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Items 30 and 31 of the preliminary list*

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 18 July 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a communiqué issued by the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations concerning the establishment of diplomatic relations between Portugal and Israel.

I should be grateful if you would have the aforementioned text circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 30 and 31 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Vasco FUTSCHER PEREIRA
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

* A/32/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Communiqué issued on 18 July 1977 by the Permanent Mission
of Portugal to the United Nations

The Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations, referring to the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Portugal and Israel, is in a position to provide the following clarification:

1. Since 25 April 1974, all the provisional Governments have stated in their foreign policy programmes that their first objective was to free the Portuguese nation from "the isolation to which it had been condemned because of the colonial war".
2. The decision to establish diplomatic relations with all the countries of the world was solemnly reaffirmed in the programme of the first constitutional Portuguese Government, submitted to the Assembly of the Republic by the Prime Minister, Mr. Mario Soares.
3. Faithful to this programme, Portugal has, in the past three years, established diplomatic relations with all countries, regardless of their socio-political régime and their various foreign policy positions.
4. In the particular case in question, it should be remembered that the State of Israel had been represented in Lisbon since 1959 by a Consulate-General which had always functioned without interruption. In the circumstances described above, the Portuguese Government considered that the transformation of this Consulate-General into an Embassy was a logical consequence of the policy defined in the preceding paragraph. However, its views on this point should in no way be interpreted as signifying any change in Portuguese policy, as defined clearly with regard to the problem of the Middle East in general and the question of Palestine in particular.
5. The recent establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel does not reflect the slightest change in the general policy which the Portuguese Government has defined and maintained in considering the various resolutions submitted to international bodies. In this connexion, the vote of the Portuguese delegations on each of those resolutions has in fact been cast solely in the light of the text and its implications.
6. The Portuguese position on the problems of the Middle East and Palestine thus remains unchanged as regards both the application of United Nations resolutions by the parties concerned and the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and the creation of a homeland for the Palestinian people. That position was, moreover, unequivocally affirmed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Mr. José Medeiros Ferreira, in his statement during the general debate at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly:

"We also express our concern at the situation in the Middle East, where the Palestinian people continues to see the homeland to which it is entitled unjustly disputed. We support the rapid convocation of the Geneva Conference and hope that it will recognize the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, as well as provide guarantees for the security of Israel." a/

7. Hence, this position, which has been defined so clearly, cannot be considered as having been affected by the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, especially since Portugal also, and at the very outset, established diplomatic relations with the Arab States, to which the Portuguese people is linked by profound cultural and historical affinities. Moreover, it should be noted that all the foregoing considerations have been emphasized in a number of recent statements by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

a/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 22nd meeting, para. 275.