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Letter dated 11 June 1949  
addressed by Dr. Walter Eytan, Head of the  
Delegation of Israel to the Principal Secretary  
of the Conciliation Commission

Dear Mr. Azcárate,

I feel it may be useful for me to re-state one of the suggestions I made at our meeting with the Commission this morning, and I should be much obliged if you would bring this letter to the notice of the Commission's members.

It will be recalled that the Security Council, in a resolution adopted on 16th November, 1948, called upon the parties involved in the Palestine conflict to negotiate an armistice "in order . . . to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace". The Government of Israel responded to this call, as did the Governments of Egypt, of the Lebanon and of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom, with the result armistice agreements were concluded between Israel and these three Arab States.

These armistice agreements form the only existing basis of Israeli-Arab relations. Their conclusion was a conspicuous step in the direction of final peace. Indeed, the first article of each of these agreements makes it explicit that the parties signed them "with a view to promoting the return of permanent peace in Palestine".

My delegation, which has been anxiously seeking bases of accord between the Arab delegations and itself, suggests that the substantial measure of cooperation and good sense represented by these agreements should not now be dissipated. It believes that there is much both in the spirit and in the letter of the agreements that could serve as common ground for the discussions at Lausanne. It is encouraged in this belief by the terms of clause 5 of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948, which calls upon the parties "to extend the scope of the negotiations provided for in the Security Council's resolution of 16 November 1948" - that is, the resolution upon which the armistice agreements were based - "and to seek agreement by negotiations conducted either with the Conciliation Commission or directly with a view to the final settlement of all questions outstanding between them".

If my delegation's understanding of this clause is correct, the General Assembly envisaged the discussions now being held under the auspices of the Conciliation Commission as an extension of the negotiations which led to the conclusion of the armistice agreements. It would thus be reasonable to find in the armistice agreements, which represent the last formal stage in these negotiations, a starting point for the discussions at Lausanne. This would have the effect of basing our present conversations on the solid ground of accord previously reached between Israel and three of the Arab States. The armistice

agreements, though they in no way prejudice the final settlement between the parties, may, in the view of my delegation, serve as an appropriate starting point for that settlement.

When I informed the Conciliation Commission this morning that there was, in the view of my delegation, no contradiction between the Protocol of 12 May 1949 and the basis here outlined, I took it for granted, as I have taken it for granted all along, that the Commission regarded the Protocol as an instrument consistent with the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948. My delegation has always considered it as axiomatic that the principles and procedures of reaching a settlement between Israel and the Arab States are those laid down in clause 5 of that resolution, and that the Protocol, while serving as a basis for discussion, cannot render invalid this or any other clause of the resolution upon which the whole of the Commission's being and the conversations now proceeding at Lausanne exclusively rest.

I am sending you these additional explanations in response to the request for elaboration which was made this morning by one or two of the Commission's members.

Yours sincerely,

S/ Walter Eytan