palestinians' right to an independent State could not be achieved through terrorist acts. Those worked directly against the prospect of the Palestinians attaining their acknowledged rights. The essential objectives of both sides could be achieved only through a negotiated settlement.

The international community, collectively, had the responsibility to persist in efforts to support peace, he added, while a few countries were in the position to influence developments individually. The Arab-Israeli conflict remained a threat to international peace and security, while the resolution of the central conflict was the key to a positive relationship between the Western and Arab worlds in the long term. In that context, the United Nations could play an important role through the humanitarian work of UNRWA and through facilitating talks between the two parties. United Nations participation in the Quartet represented the international community's broader stake in resolving the matter. Finally, both parties should work to achieve long-term commitments with the other side's elected leadership.

ÜMIT PAMIR (Turkey) said the spiral of violence in the area was of deep concern. It had risen to unprecedented levels in recent days. He condemned all forms of violence, saying that acts of that nature would not help the just cause of the Palestinian people. Terror and violence led only to darkness and misery. That path destroyed the hopes of future generations. Building confidence between both parties was the only way to break the cycle of violence. Peace, he said, should be built on Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1397, as well as the principles of Madrid and Oslo.

It was his conviction that the road map developed by the Quartet could play a vital role in ending violence and promoting peaceful resolution of the situation. Such a road map should contain all details for a two-State outcome and address the needs, demands and concerns of the parties in an equal and balanced manner. Turkey was prepared to host a peace conference, as envisioned in the European Union and United States road maps.

NASSER AL-KIDWA, Observer for Palestine, said that the situation in the Middle East continued to deteriorate. The Arab peoples were angry and their Governments frustrated. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued and threatened to expand. The region lived in fear of a new war. In addition, the gap between the region and the industrialized world was increasing, and the estrangement between the civilizations of the East and the West was deepening and threatening to devolve into a form of religious confrontation.

The Arab world, despite the independence of its States, was not finished with the era of national liberation, he noted. At the heart of that was the question of Palestine. Israel had occupied Palestine and begun colonizing it, and had committed aggression against other Arab States. The issue was deeper and much more complicated than the vicious practices of the occupying Power against the occupied people. It was about ongoing national humiliation and about the insistence by the other side on continuing to pursue and escalate injustices. It was also about what Arab nationals saw as not only the continuation of occupation, but Israeli expansionist plans for a greater Israel.

In addition to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there was the threat of war in Iraq, he said. If that war took place, it might result in dire unforeseen consequences. If the issue was the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, why then were no efforts being made to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction possessed by Israel? And if the issue was the implementation of Security Council resolutions, why then had there been no implementation of the Council's resolutions in the case of Israel?

KOICHI HARAGUCHI (Japan) said that his Government condemned all acts of terrorism, particularly those aimed at innocent people; terrorism could not be justified for any reason. By the same token, Japan deplored excessive military actions in retaliation, which often claimed civilian victims and could never improve the situation. Japan urged President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority to crack down on extremists. It urged the Government of Israel to exercise restraint, refrain from actions that could further inflame the situation, and reengage in the dialogue to achieve peace.

The international community's involvement was essential in efforts to find a just solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which posed a serious threat to the Middle East region. It was also vital for maintaining solidarity in the fight against terrorism and addressing the issue of Iraq. The Government of Japan supported efforts by the parties concerned to gain a consensus on the Quartet's road map, and held that reforming the Palestinian Authority was an important element in advancing the peace process.

Improving the economic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinians was another important task, he said. Israel should transfer frozen tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority and ease the closures of the Palestinian territories. Japan had extended more than \$600 million in assistance to Palestinians since 1993, and would continue to support the Palestinians in a comprehensive and effective manner. Finally, he noted that while the international community could help to draw up the road map for peace, it was the parties themselves who had to walk the road.

JENÖ STAEHELIN (Switzerland) condemned the violence in the Middle East, saying that it compromised the future of an entire generation and engendered suicidal desperation. The violence should stop. He recognized Israel's right to exist in security and peace. Murderous attacks against civilians were undermining and disqualifying the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. It was the duty of the Palestinian Authority to bring those responsible to justice. But he was equally supportive of the need for a Palestinian State. In that connection, he urged the Palestinian Authority to carry out the necessary reform of its structure, with a view to ensuring both the democratic control and transparent functioning of its security apparatus. Both parties should cooperate in security matters, in order to restore mutual confidence and lay the foundation for a genuine peace process.

Negotiations would only be undertaken with real prospects for peace. Not long ago, peace had seemed near at hand. Such an opportunity could emerge again, provided both parties committed themselves to Security Council resolutions and the Madrid agreement. Switzerland supported the work of the Quartet, especially its vision of two States. He called on both parties to comply with the Fourth Geneva Convention as a means of combating terrorism. He said settlements were an obstacle to peace and a breach of international law. Israel should live up to its obligation accepted under the Oslo agreement, not to change the status of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Peace, he concluded, would only be brought about through the exercise of political will, not through acts of terror.

NGUYEN THANH CHAU (Viet Nam) said no one benefited from the precarious situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. For Israel and neighbouring countries, it must be an uneasy feeling of constant insecurity, but for the Palestinians, it was the feeling of being denied for so long the inalienable right to self-determination and to the statehood they deserved. The international community suffered as well, as evidenced by the recent

killing of a United Nations relief worker in Jenin. Sheer force could not solve the problem. The only option to the conflict was to peacefully negotiate a solution which catered to the legitimate interests of all parties concerned.

The miserable plight of the Palestinians was a direct consequence of the acts of war and occupation by Israeli forces, he said. For the last 50 years, millions of Palestinians had become refugees on their own land, struggling hard to make both ends meet. In addition, prolonged military curfews and strict travel restrictions gravely affected the normal life of the people. The international community had tried its best to deliver assistance. In that connection, he commended UNRWA for its painstaking efforts to help the Palestinian people even with its very tight budget. He also commended the donor countries, the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other bodies for their generous contributions, which helped ease the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

ORLANDO REQUEJO GUAL (Cuba) said the ongoing cycle of violence and reprisals had exacerbated tensions and had led to an unprecedented toll of dead and injured. Yet, violence, destruction and the use of military force could in no way lead to the definitive resolution of the conflict. Half a century after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181, the creation of the State of Palestine continued to be just an aspiration that had yet to take place. The picture today was devastating, given the continued occupation of Arab territories and the lack of respect shown for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Israel continued to expand its settlements, particularly in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem.

Virtually nothing had been done to address the lot of the roughly 4 million Palestinian refugees since the beginning of the peace process in Madrid roughly one decade ago, he added. It was lamentable that the Security Council had been held hostage by a Power wielding or threatening the veto. The double standard concerning implementation of resolutions should be eliminated if the international community wanted to avoid having the legitimacy of the Council called into question.

Achieving a just settlement to the question of Palestine was essential to reaching a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, he concluded. The need for progress on the Syrian and Lebanese fronts could not be forgotten either. Full compliance with United Nations resolutions was needed without exception or discrimination. The United Nations should adopt more decisive and effective measures on the ground, such as the deployment of an international force to protect civilians under a United Nations mandate. Moreover, the United Nations should play an impartial role, avoiding any kind of interference unacceptable to the parties, so that their confidence in mediators could be restored.

MICHEL KAFANDO (Burkina Faso) said that the Israeli policy of occupation and expulsion of Palestinians was the main cause of the persistent tensions, punctuated by suicide bombings and violence of all kinds. Most of the victims were children. It must be acknowledged that by weakening the Palestinian Authority and subjecting the Palestinians to humiliating practices, the Israeli Government was antagonizing organizations which wanted to express themselves through violence. The conflict in the Middle East was entering its 54th year without any hope for a solution or lasting peace emerging on the horizon.

Yet, he said, the current impasse should not be reason to despair, as there were many diplomatic efforts underway. There was the Arab Initiative, which advocated the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of normal relations between Israel and Arab countries in exchange for the return of Arab land. That plan was an honourable solution and had been fully supported by the international community. The Security Council had evolved in its approach to the Middle East, having supported the vision of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side. The idea of the “road map” proposed by the Quartet was to create a Palestinian State by 2005.

Those proposals were opportunities which should be seized without further delay, he said. The parties had no choice but to negotiate. Violence had not led to any victory. A final solution would not come through military action.

ARTHUR C.I. MBANEFO (Nigeria) said the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine was one of the most intractable problems on the United Nations agenda. It was regrettable that situation persisted in spite of the international community's efforts to end the cycle of violence there, and he condemned the recent escalation of violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The various military incursions by Israel, such as “Operation Defensive Shield” in Bethlehem, Jenin and Nablus, and the deliberate humiliation and isolation of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat were as deplorable as the spate of suicide bombing attacks at schools, markets and other public places carried out against Israel by certain Palestinian elements. All those actions were clear violations of the Madrid and Oslo accords, and the international community could not and should not allow that wanton destruction of lives and property to continue. He said Nigeria believed that a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine should be the basis for the establishment of sustainable peace in the region and one that was consistent with Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 425.

He called on the parties to resume the peace process and move towards a lasting peace in the region, stressing that no progress was likely until the core issues of the Middle East crisis were addressed. Those included the occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, violence, terrorism and the economic situation in Palestine. Also, the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan continued to live under “foreign occupation”, and the continued existence and expansion of settlements there, as well as the reluctance to guarantee the security of the parties, were major stumbling blocks to peace.

While some progress had been made in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425, the situation in Lebanon remained unstable. Disturbing developments along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon, including the mortar and rocket attacks from southern Lebanon across the Blue Line, could threaten regional peace and security, he said.

OLE PETER KOLBY (Norway) said external initiatives were needed to bring peace to the Middle East. On that basis, he supported the ambitious road map of the Quartet for peace in the region by 2005. To succeed, the road map would require the full cooperation of both sides. While conceding Israel's right to exist, he called for the cessation of its heavy military operations in densely populated areas and the easing of its curfews and closures in the Palestinian territory.

At the same time, he urged the Palestinian Authority to take an unequivocal stand against terror, which had achieved nothing but misery and grief. Because of terror, the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had deteriorated greatly. For its own security, Israel should no longer delay the disbursement of taxes that had been withheld from the budget of the Palestinian Authority. As chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinians, Norway saw the need for a donor meeting to be organized soon to address urgent issues sustaining the situation. Timely action by the donor community would be an indispensable complement to the efforts of the Quartet to get the peace process back on track.

GENNADY M. GATILOV (Russian Federation) said the last year had been marked by an unprecedented crisis in the relations between Palestinians and Israelis. They had been unable to break the cycle of violence, the victims of which were civilians on both sides. Desperation had grown while prospects for the resumption of the peace dialogue had gotten worse, and the humanitarian crisis had assumed catastrophic dimensions. The Russian Federation called on both sides not to succumb to extremists. Violence could not be justified by any reason at all; it did irreparable damage to the

aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Russia had confronted the manifestations of an ongoing terrorist war, he said, and condemned all those who chose terror to further their aims. The Palestinian Authority should act to combat decisively the terrorist infrastructure. Improvement of the situation, he added, would only come if Israel stopped attacking Palestinian towns and lands. Also, the economic blockade should be lifted, tax revenues unfrozen and unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations to all Palestinian areas ensured. Moreover, it was unacceptable to damage the property of institutions giving assistance to the Palestinians. In this respect, the Russian Federation shared the Secretary-General's concern over the destruction of a World Food Programme warehouse.

Reaffirming the Palestinians' right to an independent State and Israel's right to a safe and peaceful existence within internationally recognized borders, he called upon both sides' leadership to cooperate closely with international mediators and other parties to achieve a peaceful settlement on the basis of two States. A comprehensive settlement was achievable only on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, genuine peace was impossible without the reestablishment of normal relations between Israel, Lebanon and Syria.

OMER MANIS (Sudan) said he attached the greatest importance to the peace process in the Middle East. Because of Israel's flouting of international legality, he anticipated complications in future peace efforts. Its destructiveness, which had had a telling impact on the civilian population, had provoked resentment and would lead to further violence. The occupying power had taken away land from Palestinian citizens thus depriving them of the means to provide for themselves and had used those lands for its own benefit.

Israel was terrorizing the civilian population in complete violation of United Nations resolutions, the Charter, the Geneva Convention and the Hague Conventions. Israel must be compelled to withdraw from those lands it had occupied since 1967 in order for the principle of "land for peace" and relevant resolutions to be implemented. It was also essential for Israel to release Palestinian prisoners as well as Syrian and Lebanese detainees. He called for the disarming of Israel of all weapons of mass destruction, including its nuclear weapons.

SAEED AL-JOMAE (Saudi Arabia) said the United Nations had made many efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the adoption of several resolutions. Israel, however, had refused to implement the relevant resolutions against the will of the international community. It was not necessary to delve into a detailed description of the daily acts of aggression committed by Israel. The way out lay in the implementation by Israel of the relevant resolutions, which was the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace.

He said that while all the States of the region had acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Israel had refused to accede to that Treaty and refused to submit itself to International Atomic Energy Agency supervision. He called for strenuous efforts to render the region free of nuclear weapons. His Government rejected the policy of double standards, which exempted Israel from the efforts for nuclear disarmament. It was the duty of all Member States in the region to commit themselves to the implementation of international law. He welcomed the return of inspectors to Iraq and called on Iraq to comply with all relevant resolutions.

ZEID RA'AD ZEID AL-HUSSEIN (Jordan) said Israel's security policies had led to the further deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. They would not bring an end to the violence, but were ineffective and contradicted international efforts to resume the peace track. Urging Israel to end the occupation of Palestinian cities without delay, he called for Israel to adopt more positive policies, including handing over the tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority and facilitating humanitarian access to the Palestinian people. Israeli violence in the occupied territories had become the main source of frustration and desperation among the Palestinian people, and it strengthened the role of extremist organizations on both sides. Jordan condemned the killing of innocent civilians on both sides.

The only way to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, he said, was to resume the peace process on the basis of the withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian State. The peace process should be resumed on the basis of a clear road map, delineating the obligations of both sides, with a specific timeline for the establishment of the independent Palestinian State. In this regard, the Quartet's road map should be comprehensive and include a monitoring and evaluation mechanism beginning with the first stage of implementation. It should be dealt with as one package in terms of accepting or rejecting its elements. Israel was called upon to deal seriously and positively with international efforts aimed at issuing the road map.

There was a true and serious Arab commitment to achieving a just and lasting peace, he added, on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit. All Arab States would collectively sign a peace treaty with Israel in return for: Israel's full and prior withdrawal from the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories occupied since 1967; the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital; and reaching an agreed solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees. Finally, calling on Israel to freeze all settlement activities in the Palestinian occupied territories, he said Jerusalem was subject to relevant Security Council resolutions as an occupied Arab territory.

LUIS CAPPAGLI (Argentina) said that terrorism, occupation, settlements, and destruction of infrastructure and homes had led to an increase in tensions to an alarming level in the Middle East. Peace would not be imposed by force of arms or terrorism. Reports by international organizations had revealed war crimes being committed by Israel. Suicide bombings by Palestinians were also classed as war crimes. Israel must abide by international law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. Its right to security did not permit it to violate international law. It should implement the recommendations of the Bertini report in order to improve the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The Palestinian Authority should refrain from attacks against civilians and should exercise its authority to restrain others who would carry out such acts because those attacks did not cause Israel to bend but merely strengthened its resolve to put a stop to them. He deplored acts that took the lives of innocent citizens and also called for the protection of United Nations personnel. In the face of the unfolding violence, it was imperative for the two parties to return to the negotiating table. The road map of the Quartet should be supported by both parties so that there could be a resumption of the peace process. Further, there had to be peace with Syria and Lebanon as well. Acquisition of territory by force was inadmissible. The peace attained should conform with Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1397.

STAFFORD NEIL (Jamaica) said that most distressing of all regarding the situation in the Middle East was the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Terrorist bombings, shootings and military excesses of the Israeli occupation forces, the destruction of homes and property, economic deprivation, misery, suffering and impoverishment had all become part of the evolving deterioration. Those conditions were the result of hard-line policies which emphasized military solutions which only helped to fuel the conflict and resulted in continued violence.

He said there was a need for more active promotion of diplomatic initiatives. The United Nations had a central role to play, and the Security Council had a special responsibility under the Charter in that regard. Since so much time had already been lost, what was needed now was a political initiative from within the international community to move the process forward and to move the parties to negotiations without pre-conditions.

It was time for the occupation to end along with the illegal establishment of settlements in the occupied territories. The prolonged occupation by Israel

had intensified grievances and had provoked anger, bitterness, frustration and despair, he said. If the Palestinian people were not offered any hope and their elected leaders were subjected to disrespect and humiliation, there could be no real prospect of durable peace. On the other hand, there should also be acknowledgement of the right of all States in the area to exist in peace and security within recognized boundaries. Violence could not bring justice for the Palestinians nor could their military domination and subjugation bring security for Israel.

MIKHAIL WEHBE (Syria) said the region was witnessing a horrendous escalation of aggression by Israel. Year by year, month by month and day by day, the Madrid peace process was losing momentum. Israel's continued occupation of Arab lands, sometimes packaged by its security needs and other empty claims, was the main obstacle in the path to peace. The peace process had been stopped on all tracks, particularly in recent years following the ascension of extremist forces to power in Israel. Those powers insisted on occupying Arab lands; rejected international legality; refused to implement Council resolutions; and rejected the principle of land for peace. Israel was not interested in achieving a just and lasting peace based on United Nations resolutions.

It was the indivisible right of Syria, he said, to regain all of the Golan to the line prior to 4 June 1967. Israeli occupation of the Golan was accompanied by the promulgation of legislation and various ways and means to rid the land of its people and build settlements on occupied Arab land, bringing in settlers to replace its Arab inhabitants. Among the most important effects of occupation was the issue of displaced persons, who had been ejected from the occupied Golan in 1967 and continued to wait to return to their lands and homes. Israel knew that the Golan was an indivisible part of Syria and that it would return to the "motherland", however long it took and whatever the military might of the occupying Power.

Israel had exploited the umbrella of the international coalition against terrorism in the ugliest possible way, by combating Palestinian resistance under the pretext of combating terrorism, he said. Thus, it was contravening international instruments and the principles of international law as it attempted to cover up the war of extermination of the Palestinian people. For many years, Syria had called on the international community to condemn all forms of terrorism, particularly the State terrorism practiced by Israel. Terrorism had been unknown in the region until the creation of Israel. Since then, Israel had become the master of terror. The Palestinian people now had no alternative but the intifada to regain their land and their dignity. Peace contradicted occupation; they could not coexist. Also, peace could not be reconciled with the brutal muscle flexing by Israel.

The Arab States had unanimously, through adopting the Arab Peace Initiative, drawn the path to comprehensive peace. However, Israel had responded with incursions into Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps. Israel had defied any international efforts for a just and lasting peace. The international community must realize that peace could not be achieved at the expense of continued occupation and a continued policy of starving and killing. The road to peace was crystal clear – the implementation of resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

The Arab Initiative, he added, was the most viable, most appropriate path for the region because it was of the region. The implementation of that Initiative would obtain peace and security in the region. It was impossible to understand why Chapter VII was selectively applied while its use was excluded against Israel, which had shown contempt for all United Nations resolutions. He appealed to Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolutions tabled before the Assembly.

CRISTIAN MAQUIEIRA (Chile) expressed concern that the international community's efforts to renew cooperation in security matters between the Israelis and the Palestinians had thus far not borne fruit. The lack of cooperation by Israel in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council diminished the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations and weakened its role as the guarantor of international peace and security.

It was a matter of grave concern that those resolutions had not only been ignored but had also been defied with the reoccupation of Palestinian territories, as a result of which the peace process in the Middle East was now at an impasse. Additionally, the worsening situation in the Israeli-occupied territories and the tightening of restrictions on the Palestinian civilian population had had a negative impact on the economy and on the lives of the population, who were the main victims of the conflict. Israel, for its part, was experiencing its worst economic recession since 1953.

Chile recognized Israel's right to live within secure borders and protected from acts of terror, he noted, adding "we cannot ignore the fact that waves of Palestinian suicide attackers have inflicted deep wounds on the society of Israel". Those acts and any other criminal acts of terrorism were morally unacceptable. However, the excessive use of force and attendant violation of human rights and humanitarian law by Israel were not justifiable. He called on Israel to safeguard the security of its citizens without violating the rights of Palestinians. He endorsed the efforts of the Quartet and urged it to continue the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting negotiated solution based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338, and 1397 and on the core principle of "land for peace".

MARKIYAN KULYK (Ukraine) said the situation in the Middle East remained a source of deep concern, particularly in terms of the increasing human suffering and loss of life among the innocent Palestinian and Israeli civilian populations, as well as the humanitarian crisis faced by the Palestinians. Ukraine, which had stated its condemnation and utter rejection of terrorism, called upon the Palestinian Authority to take all possible measures to prevent terrorist attacks against Israelis and to bring those responsible to justice. Furthermore, the legitimate right of Israel to defend its citizens could not justify the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, extrajudicial killings and destruction of property.

Adequate Israeli security, he said, could not be ensured solely with military force. Thus, Israel should withdraw its forces to positions held prior to September 2000, lift the blockade, stop the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and end its settlement activities. The only way to solve the conflict in a comprehensive, just and lasting manner was through peaceful dialogue and political process between the parties. The basis of negotiation was well known and widely accepted – the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, land for peace and previously signed agreements. The final goal was also clear – two States of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders.

The international community should not relax its attention nor weaken its efforts to advance the peace process, he added. The Quartet road map could require painful compromises and hard decisions, but the alternative would be continued bloodshed and further delayed prospects for a peaceful solution. Finally, a comprehensive Middle East settlement would be impossible without the resumption of negotiations on the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks aimed at ending the occupation of the Arab territories and normalizing their relations with Israel.

ALEG IVANOU (Belarus) noted with regret that the Middle East peace process was still beset by the serious consequences of 28 September 2000. Acts of violence continued unabated. The only solution was the practical embodiment of the will of both parties to achieve peace for the sake of the thousands of lives sacrificed. He was pained at the continued bloodshed, which prevented the normalization of the situation in the Middle East.

Peace in the Middle East, he said, was impossible unless the Palestinian people exercised their right to self-determination. It was also impossible without the peaceful coexistence of Palestinian and Israeli States along internationally recognized borders. He hoped that the coordinated efforts of the international community would ultimately lead to a resumption of the peace process, leading to a final settlement. The prospects for peace were now being threatened by the developments surrounding Iraq. The artificial heightening of tensions and the threat of the use of force would have catastrophic

consequences for the region. The international community had no right to start a new war in the region.

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