

**UNITED NATIONS MEETING FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

**Beijing
16 and 17 December 2003**

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the Question of Palestine was convened in Beijing on 16 and 17 December 2003 by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in accordance with its mandate to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people. It was followed, on 18 December 2003, by a Public Forum in Support of Middle East Peace, which was co-sponsored by the United Nations and Peking University. The Meeting and the Forum were held in pursuance of General Assembly resolutions 57/107 and 57/108 of 3 December 2002.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee and Head of the delegation; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Victor Camilleri (Malta), Rapporteur; and Mr. Rastam Mohd Isa (Malaysia), member of the Committee.

3. Under the theme *Mobilizing international support for a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine*, the Meeting proceeded with an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were "The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem", "Strengthening international support for a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine" and "Support in Asia for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people".

4. Presentations were made by 15 experts, including Palestinians and Israelis. The Meeting was attended by representatives of 72 Governments, Palestine, 3 intergovernmental organizations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 7 United Nations bodies and representatives of 12 civil society organizations, as well as special guests of the host country and representatives of the media and academic institutions.

5. The main points of the discussion were highlighted in the Final Document of the Meeting (see annex I).

II. Opening statements

6. The Meeting was opened by Dai Bingguo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of China. The Secretary-General of the United Nations sent a message to the Meeting which was read by his representative Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

(ESCAP). The opening session was also addressed by the Head of delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and Mr. Ghassan Khatib, Minister for Labour of the Palestinian Authority and Representative of Palestine. Subsequently, statements were made from the floor by the representatives of Lebanon, Tunisia, India, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Poland, Ukraine and Jordan. The representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the League of Arab States also made statements.

7. **Dai Bingguo**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, recalled that the question of Palestine had been for more than half a century the root cause for enduring tension and chaos in the Middle East. He said that the key to a solution to the question was in the hands of the Israelis and the Palestinians, but international support was indispensable. It was imperative for the international community to show greater courage, wisdom and resolve in helping the two parties get rid of disturbances, abandon violence, continue peace talks and follow the Road Map in good faith. To that end, he recommended, first, the promotion of the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in resolving issues in the Middle East. The relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace continued to constitute the basis for a political settlement of the Middle East conflict. But, he said, United Nations peacemaking efforts in the Middle East had always been fraught with difficulties, which were not conducive to peace and detrimental to United Nations authority.

8. Second, he called upon the international community to strictly observe the principles of neutrality, objectivity and justice without favouring either party. The reasonable concerns and requirements of the two parties must be taken seriously with equal attention and care. The legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to build an independent State, must be restored at an early date. Suicide bombings targeting civilians also should be checked effectively. Only on a just, reasonable and comprehensive basis could the question of Palestine be solved properly.

9. Third, he recommended bringing the role of civil society into full play. The participation of academia, the business community, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society helped the international community to pool its wisdom and jointly promote the Middle East peace process. As an example he pointed to the recently launched Geneva Accord which demonstrated a fresh way, undertaken by well-known representatives of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, for resolving the question of Palestine. He concluded by saying that the painful sufferings of the two sides simply could not continue; the more than half a century-old hatred and animosity must come to an end. All peace-loving countries were obligated to help those two great nations to remove their hate and feuds, live in peace and harmony and develop their societies side by side. He said that China would continue to back the United Nations role in addressing the Middle East issue and was ready to join the rest of the international community in pushing forward the Middle East peace process.

10. **Kofi Annan**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a message read out by his representative, Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, said that every effort should be exerted to bring the unconscionable violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians to an immediate halt. He said that Israeli military operations, closures and curfews, the destruction of houses and continued settlement expansion reinforced the Palestinian feelings of deep despair and hopelessness. The construction of a barrier in the West Bank caused great concern. It deepened economic and humanitarian problems facing the Palestinians, ran contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Road Map, and sowed the seeds of mistrust and suspicion among Palestinians. It was critical for both sides to take good-faith, confidence-building steps, so as not to impair future negotiations. He informed the Meeting about his report on the barrier and on the adopted General Assembly resolution that requested the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from the construction of the barrier.

11. He stressed that Israel had a legitimate right and duty to protect its people against terrorist attacks. That duty, however, should not be carried out in a way that contradicted international law, damaged the longer-term prospects for peace or increased suffering among the Palestinian people. The practice of collective punishment and extrajudicial killings further diminished trust and raised levels of frustration and anger. At the same time, the new Palestinian Cabinet must act decisively to put an end to terrorist attacks. A solution would not be achieved through terrorism. Suicide bombings against innocent Israeli civilians were morally reprehensible and could not be justified. The Palestinian side should live up to its Road Map obligations as regards security and take immediate and practical steps to rein in extremists committing terrorist acts.

12. He emphasized that the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians could only be resolved through a political process that resulted in a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on two States living side-by-side in peace within secure and recognized borders. Recent efforts by civil society demonstrated that there were Palestinians and Israelis who felt that peace was an aspiration that could no longer be put on hold. The Geneva Initiative, launched on 1 December, offered a detailed plan to resolve the conflict in a comprehensive manner. The Ayalon-Nusseibeh statement of principles was another clear signal that the Israelis and Palestinians could act with reason and restraint and agree on how to live in peace. Those creative Track Two initiatives were consistent and compatible with the Road Map.

13. He called upon the international community to bolster its role in the peace process and welcomed the Security Council's unanimous endorsement of the Road Map in its resolution 1515 (2003). It paved the way for a more vigorous involvement of the international community in helping the parties to implement their respective Road Map obligations. He urged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to speed up efforts to restart negotiations. The international community should remain steadfast in its support for the quest for peace in the Middle East. He would continue to work with all concerned to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and the principle of land for peace.

14. **Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla**, Head of the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that a determined effort by the world community was needed now more than ever if peace was to prevail in the Middle East. The situation in the Occupied Territory remained of great concern and the Palestinian civilians continued to suffer from oppressive Israeli policies and practices. He said that the death toll since the outset of the intifada was approaching 4000, most of whom were Palestinians. Hundreds of Israelis had lost their lives as well. The Committee condemned the Israeli practice of extrajudicial killings as well as the suicide bombings against Israeli civilians, all of which harmed efforts to encourage reconciliation and pushed the goal of peaceful coexistence farther away.

15. He continued by noting that the construction of a separation wall in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem had, like the expansion of the settlements, led to the confiscation of Palestinian land and property. The Israeli Government asserted that the wall was a temporary security measure and should not be perceived as a political border. If that was so, he went on to ask, why wasn't Israel building the wall in its own territory parallel to the Green Line? The Committee was still waiting for a clear reply from the Israeli leadership. The wall, if fully completed, would create unwanted facts on the ground and hamper negotiations on the future borders between Israel and a State of Palestine. The international community had expressed its vigorous opposition to the separation barrier through General Assembly resolution

ES-10/13, in which the Assembly had demanded that Israel stop and reverse the construction of the wall. Israel had indicated its intention to complete the project, ignoring the will of the international community. The General Assembly, on 8 December, had adopted a resolution asking the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's construction of the wall in the West Bank.

16. He said that the Quartet's Road Map offered a solution which was accepted by both parties and enjoyed broad international support. Regrettably, the implementation of the Road Map had been held back, but a group of Israelis and Palestinians had embarked on dialogue and had begun to explore possible alternative solutions. The Geneva and the People's Voice initiatives, which were compatible with the Road Map, were good examples of civil society on both sides addressing painful, yet essential issues that would help start the process of finding ways to bridge the deep divide still separating the two sides. While only the official negotiations could move the process forward, the voice of civil society reminded the international community that there were promising approaches that had yet to be seriously considered. He said that the Committee welcomed Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), which aimed at bolstering international support for the Road Map and reiterated its position that the United Nations should continue to maintain its responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine. He said that there was a hint of movement in the right direction with the newly elected Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmad Qurei demonstrating the Palestinian Authority's readiness to bring about law and order and rein in militants. He called upon both parties to heed the call to peace and to restart the political process. He also urged the international community to continue to give generously to the assistance programmes benefiting Palestinians and called upon the Israeli Government to ensure that donors and aid workers were allowed to deliver humanitarian assistance.

17. **Ghassan Khatib**, Minister for Labour of the Palestinian Authority and Representative of Palestine, said that Israel was in violation of international law in two central ways, first through collective punishment of Palestinians, including arbitrary killings of civilians, and, second, through settlement expansion including the latest Israeli project which the Palestinians called the "apartheid wall".

He asserted that settlement expansion was widely considered to be the sole responsible for hindering the peace process and any prospect of peace. It created concrete realities on the ground that prevented a resolution based on the establishment of two States.

18. He said that the question was no longer how to describe the situation on the ground or whether Israel had violated international law, but how the international community could do something practical to end those violations and resume the peace process in a manner that would end the occupation.

He stressed that the situation was urgent; it needed to be dealt with before it became irreversible, where the United Nations might regret not having reacted sooner. He went on to say that the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon were not only harming the Palestinians, but tarnishing Israel's reputation and its international credibility, not to mention Israel's security and economy. Palestinians were asking how long the international community would treat Israel as a country above international law.

19. He conveyed President Arafat's commitment to a negotiated, peaceful settlement, the relevant Security Council resolutions and to the Road Map. He also conveyed his appeal to the international community to provide protection for the Palestinians. The Palestinian people and their leadership remained committed to a peacefully negotiated solution that would replace the Israeli occupation with a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and would solve the refugee problem in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Finally he said that Palestinians could promise two things, to remain steadfast in the face of Israeli occupation and to continue searching for ways to replace the confrontational relationship with Israel with peaceful negotiations which would allow both peoples to achieve their legitimate objectives.

20. The representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) said there was a growing international awareness of the need to find a just and peaceful solution to the situation in the Middle East and to enable the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights. Despite positive efforts by the United Nations, such as the Secretary-General's report and the General Assembly resolution on the Israeli barrier, it was high time for concerted international efforts to stop the Israeli aggression and its violations of international law and agreements. This required an end to all Israeli aggressions against land and people; the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Occupied Palestinian Territory; a cessation and abolishment of all settlement operations and the removal of the apartheid wall; the release of all Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons; and the removal of all barricades and blockades imposed on the Palestinian people and its leadership and the dispatch of international disengagement forces to supervise the implementation of the Road Map.

21. The representative of Lebanon said that his Government had brought the Palestinian cause before the world and the United Nations. Since 1948, Lebanese had been suffering with Palestinians. After many years of war, it was very clear that Israel did not want peace and did not want the Palestinians to live in a sovereign, independent and viable State. The fact that Israel continued to occupy Lebanese and Syrian territories and continued its policy of death and destruction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory made it impossible to talk in a reasonable manner about the peace in the Middle East. Lebanon was committed to the peace process in the Middle East according to United Nations resolutions and the principles of Madrid. Solidarity with the Palestinian people meant helping the people to return to their land. Lebanon firmly supported the right of Palestinians to return, because it was a legal, moral and human right. On that basis, Lebanon opposed any attempt to implant Palestinian refugees on Lebanese territory. He called for a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees in order to ensure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return.

22. The representative of Tunisia said that his country's unswerving support for the Palestinian cause was long-standing. Tunisia had actively supported various peace initiatives in the Middle East from the outset and would continue to support any solution that guaranteed the rights of the Palestinian people. He said that world peace remained fragile as long as any conflict was unresolved. The struggle against terrorism and the establishment of peace and security called for peaceful solutions to problems, of which the Middle East conflict was a central one. He said that his Government had reiterated the urgency of stepping up efforts to bring peace and to help the Palestinian people establish their own State. The application of the Road Map and the implementation of United Nations resolutions could put an end to the violence and pave the way for the achievement of a comprehensive and lasting peace for the peoples in the region and to the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

23. The representative of India said that his country had consistently supported the Palestinian cause as enshrined in Security Council resolutions which envisaged Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territory and the establishment of two States. He said that India was supportive of various moves by the international community towards a political solution, such as the Quartet's Road Map and the Arab Peace Plan. There was no military solution to the problem. Both sides must cease all acts of violence and fully cooperate with the efforts of the international community. He added that the separation wall that was being built on the pretence of preventing violence was anachronistic in today's open world. He called for an immediate, parallel and accelerated movement towards tangible political progress and a defined series of steps leading to permanent peace involving recognition, normalization and security between the two sides.

24. The representative of Afghanistan said that the Palestinian people had the right to enjoy their own State. The illegality of settlements and of changing of the status of Jerusalem had been reaffirmed by the General Assembly. A peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine was the basis of recent efforts by civil society to find a negotiated solution. He stated that while Palestinian suffering could not be ignored, all acts of violence must end. The time had come to create circumstances in which the Palestinian people could enjoy their human rights. Afghanistan had always actively supported the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. He added that East Jerusalem was considered a sacred place by all Moslems and therefore Jerusalem was not just an Israeli-Palestinian matter; Jerusalem was a global problem.

25. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that a climate of democratic governance was developing in the Palestinian Territory. He admitted that it was no small achievement for a people to discover the right to govern themselves under difficult conditions. Regretting that all the development work was being carried out under a state of emergency, he told participants that there were many examples of progress. For example a woman's centre had helped women with little training to establish their own businesses. He highlighted that UNDP's Palestinian programme had had considerable experience and enjoyed trusted relationships with local counterparts. All of its efforts required a participatory approach. He concluded that even in times of crisis and conflict one must not lose sight of the fact that the eternal task was to join with the people as partners for the future.

26. The representative of Indonesia said that his Government had consistently condemned the actions of the Israeli Government which assaulted the lives of Palestinians. The construction of the wall made it difficult to believe that Israel was actually searching for peace. He expressed hope that the Meeting would further the resolution of the question of Palestine and support the two-State solution. He said that Indonesia shared the view of the United Nations Special Coordinator, expressed at a recent Security Council briefing, that the stalemate in the peace process had been characterized by a period of relative quiet which provided a narrow window of opportunity to put the peace process back on track. He opined that unless Israel demonstrated its interest in making the peace process work it would be difficult to achieve any progress.

27. The representative of Poland said that since the Committee's meeting at Kyiv in May 2003, there had been further acts of violence in the region. For that matter he expected the Palestinian Cabinet to take steps to establish law and order. He went on to say that during the past several weeks there had been further construction of the Israeli barrier. Poland had expressed its grave concern about the route of the wall and the likely impact on the Palestinians. He supported the United Nations resolution to stop and reverse the wall and regretted that construction had continued unabated. He opined that such acts were inconsistent with the Road Map and made the realization of a two-State solution more difficult. He welcomed the new and promising spirit of the Geneva Accord and the Ayalon-Nusseibeh initiative and said that those initiatives should be welcomed in a positive spirit.

28. The representative of Ukraine said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to pose a threat to the whole world. He emphasized that the peace process in the Middle East must be made irreversible. He noted that the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Peace in the Middle East sponsored by the Committee and held at Kyiv in May 2003 was the first international event where the Road Map had received wide support in the world community. He said that the only meaningful option was to continue negotiations with the objective of stabilizing the current situation and to achieve a complete and lasting peace. He reiterated his country's offer to provide good offices for holding peace negotiations in Ukraine. He drew attention to the fact that current obstacles to the peace process needed to be overcome so that the negotiations on the final status could begin as soon as possible. The role of the international community in the settlement of the problem could not be overestimated. He concluded by calling upon all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to respect the principles of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

29. The representative of Jordan said that Jordan deplored violence against civilians. He called upon Israel to stop violence and refrain from closures, assassinations, demolition of houses and all kinds of collective punishment. He called for an immediate halt of Israeli settlement expansion, the abolishment of the wall and the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He said that his country attached great importance to the international community and donor countries for extending all kinds of assistance, which was vital and fundamental for the Palestinian people. He stated that the Palestinian refugee issue was critical. As the host of the largest Palestinian refugee population, Jordan called upon the international community to solve this problem in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and other relevant resolutions. He looked forward to a comprehensive peace in the region that involved Israel and the Palestinians as well as Syria and Lebanon.

30. The representative of the League of Arab States (LAS), said that Israel's colonialist settlement policy and the construction of the apartheid wall confiscated more Palestinian land, prejudiced the result of any future negotiations and precluded the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. He stressed that the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), which the League had supported, reflected the international community's strong support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Now, the international community had to enforce that resolution by making Israel fulfil its commitments and obligations as stipulated in the

Road Map. He said that the vision of United States President George Bush of a two-State solution was the only way to bring the Middle East conflict to an end. He noted that while the Palestinians had implemented many obligations under the Road Map, and reformed their institutions and the new Prime Minister was exerting efforts to reach a truce, Israel continued its military campaign against the Palestinians. He reminded participants that the Arab Summit had adopted an unprecedented peace initiative linking Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territory and the establishment of a Palestinian State with the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab States.

31. The representative of the **United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Habitat)** described his Organization's activities and said that it was imperative that the Palestinian Authority and other stakeholders prepare coherent housing and urban policies and commensurate implementation strategies. They should not, however, become housing providers but enabling agents. The Occupied Palestinian Territory was a highly urbanized territory and interventions tended to impact on the living conditions of the vast majority of the Palestinian people. He stressed that there was a critical need for donor countries to provide support. He called attention to the establishment of a Trust Fund that was intended as a vehicle for a funding mechanism and to raise the profile of human settlements activities. Rather than incur the costs associated with creating new institutions, the cost of housing could be kept low by drawing upon Habitat's extensive experience. He concluded by saying that Habitat was undertaking a campaign to raise funds for the Trust Fund and he urged Governments to contribute to the Fund.

III. Plenary sessions

Plenary I

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

32. The first plenary session heard presentations of six experts who discussed the following sub-themes: Illegal policies and actions of the occupying Power against the Palestinian people; the urgency of international protection of the Palestinian people; and the humanitarian emergency and the destruction of the Palestinian economy.

33. **Ahmad Tibi**, Member of Knesset, said he was one of eight Arab members in the Knesset and he represented the Arab Move for Change. He emphasized that the latest wave of criticism against policies of the current Israeli Government had come from inside Israel with former senior Israeli officials speaking out against those policies. The importance of those criticisms would not be understood by outsiders, but they were an important development. He stated that since Palestinians within the Occupied Territory had no parliamentary representation, they had to improvise their own resistance to the occupation. In trying to crack down on that resistance, Israel had taken drastic steps, imposing measures that were illegal under international law. The construction of the wall was the gravest violation, which gave Israel a chance to occupy more Palestinian land. It killed every chance for peace with the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world. To avoid criticism the Israeli Government was trying to say that it would take some steps towards fulfilling the Road Map.

34. He highlighted another important development embodied in the statement made by President George Bush in which he had called upon Israel not to prejudice final negotiations by its actions. But Israel had not listened to the President's words and continued to undertake illegal measures. He stressed that it was time for the international community to take action and put an end to Israel's anti-Palestinian policies. Criticism of Israel was fine but not enough. He called for concrete action. The international community must pressure Israel to stop the construction of the apartheid wall and its twofold strategy of confiscating Palestinian land and encouraging an exodus of Palestinians by denying them the ability to earn a living from their land and to have access to water.

35. He called attention to Israel's maltreatment of Palestinian prisoners and said that the use of administrative detention was illegal. It gave the administering Power the right to lock people behind closed doors for six months without recourse and to extend that time at will. The Israeli judicial system discriminated against Palestinian prisoners, in comparison with its treatment of Israelis convicted of the same crimes. He said that putting an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands was mandatory, concluding that the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel was the optimal solution.

36. **Ziad Abu Zayyad**, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the United States had tried to pre-empt any third-party intervention for achieving peace in the Middle East by stating that a peace process was already underway. At the same time the United States was playing a negative role by preventing the success of the peace process. It was still trying to limit the role of the United Nations and even that of the Quartet. He highlighted the importance of facilitating the role of the United Nations and the importance of neutrality, justice and objectivity by major international players in trying to find a solution to the conflict. He deplored the absence of the United States and the European Union representatives at the Meeting. He went on to regret that the Road Map had become a kind of slogan while Israel raced against time to create facts on the ground. He speculated that the time would come when there would be no possibility of a two-State solution.

37. He said that the Geneva Initiative made it clear that there was a Palestinian partner for peace. Combining that initiative with the Road Map could help change things on the ground. He opined that the Road Map did not spell out how to reach the final status. He urged the Security Council to establish a mechanism that would allow the international community to move from words to actions. He went on to say that the 8-metre wall with two double fences was not a temporary separation wall, but a Berlin Wall. It was appropriating large portions of Palestinian land and not allowing Palestinians to communicate with their neighbours and families on the other side of the wall. Contrary to that situation, Israeli settlers had free access to their settlements. While people were disgusted by the segregation imposed between whites and blacks, there was no reaction to the segregation of Jews and Arabs. He emphasized that that segregation was also racism.

38. Turning to Palestinian elections, he explained that the Palestinian Authority prepared for the elections, but how could there be any voting when Israeli soldiers were patrolling the Occupied Territory and killing Palestinians? He concluded by saying that the United States, sinking in the mud of Iraq, was approaching an election and did not want to provoke the Jewish lobby or the Christian right. No one was interested in protecting Palestinian rights. He emphasized the Palestinians' readiness for peace and urged participants not to compare the sufferings of the two peoples. There was no match between the occupied and the occupiers.

39. **Wang Shijie**, Special Envoy of China for the Middle East Peace Process, stressed that in the conflict, the Palestinian people had suffered enormous material losses and spiritual damage, and were helpless to control their fate. Also the Israelis had become victims, families losing loved ones, and economic conditions becoming difficult. He said that a new century had already arrived and peace had yet to be achieved in the long-suffering region. Achieving peace was a fundamental solution to the question of Palestine. Achieving peace required courage, strong political will, mutual compromise, and sometimes even sacrifice, on both sides. He asserted that an unfair peace could not last. The problems of the Middle East could not be resolved unless Palestinian lands were returned and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish a State, were restored.

40. He stressed that achieving peace also required the joint efforts of the international community. The question of Palestine was connected to world peace and security. It should be resolved through negotiations based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of "land for peace"; and the agreements and common foundations already approved of by Palestinian and Israeli negotiators.

He commended the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to resolve the question of Palestine and supported a larger role by the United Nations in promoting peace in the Middle East.

41. He noted that the first glimmers of peace had already appeared in the Middle East. From Camp David to Madrid and Oslo, the Arab and Israeli peoples had begun their reconciliation process. The Road Map for Middle East peace had proposed new ways for the resolution of the conflict. It had won the approval of the Security Council and become an important document for peace. The Geneva Initiative was a new effort to renew people's hopes for the prospects of peace. He said that traditional Chinese culture esteemed harmonious relations between peoples. China had always made efforts of its own to achieve Middle East peace. In his position as Special Envoy on the Middle East Question, he hoped that Palestinian and Israeli politicians would take the interests of their peoples as a point of departure and return to the negotiating table as soon as possible.

42. **Helena Cobban**, political analyst, author and researcher, emphasized that the cause of the ongoing tragedy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was entirely political and a result of failures of everyone involved – Israelis, Palestinians and also the international community. The latter could have used all its powers to bring the Israelis and the Palestinians to an agreement. The "temporary" situation of rule-by-military-occupation should not have been allowed to continue for so long. In the past few years and in the name of "cracking down" on Palestinian hardliners, Israel had built walls and fences around Palestinian communities, chopping them into separate "cantons" with tightly restricted movement, which destroyed the ability of the Palestinians to maintain any independent economic base and much of the administrative basis for an independent Palestinian State. Some Israelis claimed the motive was self-defense, while other Israeli leaders said the aim was to break the Palestinians' independence of will. She made it clear that just as Palestinian acts of terrorism against civilian Israelis were unacceptable, so was Israel's policy of repressive collective punishment.

43. She recalled that the current crisis had been preceded by a period of relative hope. It dashed all positive developments that were achieved in the period of the Oslo Accords to form a basis for the future Palestinian State. Those developments were a result of flaws in the Oslo Accords, which resulted in the transformation of the human geography of the West Bank since 1992 when the environment was mainly Palestinian; by 1999, it had become an environment dominated by the Israeli settlers. The Oslo Accords did not prohibit the expansion of settlements, they even expressly allowed the building of a new road network to meet the needs of the settlers at the expense of the Palestinian community. Of even greater importance was the failure to spell out the nature of the final status, a design that had been

repeated in the Road Map, leaving the issues of final boundaries, settlements, Jerusalem and Palestine refugees untouched. She reminded participants that in the absence of an agreed final outcome, the party with the greater raw military power was able to change the facts on the ground to its advantage. The international community should not have allowed Israel to get away with refusing to discuss the final-status issues, time after time after time. She proposed to ask Palestinian and Israeli leaders what vision they had for a stable, sustainable final-status relationship.

44. She expressed her belief that the international community must adhere to the benchmark of simple human equality. There was no such thing as a "Chosen People" who had a special claim on the rest of humanity. The Jewish people were not the only ones to have suffered in modern times and a considerable amount of restitution had already been made and accepted by them. Thus, Israel could not refuse to discuss Palestinian claims for the restitution of wrongs done against them in the 1940s. She recalled that there were 8 million Palestinians who claimed to be counted as part of the future independent Palestinian nation. She doubted that the area of the West Bank and Gaza could sustain them. It was clear that if those areas used by the settlers were to be taken out of the landmass of a future Palestinian State, then that State would lack national integrity, viability, and sustainability. She expressed doubt whether any two-State outcome that was of sustainable size for a Palestinian State over the long term was politically winnable from Israel at this point. She opined that it could be too late for such a solution and the international community might have to consider supporting the creation of a unitary, binational State in the whole of Israel/Palestine. In conclusion, she stressed that it was urgent to spell out concretely the terms of a final peace agreement between the two peoples. Further adherence to interim or merely transitional arrangements was a recipe for additional years of conflict, disquiet, and disaster. The situation in the region was one of intense concern to the entire world community.

45. **Kamal Hossain**, Chairman of the General Assembly of the Forum of Democratic Leaders in Asia and the Pacific, said that the tough Israeli policies of closures and restriction of movement that had prevailed since September 2000 had decimated the Palestinian economy. The wall that Israel was building to separate Israel from the occupied territory cut deeply into Palestinian land, leaving thousands of Palestinians trapped between the wall and the Green Line who would be economically and socially cut off from neighbourhoods to which they were formerly connected. According to B'Tselem, an Israeli NGO, those trapped Palestinians might find life so intolerable that they would move to the West Bank, thus creating a new generation of refugees. International law as contained in the Charter of the United Nations prohibited conquest and outlawed the use of force. The Oslo Accords and article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention also prohibited alteration and annexation of occupied territory respectively. Consequently, the wall should be condemned as an unlawful act of annexation. Israel's claim that the wall was designed for security measures was not supported by facts. He urged the international community to ensure respect for international law and not to abandon 100 years of evolution of international law.

46. He stressed that the international community had to seriously take stock of the situation where successive Security Council resolutions were negated. He quoted from a report by Mr. John Dugard, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Territory, saying that the creation of a humanitarian crisis by restrictions on the mobility of goods and people, the killing and inhuman treatment of children, the widespread destruction of property and territorial expansion could not be justified as a proportionate response to the violence and threats of violence to which Israel was subjected. As stressed in the report, the construction of the wall within the West Bank and the continued expansion of settlements, which on the face of it had more to do with territorial expansion, de facto annexation or conquest, raised serious doubts about the good faith of Israel's justification in the name of security.

47. He stated that the root cause of the deepening crisis was political and that required a political settlement. The Road Map might be an important step in achieving a negotiated settlement for the conflict, but formidable obstacles stood in the way of its progress. Pessimism about progress of the Road Map had led to independent initiatives such as the Geneva Accord, which offered specific solutions and demanded compromises from both sides on sensitive issues. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had welcomed that initiative, calling it consistent and compatible with the Road Map. Mr. Hossain called upon participants to send the message from Beijing that enough was enough. The wall was a gross violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and must be removed. The Road Map was important because of its sponsors, but should not be driven by the asymmetry of power. The Geneva Initiative was a genuine exercise. He said it was imperative to extend international protection to the victims of the violations of international law. He insisted that there had to be massive mobilization of the world to support peace. Asia as the largest of the continents must awake and speak out.

48. **Francis Okelo**, Deputy Special Coordinator of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process (UNSCO), said that after three years of a drastic decline of the living conditions of Palestinians, it had now reached a bottom rock. He provided some economic indicators which revealed that between 2000 and 2002 losses had amounted to US\$5.4 billion and real per capita consumption had declined 25 per cent, while GDP had dropped 33 per cent between 1999 and 2002. In 2003, although the Israeli military activities were fewer in number, curfews continued to impact 200,000 Palestinians daily. He stressed that keeping Palestinians confined to their dwellings was the single greatest cause for the economic decline. Palestinian income from jobs inside Israel was at a 20-year low. The humanitarian situation was equally bleak. The number of individuals living in poverty had reached a record of 2.46 million, and unemployment remained at 14 percentage points above pre-crisis levels.

49. Speaking about access for humanitarian relief organizations, he explained that relief operations had increasingly become difficult due to the measures taken by Israel on security grounds, to the extent that some donors considered the operational environment unmanageable and unacceptable. The international community lacked an interlocutor on the Israeli side with whom donors could discuss policy issues. The constraints of access for relief work were costly and complex; they impeded and restrained the efforts of humanitarian workers. He called upon the Government of Israel to take immediate steps towards ameliorating the situation.

50. In discussing the so-called "security wall", he said that it involved confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of houses, shops and agricultural land. He also referred to the latest reports of the Secretary-General and from humanitarian agencies which indicated that the wall isolated and impoverished Palestinians in its environs. It separated the Palestinians from their economic means of livelihood. That situation would continue unless the separation barrier was removed. To ease the fact of the barrier, the Israelis had established gates, but there were serious restrictions imposed. The Secretary-General had pointed out that the construction of the wall would make the establishment of a viable Palestinian State unachievable. Yet the Palestinians were determined to continue the struggle to achieve their freedom. The Palestinian Authority continued to make internal reforms but it faced a real financial crisis because of a large shortfall in external budget support. Unless there was external financial support before the end of the year, the Palestinian Authority would not be able to pay its salaries. He asserted that the rehabilitation of the Palestinian economy and a major improvement in the Palestinian living conditions were linked to the political goals of ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian State where both peoples lived within peaceful and secure borders. Unless that was achieved, the catastrophe would continue.

Plenary II

Strengthening international support for a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine

51. Plenary II heard the presentation of six speakers who examined the following sub-themes: Salvaging the political process, the role of the Quartet in restoring the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue; upholding the primacy of international law-the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine; and action by the Non-Aligned Movement and intergovernmental organizations.

52. **Albert Aghazarian**, researcher on Jerusalem affairs, said that if there was to be a successful conclusion to the conflict in the Middle East, there needed to be a proper diagnosis and an assessment of what had gone wrong. He pointed to a significant change that had occurred under the Labour Party Government led by Yitzhak Rabin. With the proclamation of the Oslo Accords, the term "constructive ambiguity" had come into vogue. Before ending the occupation, Prime Minister Rabin had thought the Palestinians would show first their capability in running matters in small enclaves, but more importantly their prowess in combating terror, before moving onto other phases. When asked when the process would move to the next phase, he said there were no sacred dates. The Palestinians were under a continuous, unending test. Under the Oslo Accords, any disturbance by the Palestinians was deemed an indication that they were not doing their part.

53. Continuing, he said that under Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Israel had embarked on a grandiose mission to create a new Middle East. Reaching a deal on the question of Palestine would open opportunities for Israel in the Arab world. Characterizing the so-called interim agreements, even Shimon Peres pronounced before the Israeli Knesset the famous words: "We screwed the Palestinians." The position then taken was that of the "imperium imperia", under which Israel created the concept of the security establishment. There was a gradual separation and elimination of the political track. The same concept was adopted by the United States after 11 September 2001. More than ever after 9/11, the security establishment started to call the shots with no vision other than fighting terror. Policy was based on the three Gs: guns, gates and guards. The situation was disturbing in view of the fact that the United States Administration had adopted the same cult.

54. He called attention to the distinction between security and securitism which had begun with the fight against Osama Bin Laden, but soon moved to blame States such as Iraq, Syria, others. Step-by-step negotiations would not work. Security was a pagan god that Israel and the United States worshipped. The Oslo process was an attempt to control the Palestinians and the idea of statehood had become a repressive concept to fulfill Israeli goals. Securitism was at the core of the problem and if that was not recognized, there was no way to emerge from the conflict.

55. **Zehava Galon**, Member of Knesset, said that the most urgent issue was the separation wall that the Israeli Government was constructing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The wall would jeopardize the livelihood of many Palestinians. She noted that Israel was not able to convince the world that its only motive was

security. She called upon the international community to act decisively against the wall and to put pressure on the Israeli Government to stop the construction of the wall. If that was impossible, then the international community must insist that the wall be built along the 1967 lines.

56. Referring to successes and failures of the Quartet, she said that to date the international community had been successful in its attempts to contain the conflict, but had not succeeded in restraining the daily violations of human rights. She told participants that in the past, the two sides had maneuvered between the various communities, exploiting the differences between them. As a result, the international community had not spoken with one voice. That must change if the world wished to ensure that the parties fulfilled their obligations. She opined that the Road Map risked the same traps into which the Oslo Process had fallen. The implementation of the Road Map depended on the efforts of the Quartet, and since the United States did not pressure the parties, the plan had not moved ahead. So far neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis had fulfilled their obligations under the plan.

57. She expressed concern over the latest discussion of unilateral steps to be taken by Israel because it conveyed the message that there was no partner on the Palestinian side. She was even more concerned that that approach was led by those who would try to establish Palestinian cantons with no continuity between them. She reaffirmed that a settlement could only be achieved at the negotiating table and that only a two-State solution could protect the interests of both peoples. She welcomed United States Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement that the United States objected to any unilateral steps. She was adamant that the Quartet must discourage Israel from taking unilateral steps and it must establish a transitional authority to monitor such actions. She drew attention to the Geneva Initiative as the most promising proposal on the table. The international community must work towards the adoption by Governments of the Geneva Initiative. Both Mr. Powell and Secretary-General Kofi Annan had spoken encouragingly about that proposal. Although it had been criticized by many people on both sides, the initiative offered an alternative to the ongoing confrontation by providing practical solutions to the important problems. It was an outline that guarded the interests of the two peoples. She stressed that it was the responsibility of the international community to stop the cycle of violence. It should not evade responsibility under the pretext that the conflict could not be solved.

58. **Oleg Ozerov**, Head of the Middle East Peace Process Division in the Department of the Middle East and North Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, said that the events of the past three years had destroyed many of the achievements of the Madrid and the Oslo processes. The deterioration of the situation had made it all the more difficult to resume negotiations. He was also concerned about the regionalization of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which had spread to neighbouring States. He stressed that greater international cooperation to resolve the conflict was needed. The international community, embodied in the Quartet, had proposed a settlement plan in the form of the Road Map. He said that the plan, although not ideal, was a programme of action to resolve the conflict. Highlighting the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) he stressed that it supported the Road Map and strengthened the unity within the Security Council on approaches to the main aspects of facilitating the peace process.

59. He opined that the recent civil society peace initiatives supplemented the Road Map on a number of points which it did not address. The proposal of Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin, which had gained the wide support of both Israelis and Palestinians, demonstrated that Palestinians and Israelis were capable of negotiating solutions on complex issues. He also welcomed the formation of a new Palestinian Government with Ahmed Qurei as the Prime Minister, hoping that he would vigorously address the major tasks facing Palestinian society, especially the creation of favourable conditions for the resumption of the peace process. He stated that immediate reciprocal steps were required of both sides in order to ease the tension. Removal of blockades, abandonment of sending Israeli troops into Palestinian areas, the cessation of targeted assassinations, halting settlement activity and the construction of the so-called "separation wall" were essential steps to establish peace.

60. At the same time, he said, no change for the better could be expected unless there were determined and effective efforts to curb the activities of extremists and terrorists who were responsible for the death of many innocent civilians. An important item on the agenda continued to be the establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue at a high political level as well as cooperation in the area of security. Action by the Russian Federation could not be separated from the efforts of the United States, the European Union and the United Nations. The Russian Federation was sincerely interested in the attainment of a comprehensive and just settlement and in the strengthening of security and stability in that strategically important region which adjoined its border.

61. **Chen Weixiong**, Counsellor at the Department of International Organizations and Conferences of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that there were four invaluable lessons to learn from all the ups and downs in the history of the Middle East conflict. First, peace was not a zero-sum game. A prompt and satisfactory resolution would contribute to the security and welfare of both Israel and the Palestinian State as well as to the peace and security of the whole world. Second, the only genuine peace was a lasting peace, taking into account the interests of both peoples. Third, political negotiations were the only way to peace. Violence could not obliterate nor build a nation. Fourth, peace could not be achieved without the support of the international community. After decades of confrontation, trust was lacking between Israel and the Palestinians. The international community must mediate, bring about reconciliation and push the peace process forward. It had not been easy for the international community to reach a broad consensus on the Middle East question. The Road Map might not be perfect but it was the most realistic framework of objectives for the resumption of peace talks. The international community should ensure the implementation of the Road Map.

62. He reaffirmed that long-term peace and stability in the Middle East region could not be achieved without the United Nations. The United Nations could play a constructive role in achieving peace. First, United Nations resolutions should be implemented before they become meaningless. Second, the central role of the Security Council should be given full play. The Council should establish an observation, monitoring and assessment mechanism to ensure the implementation of the Road Map, or call for the convening of an international conference on peace in the Middle East. The Council could also dispatch a mission to the Palestinian area to ascertain the situation on the ground, make adjustments to the peacekeeping operations in those areas or even deploy a new peacekeeping force.

63. He recommended that the work of the United Nations in the humanitarian and development fields should be strengthened, as peace and development complemented each other and the United Nations had a responsibility to help alleviate the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and promote the area's development in the economic, social and cultural fields. The United Nations should make innovative efforts, in particular by enhancing the role of the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator, consolidating its internal resources, reforming the functions of agencies providing assistance to the Palestinian people, mobilize the resources of the international community, and make full use of civil society organizations in promoting peace and development in the Middle East. He concluded by saying that achieving lasting peace was a great endeavor for the international community. He predicted setbacks along the way, but if the international community continued to press forward it would certainly reach its destination.

64. **Isamu Nakashima**, Senior Researcher at the Middle East Research Institute of Japan, believed that while in the short term Israelis and Palestinians were nearly in a state of war, in the long term the situation would be much better. He believed that the two parties had come to the same point which they had left nearly half a century ago, back to the idea of a two-State solution. By giving an account of the sequence of events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he juxtaposed the 1947 United Nations proposal for a two-State solution which was rejected first by the Arabs and then by Israel and the 2003 Road Map under which all parties accepted the two-State solution. He added that the Road Map was also the first document that clearly mentioned the final goal: to have two States coexisting in peace and security.

65. He stressed that the international community and the United Nations should help keep and stabilize the present political framework. Palestinians needed more time and support than the Israelis, because they were in the process of nation-building. He believed that this political framework would give Palestinians not only the support to create a State, but also the pressure to promote the internal changes. He went on to discuss the Israeli security fence, saying that it negatively impacted not only Palestinians' daily lives but also the political framework. That might be the reason why the current Israeli Government was so eager to create facts on the ground. The United Nations had already taken some action, but efforts should continue until construction was stopped and the fence removed. The United States and the international community were also opposed to the security fence, and so were many Israelis.

66. He told participants that many peace initiatives had been brought forward lately, one of them being the Geneva Accords. Mr. Sharon also had an idea or a plan, and so did his Deputy Prime Minister. He expected that more plans, ideas and accords would follow, which he considered as a signal that the current political framework was working. He noted that although both Israel and the Palestinians had accepted the Road Map, they were reluctant to implement the plan. He opined that both sides needed outside political, diplomatic or economic pressure in order to promote the domestic changes. He believed that the United Nations could exert pressure on both sides firmly and legally, even if the outcome was unsatisfactory for the parties. He ended by calling upon the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to do more to alleviate malnutrition and deal with other problems facing the Palestinian people.

67. **Edward Peck**, Ambassador and President of Foreign Services International at Washington, D.C., prefacing his remarks with the statement that he was a proud and patriotic American who had twice served his nation in uniform and been a member of the United States diplomatic corps, said he did not agree with American policies regarding Israel's savage persecution of the Palestinian people. He stressed that the occupation was not in the best interests of Israel or the United States and certainly not the Palestinians. He drew attention to the many powerful myths involved regarding the question of Palestine. Those myths clouded understanding and closed the mind, including the minds of important decision makers who could have a more productive role in ending the decades-long violation of human rights and international law.

68. The first myth was that there was a simple solution to the conflict. Trying to create a simple solution for a violent, explosive situation was counterproductive. A Road Map would not be of any help. He said that the popular premise that the occupation would end if American aid to Israel ended was a myth. Ending American assistance would make the current abhorrent practices difficult but they might not stop or even be mitigated. Another myth was that in democracies the majority ruled. The number of actual voters was frequently far smaller than the total electorate. He went on to describe the Geneva Accords as a historic document that recognized that the continuation of Israel's policies and actions would prevent that country from ever achieving mutual peace and security with its neighbours. He said that the authors had crafted an eminently workable, complicated and detailed solution for a complicated problem. Implementation would remove the need for America's support. It would also reduce the misguided concern for Israel's security that motivated an active American minority to push for continued American support, and a misinformed American public which posed serious threats to America's own interests and security.

69. He expressed his astonishment at how speakers had fallen prey to platitudes. The word negotiation implied a certain measure of balance in what the different parties could offer. The only thing that the powerless Palestinians could bring to a negotiating table was a willingness to accept the falling crumbs. Another example of platitude was use of the phrase "a relatively peaceful time", when terrible things were still happening on the Palestinian side. The peaceful period only referred to the Israeli side. He opined that the so-called separation wall was really a prison wall. He was also concerned about the use of the word terrorism, noting that one man's terrorist was another man's freedom fighter. The Israeli pilot who dropped a bomb and killed 16 civilians received a medal. The Palestinian fighter who strapped a bomb to himself and blew up a café was a terrorist. He urged participants to realize that nothing was really being done to solve the question of Palestine. In the future, historians would look back to determine that occupied Palestinian land was the source of a major world problem. He said if that issue was not resolved, generations to come would never forgive us.

Plenary III

Support in Asia for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people

70. In the third plenary four speakers examined the following sub-themes: Action by Asian States within the United Nations system, the Non-Aligned Movement and other intergovernmental organizations; and support by parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations.

71. **Andrew Vincent**, Director of the Middle East Studies Centre at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, said that it was more important than ever to keep the question of Palestine alive, especially in Asia and the Pacific, as events proved that those regions were not immune from the war on terror, and the question of Palestine was closely related. He pointed out that in writing about Australia and the question of Palestine in the new millennium, he was not representing the Australian Government; his position was that of an impartial and outside observer. He said that Australia had schizophrenic fears of Asia, and a simultaneous desire to become part of Asia, depending on which Government was in power. The fear of Asia had led Australia, throughout its history, to ally itself with great and powerful friends. Australia's whole foreign policy was predicated on this United States alliance.

72. Since September 11, 2001, Australia had been in the forefront of the war against terrorism. Many Australians seemed to have accepted that Palestinians were terrorists too. The previous month, Hamas had been formally banned as a terrorist organization by the Australian Parliament. He cited other events demonstrating Australians' association of the question of Palestine and terrorism. However, Australia's close alliance with the United States did not drive it to slavishly adopt the neo-conservative agenda on the Middle East. Many Australians viewed the question of Palestine with deep misgivings. He told participants that Australia had opened a diplomatic mission in Ramallah and a few months ago the Australian Parliament had invited the Honorable Ahmad Qurei to visit Australia. And in October 2003, Sydney University had awarded the Sydney Peace Prize to Hanan Ashrawi. Although a fierce campaign had been generated against the event, Ms. Ashrawi and the organizers, it went ahead with much media hype. The pro-Israel lobby that was opposing the event attracted some very unfavourable publicity, which seriously divided Australia's Jewish community. Many saw the attack on Hanan Ashrawi as an attack on free speech.

73. He noted that the Australian Government position supported the Road Map and condemned violence. But its voting record in the United Nations and the statements and actions of its leaders on the question of Palestine revealed a one-sided approach caused by the desire to please the United States and to placate the vocal and powerful pro-Israel lobby. He predicted that this one-sidedness would soon have commercial consequences. It was already having consequences on Australia's social cohesion, as anti-Arab sentiment stirred up by the war on terrorism affected life in the multicultural suburbs. He concluded by saying that he was sorry to report that Australia's position on the question of Palestine, at the beginning of the new millennium, left much to be desired and that he saw little prospect for improvement in the near future.

74. **Pensak Chagsuchinda**, Senator of the National Assembly of Thailand and member of the Committee on Middle East Questions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), said globalization could elicit public hostility if people's welfare and security were threatened and compromised by incautious and unequal development and liberalization. The United Nations and the international community must be alert to the pace and stages of globalization and adjust to non-conventional changes in order to lead the world through this transition. All world institutions, including parliamentary institutions, must be adaptable and innovative in making changes.

75. She pointed out that the role of the parliamentary bodies in supporting the rights of the Palestinians was unique. Parliamentary assistance included confidence-building, the establishment of and participation in external bodies, maintaining constitutional reform processes that could mitigate the violation of human rights, and technical assistance extended to liberation or resistance movements for making the necessary change to transform into functioning political parties. Palestinians, at the same time, must diversify their working methods in international relations and champion parliamentary support of human rights. She stressed the importance of upholding human rights standards which were highly respected in Asia where parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations put the rights of individuals before anything else.

76. She moved on to say that Israel and the Palestinians must be encouraged through their parliaments to take effective steps to cease the violence affecting the two peoples. Both sides had to implement the Road Map step by step in order to end the suffering of Palestinian women and children and to establish the independent Palestinian State. The Road Map for Peace was imperative; the Quartet, as well as parliamentary, inter-parliamentary and civil society organizations must assist in its implementation. She went on to say that the IPU had contributed to the question of Palestine since 1987 within the framework of its Committee on Middle East Questions. The Committee had worked towards encouraging dialogue between the two sides. Finally, she said it was imperative that parliaments, parliamentary and civil society organizations joined hands to inform public opinion about the root causes of the conflict and the legitimate rights of Palestinians and Israelis. They must promote action in supporting the implementation of the Road Map and to end the suffering of the two peoples.

77. **Albert Aghazarian**, researcher on Jerusalem affairs, using a term coined by Palestinian writer Emile Habibi, said that Palestinians were "pessoptimistic" because whenever they received a blow, although it hurt, they thought it could have been worse. Responding to accusations that Palestinians had missed many chances, he felt that they had not missed any train that was going where Palestinians wanted to go. He said they had jumped onto the Madrid train and were there, even without knowing where they were heading. In the Road Map he saw no road and no map; he only saw tanks invading Palestinian towns and prisons being erected. The conflict continued, accompanied by emotional outbursts. In the spirit of crime and punishment, a killer suffered more than the killed because the killed was dead and could not feel pain. The concept of pain, however, was relative. He asked who suffered more, the Israeli soldier who had to sit at a checkpoint or the Palestinian who had to cross it. The Road Map was missing the point. The basic point was as in the French saying that good accountants made good friends. First both sides had to fulfill their obligations before they sat together for a cup of coffee.

78. The conflict was not about shaking hands but about legal obligations to which the Palestinians had made a compromise by accepting 22 per cent of their historic land despite the continued brutality by the Israelis. Yet the remaining pieces of land were still being cut into slices, which broke hope among the Palestinian people. Highlighting the topic of the meeting, to mobilize Asian countries to advance peace, he said that globalization was a matter of fact whether it was liked or not. The question was how to make use of globalization. He went on to say that the Palestinians should feel encouraged by the experience of a minority in Mexico that was the first group to use globalization for networking to politically mobilize supporters across the globe.

79. Discussing the influence of myths, he said that the premise that "there was a unipolar system" was a myth that one should not believe. Based on the logic of history and even the laws of gravity- to every action there was a reaction- and in line with the concept that reality contained the seeds of its own antithesis, no one system remained intact. He went on to say that Palestinians should encourage popular international support such as that illustrated by outsiders who came to help harvest the olives or to stop the destruction of homes. There was tremendous work to be done by the people in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. He was encouraged by the success of the Asian people, and said that progress was not uniquely Western but a human concept. He concluded that when the people lead, leaders follow.

80. **Li Huaxin**, Deputy Director-General of the Department of West Asia and North Africa Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, said that his country, like many other Asian countries, had undergone arduous struggles for its independence and national liberation. As a result, it was generally sympathetic to and supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights. The Government of China had provided unselfish support and assistance to the Palestinian people at every historical stage of their struggle to restore their legitimate national rights. In particular, since the outbreak of large-scale conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in 2000, China had also provided humanitarian assistance on many occasions to the Palestinian Authority.

81. He stated that China attached great importance to working in coordination and cooperation with the United Nations on the question of Palestine and had consistently supported a more active and effective role for the United Nations in dealing with regional disputes and maintaining world peace. China had always proceeded on the merits of the matter when the question of Palestine was being discussed in the United Nations. With a view to an early resolution of the issue and seeking to uphold justice, China continued to work tirelessly to restore legitimate national rights to the Palestinian people as soon as possible. He told participants that China had always supported the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people at various forums of United Nations agencies. He added that in 2003, his Government had again increased its contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

82. He emphasized that the question of Palestine had now reached a critical juncture. The launching in June of 2003 of the Road Map for Middle East Peace had brought new hope for the resolution of the conflict. At the same time the signing of the Geneva Initiative in early December reflected the ardent aspiration of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples for regional peace. At that juncture, China believed that the international community and especially the United Nations had a responsibility to intensify their mediation efforts, so as to bring the Middle East peace process back on track as soon as possible. He assured the participants that China would, as always, work together with all peace-loving and justice-seeking countries of Asia and the world to contribute to an early restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.

IV. Closing statements

83. **Victor Camilleri**, Rapporteur of the Committee, introduced the Final Document of the United Nations Meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the Question of Palestine (see annex I).

84. **Zhang Jun**, Acting Director-General of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, emphasized that the Meeting was sending three positive signals to the international community. The first was a signal of peace. He said that the achievement of long-lasting peace and security in the Middle East was an urgent call of the international community. The situation in the Middle East not only ran contrary to the primary objectives of the times, but was also not conducive to long-lasting peace and security for all mankind. The second was a signal for dialogue. He stated that peace in the Middle East could not be achieved through military means or violence, but through dialogue and negotiations. He went on to say that the Geneva Initiative was a useful attempt by the international community to facilitate the Middle East peace process. It demonstrated that when there was courage, wisdom and patience a political solution was possible. The third was a signal of support. More than half a century of conflict had generated deep hatred and mistrust. The support of the international community was indispensable for the resolution of the conflict. It should intensify its efforts to help Israel and the Palestinians and Israel to overcome obstacles to implement the Road Map for Middle East Peace. The United Nations had an important role to play in that regard.

85. **Ziad Abu Zayyad**, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and Representative of Palestine, alerted participants that the situation on the ground had reached emergency proportions.

He expressed reservations regarding a requirement of being balanced in dealing with both sides of the conflict. He urged participants to call things by their names. The Palestinians did not occupy the land, the Israelis did and they were pursuing a policy of separation and racism. The Palestinians had made a big concession by accepting the two-State solution, and yet the Israelis were unsatisfied and wanted to decide on the borders unilaterally. The level of despair in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was beyond imagination. Instead of thinking of building their lives, young Palestinian men were thinking of blowing themselves up. Those who had been humiliated several times at checkpoints sought respect through dying. The multitude of peace proposals was misleading. He stressed the need for the international community to exert pressure and be serious about the implementation of the Road Map. He regretted that the United States was not serious. He urged participants to mobilize international support not by words but by working on the ground. He stressed that the root cause of the suffering was the Israeli occupation. He concluded by calling upon Israel to lift the siege of President Yasser Arafat, which was in violation of all agreements Palestinians had concluded with Israel and was contributing to the Palestinian-Israeli hatred.

86. **Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla**, Head of the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, noted that the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had reached critical dimensions in light of destroyed infrastructure, dire economic conditions, loss of life, flaring violence and disturbing social and living conditions. In their deliberations over the past two days, participants had ruled out any military solution for the crises. He said that the Meeting had highlighted the vital role of the international community, the Quartet and the United Nations in restoring the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. It considered the Road Map as the key mechanism in moving towards the two-State solution. The discussion had also commended the role taken by Asian countries at the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations. He reviewed the presentations of the experts in the three plenary sessions and expressed the hope that the deliberations would contribute to the mobilization of international, including Asian, efforts for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

V. Public Forum in Support of Middle East Peace

87. In connection with the United Nations Meeting, the Committee on 18 December 2003 held the Public Forum in Support of Middle East Peace. The Forum was co-sponsored by Peking University. Representatives of civil society organizations, the media, and Chinese experts on the Middle East belonging to different Chinese academies and institutions participated in the Forum. Most of the speakers who had made presentations at the United Nations Meeting participated, as did three additional experts from Peking University.

88. The experts were: Ziad Abu Zayyad, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council; Albert Aghazarian, researcher on Jerusalem affairs; An Weihua, Professor at the Institute of Afro-Asian Studies of Peking University; Helena Cobban, writer and researcher on international affairs; Zahava Gal-On, Member of Knesset for the Meretz Party; Kamal Hossain, Chairman of the General Assembly of the Forum of Democratic Leaders in Asia and the Pacific; Edward Peck, President of Foreign Services International; Pensak Chagsuchinda, Thai Senator and Member of the Committee on Middle East Questions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; Ahmad Tibi, Member of Knesset for the Arab Move for Change; Andrew Vincent, Director of the Middle East Studies Centre at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia; Wang Suolao, Associate Professor at the Institute of Afro-Asian Studies of Peking University; and Zhao Guozhong, former President of the Association of Middle East Studies of China.

89. The Forum was also attended by a delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and representatives of Governments and intergovernmental organizations. Members of the Committee delegation were: Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee and Head of the Committee delegation; Ravan A.G. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; and Rastam Mohd Isa (Malaysia), member of the Committee. Representatives of Algeria, Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Mauritius, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Viet Nam, as well as the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States attended the Forum as observers.

90. The Forum was opened by Yuan Ming, Professor, Chief of the Institute of International Relations Studies, Peking University, who jointly presided over the Forum with Ravan A.G. Farhâdi, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, who made an opening statement. The participants discussed three topics: Public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - the unchallenged media; the impact and educational responsibility of think tanks and academic institutions; and the role of civil society in raising public awareness about the question of Palestine. The Forum used a round-table style and was open for interventions from all participants, including the audience.

91. **Ravan A.G. Farhâdi**, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said joint initiatives of the Israeli and Palestinian civil society, in particular the Geneva Accord and the People's Voice initiative, showed just how important civil society had become in areas that traditionally were the exclusive domain of the politicians and diplomats. The impact of civil society action was greatly reinforced when it went hand-in-hand with other international actors such as the Quartet. He added that although the Road Map had been launched at the governmental level, its implementation required the broadest possible support.

92. He stressed that the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained precarious. The Palestinian suffering called for an urgent engagement by all sectors of the international community, which increasingly included civil society. Thousands of NGOs, faith-based organizations, political and university groups, think tanks, trade unions and concerned individuals were actively working for a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Solidarity with and support for the Palestinian cause by the world community was of paramount importance for a just peace. Because of the stark disparity in the balance of power between the parties, the Palestinian people needed the support and assistance by Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations.

93. He expressed the need for sustained and robust campaigns aimed at informing public opinion about the root causes of the conflict and the legitimate rights of the parties. Civil society should promote national and international action in support of effective steps to end the crisis and to resume negotiations. He said that the Committee believed that civil society, in particular, should remain engaged to support the Road Map and other peace initiatives. Another important priority work for civil society included providing emergency relief and other assistance to the Palestinian people and rehabilitating the Palestinian economy. Governments should be

encouraged through parliaments, NGOs and public opinion to take immediate and effective steps to uphold the Fourth Geneva Convention and to live up to the Declaration regarding the Occupied Palestinian Territory unanimously adopted by the High Contracting Parties in December 2001 in Geneva.

94. **An Weihua**, Professor at the Institute of West Asian and North African Studies of Peking University, discussing the topic of public perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, said the latest cycle of violence and counter-violence that had been going on since 2001 had increased the attention of China and the international community to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He said that his faculty and students were very concerned about the loss of life, and that the Chinese people looked forward to a final peace. The acceptance of the Road Map by both sides had given them hope. The Road Map embodied mutual respect and accommodation and provided a basis for the conflict to be resolved. He drew attention to the influence of minority groups who would never agree to compromise. He insisted that their influence must be mitigated. Focusing on justice and fairness for both sides was important for finding a solution to the conflict. He regarded the Road Map and the Geneva Initiative as much welcomed developments. He opined that Israel should be challenged for its nuclear capability. The international community needed to adopt a constructive approach to mitigate the Middle East tensions. He said sending peacekeeping troops to the Middle East would be one constructive example.

95. He emphasized that the Chinese people valued harmony and solidarity and that those values were applicable for relations among states as well as among people. According to a Chinese proverb, it was better to make compromises and to make friends. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that Israel was ready to make painful concessions. If that was true, it would give momentum to the peace process.

It was hoped that the Road Map and the Geneva Initiative would give momentum to the Middle East process and end the practice of violence and counter-violence. He acknowledged that Israel had made major progress towards peace with Lebanon and Syria and expressed hope that the peace process with the Palestinians could move forward.

96. **Zhao Guozhong**, Senior Researcher, Institute of West Asian and North African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Vice-Chairman of China's Association of Middle East Studies, said the long-lasting intractable Palestinian issue was one of the root causes of the disturbance in the Middle East. He informed participants that numerous Chinese academic institutions had set up programmes to study the Middle East, published articles in various journals and held meetings to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chinese institutions and scholars had also published books on such subjects as the four Middle East wars, relevant Security Council resolutions, the Palestinians refugees, Israeli settlements, the question of Jerusalem, the various accords signed by Israel and the Palestinians since 1990 and approaches to solving the problem. He said that for the past few years, Chinese academicians had been rather pessimistic because they could not envision a peaceful solution. The Academy of Social Sciences had published President Arafat's biography and was preparing to publish a book on the various aspects of the question of Palestine. It also planned to publish a book on the State of Israel.

97. He went on to say that China condemned attacks against Israeli civilians but did not regard those organizations as terrorist organizations. It also opposed Israel's making use of the suicide attacks to use force against the Palestinians. Responding to violence with violence did not solve anything. The Israelis should end settlement construction as well as the siege of Chairman Arafat. He stressed that expelling him would only aggravate the situation and would not produce a solution. China recognized the State of Palestine, which should have Jerusalem as its capital. The Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem was not recognized by the international community. He hoped that both Israelis and Palestinians would make efforts to seize the opportunity that was presented by the Road Map and the Geneva Accords to put an end to the bloodshed and return to the negotiating table.

98. **Wang Suolao**, Associate Professor, Institute of Afro-Asian Studies, Peking University, said the number of students interested in the Middle East situation had increased. Students continued to ask why there was no end to the Middle East conflict. The three-year fierce bloodshed had been explained differently by Israel and the Palestinians. Israel, stating that it had a legitimate right to security and blaming Palestinian organizations for suicide bombings, had embarked on extreme policies of closures, targeted assassinations, land confiscation and house demolishing. According to the Peace Research Institute, 70 per cent of the Israelis supported their Government's policy. Ironically, the Israeli policy towards Palestinians was the reason for the suicide attacks. Hamas, at the same time, conducted suicide attacks killing civilians on the pretext that Israel continued to build settlements and refused to end the occupation and withdraw from the Palestinian areas. According to one poll, 70 per cent of Palestinians supported Hamas. In a way there was public approval for violence. Violence had replaced peace negotiations and had become the form of communication between the two parties. He pointed out that that culture of violence had killed the prospects for the Road Map and possibly would kill the Geneva Initiative. He hoped that the fate of those peace-loving Israelis and Palestinians would not be the same as that of the late Prime Minister Rabin. He asked whether there was hope for a peaceful solution of the Middle East question. That question should be faced by both parties. He hoped that more courageous Israelis and Palestinians would stand up. Only when violence was halted and both sides returned to the Oslo peace process would there be hope for a resolution of the conflict.

99. **Edward Peck**, Ambassador and President of Foreign Services International, said that diplomats worked with words, and in this forum words did not describe accurately the subject under consideration. The discussion was not about ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but rather ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. He expressed his distress at seeing Israel creating serious danger for itself by continuing the illegal, savage suppression of the Palestinian people. He said that violence did not lead to security; something else had to be done. Israel should begin by ending the occupation. Israel and the Palestinians had equal rights to security. The world community and civil society should convince the Israeli leaders that the future of their nation was threatened by the policies they were carrying out. When one talked about negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians one ought to be careful. Israel was the occupier and it held all the cards. The Palestinians were expected to accept only what Israel was prepared to give. Israel had the force and the control to impose its will for a while – but not forever. The situation was bad for both Israelis and Palestinians and it could become worse for them as well as for the whole world. People were reluctant to speak out and say what the situation was – it was a savage suppression of one people by another, which the world community should not permit. The community of nations should not reinforce it by refusing to call it by its name: an occupation, and it had to end.

100. **Ziad Abu Zayyad**, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that Palestinians were hungry for peace and dreamt about it. He cautioned participants not to believe what they heard about positive developments; the reality on the ground was the opposite. He said that the Road Map was not a magic solution. The Road Map spoke about a provisional State, which did not exist in international law, nor was there such a thing as a State with provisional borders. He pointed to the unique situation of the Palestinian Authority: they had ministers, a cabinet and a government but no control. If that was to be the outcome of the Road Map, the Palestinians did not need it, because a provisional State would only be a cover-up for the Israeli colonization of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. There were some Israelis who opposed peace and wanted to make the Occupied Territory a living hell so that the Palestinians would leave. In light of that situation, there was an urgent need to restart the peace process, to make peace, to reverse the policy of expansionism and to agree on a ceasefire, including *ahudna*. He said that although the Palestinians, including Hamas, were ready for a ceasefire, the Israelis were continuing their policy of targeted assassinations. Even now, Palestinian militants were saying they would stop their actions if the Israelis stopped.

101. He said the Palestinian Authority needed to normalize life for its people. What was also needed was a political vision for the future that gave hope to the people. The two sides were not capable of making peace by themselves; there was a need for a third party which should include monitors in order for the international community to judge. He reiterated that the Palestinian Authority opposed violence and terror against civilians from both sides. But when Palestinians told Hamas that their actions were not only against moral and religious principles but damaging to the Palestinian image, they agreed but argued that Israel had Apaches, F16s and many sophisticated weapons including forbidden weapons with uranium. The only thing that the Palestinians had was their bodies. Referring to civil society, he said it had an important role to play both within and outside of the Occupied Territory. The Palestinians welcomed volunteers who acted as a buffer against the destruction of the Israeli troops. The role of the biased media must be challenged. They reported when Prime Minister Sharon said he wanted to make painful concessions, but did not report on what actually happened. The difficulties of convening a meeting such as the present one were illustrated by the pressure applied to the Chinese Government not to host the meeting. The same kind of pressure should be applied to the Israelis. Civil society organizations should continue to hold meetings to spotlight the situation and to use the media to enlighten the societies about the truth and not to leave the dissemination of information to the biased propaganda of certain media.

102. **Mr. Ahmad Tibi**, Member of Knesset for the Arab Movement for Change, said there was a misleading international political discussion that aimed at putting Israel and the Palestinians on equal sides as if they were two independent States fighting each other. But according to President Bush only one side had the right to defend itself. The most outrageous cause of humiliation lay in the fact that whenever an Israeli was killed, the condemnation was immediate and swift, but the American President never condemned the killing of innocent Palestinians. One questioned whether he considered the Palestinians as equal human beings or whether they even had the right to exist. He considered that to be a moral double standard of the international community, especially of the United States. He said that Palestinians had feelings too: they felt sorrow and pain just as others did.

103. He stated that Palestinians condemned violence against all civilians. It seemed that the killing of Palestinians by F16 air raids or assassination was acceptable and justifiable as an official Government decision. He asked how air or tank attacks on refugee camps could be defended. State terror should be condemned. He

stressed that all participants had concluded that the occupation should be ended, not rearranged. Prime Minister Sharon spoke about a Palestinian State on 7 per cent of mandated Palestine. Meanwhile, the leadership of the United States, a supposedly democratic nation, said they did not accept the democratically elected Palestinian leader. He recalled that the Palestinians were ready to hold elections at any time, but they were opposed by Israel and the United States Administration. He said he represented the 1 million Arabs of Israel or 20 per cent of the Israeli population and informed participants that the day before, the Israeli Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had said that Israelis were facing a demographic threat not from the Palestinians but from the Arabs of Israel.

104. **Zehava Galon**, Member of Knesset for Meretz, said although she was the only Jewish participant at the meeting she represented 50 per cent of the Israeli society, which for many years had struggled against the occupation. She said that many people from the right wing were beginning to understand that ending the occupation was in Israel's best interest. She highlighted that her main role was to convince the Israeli public that the occupation, the Israeli settlements and the wall were motivation for terror and suicide attacks. She said when Israel violated human rights and the peace process, the Israeli Government was also acting in her name and she could not accept that. Israelis needed to understand what motivated the terror. She condemned all kinds of terror, even though there was no symmetry in power between the two sides. She recalled that for many years she had been considered a traitor because she spoke against the Israeli actions, but she was still optimistic that peace was possible. She said that Israel should come back to the negotiating table and expressed the need for a third-party intervention. The international community must intervene because both nations needed peace.

105. **Andrew Vincent**, Director of the Middle East Studies Centre of Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, said that a great wrong had been perpetrated on the Palestinian people. He said that his students in Australia studying the Palestinian situation and eager to change the course of events asked him what they could do. The answer was that they should first inform themselves thoroughly about what was happening, reading between the lines of what was published by the mainstream press. A great deal of misinformation was being disseminated, largely by the American media, but there were other, more reliable sources of information. The question was how could one improve the understanding of the question of Palestine by the media. He said that civil society should examine this question and expressed his belief that they could bring about a change in the way the issue was presented in the media.

106. **Pensak Chagsuchinda**, Thai Senator and member of the Committee on Middle East Questions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, said she had been enlightened by Mr. Peck's presentation on the use of platitudes to describe a dangerous situation such as the one in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She agreed with him on the need to call the problem by its true name: occupation. She emphasized the need to end the occupation and called upon the international community to work forcefully with the parties to the conflict towards that aim.

107. **Helena Cobban**, political analyst, writer and researcher on international affairs, said that the weakness of the Road Map, like the Oslo peace process, was in the fact that it had no destination, thus allowing the stronger party to pursue its intentions on the ground. There was too much process and too little peace. Israel under Oslo had benefited economically while the Palestinian economy had suffered. She said the parties should not go once again through the endless interim processes. The international community should concentrate on the final status. Under Oslo, Israel had reaped enormous economic benefit while the Palestinian economy had been stifled. The international community should call for an immediate, internationally sponsored gathering to determine the final status.

108. She opined that Ariel Sharon's claim that he could not negotiate while there was violence was not tenable. Everyone negotiated under conditions of violence; that was how people reached agreements. She stressed that the negotiation process had to start now. Until the final status was determined there would be no peace in the process. One of the inherent dangers was the concept of a "provisional State" giving only 7 per cent of mandated Palestine and modeled after the Bantustans in apartheid South Africa which were totally non-viable. Moreover, the word State was meaningless unless it represented an independent, sovereign and viable State. One could not have a viable State of 7 million Palestinians on

7 per cent of the land. The United Nations was not yet operating as a true sponsor of the peace process and the United States should be a serious sponsor to end this conflict.

109. **Albert Aghazarian**, researcher on Jerusalem affairs, told a story the moral of which was that Palestinians did not see what they heard and did not hear what they saw. Accordingly, theory and practice should be synchronized. The issue was far more profound than the way it was presented. The problem in Israel was not the Likud or Mr. Sharon but rather the Labour Party. Israelis were saying that ending the occupation was in the interest of the Jews, but they should support ending the occupation because it was in the interest of the Palestinians as well. The demonstrations that took place around the globe were not the result of Palestinian public relations, rather they were a human response to the problem. Respect was lacking in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on a daily basis. He stressed that there was a need for people with vision; it was a mistake to deal with everything as though it was a security problem. The problem in the Middle East had existed long before 9/11. It would be won together or lost together.

110. **Kamal Hossain**, Chairman of the General Assembly of the Forum of Democratic Leaders in Asia and the Pacific, said that power could not negate justice. The excessive use of force would not solve the problem and would not attenuate people's will for justice. People could drive Governments. The Geneva Accord envisaged that Israel and the Palestinians should put an end to decades of conflict. The Israeli and Palestinian people did not understand why that madness should go on. Ordinary people could change the course of history. He went on to say that in the middle of the 20th century, the international community had committed itself to a world of peace with justice for all peoples. The long struggle of the Palestinians served as a test case for those principles. The challenge to the international community was to recognize the basic principles on which a just peace was to be built. It must reaffirm those principles, which had been destroyed by the illegitimate use of force. He stressed that words should not be used as a smoke screen for actions serving an illegitimate purpose. He was inspired by the history of China, which illustrated how the people could triumph over injustice. The logic of peace required the transfer from war to reconciliation. It required compromises recognizing the rights of both parties to statehood, peace and security without prejudice to either. He urged participants to add their voices to the Forum's effort and called upon the respective Governments to support peace. Justice would only be realized when ordinary people made their Governments respond. He expressed his hope that the 21st century would complete the agenda of the 20th century upholding its principles and that peace and security would prevail in the world.

Annex I FINAL DOCUMENT

1. The United Nations Meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the Question of Palestine was held in Beijing, on 16 and 17 December 2003, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Participants in the Meeting included international experts, representatives of Governments, Palestine, intergovernmental organizations, entities of the United Nations system, parliaments, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the media.

2. The Meeting was convened by the Committee with a view to mobilizing international support for a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine. In the course of the Meeting, the participants reviewed the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and expressed grave concern about its deterioration. The participants discussed the Road Map and emphasized that it remained the principal mechanism for moving towards a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They welcomed recent civil society initiatives, such as the Geneva and People's Voice initiatives as important steps to stimulate the necessary debate among Palestinians and Israelis on the factors that must be resolved to end the conflict.

3. The Meeting was held following the appointment of a new Palestinian Government and renewed efforts by the Quartet to promote the performance-based Road Map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The participants also welcomed the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1515 (2003), in which the Council endorsed the Road Map, and called upon the parties to fulfil their obligations under the plan in cooperation with the Quartet and to realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The participants were hopeful that the expression of support for the Road Map by all members of the Council would provide the much-needed impetus to the stalled political process and would send a clear and powerful message to the leadership on both sides that concrete steps should be taken without further delay and conditions put in place in order to resume the peace dialogue and move forward vigorously with the implementation of the Road Map.

4. The participants viewed the adoption of resolution 1515 (2003) as a strong indication of the Security Council's intention to remain fully engaged in efforts towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. In that regard, the participants called upon the United Nations to continue to maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine until it was resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with relevant United

Nations resolutions, in accordance with international legitimacy, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were fully realized.

5. The participants agreed that the continuing occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, threatening the security and stability of the entire region. The constantly expanding illegal settlement activities, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and new Israeli-only roads and security zones cutting through the Palestinian land, were described by the participants as illegal facts which also jeopardized the chances for a political settlement and the eventual establishment of a sovereign, contiguous Palestinian State.

6. The participants voiced serious concern about the suffering and dispossession of the Palestinian people caused by the occupation. They noted that since September 2000 more than 2,700 Palestinians and 800 Israelis had been killed and many more had been injured, and participants deplored the loss of innocent lives. In that connection, the participants strongly emphasized that there could be no military solution to the conflict, and that a lasting settlement could only be reached through a peaceful dialogue and political process between the two parties based on international legitimacy.

7. The construction of the separation wall in the occupied West Bank and around East Jerusalem was seen as an extension of the illegal annexation by Israel of Palestinian land in violation of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The participants welcomed the resolutions of the resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly and the subsequent report of the Secretary-General, and called upon the Security Council to take steps to make Israel comply with the General Assembly's demand to stop and reverse the construction of the wall. The participants considered the request by the General Assembly to the International Court of Justice to determine the legal consequences arising from the construction of the wall an important step towards upholding international law in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

8. The participants called upon the Government of Israel to lift the siege it had imposed on the Chairman of the Executive Committee and President of the Palestinian Authority H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat. They expressed concern that the elected leader of the Palestinian people remained confined to his headquarters, the *muqataa*, in Ramallah. As a result, the Palestinian people had been deprived of his leadership and guidance, especially at such a critical time. The participants felt that the situation was utterly unacceptable and should be redressed by the occupying Power without delay.

9. The participants noted that because of an exceptionally high level of mistrust between the parties, the best hope was seen therefore in a continued international oversight and stewardship of the political process, in particular through the Quartet, working closely with other international and regional actors. The participants also underscored the need for the establishment of an effective formal mechanism on the ground to monitor the implementation of the Road Map and encouraged the Security Council to work towards the setting up of such a mechanism.

10. The Meeting commended the international donor assistance to the Palestinian people and emphasized its vital importance especially in view of the growing humanitarian crisis, the virtual collapse of the Palestinian economy and large-scale destruction on the ground. The participants noted that harsh restrictions on the movement of people and goods, the prolonged withholding by Israel of the Palestinian tax and customs revenues, and other measures of collective punishment had a disastrous effect on the Palestinian economy as a whole, as well as on the livelihood of individual Palestinian households. The participants stressed the responsibility of the occupying Power for facilitating the efforts by the donor community. Donor assistance was considered key to alleviating the humanitarian crisis and supporting the political process.

11. The Committee delegation expressed its deep appreciation for the active and constructive role played by China, a permanent member of the Security Council and an observer in the Committee, in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. Members of the Committee delegation welcomed the constructive efforts by H.E. Mr. Wang Shijie, China's Special Envoy for Middle East Affairs, towards the resumption of the political dialogue between the parties.

12. The participants also expressed gratitude to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and to the Government of China for hosting the Meeting and for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation.

Beijing, 17 December 2003

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Speakers

Ziad Abu Zayyad
Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Jerusalem

Albert Aghazarian
Researcher on Jerusalem affairs
Jerusalem

Pensak Chagsuchinda
Senator, Thai National Assembly and member, Committee on
Middle East Questions, Inter-Parliamentary Union
Bangkok

Chen Weixiong
Counsellor, Department of International Organizations and
Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Beijing

Dai Bingguo
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Beijing

Helena Cobban
Political analyst
Charlottesville, Virginia

Zehava Galon
Member of Knesset (Meretz)
Tel Aviv

Kamal Hossain
Chairman of the General Assembly
Forum of Democratic Leaders in Asia and the Pacific
Dhaka

Ghassan Khatib

Minister of Labour, Palestinian Authority
Jerusalem

Li Huaxin
Deputy Director-General, Department of Asia and North Africa Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Beijing

Isamu Nakashima
Senior Researcher
Middle East Research Institute of Japan
Tokyo

Francis Okelo
Deputy Special Coordinator, Office of the United Nations
Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
Jerusalem

Oleg Ozerov
Head of the Middle East Peace Process Division
Department of the Middle East and North Africa
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
Moscow

Edward Peck
Ambassador, President of Foreign Services International
Washington, D.C.

Ahmad Tibi
Member of Knesset (Hadash/Arab Movement for Change)
Jerusalem

Andrew Vincent
Director, Middle East Studies Centre
Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia

Wang Shijie
Special Envoy of China for the Middle East Peace Process
Beijing

Zhang Jun
Acting Director-General, Department of International
Organizations and Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Beijing

Speakers of the Public Forum in Support of Middle East Peace

An Weihua
Professor, Institute of West Asian and North African Studies,
Peking University
Beijing

Zhao Guozhong
Senior Researcher, Institute of West Asian and North African
Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and
Vice-Chairman of China's Association of Middle East Studies
Beijing

Wang Suolao
Associate Professor, Institute of Afro-Asian Studies,
Peking University
Beijing

**Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

H.E. Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
Vice-Chairman of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Ravan A.G. Farhâdi Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
Vice-Chairman of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Victor Camilleri Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Rastam Mohd Isa Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Kim Hak-Su
Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and
Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,
Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Governments

Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Greece, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Palestine

Intergovernmental organizations

European Union, League of Arab States, Organization of the Islamic Conference

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

International Labour Organization (ILO)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
United Nations University

Civil society organizations

China Institute of International Studies
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
College of Foreign Affairs of China
Development Research Center of the State Council
Institute of Contemporary International Relations
Institute of Religious Studies
Institute of West Asian and North African Studies
Peking University Department of International Cooperation
Peking University Newsletter
Peking University School of International Studies
Peking University TV Station

Non-governmental organizations

Neda Institute for Scientific Political Research

Media

Agencia EFE
Al Jazeera TV
Associated Press
Chinese Central TV-1
Chinese Central TV-4
Chinese Central TV-9
China Daily
China National Radio
China News Agency
China Radio International
Islamic Republic News Agency

Lusa Portuguese News Agency
NHK – Japan Broadcasting Corporation
People’s Daily
Prensa Latina News Agency
Press Trust of India
Trud (Russian newspaper)
Viet Nam News Agency
Xinhua News Agency
Yedioth Ahronoth

Public

Susana Garcia Campa
Researcher

Qin Xiaopeng
Researcher, Hanyang University
