

UNITED NATIONS
LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MEETING
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
Havana
12 and 14 June 2001

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held in Havana from 12 to 14 June 2001, 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 [55/52](#) and [55/53](#) of 1 December 2000. The theme of the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting was “Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people – a key to peace in the Middle East”.
2. The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee, who acted as Chairman of the Meeting; Walter Balzan (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, who acted as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Meeting; Martin Andjaba (Namibia) and Rafael Dausá Céspedes (Cuba), who served as Vice-Chairmen of the Meeting, as well as Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).
3. The Latin American and Caribbean Meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary meetings, an NGO workshop and a closing session. Plenary I reviewed the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, plenary II was entitled “Upholding international legitimacy – the path to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the conflict, and plenary III drew on the international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The NGO workshop discussed possible action by civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean in solidarity with the Palestinian people.
4. Presentations were made by 19 experts from Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as other regions, including Palestinians and Israelis. Each plenary meeting included a discussion period open to all participants. Representatives of 44 Governments, Palestine, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 4 United Nations bodies and agencies and 20 non-governmental organizations, as well as special guests of the host country and representatives of the media, universities and institutes, attended the Meeting.
5. Participants have been informed that two Palestinian experts invited by the Committee to speak at the Meeting and a number of NGO participants from the Occupied Palestinian Territory were unable to travel to Havana due to the general closure imposed by Israel. The Committee delegation deeply regretted the absence of Ahmed Soboh, Assistant Minister for International Cooperation and Director-General for Diplomatic Training, and Riad Malki, Vice-President of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace. The Committee delegation denounced the illegal actions of the Occupying Power, which have among their many grave consequences, a negative effect on international efforts to find a solution to the current crisis (see annex II). The Ambassador of Palestine to Chile, Sabri Ateyeh, made himself available to join the deliberations of Plenary III.
6. The main points of the discussion were highlighted in the final document of the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting, the Havana Declaration (annex I).

II. Opening statements

7. The opening session was addressed by **Felipe Pérez Roque**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. He emphasized that the foundations of peace in the region were firmly laid down in international law. Israel's occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories was the primary cause of the conflict. The expansion of Israeli settlements, the construction of new settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the destruction of homes and crops, the cutting off of water supplies, the constant violation of agreements reached with respect for Palestinian autonomy and the blockading of the Palestinian territory was just to modify the status quo for

the benefit of the occupying power.

8. He said that the unparalleled escalation of violence in the region was the result of provocations of the perpetrators of expansion and regional hegemony. The lethal war machine of the Israeli army had been developed and perfected with the financial, military and technological backing of the United States, Israel's unconditional ally, which shared responsibility for the serious violation of Palestinian human rights. That was also documented in the work of the United Nations Security Council. While the Council recommended humanitarian interventions in other situations, there was a heinous complicit silence because of the United States veto such as the one on 27 March when the United States vetoed a resolution by the Non-Aligned States to establish an observer force in the Occupied Territory. The United States had used the veto 22 times to prevent the Council from acting on behalf of the Palestinians, thus maintaining a double standard that was typical for that important United Nations mechanism. The international community expected more vigorous and effective action on the part of the Council, given the seriousness of the violations.

9. He went on to say that important instruments of international law, like the Genocide Convention or the Fourth Geneva Convention should be applied to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Arab countries had the right to recover the land usurped from them by force, the Palestinian people had the right to self-determination. A solution to the Palestine question was the key to peace and stability in the Middle East. There could be no peace until an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital was declared. There could not be peace until the Security Council assumed direct responsibility in accordance with the Charter and on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

10. A message of the **Secretary-General of the United Nations**, read out by Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said that the Middle East peace process was going through a critical and very complicated phase. The events last September and the outbreak of violence had interrupted the peace process and allowed frustration and despair to set in. Once again, mutual trust had given way to hostility and suspicion. The understandings reached at Sharm el-Sheikh had been an important step towards stopping the violence and putting the peace negotiations back on track. Yet, despite international pressure to halt the violence, it had escalated rapidly. The Secretary-General had strongly condemned indiscriminate terrorist attacks from whatever quarter they came. The attacks by Israeli armed forces against Palestinian towns and villages, and the restrictions imposed on Palestinian economic activity were excessive, disproportionate and counterproductive.

11. The message stressed that the recommendations of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee aimed at calming the situation and enabling the peace talks to resume offered the most promising opportunity to stop the violence, rebuild confidence and jump-start the peace dialogue. It was important that the parties use them to build tangible and coherent steps to be implemented and carefully monitored in accordance with an agreed and verifiable timetable. Both sides needed to move beyond their anger, bitterness and recriminations. The events of the last few months had shown that there could be no military solution to the conflict. The only viable political settlement was based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

12. He expressed concern over the damage inflicted on the Palestinian economy during the confrontation and said that only a coordinated and concerted international relief and assistance effort could help rehabilitate the infrastructure and improve the people's living conditions. He called on donors to assist the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) so that it could continue to deliver badly needed services, especially now during a time of crisis and economic hardship. The international community must intensify efforts to support and assist the Palestinian people until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine was achieved. The Secretary-General pledged to remain fully engaged and informed that he would undertake a trip to the region to assist the parties in their search for a political process to strengthen the efforts in the security field.

13. **Ibra Deguène Ka**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said the history of Cuba and of Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole served to strengthen the resolve to defend a just struggle against foreign domination and oppression, for self-determination and independence, as is the struggle of the Palestinian people. The Committee had been much alarmed by the continuing violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the excessive use of force by the Israeli army in response to outbreaks of Palestinian protests. He condemned the extra-judicial killings of Palestinian officials by Israeli security forces, a policy which was contrary to international law, perpetuating violence, leading to a crisis of confidence between the parties and pushing back prospects for resuming the peace negotiations. The international community should act without further delay to explore ways of protecting the Palestinian people. He regretted the inability of the Security Council to establish a protection mechanism for Palestinian civilians, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council in late March. He hoped that the deadlock would soon be overcome and action by the Council would be possible.

14. He stressed that the present crisis must be dealt with as a matter of extreme urgency. The Committee supported the Mitchell Committee report which presented an opportunity for an exchange of views on how to move decisively to lower the level of violence, help the parties restore the channels of communication, lost since September last, and discuss further steps in the peace process. The Egyptian-Jordanian initiative might also serve as a helpful building block in reducing violence and getting the parties back to the negotiating table. Recently the Non-Aligned Movement had taken on a broader and more involved role in efforts to calm the explosive situation in the Middle East and revive the stalled peace negotiations, which was also documented in the efforts of the Non-Aligned Caucus in the Security Council. He went on to say that economic development should serve as an important underpinning of peace in the region. He expressed concern at the dangers posed by the rapid disintegration of the Palestinian economy as a result of restrictive policies pursued by the Government of Israel. A very real concern was the fiscal crisis of the Palestinian Authority, its institutions and their capacity to continue to function.

15. Noting that 2001 marked the tenth anniversary of the Middle East Peace Conference held at Madrid, he said that the progress made in the past decade simply could not be allowed to wane. He reaffirmed the position of the Committee that the United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards all the aspects of the question of Palestine until it was resolved in accordance with international legitimacy, and until all the rights of the Palestinian people were fully realized. The need for sustained involvement of the United Nations on the question of Palestine had been illustrated by the dramatic developments on the ground and the deadlock in the peace process. He welcomed and encouraged the close engagement of the Secretary-General and emphasized that the international community should support those efforts and use all means at their disposal to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people and help reverse the current unacceptable state of affairs.

16. **Farouk Kaddoumi**, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said he hoped the meeting would bring the true message about the tragic situation and deteriorating conditions in the Occupied Territory. Palestinians in those territories had been living under Israeli occupation for the last 34 years and for more than 9 months have been subjected to brutal suppression. The Palestinians were acting in self-defense in confronting Israeli firepower and draconian measures. They were facing a horrible campaign organized by the Israeli Government aiming at Palestinian submission if not their elimination.

17. He called attention to the statement by President Arafat to the Special Ministerial Meeting convened on 3 May 2001 under the auspices of the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement in which he reiterated his commitment to the peace process and all agreements signed. He had said that the language of violence and bombardment would not serve the interests of Palestinians or Israelis. President Arafat announced his full acceptance of the Egyptian-Jordanian proposal stating that it was in the interests of the Israeli people, the Palestinian people and the peoples of the Middle East. He was committed to peace, to peace and security for the children of the region and to stability and peace in the whole Middle East.

18. Statements were also made by representatives of some Governments. The representative of China recalled that starting with the Madrid conference, the process towards peace had made some progress. However, the violence that followed the Israeli provocation last September had resulted in huge losses. The international community was obligated to assist the parties in the Middle East to overcome their problems. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China would continue to support efforts to bring about a just and durable solution to the question of Palestine. It had also provided material and economic assistance within its means. The representative of the Russian Federation said that from the beginning of the current cycle of violence, Russia had taken intensive steps to overcome the danger, to protect civilian rights and security and to prevent an economic collapse. Under the circumstances, a set of arrangements should provide for the withdrawal of Israeli troops, lifting the closure of territories and the financial and economic sanctions along with full cessation of the settlement activities. Sustainable security and stability was only possible if the prospects of a political settlement of the Palestinian problem were defined. An interim arrangement was necessary, keeping a constant focus on the fundamental issues of the final status.

19. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic said that Israel clearly wanted to preserve its occupation of the Arab territories. The United Nations needed to invigorate its actions to protect the Palestinian people from Israeli state terrorism. The Organization should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards all aspects of the question of Palestine until it was resolved in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and international law. Attempts to prevent the Security Council from discussing the Palestinian issue contravened its responsibility and diminished the credibility of the Council. In the absence of any hope of a just and comprehensive peace, the Palestinian people had every right to continue their just struggle. The representative of Indonesia said that in spite of initiatives by the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Security Council had failed twice to adopt a draft resolution that would have established a United Nations observer force to be dispatched throughout the Occupied Territory. If the Council had undertaken its

responsibilities and acted decisively on those occasions, needless loss of lives would have been avoided and the situation could have been brought under control. Peace could only be accomplished with the return of all Palestinian lands and the establishment of a viable contiguous state. Every effort should be made towards fostering trust and confidence, resuming negotiations and reaching out for peace.

20. The representative of Jamaica said that the recommendations of the Mitchell Commission, if fully implemented, would pull the region back from a culture of violence and promote a culture of peace. Until there was a resumption of the peace process, the humanitarian dimensions of the conflict made necessary the presence of a United Nations observer force as a vehicle to contain the violence on both sides and, in particular, the excessive violence against the Palestinians. Once the violence had subsided, it would be far easier to talk peace. The representative of Malaysia called on Israel to lift the protracted closures of the Occupied Territory so as to ameliorate the plight of the people living there. He commended the Palestinian Authority for unambiguously accepting the Mitchell Report and called for an immediate implementation of all the Committee's recommendation. He regretted that Israel had rejected major parts of the report and called on that Government to accept the report as a whole and without conditions. The establishment of a United Nations observer protection force would calm the situation and prevent needless deaths and injuries.

21. The representative of Viet Nam demanded an immediate end to the Israeli blockade of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a nation of people living in exile, the Jewish people should understand the suffering of the Palestinian people. Viet Nam identified with the Palestinian cause. He welcomed attempts by the international community to untangle existing deadlocks with a view to reaching a peaceful and lasting settlement but greater efforts were needed to strengthen international solidarity. The United Nations should double its efforts to support the Palestinian people. The representative of Iran pointed out that, during the past decade, a solution to the question of Palestine became more and more complicated, indicating that the region needed a new approach. It was crucial to uphold the right of return of the Palestine refugees to their homeland. He recalled the international conference held last April in Tehran, which made a specific contribution in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people. The representative of Tunisia deplored the death of more than 500 Palestinians and said that the conflict had had a tremendous impact on the economy. The situation could deteriorate further unless there was concerted action by the international community. Within the Security Council, his Government had supported the Non-aligned Movement's call for the establishment of an international force to protect the Palestinian people. Israel must withdraw from all the territories occupied since 1967.

22. The representative of the League of Arab States said that time and again the international community had condemned Israeli practices and actions since they constituted serious violations and flagrant breaches of international law. A recent meeting of the Arab Foreign Ministers called on Arab Governments to halt all political contacts with Israel until it stopped the aggression against the Palestinian people. At the same time, the Arab States remained attached to their commitment to peace as a strategic objective and they have called on the Security Council to deploy a United Nations observer force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At the current juncture, serious collective efforts by the international community were urgently needed to help in consolidating the cease-fire, implementing the Mitchell report recommendations and resuming negotiations. The representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said the OIC had always supported the Palestinian cause and had demonstrated and affirmed that support in all of its meetings. The resolution adopted at the latest meeting in Doha included requests to the Security Council to assume its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter to end the Israeli occupation. It charged that Israeli activities represented war crimes under international law and called for the establishment of a criminal court to try such crimes. The OIC asked that the international community, especially the United States not place obstacles in front of the Security Council. It also called for international pressure on Israel to make it withdraw its troops from all the Palestinian Arab lands. The OIC resolution stressed the need to enable the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights.

III. Keynote presentation

23. **Farouk Kaddoumi**, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization delivered the keynote address on the theme of the Meeting: "Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people – a key to peace in the Middle East". He recalled that in November 1975, the General Assembly had established the Committee to formulate recommendations to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights. Reviewing the history of the consideration of the question of Palestine by the United Nations, he said the Committee's recommendations which included the evacuation of territories occupied by force and the establishment of a timetable for the complete withdrawal by Israeli occupation forces from those areas occupied in 1967, provided the basic tenets for a just solution leading to peace and stability in the Middle East. The Security Council could have acted on those recommendations in 1976, but was prevented from doing so by the United States, which, hence, bore the primary responsibility for obstructing the path to peace. He revisited the different initiatives by succeeding United States Administrations up to Camp David II and concluded that they were doomed to fail, because they did not address the underlying causes of the conflict.

24. He said the attempts to establish an international commission by the Security Council to investigate the latest violence had been rejected by the United States Government and by the Government of Israel. That rejection was an affront to the principles of the United Nations Charter and a total disregard for norms of international conduct. It rejected all attempts to attain peace. The Security Council must adopt and implement measures to investigate the root cause of the recurring violence; to provide protection to the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, and to take steps that would ensure Israel's compliance with its resolutions calling on it to withdraw totally and unconditionally from Palestinian territory. Instead, fact-finding commissions were established with the participation of the United States and the European Union. The Palestinian leadership would have preferred a commission mandated by the Security Council, which must not be neutralized.

25. He continued that the Palestinian Authority had, however, reaffirmed its total support of the conclusions and recommendation of the Mitchell report. Those recommendations must be wholly and faithfully implemented. Addressing the root cause was still the proper path to reach a solution and not only interim settlements. The Israeli Troika composed of two Labor party leaders and a Likud chief was showing no signs of accepting that firepower would not lead to peace and would not break the determination of the Palestinian people to achieve its inalienable rights. Concluding, he said the Al-Aqsa intifada was aimed at a political target and was not a mere expression of discontent and dissatisfaction with the policies and practices of the Occupying Power. The intifada was not an insurrection but a legitimate right of self-defense, a struggle to end the Israeli occupation and to create a sovereign Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

IV. Plenary sessions

Plenary session I

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem

26. Speakers in the Plenary examined the situation since September 2000 and its effect on the Palestinian people; the continued expansion of Israeli settlements; efforts by United Nations organs; the need for international protection of the Palestinian people; and the obligations of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

27. **Abdelaziz Aboughosh**, Assistant Secretary-General, Organization of the Islamic Conference, said official Palestinian reports had recorded that Palestinian martyrs during the current intifada numbered over 500. More than 21 were killed by helicopter gunships, rockets, missiles and heavy artillery. Detailing actions by the Israeli Government to begin the construction of new housing units in the settlements, he said the Government had earmarked \$300 million for the benefit of settlers in the Occupied Territory. Israeli settlement activities bore evidence of the Government's hostile intentions and flouted all international calls to halt such activity. Meanwhile Israel was continuing its policy of demolition of Palestinian homes, institutional buildings and infrastructure. Furthermore, Israel continued confiscating Palestinian houses for military purposes. He described the tight seal around the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip closing land outlets to Egypt and Jordan as well as passageways between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Gaza international airport. In addition, he said, Israel had torn apart the land through the establishment of military checkpoints to prevent movement of Palestinian citizens between towns and villages. The occupation authorities had carried out a campaign of land bulldozing and crop destruction affecting tens of thousands of acres.

28. Mr. Aboughosh outlined other Israeli practices and their effects including large-scale detentions, the destruction of the Palestinian economy, the resulting impact on the Palestinian budget, the effects of Israeli aggression on development programmes, the increased poverty rate and the escalating Israeli aggression against the city of Jerusalem. He said the international community must adopt tangible measures to end the Israeli aggression and settlement activity; secure the necessary international protection for the Palestinian people; prosecute Israeli war criminals; and implement the resolutions of international legality relevant to the question of Palestine, Jerusalem and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

29. **Kamal Hossain**, Member of the Inquiry Commission of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, said the three-member Inquiry Commission had come back from its investigation into the violation of human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied territories after 28 September with the overriding impression of widely divergent perceptions of the two sides of the reality which confronted them. Citing a number of issues, he illustrated that perceptual gap. The basic recommendation of the Commission was that a comprehensive, just and durable peace was to be sought through negotiations. The aim must be to end the occupation and establish a dispensation that met the legitimate expectations of the Palestinian people and the security concerns of the people of Israel. The framework for a final peaceful settlement and the process through which it was pursued should be guided by respect for human rights and humanitarian law. The Commission also recommended that an adequate and effective international presence should be established to monitor and regularly report on compliance by all parties with human rights and humanitarian law standards.

30. He said the Commission had recommended a number of specific and immediate measures which urged an end to the excessive and disproportionate use of force by the IDF and also targeted shootings of individuals by the IDF, settlers and sharpshooters of either side. Such extra judicial executions constituted gross violations of human rights and a breach of international humanitarian law, which involved international criminal responsibility. Immediate and effective measures were also urged to end closures, curfews and other restrictions on the movement of people and goods in the Occupied Territory as well as the arbitrary destruction of property. To improve prospects for a durable peace, especially given the fundamental gaps in perception that currently separated the two sides, the Inquiry Commission strongly recommended that the Commission on Human Rights take steps to facilitate dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians at all levels of social interaction, formally and informally. In that regard, the Commission on Human Rights was urged to convene a consultation between leaders of Israeli and Palestinian civil society on a people-to-people basis in Geneva at the earliest possible time. The Commission on Human Rights was also urged to convene a round table of representatives of European civil society and Governments to discuss steps that could be taken to promote peace, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and to ensure greater respect for human rights standards and for international humanitarian law.

31. **Latif Dori**, Secretary, Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, said Palestinians considered the settlements as the main obstacle to peace, an opinion shared by the Israeli Peace Camp. Some 150 Israeli settlements, inhabited by about 200,000 settlers, had been systematically scattered all across the Palestinian Territory, in order to break up Palestinian territorial continuity. Unless the State of Israel gave up control of the settlements and the roads leading to them, there was no way to create a viable Palestinian state, and no way of making peace. The settlement problem was particularly acute in Jerusalem where the Israeli Government had made an intensive effort in East Jerusalem to increase the number of Jews living there and while reducing the number of Arab residents; in the Gaza Strip, which, though nominally under the control of the Palestinian Authority, was in reality controlled by Israel; as well as in Hebron, the center of which contained some 400 of the most fanatic Israeli settlers. Although many Israelis understood the settlements to be a historic mistake, fifteen new settlements had been created since the February elections.

32. He stated that, since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada, the Palestinian people were in a war of independence against the army of occupation. After Mr. Sharon's election, the iron fist policy was exacerbated by the use of tanks, missiles, helicopter gunships and fighter airplanes. Such tactics had not pushed the Palestinians to their knees, nor would further use of them produce that result. In face of that grave situation, he supported the stationing of an international force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to protect the population. He recalled that the Prime Minister had a record of using force as the 'solution' to all problems. The common element of the Mitchell Report and the Jordanian-Egyptian Initiative was a total and complete settlement freeze, which Mr. Sharon rejected. The only solution was to topple the current Government by mobilizing Israeli public opinion. The main task of the Israeli peace camp today was to present an ideological and practical alternative to the Government of Mr. Sharon and to its policies which endangered Israel's security and the chance to achieve peace. Ultimately, if the Palestinians were deprived of their basic rights, so were the Israelis. The State of Israel had no future without achieving peace with its neighbours.

33. **Corrine Whitlatch**, Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace, said she supported the Mitchell Report and called on participants at the meeting to encourage their organizations and Governments to work for its endorsement. Despite reservations about the Report's failure to call for an international protection force for the Palestinians and suspicions of Israeli intentions, she agreed with the PLO that the Report provided a foundation for solving the current crisis. She stressed the importance of the report's emphasis on settlements saying that the settlement issue could no longer be deferred or denied. It was of fundamental significance that the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact Finding Committee provided a vehicle to move the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations off the United States dominated track and onto an international track that could better lead to the United Nations where it belonged. She hoped that the involvement of other States might lessen the White House's fear of failure resulting from President Clinton's diplomatic clash. By including two popular and powerful former United States senators, the Report should be promoted by the Administration with less risk of the Congress squashing it. Secretary of State Colin Powell needed the political protection provided by those former senators to stand up to pro-Israel Democrats and Republican hawks in Congress and the Defense Department.

34. Reviewing the report's findings and recommendations, she said she was surprised that the Report spoke of the strong support the United States had given Israel and that it noted that in international forums, the United States had at times cast the only vote on Israel's behalf. The long-held United States opposition to settlements was cited as an exception to that support. The PLO response to the report called the recommendations a sensible and coherent foundation for resolving the current crisis and preparing a path back to meaningful negotiations. She cautioned, however, that Israel's strategy was to publicly accept the report while rejecting the only recommendation giving the report credibility in Palestinian eyes – a freeze on settlements and revision of Israel's military policies. The international community had a responsibility to keep attention on Israeli settlement activity as a source of violence that destroyed confidence and hope for a just and durable peace. She hoped that it also act to encourage Palestinians to use active but non-violent resistance to occupation as the means to liberation. Bombings by Palestinians destroyed not only Israeli lives and international solidarity with the Palestinians but would prevent implementation of the settlement freeze called for in the report.

35. **Idalmis Brooks**, Researcher, Center for Studies on Africa and the Middle East, Havana, said Jewish settlements were a hindrance to the negotiation of a solution to the Middle East conflict. Despite the call for a ban on settlement activities, there was no control over the increase in Israeli settlements. In fact, there had been an incredibly rapid increase in the number of settlers, which amounted to eight per cent in one year. The Israelis reserved the right to meet the growth needs of the existing settlers. The term "natural growth" covered up more ambitious projects to stifle the Palestinian autonomous territory, making it easy to repress the Palestinian people. There was clear evidence that Israel maintained effective control over the Palestinians. The Occupied Territory had become a bundle of knots of isolated territories, allowing for violent military attacks and incidents of violence by settlers against Palestinians. If the current trend continued, many more lives would be lost.

36. She said the question of natural resources basically involved the control of water. Israel diverted 500 million cubic meters of water while allowing only 218 meters annually per capita to Palestinians. Accordingly, water resources were a source of conflict and an obstacle to negotiation. The most controversial water issue was in the city of Hebron. Continuing, she said the United Nations had often condemned settlements, which violate the Geneva Convention of 1949. Today, the international community was also discussing the need to protect Palestinian civilians. Yet, the Israeli Government had plans for new settlements. Mr. Sharon's Government had spoken about dismantling settlements in the Occupied Territory but he would do everything to avoid any dismantlement. Only a change in policy could bring Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. The Mitchell Report had to be implemented to avoid further loss of life.

Plenary session II

Upholding international legitimacy – the path to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the conflict

37. The participants considered the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine; resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 242 (1967); the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; and actions by the Israeli peace camp.

38. **Musa Amer Odeh**, Ambassador of Palestine to Brazil, recalled that the State of Israel was created as a result of a United Nations resolution. Israel had been accepted as Member State to the Organization on the condition that it accepted resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III) pertaining to the creation of two States in historic Palestine and the right of return. Fifty-three years later, Israel had still to recognize and implement those key resolutions. Volumes of United Nations resolutions called on Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, denounced Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights, use of collective punishment, land confiscation, control of natural resources and condemned Israeli settlement activity. The question of Palestine was the longest outstanding issue on the agenda of the United Nations. He pointed out that the international community had dealt with similar cases by enforcing United Nations sanctions and military intervention. Allowing Israel to remain above international law was jeopardizing stability in the region and threatening peace and security in the world. Advocating the notion that ending Israel's occupation should be a matter resolved between the two parties would mean giving Israel the upper hand. Ten years of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations had failed to reach an agreement, because Israel has never recognized the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, nor the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that, it received unconditional support from the United States on the political, economic and military levels, which were tantamount to condoning aggression and occupation.

39. He continued that the international community accepted, encouraged and sometimes sponsored mass Jewish immigration to Israel, while allowing Israel to reject Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homes and properties. He recalled that the United Nations had been able to act promptly on the repatriation of Kosovar and East-Timorese refugees and emphasized that the right of return was a basic inalienable right that was not diminished by the passage of time or the change in the political situation in the refugee's country of origin. Likewise, self-determination was a legal right as stated in the Charter. No measure of brutal force or political coercion had ever diminished the inalienable right of a people to self-determination. Israeli policy of building and expanding settlements would not give them legal status. There was no question about the illegality of occupation and the policies and practices of the occupiers. What was lacking was the will to empower and enable the Palestinian people to regain and practice their rights. He concluded that a mechanism was needed to ensure an end to the reluctance of the international community to condemn Israel's occupation. Urgent and long overdue action was needed to ensure Israel's compliance with international legitimacy. Finding excuses

and justifications and granting immunity to aggressors and occupiers only led to chaos in the world order.

40. **Andelfo Garcia**, visiting scholar, Columbia University, reviewing the United Nations activity with regard to the question of Palestine dating back to beginning of the Organization, said it was both important and necessary that the General Assembly continued to provide political support for the resumption of the peace process. In general, the Organization, including organs such as the Commission on Human Rights, should continue to monitor developments in the situation. The ideal solution, however, would be for the Security Council to discharge fully the mandate entrusted to it under the Charter and take effective action such as that contained in the 23 March proposal by the non-aligned movement caucus. The draft resolution presented to the Security Council called for the establishment of a United Nations military and police observer force in the Occupied Territory. The proposed force would help to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh undertakings, secure an end to the violence and guarantee the security of Palestinian civilians. The veto, however, made it difficult for the Council to act forcefully, if at all.

41. He stressed that, under those circumstances, the role of the Secretary-General was particularly important. In today's unipolar international system, the Secretary-General, with his moral authority and international standing, was destined to play an increasing role in monitoring the peace process and in helping to overcome the obstacles in its path. Those obstacles would have to be dealt with as the international community got closer to tackling the substantive problems that remained outstanding. The active role of the Secretary-General must be developed and decisively expanded. In addition, the activities of the Palestinian Rights' Committee needed to be strengthened, particularly in regions such as Latin America. He noted that the position of most Latin American countries was expressed by the Rio Group in October 2000 in excessively moderate terms. That highlighted the need for a more active and determined diplomatic and public information effort in the region to avoid Governments and public opinion in those countries becoming hardened to the situation prevailing in the Occupied Territory.

42. **Ilan Pappé**, Professor of Political Science, Haifa University, analyzed the current situation in the Israeli peace camp and said that the fundamental position of the Israeli Left was not that different from the Right when it came to a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Oslo for the Israeli Left was about tactics, not a genuine wish to revise the relationship with the Palestinian people. Left and Right were united in demands from the Palestinians to give up everything they fought for. He said that for the Palestinians, to relinquish all together their right of return was equivalent to a demand from Israel to abolish its identity as a Jewish nation State in return for peace. For the members of the Peace Now movement, peace and reconciliation meant the mutual recognition of the separate national narratives of the two sides without conflict. According to Peace Now, the way to achieve that would be to divide everything that was visible - land, resources, blame and history - into a pre-1967 era when Jews were "Right and Just" and post-1967 when Palestinians were the victims. From that perspective, victimhood could also be divided into those two historical periods. Such a division was important because being "Just" in the pre-1967 period justified the existence of Zionism and the whole Jewish project in Palestine. It obliterated any discussion of the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Jews in 1948, the destruction of 400 Palestinian villages and neighborhoods, the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians and the massacre of several thousand civilians. On the other side, he said, the Palestinian narrative was that of suffering, reconstructed on the basis of oral history. In that narrative, Zionism or Israel was the absolute evil.

43. He expressed the view that the Peace Now movement's main problem was the PLO's agreement to cooperate in the Oslo Accord. The peace camp read that consent as an acceptance of the Zionist Left's interpretation of the reality. It expected the Palestinians to leave all the issues emanating from 1948 out of the peace agenda: refugees, the Palestinian minority in Israel, Jerusalem and a sovereign Palestinian state. That was the essence of the Israeli offer at Camp David. In the current situation, the Israeli society was experiencing the creation of a non-democratic atmosphere and intolerant regimes, embracing settlers into the national consensus. That was manifested in the thought control exercised in the educational system and the media, but was mostly evident in the Israeli academia, a situation that required nonpartisan scholars to rethink about their relationship with an academia that supported oppression, occupation and discrimination. The Israeli non-Zionist left was a small constituency in Jewish society and relied heavily on the Palestinian minority in Israel. It was a significant actor in politics, but, as in South Africa, he concluded, it would take an internationalization of the conflict to allow that force to create a basis for future reconciliation.

44. **Eugenio Chahuan**, Director for Contemporary Arab-Islamic Studies, University of Chile, referring to the words of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, said one does not look back at past crimes because one continued to live in the present time. Individual and collective memory was capable of recalling the heroic existence of Palestine. Those words reflected the sentiments of the Palestinian people. He said he could review the accumulation of resolutions referring to the question of Palestine but it was clear that international law was on the side of the Palestinian people. They had given up 78 per cent of their demands in their attempt to achieve peace but the other side had not given up on their conditions.

45. He stated that, unfortunately, the Power responsible for ensuring compliance with international law was allied with the other side. After 53 years of resistance and exile, the Palestinian people as a national entity had to seek a way of promoting compliance with international law. Previous panelists had exhaustively reviewed figures and data concerning the systematic violation of Palestinian rights. Such analyses, however, did not curb the actions of the Occupying Power. The international community must move from evaluation and analyses to more effective action. The Palestinian people were being subjected on a daily basis to martyrdom. As Darwish had said, the intifada yesterday and today was the legitimate expression against slavery, the dirtiest form of apartheid which sought to dispossess the Palestinians of their lands until the day their state would be referred to a cage.

46. **Olga Ruffins Machin**, Researcher, Center for Studies on Africa and the Middle East, Havana, said the Arab-Israeli conflict was one of the most complex and long lasting issues in modern history. It went beyond the regional context. Solutions proposed in recent years were open to different interpretations. The United Nations had the major responsibility for a solution since the background for the issue was General Assembly resolution 181 (II). Israeli policy had been always geared toward expansion. The Madrid peace conference was an important first step in the peace process but today, while the international community was still discussing solutions, the region was faced with a crisis. In the balance, more Palestinian people died and suffered. The Israeli Government continued to violate agreements signed with the Palestinian Authority. Although many analysts had dealt with the 1991 agreement, there had been a lack of political will on the part of successive Israeli Governments. There was a need to analyze what had been happening in the negotiations. Through all the years, the international community had witnessed the arbitrary actions of Israel. Yet the slow route of the peace process had had tangible results including the fall of Mr. Barak's Government, division within the Labour Party and the coming to power of the Likud Party. She stressed that Israel could never have stability unless it respected the signed agreements. There was barely any culture of peace left in the country. The overwhelming majority was locked into its own concept of what was national security. There could not be stability unless there was a viable Palestinian state.

47. She pointed out that the Palestinian people had a right to enjoy their inalienable rights. The Israeli Government had demonstrated that it was determined to avoid at any cost the establishment of a Palestinian State. More than ever before, there was a need for greater United Nations participation and the support of regional groups. She urged the Palestinian Rights Committee to step up its activities. The credibility of the international community demanded that the Organization provide a solution to the question of Palestine and support to the Palestinian people. The United States had said it wanted to distance itself from the Middle East problem but it was bound to live up to its commitment to Israel. The United Nations must focus on promoting concrete solutions that were monitored and observed to ensure that they were implemented. The issue was to save a people.

Plenary session III

International support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people

48. The participants discussed action by Latin American and Caribbean States in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people within the United Nations system, the Non-Aligned Movement and other intergovernmental organizations; the experience of Latin American and Caribbean States in the struggle for national independence and sovereignty; action by the States of the region in providing assistance and emergency relief; and action by civil society in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

49. **Sabri Ateyeh**, Ambassador of Palestine to Chile, said that the question of Palestine had been of great concern to the international community from the very beginning of the partition. The relations between Latin America and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had evolved from the diplomatic efforts of the PLO, to date there were permanent missions in numerous countries of the region. Throughout history there had been great understanding in Latin America for the cause of the Palestinians.

50. He said that since the Oslo Agreements, there had been a worsening of conditions in the Occupied Territory. At the same time, committees of solidarity and support for the Palestinian cause had become relaxed following the agreement and had not quite gotten into gear again. Such organizations should be reactivated so that they could help their counterparts in the Palestinian Territory. During Colombia's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement the Chair had made a visit to the Palestinian Territory. In the Security Council, Colombia had voted in favour of sending United Nations troops to protect Palestinian civilians reflecting the sentiments of many Latin American and the Caribbean States.

51. **Maguito Vilela**, Senator and President of the Brazilian Socialist Democratic Party, Brasilia, said the Jewish people had established a State but had not allowed the Palestinians to do the same. The United Nations must keep up its activities to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people. He expressed concern that, in the eight months of the intifadah, almost one-fourth of the more than 450 deaths were children under the age of 18, most of them Palestinians. There had been an

intensification of the conflict and it seemed to be turning into a war. Children could no longer believe in a future and adults were growing more hopeless. Economic sanctions imposed by Israel worsen the situation and rendered the unemployment rates frightfully high.

52. He said there would be no peace under the present circumstances with a strong Israeli army occupying Palestinian territory. Active participation of international mediators was essential. The United Nations resolutions must be obeyed. Without the withdrawal of Israeli troops the Palestinians could not establish their sovereignty. Those who remained in the region had crowded into besieged villages, which were surrounded by Israeli checkpoints. With the equal granting of rights to the two people, there was a chance for peace. He hoped that peace would prevail and the Palestinians and Israelis would fulfill the dream of living in harmony. He expressed the solidarity of the Brazilian people with the Palestinian people. He expressed the wish that international forces led by the United Nations would have success in the task that lay ahead.

53. **Shafick Handal**, Member of Parliament, San Salvador, and leader of the Revolutionary Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional of San Salvador, stated that the Palestinian people wanted peace and were asking the United Nations to send a protection force to stop the Israeli army's activities against it. In the United Nations such a force would be a routine exercise if it were not for the Palestinian people. He drew attention to the fragmentation of Palestinian land that made it difficult to imagine it as a state. El Salvador was the same size as Palestine but Salvadorans could not imagine being cornered in just 20 per cent of their land. The Israeli policy was one of occupation and expulsion with the intention of driving the Palestinians out of their land. In the beginning, the Government had financed groups to settle on Palestinian land and they had continued the policy of establishing and expanding settlements.

54. The overwhelming majority of the international community supported United Nations resolutions in favour of the Palestinians, but the will of the majority was being overruled. He said the United States used the question of human rights as an instrument of their own geopolitical strategy. They had bombed Belgrade in the name of human rights. If imperialism's concept was to be consistent, they should bomb Tel Aviv. The United States was hypocritical in its policy and did not deserve respect. Some countries might not have armaments or nuclear weapons but they did have moral authority. He appealed for a moral uprising against Israeli actions. The obstructionists should not continue to play politics with human rights. It was worth insisting that the United Nations shoulder its responsibility with regard to the Palestinians and find a way to implement its resolutions. Those who had died, particularly the children, had suffered a terrible tragedy. But those who lived suffered a worse condition, humiliation. No colonial country had humiliated its people in the same way. Latin Americans found it difficult to accept that the Palestinians could be treated in such a way. They could not even move around freely in the twenty per cent of their territory that was left to them. On the other hand, apartheid and colonialism had seemed insurmountable but they were overcome.

55. **Hebe de Bonafini**, Head, Movement Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires, asked if the participants really believed in the effectiveness of the Security Council. She had been hardened by what had happened in her own country. After more than 50 years and hundreds of resolutions the rights of the Palestinian people had not been fulfilled. The press and most of the media in the United States were in Jewish hands and bias towards Israel. They had a great deal of skill in sensitizing the world and transforming Palestinians into terrorists and Israelis into victims. The truth was that the United States was the terrorist. It was the one which dropped the most bombs. It blockaded Cuba and protected other terrorist states like Israel. She praised Palestinian men and women and said they were incredibly brave. They were supposed to accept what they were offered from the Israelis. Mothers around the world should go to the streets and town squares to tell the world that "we are all Palestinians".

56. **Eduardo Kronfly Kronfly**, Dean, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Bogota, said that the Security Council had done nothing to alleviate the Palestinian crisis. Peace in the Middle East was becoming more and more remote. International law granted rights to states and not to individuals. It recognized the dignity of people and highlighted independence. Reading from chapters of a work he was preparing on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, he said the principles and philosophy of new international law had become a backup to the Charter and regional agreements. The Charter of the Organization of American States called on all States to achieve peace and justice and to defend their sovereignty and independence.

57. He expressed the view that philosophy and norms of international law united the fate of the international community. The various bodies of the United Nations were caught in a new philosophy of decolonization. The General Assembly had adopted a resolution that supported the right to self-determination. It adopted the declaration of independence to colonial countries and people calling for an end to colonialism and the practices of racism and segregation associated with it. All people had a right to self-determination. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) also related the right to self-determination with the declaration of human rights. He recalled that Colombia was one of the countries that had not voted for the partition of Palestine, because it believed it to be the most terrible injustice towards the Palestinians. Colombia had always voted for the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes. Now in the Security Council, Colombia continued to stand for Palestinian rights in spite of the implied threats from the United States.

58. **Raimondo Kabchi Chemor**, Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Santa Maria, Caracas, emphasized that Latin America and the Caribbean were dedicated to the support of the Palestinian people. He recalled that a Caribbean vote, called the "Ten Thousand Dollar vote", had made it possible for the partition resolution 181 (II) to enjoy a majority of one vote. On the whole, Latin America had voted for the partition. However that resolution had also called for the creation of a Palestinian state. Latin Americans were obligated now to ensure the establishment of that state. The majority of Latin American leaders had lacked convictions. The partition resolution did not have one vote from Asia and Africa. The international community must work together to make compliance possible with General Assembly resolution 181 (II).

59. He stated that the Palestinian demands were in accordance with international justice. First on their list was the creation of a Palestinian state, a right that was recognized by the United Nations. Jerusalem was an entirely Arab city and had been so for millennia. The Palestinians also wanted the right to return. Israel had no reason to say that the Palestinians had no right to return while people from Russia, Ukraine and all over the world had the right to return if they had a Jewish mother. There was no international law saying that someone who had recently arrived from Russia could go to the Palestinian Territory and move into a settlement. He said that unipolarism and globalization made it difficult for some countries to support the Palestinian people. It seemed sad that terrorism and violence in the Middle East was associated with the Palestinians. The Palestinians who shouted for their rights could not be compared with the Israelis and their fighter planes and other sophisticated weapons supplied by the United States. He was proud that Venezuela had assumed a principled stance with regard to the Palestinian people.

60. **Gabriel Perez Tarrau**, Professor, Higher Institute of International Relations, Havana, said the Security Council constantly demonstrated the use of a double standard, particularly in the consideration of the question of Palestine. He called attention to the impunity with which Israel had violated international law. In fact, the State of Israel was constituted in violation of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) because it had seized part of the land that was supposed to go to the Palestinian state. Israel was founded using discriminatory practices against Palestinians living within its territory.

61. He said that Israel had started five wars against its Arab neighbours. It felt it was entitled to develop weapons of mass destruction. The State of Israel flagrantly violated agreements and showed a God-like contempt for all the resolutions adopted by the United Nations. It used missiles, bombs and warships against young people and children who had only stones to protect themselves. The State of Israel that had continuously increased its population based on the right to return denied that right to the Palestinians. Its entire history was one of arrogance and impunity. An exception had been made for Israel because it had always found financial and political support from the United States. He noted that Israel always voted with the United States for the blockade against Cuba. The double standard stood unchallenged. However, the United States had put itself in a vulnerable situation. In vetoing fair and necessary proposals such as the deployment of an observer force, the United States showed its true nature. The policy of double standards must fade away helped by the actions of the Palestinian Rights' Committee, which worked to dispel the myths that people were bombarded with about this issue.

V. NGO workshop

Action by civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean in solidarity with the Palestinian people

62. An NGO Workshop organized in connection with the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held in the morning of 14 June 2001. The Workshop was opened by the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The theme of the Workshop was "Action by civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean in solidarity with the Palestinian people". Representatives of 20 NGOs together with the experts of the Meeting reviewed regional NGO action in the light of the Plan of Action adopted at the 1998 Meeting in Santiago de Chile; efforts by NGOs, religious groups and the media to mobilize public opinion in support of the Palestinian people; and discussed action-oriented proposals and mechanisms for their implementation. The deliberations of the Workshop were chaired by **Lourdes Cervantes Vásquez**, Head of the Political Department of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL).

63. **Ibra Deguène Ka**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said non-governmental organizations worldwide had worked for decades for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The role of civil society in educating their respective constituencies about the fundamental issues of the question of Palestine and in mobilizing public support was very important. There was now a greater need for sustained campaigns aimed at informing public opinion and promoting national and international action in support of the peace process and the effective

implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements. In the months to come, non-governmental organizations should focus on Jerusalem, settlements, refugees and borders, building on what was reached in Camp David and Taba. He stressed that it was important for non-governmental organizations to continue to support the peace negotiations. Promoting varied assistance to the Palestinian people in nation-building and economic and social development, as well as providing emergency relief should be another important area of work for NGOs.

64. He went on to say that the Committee encourages cooperation, coordination and networking among civil society organizations. In the period ahead, much of the success of the non-governmental work would depend on the ability of such organizations to mobilize the broadest possible constituency for their specific initiatives. The past months had seen organized and spontaneous protest against Israeli violence. Demonstrations, solidarity marches, candlelight vigils, letter campaigns and newspaper advertisements had been organized by non-governmental organizations in all regions. He drew attention to the Web site for NGOs active on the issue developed by the Division for Palestinian Rights that served as a useful tool for mutual information and mobilization. It featured useful sources of information such as the NGO Action News and Calendar of Events. He encouraged non-governmental partners to inform the Division as to how it could assist them in utilizing electronic facilities more efficiently.

65. **Doris Musalem**, Professor, University Autonoma Metropolitana de Mexico said the fundamental work in support of the Palestinian cause was achieved through the mass media, academia and cultural institutions. Representatives of NGOs had been averaging approximately two invitations a year to appear on Mexican television programmes. Since 6 January, however, no representative had been asked to appear again. She felt that when it was possible to talk about the peace process, NGOs were welcome to discuss the question of Palestine. However, when things in the Occupied Territory deteriorated and public criticism of Israel increased, the invitations to discuss the issue stopped and silence on the issue ensued. She said the mass media were reducing the time spent on the situation in the Middle East. The amount of time that pro-Palestinian advocates were asked to speak on the issue was directly linked to events in the region and that was caused by the huge financial power of the Jewish community in Mexico. Moreover, the enormous power of the Jewish lobby was crushing at the international level. Only one newspaper, *La Jomada*, which had special audience of professionals, gave serious coverage to the issue.

66. She continued that in the academia there was still space for advocates to speak out and to publish articles on the problem. In addition, she and many of her colleagues were asked to give lectures to large audiences of young people, providing them with the opportunity to speak the truth. It was difficult to counter the media offensive led by Jewish groups. There were not two truths, only one, she said. The victim should not be allowed to become the victimizer. That was part of the ongoing Jewish strategy. She emphasized that no public opinion was as important as that in the United States. Americans needed to know where their money was going. The peace negotiations could not be resumed because there never were peace negotiations. First there had to be peace with total and unilateral withdrawal by Israel from the West Bank. Then there could be negotiations. At that critical time, it was needed to find a way to present the situation to the public.

67. **Juan Carretero Ibañez**, Secretary-General of OSPAAAL, said his organization offered solidarity to all peoples deprived of their fundamental rights and in particular to the Palestinian people, which needed multifaceted support from all the organizations, institutions, Governments and peoples of the world. Living as pariahs on their own soil, under a regime of threats, assassinations and imprisonments, without any rights, the Palestinians had been left with only one option – to revolt. He proposed that information be widely disseminated on the harsh reality faced by the Palestinians. OSPAAAL had over many years supported the Palestinian people through a variety of activities. He suggested that on 29 November 2001, the next International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, there should be a broad international mobilization to publicize Palestinian rights. More than 50 years after the UN Partition Resolution, the Palestinians still waited for a state of their own, suffering under the Israelis who showed no respect for the resolutions of the Organization that gave them their State in the first place. The Palestinians, locked up in a kind of “bantustans”, were bombarded, assassinated or imprisoned daily, while the Israelis continued their efforts to Judaize Jerusalem, expanded their settlements and blocked funds due to the Palestinian Authority, all this with impunity. One had only to look at the number of victims on each side to the conflict to see who was the victim and who the aggressor.

68. He recalled that the Palestinians, with the support of the Arab Group and the Non-Aligned Movement, had repeatedly attempted to obtain approval by the Security Council for the dispatch of observers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but they had been hindered by the opposition of the United States and its standing veto. NGOs should call on Governments to recognize the Palestinian Authority as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and accord its offices around the world diplomatic status. NGOs should also work to get the United Nations to protect Palestinians until a stable peace could be achieved and a Palestinian State was created. He supported recognition of the Palestinian people's right to struggle against the illegal occupation and announced that OSPAAAL would convene a conference in support of the just Palestinian cause in the first half of 2002, in a Latin American country.

69. Earlier in the Meeting, **Dianne Luping**, International Legal Officer, LAW, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment, spoke from the floor. She noticed that she was the only participant coming from the Occupied Territory. She had been allowed to leave because she was a foreigner. She said Israel's campaign had moved from closures and curfews to a state of siege. Tanks had been installed at most entrances of towns and villages. Since May, the imprisonment had spread further. Some towns had literally been locked up with keys to town gates being held by Israeli soldiers. More than one million Palestinians were living under the poverty line. The forecast was that the most destitute would soon start to starve if their situation was not alleviated. She went on to say that in addition to Israeli sniper attacks there had been regular bombing attacks against homes, hospitals and civilians. There were incidences of willful killing. A large proportion of the wounded would be permanently disabled.

70. Ms. Luping called for the establishment of a protection force. In addition to considering the issues inside the Occupied Territory, the international community must consider the issues faced by all Palestinians wherever they might be. All had a shared experience of victimization and a shared history. She expressed the view that Palestinian refugees were the only refugee group that was not living under the official protection of the United Nations. Forcible evictions had created a minority within Israel, which was subjected to various forms of discrimination. The wider international community had not recognized the twin discriminatory systems of colonialism and the Israeli brand of apartheid. She called for a truly democratic state of Israel with a Palestinian state existing along side of it. Israel's policy of segregation and domination fulfilled the definition of apartheid aimed at making greater territorial gains and driving out the Palestinians. She asked the international community to join Palestinians in their fight against colonialism and apartheid. She suggested that the international community impose the sanctions and embargoes similar to those that brought South Africa to the negotiating table.

71. NGO participants discussed and adopted a **Plan of Action**. NGOs want to increase the publication of information materials on the reality of the Palestinian situation and denounce any double standard, which is applied to protect Israel from international condemnation for its human rights violations. NGOs should provide the United Nations Commission on Human Rights with all pertinent information. The Plan calls for worldwide observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2001. The United Nations should provide effective protection for the Palestinian people and demand compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention. NGOs will lobby their Governments to increase their financial contributions to UNRWA to enable it to continue its services to Palestine refugees. Special emphasis should be given to the situation of Palestinian women living under occupation. NGOs should monitor the information broadcast by the mass media in their respective countries and counter disinformation campaigns that call into question the justice of the Palestinian cause. The Federation of Arab Entities of the Americas (FEARAB) was called upon to establish an economic assistance fund for the Palestinian people. NGO action in support of the Palestinian people would be reviewed at the Second International Conference of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to be held in Mexico City in the first half of 2002.

Closing session

72. **Walter Balzan**, Rapporteur of the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting, introduced the final document of the Meeting, the Havana Declaration (see annex II).

73. **Abelardo Moreno Fernandez**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, pointed out that the United Nations had a duty to seek a just and lasting solution for the question of Palestine. The Security Council, which had been mandated under the Charter to save the world from acts that would impinge on international peace and security, must take action to protect the rights of the Palestinians. The General Assembly, as the most democratic body of the Organization, must also act decisively and urgently. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinians People must keep up the pressure. The Meeting in Havana and others like it demonstrated the constant solidarity of peoples and personalities around the world with the Palestinian people. The situation in the Occupied Territory was a blot on the world's conscience.

74. He stated that United Nations actions must seek to bring peace for Palestine but not a peace under which the Israeli Government continued to expand settlements and millions of Palestinians continued to live in fear and humiliation. Cuba did not want a peace in which millions of Palestinian refugees were deprived of their right of return. Nor did it want that merely symbolic concessions be made in order to declare that peace had been achieved. The United States were financing, arming and protecting the Occupying Power, using its overt or covert veto in the Security Council to steer towards an unjust and unacceptable peace. Cuba was quite familiar with such actions, through its struggle for almost two centuries to preserve its national identity and its subjection to a ferocious blockade for more than four decades. In conclusion, the Deputy Minister saluted the heroic Palestinian people; all those who offered their solidarity with the Palestinian people in its

struggle for independence and for the establishment of a state with East Jerusalem as its capital; and those who continued to battle for this just cause from within the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement or other fora.

75. **Nasser Al-Kidwa**, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, condemned current Israeli attempts to undermine and reverse whatever little had been achieved by the peace process. Its actions indicated that it was attempting to escape the implementation of every single agreement, and, of course, of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). By launching a bloody military campaign against the Palestinian people, committing war crimes, state terrorism, willful killing of hundreds of Palestinians, by destroying Palestinian infrastructure and economic facilities, Israel wanted to impose a solution that served only its interest. He emphasized that in spite of all its suffering, the Palestinian people would not change its position on its basic, inalienable rights, on an independent, sovereign state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of the Palestine refugees.

76. He stated that in the current situation, the basis of any agreement must remain the recommendations of the Mitchell Fact-finding Commission. The Palestinian Authority had accepted the Mitchell recommendations but Israel invented so-called stages of implementation, a position, which was not acceptable. Palestinians insisted on the implementation of the recommendations as a package with the cessation of violence and the full stop of settlement activities as a central part. It was crucial to maintain international pressure in order to give peace another chance. The Security Council must live up to its responsibilities regardless of the number of vetoes cast or the pressures applied on supporters of the Palestinian cause. In conclusion, he expressed solidarity with the Government and people of Cuba in their struggle to overcome the blockade. The Palestinians stood by the Cubans in the attempt to achieve a better world for all mankind.

77. **Ibra Deguène Ka**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People said that the Meeting had taken place at a critical crossroads in the Israeli-Palestinian track of the peace process. The change of leadership in Israel had undercut the momentum for reaching a final and comprehensive agreement. On the basis of the discussions, it could be concluded that most Governments and people of the Latin American and Caribbean region were committed to continuing their moral, and political support to the Palestinian people until it was able to fully exercise its inalienable rights. Moreover, the countries of the region had once again demonstrated their long-standing commitment to the Middle East peace process. The way ahead required strict adherence to the norms of international law, as enshrined in international conventions and United Nations resolutions. He pointed out that it was encouraging to see that the Palestinian people had not been left on their own. They continued to enjoy the support of the international community in its various manifestations, be it the United Nations system entities, regional organizations and other intergovernmental structures or international civil society.

ANNEX I

Havana Declaration

We, the participants in the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held in Havana from 12 to 13 June 2001, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, declare:

On the principles governing the Middle East peace process

Our broad and determined commitment to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State and the right to return to their homeland;

That the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, must be brought to an end without delay and that mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence must be given the opportunity to flourish;

That Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which embody the principle of land for peace and form the legal basis for the Middle East peace process, must be adhered to;

That the United Nations should continue to exercise its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with international legitimacy, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized;

On the situation on the ground

That the excessive use of force by Israel, the occupying Power, the closures and the economic blockade of Palestinian population centres and all other illegal measures of collective punishment against the Palestinian people must be brought to an end immediately;

That, in view of the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians and continued Israeli illegal settlement activity, the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention should expedite the reconvening of the Conference of the High Contracting Parties, in accordance with the statement adopted by the Conference on 15 July 1999 in Geneva;

That international protection, in the form of a United Nations observer force, must be provided. In this respect, the United Nations Security Council should fully discharge its responsibilities under the Charter, or, if it failed to do so once again, the issue should be brought before the General Assembly;

That international humanitarian assistance must be forthcoming to offset the adverse effects of illegal Israeli actions and that the Palestinian Authority should be given fiscal support to make up, *inter alia*, for revenue withheld by Israel;

That Israel should transfer without delay the revenue it is withholding from the Palestinian Authority in contravention of signed agreements;

On current efforts at reviving the peace process

That the recommendations of the Sham el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, contained in its recently published report (Mitchell report), be swiftly implemented in their entirety and in conjunction with the measures suggested by the Egyptian-Jordanian peace initiative, as a way of ending the violence, restoring confidence between the parties and resuming peace talks. In this respect, the valuable efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator, the European Union and the Co-Sponsors of the peace process should be continued;

That, in light of developments on the ground, the UN Secretary-General's visit to the region in pursuit of a peaceful solution to the crisis is an important step in the right direction;

That special significance must be attached to the need for swift implementation of the Fact-Finding Committee's call for a complete freeze in settlement expansion and its suggestion that Israel consider the evacuation now of some settlements for security reasons;

That negotiations between the parties be resumed from where they left off in January 2001 and that a final status agreement for a settlement of the question of Palestine be reached forthwith, within the framework of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on the basis of international legality and the relevant United Nations resolutions;

On the contribution of the Latin American and Caribbean region

That Governments, intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians and civil society organizations, including Latin American and Caribbean ones, should exert all efforts to support the peace process and its successful conclusion;

That Latin American and Caribbean States, having had a broad experience in their struggle for decolonization and national sovereignty, should continue their moral, political and material support for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights;

We welcome the long-standing commitment of Latin American and Caribbean States to the peace process, particularly the efforts to achieve a permanent peace settlement between Palestinians and Israelis.

Our special appreciation goes to H.E. Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Council of State and of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba; H.E. Sr. Ricardo Alarcón, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Cuba; H.E. Sr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cuba; and to the Government and people of the Republic of Cuba for hosting the Meeting, for organizing a series of parallel events – including a TV round table in the presence of H.E. President Castro, and for the assistance and support extended to the Committee in preparation of this regional meeting.

Havana, 14 June 2001

ANNEX II

Statement by the Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

The Committee Delegation to the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine is gravely concerned by the fact that, for the

second time in this calendar year, Palestinian experts from the Occupied Palestinian Territory have been prevented from attending a major Committee event. Due to the closure imposed by Israel, the Occupying Power, the two speakers from Ramallah were not able to travel to Havana. A similar incident took place last February, when four Palestinian speakers were not allowed to attend the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People that took place in Vienna.

The Committee Delegation deeply regrets the forced absence of Mr. Ahmed Soboh, Assistant Minister for International Cooperation and Director-General for Diplomatic Training at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of the Palestinian Authority and Mr. Riad Malki, Vice-President of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace. The Meeting participants have thus been deprived of the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, at a time of severe hardship and deprivation affecting the entire population of the Territory. Furthermore, the participants will not be able to hear suggestions from a representative of the Palestinian Authority on how to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and to resume the peace process.

The Committee Delegation yet again denounces the Israeli policy of closures, collective punishment and constant violation of the human rights of the Palestinians. Among their many grave consequences, these illegal practices have a negative effect on international efforts to find a solution to the current crisis, and, in particular, on the Committee's Programme of Work and this very Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine. Noting that the demands made last February in a Committee Statement went unheeded, the Committee Delegation urges once again the Israeli Government to desist from such illegal policies that jeopardize the dialogue of the international community with the Palestinian people within the framework of United Nations conferences and meetings.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will consider steps to be taken in view of the persistent policy of obstruction in implementing its General Assembly mandate.

ANNEX III
List of participants
Speakers

Mr. Abdelaziz Aboughosh
Assistant Secretary-General, Organization of the Islamic Conference
Jeddah

H.E. Mr. Sabri Ateyeh
Ambassador of Palestine to Chile

Mr. Eugenio Chahuan Chahuan
Academic researcher, Director for Contemporary Arab-Islamic Studies at the University of Chile
Santiago

Ms. Hebe de Bonafini
Capital Federal
Argentina

Ms. Idalmis Brooks
Researcher, Center for Studies on Africa and the Middle East
Havana

Mr. Latif Dori
Secretary, Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue founded by Israelis of Oriental Origin
Tel Aviv

Mr. Andelfo García
Professor, Columbia University
New York

Mr. Shafick Handal
Member of Parliament
San Salvador

Mr. Kamal Hossain
Member, CHR Commission of Inquiry
Geneva

Mr. Raimundo Kabchi Chemor
Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Santa Maria
Caracas

H.E. Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi
Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization
Tunis

Mr. Eduardo Kronfly Kronfly
Dean of the Faculty for Law and Political Sciences, University of San Martin
Bogota

Ms. Olga Ruffins Machin
Researcher, Center for Studies on Africa and the Middle East
Havana

Ms. Doris Musalem
Professor at the University Autónoma Metropolitana
Mexico

H.E. Mr. Musa Amer Odeh
Ambassador of Palestine to Brazil
Brasilia

Mr. Ilan Pappé
Professor of Political Science, Haifa University
Haifa

Mr. Gabriel Perez Tarrau
Higher Institute of International Relations
Havana

Mr. Maguito Vilela
Senator and President of the Brazilian Socialist Democratic Party
Brasilia

Ms. Corinne Whitlatch
Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace
Washington, D.C.

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

H.E. Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations,
Chairman of the Committee and Head of Delegation

H.E. Mr. Walter Balzan
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Martin Andjaba
Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Rafael Dausá Céspedes
Deputy Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Mr. Danilo Türk
Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Governments

Argentina, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia, Russian Federation, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Viet Nam

Non-member States maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Switzerland

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

Palestine

Intergovernmental organizations

League of Arab States
Organization of the Islamic Conference

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
United Nations Development Programme

Non-governmental organizations

Asociación Cubana de las Naciones Unidas
Canadian Palestinian Foundation
Casa del Árabe
Centro de Estudios sobre Africa y medio Oriente (CEAMO)
Centro de Estudios de América(CEA)
Centro de Estudios de Asia y Oceanía (CEAO)
Comité Peruano por la Paz
Commission of the Churches on of the World Council of Churches
Federation of Cuban Women
ICAP
Indo-Arab Islamic Association-India
LAW - The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
Movimiento Cubano por la Paz y la Soberanía de los Pueblos
Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL)
Palestine Aid Society
Profesionales Pro-Paz Israel-Palestina en Mexico
Unión Árabe de Cuba
Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (UPEC)
Union Nacional de Juristas de Cuba

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