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Security Council**

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Forty-third session  
Agenda items 37 and 40  
QUESTION OF PALESTINE  
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Forty-third year

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/209 A of 11 December 1987 on the question of convening an international peace conference on the Middle East. The operative part of the resolution reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

1. Reaffirms once again that the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and at the invitation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing, is the appropriate way to a peaceful, comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict which will ensure the restoration of the occupied Arab territories and the solution of the Palestinian question in all its aspects and guarantee the realization of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian Arab people;

"2. Calls upon all States that have not done so to lend their support to the convening of the Conference;

"3. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the Conference and to apprise the General Assembly of the results of his consultations no later than September 1988."

2. On 2 September 1988, the Secretary-General, in pursuance of the request contained in paragraph 3 of the above resolution, addressed the following note verbale to the President of the Security Council:

"The Secretary-General of the United Nations presents his compliments to the President of the Security Council and has the honour to refer to resolution 42/209 A, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 11 December 1987, concerning the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. The text of the resolution is enclosed.

"Operative paragraph 3 of resolution 42/209 A requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the Conference and to apprise the General Assembly of the results of his consultations no later than September 1988. In order to assist him in the preparation of his report, the Secretary-General would be grateful if the views of the Members of the Council on the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East could be conveyed to him by 21 September."

3. On 21 September 1988, the President of the Security Council sent the following reply:

"I have the honour to refer to your letter of 2 September 1988 concerning the question of the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, by which you informed me of your desire to consult the Security Council on this question once again, taking into account the relevant

provisions of General Assembly resolution 42/209 A of 11 December 1987.

"In accordance with your desire to be informed by 21 September of the views of the members of the Security Council on this question, I have undertaken the necessary consultations.

"These consultations indicate that the members of the Security Council continue to be concerned at the lack of true progress towards a solution of the crisis in the Middle East, one result of which is the serious situation persisting in the occupied territories. They are therefore more convinced than ever of the need for urgent action with a view to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement including a solution to the Palestinian problem in all its aspects.

"In this connection, all the members of the Security Council believe that it is desirable to convene an International Conference on the Middle East, and they invite the Secretary-General to pursue his efforts and consultations in that regard.

"Almost all members of the Security Council favour the early convening of a substantive International Conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties concerned and of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

"Most of those members reaffirmed their position that the Conference should be convened on the basis of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, for which they expressed their support and in which it is stated, inter alia, that one of the main objectives of such a Conference should be the attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its own independent State in Palestine. They stressed that the Palestine Liberation Organization should have the status of a full-fledged participant in this Conference. Some of these members took advantage of the consultations to request that, pending a settlement on the basis of these objectives, the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 should be the subject of interim measures, such as the establishment of a provisional United Nations administration.

"Some members, while recalling the reservations they had already expressed concerning the convening of an International Conference on the basis of resolutions 38/58 C and 42/66 D, reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, with all that this implies, as well as the right to existence and to security of all States in the region, including Israel.

"One member of the Security Council pointed out that a peace initiative was currently under way, consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which provided, inter alia, for an International Conference to be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and in which the permanent members of the Security Council and the parties involved in the conflict would participate. This Conference, which would open the way to direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, should not have the authority to impose a settlement or to oppose any agreements concluded bilaterally between the parties. This member considered, in contrast, that resolution 38/58 C, which it regards as one-sided and unbalanced, offers an approach that is not conducive to a negotiated settlement."

4. On 2 September 1988, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, and to the Permanent Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The note drew attention to the report requested of the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 42/209 A, and asked for an up-to-date statement concerning their respective positions on the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. Their replies are reproduced below:

#### Egypt

"The Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations ... with reference to the Secretary-General's note dated 2 September 1988, concerning General Assembly resolution 42/209 A on convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, has the honour to enclose herewith a message from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, H.E. Dr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid, addressed to the Secretary-General on the issue in question:

'It is the considered opinion of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt that the only way available, at this juncture, to activate the peace process in the Middle East is to convene an International Peace Conference.

'The International Conference should, in the opinion of the Government of Egypt, be convened along the following lines:

- '1. Under the auspices of the United Nations.
- '2. The terms of reference should be Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the realization of the national political rights of the Palestinian people.
- '3. The goal is to achieve a negotiated comprehensive peaceful settlement of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects, as well as other related problems, also to ensure the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.
- '4. The active participation of all parties concerned and/or involved, on an equal

footing, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

'5. The participation as well of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

'The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt wishes to underline that the convening of such a conference would, by necessity, take into consideration the existing pertinent initiatives which enjoy wide regional and international consensus. Regard should be given in this respect to the Arab Fez plan of 1982.'

#### Israel

"The Acting Permanent Representative of Israel ... has the honour to refer to the Secretary-General's note of 2 September 1988 regarding General Assembly resolution 42/209 A adopted on 11 December 1987. It will be recalled that Israel voted against this resolution and those mentioned in the second preambular paragraph thereof.

"In the ongoing effort to expand the peace process in the Middle East, Israel has long advocated direct negotiations as the most promising venue for progress. As these General Assembly resolutions propose an International Conference that seems to substitute for - rather than support - direct negotiations, they are unacceptable to Israel. The objection of Israel to the International Conference proposed in resolution 42/209 A and its preceding resolutions, does not contradict Israel's desire to conduct direct negotiations with its neighbours within an international framework agreeable to the sides involved in those direct negotiations. Moreover, these resolutions make no specific reference to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) which constitute the only commonly acceptable basis for peace negotiations.

"In this context it should be pointed out that the PLO, which does not accept the aforementioned Security Council resolutions, continues to resort to violence and terrorism and rejects the reality of the State of Israel as well as its legitimate security concerns, cannot be considered a partner to peace negotiations.

"In addition, Israel is convinced that it is the parties directly involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute that bear the primary responsibility for structuring the negotiating forum and for determining its agenda and procedure. Hence, no forum that constitutes a substitute for direct involvement of the parties to the dispute can be authorized to act on their behalf."

#### Jordan

"With reference to your note dated 2 September 1988, in which you refer to operative paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 42/209 A of 11 December 1988, on convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, I have the honour to communicate to you hereunder the position of the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the convening of the said conference:

"1. Jordan believes that the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and at the invitation of its Secretary-General, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, is the appropriate way to a peaceful, comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict.

"2. Jordan stresses its firm commitment to participation in the peace process, which it has played a part in bringing to the stage of international consensus in favour of convening an international peace conference on the Middle East.

"3. Jordan reaffirms that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and that it must accordingly participate in the International Conference on an equal footing with the parties to the conflict.

"4. The work of the International Conference must be based on the principles laid down in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which apply to all the occupied Arab territories: they are the basis for negotiations and, as principles, are non-negotiable. The work of the Conference must have a character of continuity; it must enjoy effective authority; and it must undertake to resolve the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict in all their aspects.

"5. Jordan is of the view that the basic obstacle which prevents the convening of the International Peace Conference lies in the attitude adopted towards it by the Israeli Government."

#### Lebanon

"With reference to your memorandum of 2 September 1988 concerning General Assembly resolution 42/209 A of 11 December 1987 concerning the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, I have the honour to inform you that the position of the Lebanese Government with respect to the convening of the said conference was set forth in my letter No. 88/88 of 23 March 1988, addressed to you, the text of which is included in your report issued as document A/43/272-S/19719 of 31 March 1988."

#### Syrian Arab Republic

"The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations ... has the honour to transmit the following reply of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretary-General's note dated 2 September 1988 on the question of convening an international conference on the Middle East.

"The Syrian Arab Republic supported General Assembly resolution 38/58 C on the convening of an International Conference on the Middle East as indicated in its letter addressed to the Secretary-General and reproduced in document A/43/272-S/19719 of 31 March 1988. It also supported General Assembly resolutions 42/66 D of 2 December 1987 and 42/209 A of 11 December 1987.

"The Syrian Arab Republic once again reaffirms the need to continue efforts for the convening of the International Conference, with the participation of all the parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization and the permanent members of the Security Council, provided that the Conference is effective and has competence, with a view to achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its resolutions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as on the following:

"Achievement of a complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem;

"Guarantee of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, in accordance with United Nations resolutions."

#### Palestine Liberation Organization

"In response to your note verbale regarding General Assembly resolution 42/209 A, calling for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, I have the honour to convey to you the position of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

"We would like to express our deep appreciation for the endeavours you personally undertaking towards solving regional conflicts, including the East, and your efforts to achieve peace in these explosive areas.

"The recent events in the Middle East, particularly the Intifadah of our Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, which has continued since December 1987, and the exacerbating situation as a result of the oppression by the Israeli occupation authorities against our people, proves more than at any time in the past the resolve of our people to attain its inalienable rights, and it also proves the increasing need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

"The PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, believes that peace in the Middle East can be achieved through the convening of the International Peace Conference under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and with the participation on an equal footing and with equal rights of all parties concerned, including the PLO, in conformity with United Nations resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution 38/58 C. Such a position was adopted by the Palestine National Council (PNC), and was confirmed by successive Arab Summit meetings, the last of which was the Arab Summit in Algiers. It is also the position reaffirmed by the General Assembly as well as by several international conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations.

"The PLO believes that the Intifadah and the facts it has created, as well as other political developments, including the decision by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to sever the legal and administrative relations with the 'West Bank', all require a more effective involvement by the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territories. The United Nations has the duty and responsibility to provide all kinds of protection to our people in the occupied territories. Such measures as recommended in the report of Your Excellency (S/19442) will contribute towards alleviating the suffering of our people, and will ensure respect for the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

"The PLO maintains that it is incumbent upon the United Nations to assume the responsibility of administration of the occupied Palestinian territories concurrently with the termination of the Israeli occupation and withdrawal of troops, and thereafter for a specified transitional period of time pending the exercise of the Palestinian people of its sovereignty and independence in a Palestinian state.

"The decision by the United Nations to undertake such a step will contribute towards the convening of the International Peace Conference and the achievement of peace.

"The PLO is carefully considering several political options which it has to take in light of present circumstances in order to fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We trust that such steps will meet with the support of the international community and, in particular, the support of the United Nations.

"Finally, we are sure that your meeting with H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on 27 August 1988, provided an opportunity for a detailed explanation of the PLO's position."

#### Observations

5. It will be evident from the above statements of the positions held by the members of the Security Council and the parties directly involved in the conflict that the Secretary-General is again obliged to report to the General Assembly that the necessary agreement does not exist for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. It is true that all the members of the Security Council believe that it is desirable to convene an international conference and it is at least possible to identify in the replies of the parties agreement that there should be an international framework for the negotiation of a just and lasting settlement. But the familiar and deep differences remain about the nature of that framework, about its powers, about the basis on which it would be convened, and about who should take part in it. It is thus clear that much further work will have to be done and positions will have to change if an international negotiating process acceptable to all is to be established. Meanwhile, all the members of the Security Council wish the Secretary-General to pursue his efforts and consultations for the convening of an international conference.

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

7. Recent months have seen tangible progress towards the settlement of many of the major conflicts which beset the world. They are not solved yet but promise is to be found in the fact that the parties to these conflicts have come to the conclusion that the issues cannot be resolved by war and that negotiated settlements must be sought. These beneficent winds of change have not yet reached the Arab-Israel conflict, which remains one of the most tragic and threatening in the world. There is thus an urgent need to establish a process acceptable to all for the negotiation of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement. I shall continue to work for that end.

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