
**UNITED NATIONS ASIAN SEMINAR AND NGO SYMPOSIUM
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

**Jakarta
4-7 May 1997**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine on the theme "Achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine - the role of Asia" was held at Jakarta from 4 to 7 May 1997, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 51/23 and 51/24 of 4 December 1996.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising His Excellency Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee, who acted as Chairman of the Seminar and NGO Symposium; His Excellency Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman

of the Committee, who acted as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the meeting; His Excellency Mr. Slaheddine Abdellah (Tunisia), who also acted as Vice-Chairman; and Mr. Nasser M. Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

3. The Seminar and NGO Symposium met in three panels on the following topics:

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| Panel I | The Middle East peace process: developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 |
| Panel II | Key issues of a just and comprehensive settlement |
| Panel III | The role of Asia in promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine through solidarity and assistance. |

One workshop specifically for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was also held on the following topic: Mobilization and networking of Asian NGOs in support of a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine.

4. Presentations were made by 18 experts from Asia and other regions. Each panel was followed by a discussion open to all participants. Representatives of 56 Governments, 5 United Nations bodies and agencies, 1 intergovernmental organization and 21 non-governmental organizations as well as special guests of the Government of Indonesia, representatives of the media, of universities and institutes attended the Seminar and NGO Symposium. The opening session was also attended by a number of high-ranking representative of the Government of Indonesia.

5. The main points of the discussion were highlighted in the final document of the Seminar and NGO Symposium. Participants also adopted a motion of thanks to the Government and the people of Indonesia (annex I). The participating NGOs appointed an Asian Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (annex III).

II. OPENING SESSION

6. The opening ceremony of the Seminar and NGO Symposium was addressed by **His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. He referred to the critical situation that pervaded the Middle East in light of the paralysis in the peace process and reaffirmed Asia's unremitting support for the cause of Palestinian self-determination. Indonesia had consistently called for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and for the recognition of the principle of land-for-peace, which constituted the cornerstone for peace in the Middle East. For the peace process to succeed, the role of the United Nations was indispensable.

7. He went on to say that the Asian States had hailed the positive steps since the launching of the Madrid peace process, and shared the hope of the peoples of the Middle East for peace. The peace process, however, had faltered and fallen behind schedule due to Israel's refusal to fulfil its commitments and treaty obligations, as well as provocations such as the closure of Palestinian territories and attempts to change the demographic and political conditions on the ground through confiscation of Arab lands and the building of new settlements on Palestinian soil.

8. Mr. Alatas emphasized that for Indonesia, Israel's occupation of Arab territories was a fundamental issue and that no diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Israel could be envisaged as long as the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict were not peacefully and justly resolved. Actions that could jeopardize the fragile peace process must be avoided and the gains of the peace process rendered irreversible. He said that Israel must salvage its own credibility by complying consistently and fairly with the provisions of the various agreements reached. The final status negotiations should proceed on the basis of a recognition of the right of Palestinians to an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. At the same time, the peace process had to be reinforced by a concerted international effort to strengthen the socio-economic foundations of the Palestinian nation. An integrated approach towards peace and development would serve as a framework for building a strong, secure and prosperous Palestinian nation.

9. Speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his representative, **Mr. Alvaro de Soto**, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, stated that seminars and NGO meetings on the question of Palestine were intended not only to promote greater knowledge of the relevant issues but also to provide a useful forum for enhancing dialogue and mutual understanding among people of goodwill in the Middle East and other regions.

10. Following the breakthrough in the peace process with the signing of the Declaration on Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September 1993, the Secretary-General had done his utmost to mobilize the resources of the whole United Nations system in providing assistance for the economic and social development of the Palestinian territories, in a unified and coherent manner, and would continue to do so. While drawing attention to the precarious financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which required strengthened commitment by the international community, he noted that over 20 United Nations agencies and programmes were currently operational or seeking to become operational in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip within the framework of the integrated programme of assistance. The United Nations could play a fundamental role in helping to establish solid foundations for peace in the Palestinian territories through the improvement of living conditions, the development of an effective infrastructure and the building of institutional capacity.

11. Referring to setbacks in the peace process, he stated that the Secretary-General had repeatedly condemned acts of violence, and had appealed to the parties not to allow the actions of a radical few to derail the peace process. He had expressed his sincere hope that the parties will intensify their efforts to

overcome existing obstacles to a speedy return to the peace process.

12. **His Excellency Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, noted that while welcoming the direct negotiations between the parties under the Madrid formula since 1991, the Committee had repeatedly reaffirmed that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until the question was resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner, in accordance with international legitimacy.

13. He said that despite the historical significance of the agreements reached by the parties, all the fundamental issues of the conflict remained to be negotiated. The occupation continued, settlement policies were intensified and punitive collective measures such as prolonged closures led to severe damage of the Palestinian economy. Under those circumstances, the continued concern and involvement of the international community remained essential, both in terms of providing continued political support for a solution based on accepted international principles, and for promoting a climate of confidence between the parties. He referred, in that regard, to recent action in the Security Council and the General Assembly, including the adoption of an important resolution by the tenth emergency special session. He pledged that the Committee would do its utmost to mobilize all sectors of the international community whenever the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and progress towards a comprehensive and just solution of the conflict were jeopardized by unilateral actions.

14. **Mr. Suleiman Annajab**, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, representative of Palestine, commended President Soeharto, the Government and the people of Indonesia for the consistent support they had provided to the Palestinian people and its just cause. He emphasized that in regard to the Middle East and the ongoing peace process, the United Nations had a fundamental role to play. Its relevant resolutions provided the basis and the terms of reference for the peace process. Palestinian and Arab positions were strong because they were in full harmony with the United Nations positions. They sought to expand the direct role played by the United Nations, while Israel tried to prevent such a role.

15. Referring to the emergency special session of the General Assembly and its resolution ES-10/2, he emphasized the special importance of that resolution and its implementation. The Israeli Government was defying that resolution. Israel was continuing its settlement activities, maintaining the embargo against the Palestinian people, starving it and dismembering and fragmenting its territory, transforming it into a patchwork of isolated areas, thus destroying its economic and social integrity. At the same time, the Israeli Government was ignoring the obligations assumed by its predecessor and was opposed to the start of the negotiations on the final status issues.

16. He pointed out that those Israeli practices had brought the peace process and the negotiations to a critical situation that might lead to a complete halt. The Palestinian leadership had not ceased its efforts to salvage and restart the peace process. He called for an expanded role of the international community, including the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in fostering the peace process and in prevailing upon the Israeli Government to return to the basic terms of reference of the process. He urged greater international support for the Palestinian cause, from both official and non-governmental sources.

17. **Mr. K. M. Khan**, Asian Coordinator of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP), referred to the explosive situation in the Palestinian territory and said that the international community had expressed its serious concern over the political developments that had caused that situation. He condemned, in particular, the Israeli efforts to build a new settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem as a gross violation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and concluded bilateral agreements. The continued closures of the territories under the Palestinian Authority, confiscation of Palestinian land and property and the refusal to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions were aggravating the situation in the Middle East, provoking anger and frustration among the Palestinian people and endangering peace.

18. While commending the United States of America for bringing the parties to the negotiating table in the interest of peace in the Middle East, he called upon the United States Administration to pay more attention to the implementation and protection of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination.

19. In that situation, NGOs should not be misled by the notion that the start of the Madrid peace process meant that peace in the Middle East was certain. NGOs would have to continue their efforts to mobilize public opinion to bring pressure upon the parties responsible for the critical situation. They must face the new challenges and pursue their specific programmes to promote peace in the Middle East. The Seminar and NGO Symposium would provide an opportunity to work out a concrete plan of action.

20. Statements were also made by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The representative of Jordan made available to participants studies on settlements and refugees/displaced persons prepared by the Department for Palestinian Affairs of the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

III. PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Panel I

The Middle East peace process:

developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993

21. Speakers in the panel examined four sub-topics: the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements; the status of its implementation; the current status of the negotiations; and future negotiations on the final status issues.
22. **Mr. Suleiman Annajab**, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said that the peace process was in a difficult situation. Whereas the previous Israeli Labour Government had implemented the agreements with some ease, the Government in office had started to ignore the Palestinian side as well as the signed agreements. The Israeli Government would define its own position towards an issue under consideration and then inform the Palestinian side without any negotiations. One of the goals in Likud's electoral platform was to abolish the Oslo Agreements. He stressed that Israel had to respect the signed agreements, otherwise a new intifadah might erupt. Referring to the bulldozers that were breaking Palestinian land, he said that every day new facts were created on the ground, damaging the peace process and affecting the life of tens of thousands of Palestinians. Measures against the Arab citizens of Jerusalem amounted to ethnic cleansing of the Arab quarters of the City. Israel's goal was to divide the West Bank into two parts, isolating one from the other. The delays in all areas of the implementation of the agreements negatively affected the Palestinian economic development.
23. He went on to mention the Palestinian Authority with the positions of the United States Administration as the mediator accepted by both sides, and said that those positions were contrary to the wish of the international community. He emphasized that international pressure was required to counter the dictates by Israel, and called upon the United States to promote a fair solution based on equity and justice and on the peace forces in Israel to counter the policies of their Government.
24. **Mr. Zainuddin Djafar**, Head of the International Relations Department of the University of Indonesia, stated that continued instability in the Middle East would by no means be conducive to regional economic cooperation and could place the region in a backward position in an era of economic globalization. He expressed the view that the Oslo process had put the Palestinians in a weak position. At the same time, the agreements had not been met with the required regional as well as international support to stop violations by Israel. The main problem in future negotiations in the Middle East would be how to enhance the Palestinian position so that it could gain equal leverage and power with Israel.
25. **Mr. Sergej Vadimovich Kirpitchenko**, First Deputy Director of the Middle East and North African Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized the importance of the accomplishments achieved in the framework of the peace process that started in Madrid in 1991.
26. The positive economic and political developments in the region and the emergence of Palestinian institutions had only become possible because of the businesslike and close cooperation established since Madrid between the Russian Federation and the United States, the two co-sponsors. He stressed that the commitment of both co-sponsors to continue their vital role remained a key element of the international efforts in the Middle East.
27. Referring to the critical economic and social conditions in the Palestinian territory, he called for the end of the blockade of the Palestinian territory, the establishment of free passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and for new Palestinian outlets such as an airport and harbour. He said that some recent Israeli actions, such as settlement construction, had provoked strong criticism from the international community. The prevailing trend was more likely to erode the confidence built between the two parties during the previous years. All tracks of negotiations, bilateral and multilateral, were blocked. He concluded by saying that the principle of land for peace should be preserved and confirmed as the basis of the political process. Any switch to another formula like "peace for security" could only aggravate the situation and be harmful to the Middle East.
28. **Mr. Roscoe S. Suddarth**, President of the Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., concurred with the view that the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations were at another critical stage. While the formal structure remained intact and was recognized by all the parties, albeit with different interpretations, the political and economic conditions for progress had significantly deteriorated during the previous months. This was threatening to stall the peace negotiations and to plunge the area into turmoil unless major efforts were made to improve the situation.
29. He continued by saying that the Oslo process had been built on the assumption that Israel and the Palestinian Authority would develop a partnership through which they would cooperate actively to increase mutual confidence, and that this would buttress the efforts of both sides to address the difficult final status issues. However, the Oslo process had taken a decided turn for the worse under the current Israeli Government. Some of its steps had provoked widespread violence by the Palestinians and clashes with Israeli security forces. Recent internal political developments in Israel and the Palestinian territory threatened the negotiations even further and economic expectations were dramatically unfulfilled.
30. Emphasizing that the majority of Israelis and Palestinians and their leaderships wished the peace process to continue, he stated that the key was whether sufficient trust could be engendered between the two sides to permit the resumption of meaningful negotiations and to prevent the eruption of violence. International support could help that process. He concluded by expressing concern that the other tracks of the peace process had been negatively influenced by the downturn in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

Key issues of a just and comprehensive settlement

31. Panel participants considered the following sub-topics: Israeli settlements in the occupied territory; Palestine refugees and displaced persons; and Jerusalem.
32. **Mr. Amien Rais**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Yogyakarta, discussed the settlement policies of the Israeli Governments since 1967. Citing a number of figures, he concluded that the settlements in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, were the biggest obstacle to a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people, between Israel and the Arab States and between Israel and many Muslim countries. The previous Labour Government had used them as pawns to keep key regions of the West Bank under control. The Government in office expanded existing settlements and started new ones, including in East Jerusalem. Referring to the Fourth Geneva Convention, he stressed that the Israeli Governments, since 1967, had been very consistent in flagrantly violating international law. One of their top priorities remained immigration and absorption of additional Jews.
33. He criticized what he considered the half-hearted position of the United States vis-à-vis Israeli settlement policies, in particular the two vetoes cast by the current Administration in the Security Council, thus blocking resolutions that had called upon Israel to halt construction of the new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim.
34. **Mr. Ron Macintyre**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, emphasized that the question of Jerusalem held centre stage in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The Oslo Accords provided for a solution on the basis of the exchange of land for peace. In the meantime, East Jerusalem and other occupied territories fell under the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He said that there was compelling evidence that Israel was willfully undermining the spirit of the Oslo Accords through its rapid building and colonization programme in East Jerusalem. The settlement freeze imposed by the United States in the early 1990s had been manipulated in the occupied Palestinian territory, and ignored in the case of East Jerusalem. Israel felt no restrictions in developing the demographic and infrastructural aspects of the City to meet the needs of its own population.
35. He continued that the aim of Israel's settlement policies reflected its intention to improve security through retention of strategic settlements, colonize Arab land and utilize its resources, especially water, modify severely the Arab character of the territories and persuade the international community to recognize Jerusalem as its capital. The start of construction at Jabal Abu Ghneim, in particular, demonstrated Israel's rejection of international criticism, its commanding position within the peace process, its blatant disregard for international opinion, and willful disregard for Arab interests. He suggested that the Palestinian Authority should do more to counter Israel's policy, including mobilizing more world opinion.
36. **Mr. Albert Aghazarian**, Director for Public Relations at Bir Zeit University, recalled that the issue of Jerusalem had featured prominently in Israel's last elections. Despite all claims of a united City, in reality and on the ground, Jerusalem was more divided than ever. A compromise over the City was to incorporate the diversity and avoid delegitimizing the different parts constituting Jerusalem. The purpose of endeavours such as "Jerusalem 3000" or "Jerusalem 2000" was to lay a superior claim, was counterproductive and could only exacerbate the situation. He pointed out that Israel was systematically pushing the Palestinians out of Jerusalem with its hegemonic control of planning, zoning, massive gerrymandering, land confiscation, and restricting Palestinian building permissions. Recent steps by the Israeli Interior Ministry to revoke the identification cards of a large number of Palestinian Jerusalem residents aggravated the situation. Discussing the issue of population statistics, he said that in the case of Jerusalem they did not reflect realities, but were intended to twist the facts. It was estimated that there were approximately 150,000 Palestinians of East Jerusalem who were discounted in the official statistics.
37. Mr. Aghazarian emphasized that no Palestinian entity was feasible on the ground without East Jerusalem. The City constituted the infrastructural, geographic and economic backbone of the Palestinian territory. Roadblocks hampering access from the rest of the West Bank were a grave violation of basic rights, access to schools, hospitals, religious shrines, cultural centres and the freedom of movement. In conclusion, he said that any arbitrary unilateral measures could be taken to decide borders, they could, however, not alter the organic identity and continuity of Palestinians in the occupied territory.
38. **Mr. Yang Guang**, Professor, Deputy Director-General of the Institute of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, pointed out that, despite setbacks and crisis, the Middle East peace process had made remarkable breakthroughs and one should not neglect that the settlement of the Middle East problem had been developing in an encouraging direction. The parties concerned were facing difficult problems, including the questions of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. He said that Israel had taken an intransigent attitude vis-à-vis the Middle East peace process while intensifying the construction of Jewish settlement in occupied East Jerusalem. No progress had been made regarding the issue of the refugees.
39. He continued by saying that the international community had showed its wishes regarding the settlement of those issues through a series of United Nations resolutions which had provided principles that should be followed for the settlement of the problem. Progress in the peace process could bring significant benefits to economic development of the parties concerned by reducing defence expenditures, increasing foreign and private investment, expanding trade opportunities and making regional cooperation possible. He pointed out that some constructive ideas had been put forward, for example, with regard to ways of sharing Jerusalem, or a solution of the refugee issue in stages. The progressive Israeli withdrawal from and Palestinian takeover of occupied territories were creating necessary conditions for the return of the displaced persons. In conclusion, he emphasized that negotiations were the only way to settle those issues. Any obstruction to the negotiations should be avoided and removed, including Israeli construction of Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem.

Panel III

The role of Asia in promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine through solidarity and assistance

40. Speakers addressed the following sub-topics: the role of Governments and intergovernmental organizations, and the role of businesses and private groups.

41. **His Excellency Dato' Abdullah Ahmad**, Ambassador, Special Envoy of Malaysia to the United Nations, recalled that Malaysia, since its independence, had been assisting the Palestinian people in its long and hard struggle for freedom and reiterated his Government's continued support until a comprehensive, just and lasting solution for the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian nation with Jerusalem as its capital were achieved. He said that the active involvement of many Malaysian NGOs had also helped mobilize Malaysian public opinion to support the Government's policy and actions on behalf of the Palestinians. He criticized Israel for its defiance of the will of the international community and called upon the Israeli Government to immediately cease the construction of the Jewish settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim.

42. Referring to the power and the influence of the United States, he called upon its Administration to give a similar dramatic support for the establishment of a Palestinian nation as it had given to Israel after the Second World War. He commended the Palestinian Authority and its President for making efforts to alert world opinion, the media, and, in particular, influential Jewish groups in the United States and encouraged them to develop these activities further.

43. **Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar**, Member of the Indian Parliament, said in his paper that Palestine was an integral part of Asia and that the question of Palestine was thus an integral part of the struggle for freedom in all Asian countries. The liberation of Asia would not be complete until and unless the Palestinian people were accorded their inalienable rights. The Palestinian people, represented by the PLO, had pointed out the elements of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution in connection with the Oslo process. He said that, at no stage, had the PLO delayed or derailed the process of peace envisaged in the Declaration, whereas Israel had demonstrated a recalcitrance to fulfilling its obligations. The new Israeli Government had placed new and dangerous impediments in the way of peace, starting construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem and threatening the Al-Aqsa Mosque by excavations and tunnelling works. The tardy implementation of the Interim Agreements had seriously put in question Israeli sincerity with regard to the final dispositions, which must lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in which the inalienable rights of the Palestinians were assured.

44. He stressed that it was essential for Asia to renew its commitment to the Palestinian cause and to freeze relations with Israel. Asian opinion-makers should remain vigilant and ensure that relations with Israel were connected to progress on the ground in the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people. Asia was emerging as the powerhouse of the global economy. The new prosperity must be shared with the struggling Palestinian people and the economic basis of the Palestinian movement strengthened. He stated that there was an Asian resurgence, promoting Asian unity, and an emerging Asian identity, which should help promote moral and political solidarity between Asia and the Palestinian people.

45. **Mr. Takao Natsume**, Regional Coordinator, First Middle East Division, Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that the Middle East was of vital importance to Japan and to Asia as a whole for economic and political reasons. Japan supported and reinforced the Madrid process as the only realistic option for achieving peace in the region. It continued to give political encouragement whenever possible through direct dialogue with leaders of the region. On the multilateral track, Japan was chairing the Environment Working Group and played an active role in the groups on water resources, regional economic development and refugees, which had brought about some tangible results. Japan would continue to participate actively in the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summits. It was also a major donor country, contributing more than US\$ 270 million to the Palestinian people for social welfare and job creation as well as additional emergency assistance in response to negative effects brought about by the continued closures of the Palestinian territory.

46. Commending the agreement on Hebron, he said that the momentum generated by it should be further enhanced. Japan would also, in future, serve as an advisor to the parties concerned and encourage leaders of the region to promote the peace process. It could further intensify its positive engagement in the multilateral talks. Japan would continue to provide support for the parties, in particular to the Palestinian people.

47. **Mr. Andrew Vincent**, Director of the Middle East Study Centre, Macquarie University, Sydney, referred to Australia's newly found identification with its Asian neighbours and said that Australia's attitude towards the question of Palestine could be seen as a barometer of its attitude to its Asian neighbours, many of whom were Muslim, with deep sympathies for the plight of the Palestinian people. He recalled the history of Australia's relations with the Middle East and said that it had long been a religiously based emotional interest in the Holy Land. Politically, Australia had been active in the Middle East as well. It had accepted immigrants from the region, provided limited refugee relief and sent some peacekeeping troops.

48. He pointed out that Australia's alliance with the United States was also reflected in its position towards the question of Palestine, which did not deviate much from the stand of the major Western nations. Australia also had an active and articulate Jewish lobby and was interested in potential trade relations with the region. Australia's voting on General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine had been marred by abstentions and by negative votes when it came to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian

people. In conclusion, he stressed that Australia would supply limited quantities of aid and assistance to the Palestinians, but for domestic, strategic and financial reasons, it would be very reluctant to give any diplomatic support that differed from the United States position.

49. **Mr. Fuad Hassan**, Ambassador, Member of the Supreme Advisory Council and former Minister for Education and Culture of Indonesia, gave a historical overview of major events since the Balfour Declaration and showed how the Palestinian problem had become the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He said that the Camp David agreement was a major milestone to divide the position of Arab States to the advantage of Israel. Turning to the actions of the new Israeli Government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he pointed out that it had undermined the spirit of the Oslo Agreements. He recalled the narrow margin by which that Government had been elected and concluded that nearly half of the Israeli voters were in favour of maintaining the momentum of the Oslo process.

50. Analysing the role of the United States as a partner in the search for peace, he expressed the view that its uncritical support for Israel provided Israel with plenty of room for manoeuvre and prevented the United States from playing the role of an honest broker. In his view, a multinational commission of the United Nations would be the best choice for keeping the peace process moving. The United Nations should not detach itself from the search for a just and lasting peace. NGOs should also be encouraged to establish a network with their respective Palestinian and Israeli counterparts and jointly focus their initiative on people-to-people confidence-building measures through various non-political activities, such as cultural events, art exhibitions, informal meetings, joint holiday programmes for Israeli and Palestinian children in order to promote mutual understanding and confidence. The United Nations multinational commission and the NGO-promoted people-to-people contacts should be seen as a two-pronged approach to salvage the peace process.

51. **Mr. Mourad Ghaleb**, President of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, said that the peace process was passing through a critical stage and facing a perilous turn. Prime Minister Netanyahu had denied the agreements reached with the Palestinians and refused to implement Israel's obligations in the Hebron agreement with regard to the Gaza airport and maritime port, free passage between the territories under Palestinian control in the West Bank and Gaza, and further withdrawals.

52. He expressed concern that Israel would continue the settlement project in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim in order to complete the encirclement of Jerusalem, to isolate it from the West Bank, de facto annexing it to Israel. In his view, the current Government would continue to disregard all previous agreements and United Nations resolutions and seek to accelerate the talks in the coming six months in order to impose a solution which would negate the possibility of a Palestinian State. In his view, Israel was counting on the United States to act as the only broker, thus denying a role to European countries and preventing any participation by the United Nations.

53. In conclusion, he noted that world economic power was now shifting towards Asia. Asians could do a lot to support the Palestinians through, for instance, the creation of an Asian fund, to mobilize mass media, NGOs, universities, institutes, intellectuals and writers' clubs in order to encourage a mass movement for peace in the Middle East.

54. **Ms. Sirham Sukkar**, Member of the Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women, said that the United Nations resolutions emphasized the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return, self-determination and the right to establish their own independent State. In this context, with the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, Palestinians hoped to achieve their liberation through the peace process.

55. She pointed out that Israeli violations of its obligations under those agreements, such as its policies in East Jerusalem, and the settlement policy in the occupied territory, represented not only a blatant violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, but also caused great damage to the peace process and threatened the possibility of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. The decision of the Government of Israel to build a new settlement in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim aimed at isolating East Jerusalem from the southern part of the West Bank and the city of Bethlehem, causing the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory and preventing the emergence of any Palestinian coherent entity. Furthermore, Israel had enforced the isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory as well as pursued various legal pretexts to deprive the Palestinians of their residency rights, despite the fact that East Jerusalem was the economic, cultural, and religious centre of the Palestinian people. In addition, the continuous closures constituted a serious setback for the Palestinian economy.

56. **Mr. K. M. Khan**, Member of the Indian Parliament and Asian Coordinator of ICCP, said that on the basis of General Assembly resolution 181 (III) of 1947, the Israeli State was created but the creation of a Palestinian State was yet to be realized. He regretted that Israel had been defying Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and international law. The Madrid Peace Conference specified that Israel should not make any unilateral demographic change in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, during the interim period. According to the Oslo Agreements, Israel was committed not to alter the status of Jerusalem during the interim period. Despite the views of the international community and in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel had been pursuing the policy of confiscation of Palestinian land, closures of Palestinian territories and building new Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. More particularly, the Israeli decision to build a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem had created an alarming situation to the peace process.

57. He stressed, in conclusion, that the Asian community could play a vital role in the process of reconstruction of a new Palestinian State by assisting the Palestinian Authority in the areas of transfer of technology, vocational guidance, health and housing.

IV. FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE SEMINAR AND NGO SYMPOSIUM

58. The highlights of the proceedings in the Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium were summarized in a final document, prepared by the Rapporteur in consultation with panelists and the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and presented to the participants at the final session. The relevant parts of the document read as follows:

(a) Participants welcomed the convening of the Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium as an important contribution to continuing efforts to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. They emphasized the significance of the role that the countries of Asia and the Pacific had played, and could continue to play, towards this objective. They welcomed in particular the holding of the meeting in Indonesia because of its prominent role in the region as well as in United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and other intergovernmental organizations, and its long-standing support for the Palestinian people. They commended the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for this significant initiative at a time of great importance for future peace efforts, and expressed the view that this kind of meeting should continue to be held in all regions;

(b) Participants reaffirmed their support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights, including the establishment of their State, with Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as its capital;

(c) Participants expressed support for the Middle East peace process and stressed the need for the full implementation of the agreements reached between the two parties, namely the Declaration of Principles in September 1993 and the Interim Agreement of 1995. In this regard, participants expressed their appreciation for the leading role of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian Authority and President Arafat in support of the peace process;

(d) However, participants expressed serious concern over the current stalemate in the peace process, in particular as a result of the Israeli policies and practices and the fact that the international community had not been able to put an end to actions by Israel that were contrary to the letter and spirit of the agreements reached and obstacles to the progress of the peace process;

It was noted that Israel, the occupying Power, had intensified its policies and practices of land confiscation and settlement in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, in violation of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949;

The repeated closures of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, and of areas under the Palestinian Authority, and the resulting fragmentation and lack of freedom of movement of persons and goods, as well as the non-implementation of other provisions of the agreements, had resulted in grave economic deterioration and hardship for Palestinians and were cause for anxiety and disappointment;

Concern was expressed that Israel was seeking to impose a final solution on its own terms, in disregard of United Nations resolutions, international opinion and Arab interests, thereby undermining the achievements of the peace process and exacerbating tension in the region;

Participants stressed that the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, were illegal, and pointed out that the settlement policy, and in particular its ongoing intensification by the occupying Power, posed the greatest obstacle to the achievement of a just and lasting peace and made the resumption of negotiations problematic;

They called on all countries to make additional efforts and take collective measures to end that policy, and called on them to refrain from providing assistance that could be used for the further construction and expansion of settlements in occupied lands;

The participants noted the special importance of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly and resolution ES-10/2 adopted by an overwhelming majority on 24 April 1997. They stressed the importance of the implementation of the resolution and the follow-up mechanism;

(e) It was pointed out that in October 1991, the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East, which was called for by the two co-sponsors, had ushered in a process based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the "land for peace" formula. Those provisions were incorporated in the Declaration of Principles of September 1993 and the subsequent agreements reached between the parties;

It was stressed that no other formula was acceptable to all the parties concerned, and that the co-sponsors of the peace process had a responsibility to ensure that it would remain on track and proceed towards a successful completion;

(f) Participants stressed the importance of making progress on all tracks of the Middle East peace process starting from the point where it was halted. In this regard, they emphasized the need for Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian territory to the lines of 4 June 1967 and from southern Lebanon and its Western Beqa, which had been occupied since March 1978;

(g) Participants pointed out that United Nations resolutions had provided clear principles for the settlement of the fundamental issues of the Palestine question, in particular with regard to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, the invalidity of actions taken by the occupying Power to change the legal status and demographic composition of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem; the

right of refugees to return to their homes and property in accordance with resolution 194 (III); and the right of all the countries of the region to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries;

It was stressed that, as reaffirmed in resolutions of the General Assembly, the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until the question was resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy;

(h) Participants stressed the need to enable the Palestinian people to attain its inalienable national rights, in particular the right to self-determination, and to bring about the desired solution of this long-standing conflict. It was pointed out that progress in the peace process would bring significant benefits to the economic development of all the parties concerned by reducing defence expenditures, increasing foreign and private investment, expanding trade opportunities and making regional cooperation possible, thus enabling the entire Middle East region to play its rightful role in the era of economic globalization;

(i) Participants noted that it was essential to make intensified efforts to inform and mobilize international public opinion on the realities of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and in particular with regard to Jerusalem, the Holy City of three religions - Islam, Judaism, and Christianity - which was of great interest and concern to hundreds of millions of believers worldwide. It was suggested that a fund be set up to pay taxes for Palestinians in Jerusalem who cannot afford to pay taxes and as a result would lose their property to Israeli ownership;

(j) Participants noted that 1997 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the occupation as well as the fiftieth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 181(II) of 29 November 1947, which had partitioned mandated Palestine into two States, with a special status for Jerusalem, and that those anniversaries should provide impetus for intensified international efforts in support of the Palestinian right to self-determination and to establish a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital;

(k) Participants noted that the countries of Asia had important bonds of kinship with the Palestinians not only because the Middle East is geographically part of the Asian continent but also because of a shared history and spiritual bonds since antiquity;

Through their participation in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Committee of Al-Quds, the United Nations bodies and other international and regional organizations, as well as directly, many Asian countries had provided important political and moral support to the Palestinian efforts to achieve self-determination and independence;

The active participation of panelists from Australia and New Zealand in the Seminar, for these countries were closely linked to Asia, proved the deep interest of the Australian and New Zealand peoples in the peace process in the Middle East;

(l) Participants pointed out that the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine was an integral part of the historical struggle for freedom of Asia and that the role of the Asian countries in support of the Palestinian people could and should be intensified. In particular, the need to remain vigilant with regard to political and other developments in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, was stressed, as recent experience had shown that the peace process had not lessened, but rather increased, the need for solidarity and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period;

(m) They also emphasized that the countries of Asia and the Pacific had an important stake in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East because that region had an essential role to play in the present and future economic development of the entire continent, both as a producer and exporter of energy resources and as a trading partner;

The meeting pointed out that while some Asian and Pacific countries were already making considerable efforts to promote regional economic cooperation and confidence-building through economic assistance, as well as by direct contacts with the parties to the conflict and participation in the multilateral working groups of the peace process, others could be encouraged to expand their activities and contribution in that direction. It was suggested that the Palestinian Authority might consider formulating a list of specific economic requests which might be put to Asian Governments to assist the Palestinian people at this difficult time. It was also suggested that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries might consider setting up a Fund, similar to the AFRICA Fund, to assist the Palestinian people during the transitional period;

(n) Opinion leaders and NGOs in Asia and the Pacific were called upon to place the question of solidarity and assistance to the Palestinian people in the context of the momentous economic development taking place in Asia;

It was stressed that, in light of their burgeoning prosperity, the Asian countries could easily help undo the negative effects of the years of occupation and restore the deteriorating Palestinian economy. Transfer of technology, vocational training, health and housing were mentioned as important areas in which Asian and Pacific countries could extend meaningful support and cooperation to the Palestinian people;

(o) It was emphasized that NGOs constitute an emerging force in the changing landscape of international politics. Together with their counterparts in the various regions, and in cooperation with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, the Asian and Pacific NGOs had worked for many years and should continue to work for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the relevant United Nations resolutions. Their role in educating and mobilizing public opinion with regard to the fundamental issues of the question of Palestine and in support of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination should continue to be extremely important during the transitional period and should be intensified in view of the current stalemate in the peace process;

NGOs were called upon to take full advantage of technological advances and existing resources in order to improve their exchange of information and the coordination of their activities despite the expanse and diversity of the Asian and Pacific region;

(p) NGO participants stressed the need to improve their networking and advocacy activities;

They noted that although technological advances had made information easier to obtain, much information available was one-sided and the majority of Asian peoples were not aware of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the difficulties faced by the peace process;

NGOs were called upon to undertake a mobilization campaign of Asian public opinion based on the principles for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestine question contained in United Nations resolutions. Such a campaign should include appeals to all the Asian Governments, mobilization of the mass media, outreach to all NGOs in the region, including trade unions, women and youth groups, private sector and business groups, academic and cultural institutions, with a view to establishing an effective network active in support of peace;

(q) Participants noted, in particular, that Palestinian women were making a highly significant contribution in the political, economic and social development of their nation, and NGOs were called upon to provide support for their efforts. NGOs were also called upon to provide needed assistance for women, in particular the physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims of conflict, widows, children, orphans and the handicapped;

(r) The participants stressed the importance of activities aiming at reconciliation and dialogue, as well as joint projects on matters of common interest and other confidence-building undertakings by women's groups, religious leaders, academic and cultural institutions, and others;

(s) The participants expressed their warm appreciation to the President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Soeharto, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas, to the Government and the people of Indonesia for providing a venue for the Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine and for the excellent facilities, courtesies and warm hospitality extended to them.

V. CLOSING SESSION

59. **His Excellency Mr. Nugroho Wisnumurti**, Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, on behalf of his Government, characterized the deliberations of the Seminar and NGO Symposium as fruitful and constructive, demonstrating that Asian policy-makers, together with experts and academics, could make a concrete contribution to the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine. The meeting showed that the assessments and demands laid down by the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States in the resolution of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly were shared by the world at large. He expressed confidence that the issue would be resolved peacefully and with justice.

60. **Mr. K. M. Khan**, Member of the Indian Parliament and newly elected Chairman of the Asian Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, expressed his hope that Asian NGOs would take advantage of the results of the Seminar and NGO Symposium to activate their constituencies and to involve additional NGOs in the Asian network to support the Palestinian cause. Asian NGOs would work towards the resumption of the peace process based on the Oslo Agreements. He called upon the United States of America to ensure the compliance by Israel with the concluded agreements.

61. **Mr. Suleiman Annajab**, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, representative of Palestine, commended the format of the Seminar and NGO Symposium bringing together representatives of Governments and NGOs. He expressed appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The final document of the meeting contained a number of constructive and interesting ideas and suggestions to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

62. **His Excellency Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the deliberations reflected the wide concerns on the fragility of what had been accomplished in the peace process. While understanding Israel's security needs, it was clear that many of its policies such as the continued expansion of settlements in and around Jerusalem and in the West Bank, the confiscation of land, and the repeated closures of the Palestinian territory only increased the sense of frustration and hopelessness among the Palestinians. He expressed the hope that the parties would respect the spirit and letter of the already negotiated agreements and continue without delay on the path to peace. It was essential that full confidence in the peace process be restored and tangible improvements in the life of Palestinians be achieved in order to lay the groundwork for the negotiations of the permanent status arrangements. He concluded by pledging that the Committee would continue and intensify its efforts in the implementation of its mandate.

Motion of thanks

The participants in the United Nations Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, being held from 4 to 7 May 1997 in Jakarta express their profound thanks to the Government and people of Indonesia for generously providing a venue for this meeting and for the excellent arrangements made which greatly contributed to its success. The participants also wish to convey their sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, for his statement of firm support for all efforts in the search for peace in the Middle East, and for a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The participants take this opportunity to convey sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Indonesia for their consistent support for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for their active role in advancing the cause of peace and justice in the Middle East on the basis of the Charter and the resolutions of the United Nations.

ANNEX II

List of participants

Panelists

Mr. Albert Aghazarian
Director for Public Relations, Bir Zeit University

Dato' Abdullah Ahmad
Ambassador, Special Envoy of Malaysia to the United Nations

Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar
Member of the Indian National Congress

Mr. Don Betz
Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP)

Mr. Mervyn de Silva
Consulting Editor, Lanka Guardian, Sri Lanka

Mr. Zainuddin Djafar
Head, International Relations Department, University of Indonesia, Jakarta

Mr. Mourad Ghaleb
President, Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization

Mr. Fuad Hassan
Former Minister for Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia

Mr. K. M. Khan
Member of the Indian National Congress; ICCP Coordinator for Asia

Mr. Sergej Vadimovich Kirpitchenko
First Deputy Director, Department of the Middle East, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow

Mr. Ron Macintyre
Senior Lecturer in Political Science, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Mr. Takao Natsume
Regional Coordinator, First Middle East Division,
Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Mr. Amien Rais
Professor of Political Science, University of Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Mr. Riza Sihbudi
Researcher on Middle East and Palestine issues, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPW-LIPI), Indonesia

Mr. Roscoe Suddarth, President, Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., United States of America

Ms. Reiko Suzuki
General Secretary, YWCA of Japan

Mr. Andrew Vincent

Director of the Middle East Study Centre, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Mr. Yang Guang
Professor; Deputy Director-General of the Institute of West Asian and African Studies,
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China

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

His Excellency Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka
Chairman
Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, New York

His Excellency Mr. Ravan Farhadi
Vice-Chairman
Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, New York

His Excellency Mr. Slaheddine Abdellah
Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, New York

Mr. Nasser M. Al-Kidwa
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, New York

Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Mr. Alvaro de Soto
Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Governments

Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, France, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam, Yemen

United Nations bodies and specialized agencies

International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Information Centre, Jakarta

Intergovernmental organizations

Movement of Non-Aligned Countries

Other organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters

Palestine

Other entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters

International Committee of the Red Cross

Non-governmental organizations

Association Najdeh, Lebanon
Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, India
General Union of Palestinian Women, Jordan

Indo-Arab Islamic Association, India
Japan-Palestine Medical Association, Japan
Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, India
Malaysia-Palestine Solidarity and Friendship Association, Malaysia
Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, Malaysia
MSRI: Medical Aid for Palestinians, Malaysia
MSRI: Sponsorship of Palestinian Children, Malaysia
Malaysian Youth Council, Malaysia
Muslim World League - Jakarta Office, Indonesia
United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malaysia
UMNO Youth - Malaysia, International Affairs Council, Malaysia
United Nations Association of Indonesia, Indonesia

Observer organizations

Arab Women's Federation, Jordan
Badan Kontak Majelis Daklim Pusat, Indonesia
Jigyansu Tribal Research Centre, India
National Council of Islamic Student's Alumni, Indonesia
Yayasan Obor Kebijakan, Indonesia
Yokohama International Human Rights Center, Japan

Press

AB (daily newspaper), Bali Post, Bisnis Indonesia, Citra Indonesia, GATRA (weekly magazine), Harian Ekonomi Neraca (daily newspaper), Hu Suara Merdeka, Indonesian Observer, Indosiar (TV), Jawa Pos, KOMPAS (daily newspaper), LKBN Antara, Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama), Media Indonesia, Middle East News Agency (Egypt), Nihon Keizai Shimbun (daily newspaper), PELITA (daily newspaper), Pikiran Rakyat BDG, Poskota (daily newspaper), RCTI (TV), Republika (daily newspaper), RRI (radio), SCTV, Suara Pembaharuan (daily newspaper), Suara Hidayatullah Magazine, TIRAS (weekly magazine), Xinhua News Agency

ANNEX III

Membership of the Coordinating Committee for Asian Non-governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine 1997-1998

1. **Indo-Arab Islamic Association**
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2. **UMNO Youth - Malaysia**
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3. **Japan-Palestine Medical Association**
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