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Letter dated 31 December 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of
the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the final communiqué of the 14th meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Damascus Declaration States, held in Cairo on 28 and 29 December 1996 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council and of the General Assembly under agenda items 30, 33, 35, 53, 67 and 151.

(Signed) Soliman AWAAD
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Deputy Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Final communiqué of the 14th meeting of the Damascus Declaration
States held in Cairo on 28 and 29 December 1996

At the invitation of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Damascus Declaration States held their fourteenth meeting in Cairo on 28 and 29 December 1996.

The session was presided over by His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and attended by the following:

His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates;

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain;

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia;

His Excellency Mr. Farouk al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic;

His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman;

His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr al-Thani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar; and

His Excellency Mr. Abd al-Aziz Dakhil al-Dakhil, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait.

His Excellency Sheikh Jamil Ibrahim al-Hegelan, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, also attended.

Inspired by the purposes and principles of the Damascus Declaration, and on the basis of the role played by member States in promoting Arab solidarity, advancing the interests of the Arab nation and safeguarding joint national security; in response to current requirements, and in the light of international and regional developments, particularly with regard to the peace process, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs affirmed their absolute commitment to work in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the Arab Summit Conference held in Cairo from 21 to 23 June 1996. They also affirmed their commitment to the firm and principled positions adopted by Arab leaders at the Conference with a view to strengthening Arab solidarity and establishing a just and comprehensive peace that will serve the highest interests of the Arab nation, restore its usurped rights and monitor effective Arab action in the future.

The Ministers reaffirmed their countries' firm stance with regard to developments in the peace process, and the need to adhere to the authoritative bases on which it has been based since the Madrid Conference. Of particular relevance were: Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); the principle of land for peace; complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights to the 4 June 1967 line; complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa to the internationally recognized boundaries; complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territory, including Arab Jerusalem, and the guarantee of legitimate national rights for the Palestinian people, including the right of self-determination and to establish an independent State on its own national soil. The Ministers affirmed their absolute support for the Palestinians' position, their efforts to effect Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian land, and safeguard security and the rights of their people.

The Ministers affirmed that the attempt by the Israeli Government to renege on its commitment to withdraw completely from the Golan Heights to the 4 June 1967 line, which had been made before the American co-sponsor, represented Israeli withdrawal from the peace process, undermining its bases and authority.

The Ministers expressed their complete support for Syria's firm stance regarding the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace based on legitimate international foundations, the principle of land for peace, and the resumption of negotiations from the point which had been reached. They affirmed their support for Lebanon and Syria, faced with Israeli provocation and threats intended to establish the occupation and impose the status quo on the Arabs. They held the Israeli Government fully responsible for the resultant dangerous consequences.

The Ministers stressed the importance of resuming negotiations and making rapid progress on all Arab-Israeli tracks, building on the progress and results that had been achieved. They similarly affirmed the need for Israel to abide by all the commitments that it had made as part of the peace process.

The Ministers referred to the wide international support for the Arab claim, and commended the positive development in the role of Europe, reflected in the statements issued by the European Union. In this context, the Ministers expressed their especial appreciation of the role of France, under President Jacques Chirac. They also expressed their appreciation of the statements made by the President of the United States of America, William Clinton, regarding Israeli settlement policy, and requested the United States to ensure that American financial aid was not used to implement that policy. They further requested the United States, in its capacity as a co-sponsor of the peace process, to adopt a stance that would ensure that the policy of expanding Israeli settlements on occupied Arab land would cease, and that the peace process would return to its proper course.

The Ministers affirmed their commitment to legitimate international resolutions requiring the non-recognition of any situation resulting from Israeli settlement activity, and declared that the establishment of settlements and the introduction of settlers were illegitimate acts that constituted a violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Madrid framework, in addition to threatening to bring about the collapse of the peace process.

The Ministers reaffirmed the declaration made by the most recent Arab Summit Conference, namely, that Israeli Government insistence on its position could lead to the destruction of the peace process. This would have dangerous consequences, might return the region to a vortex of violence, and force a number of Arab States to begin to reconsider the steps taken vis-à-vis Israel in the framework of that peace process. The Israeli Government alone would bear the entire responsibility for such a situation.

The Ministers asserted that the establishment of truly cooperative relations between regional parties in the Middle East was subject to complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land, and the achievement by the Palestinian people of their legitimate national rights, in order that a climate of peace, security and stability could prevail in the region.

The Ministers stressed that a just and comprehensive peace would bring about balanced and equal security for all the States of the region. In this respect, the security of Israel could not be considered a prerogative to which it was entitled at the expense of the security of Arab countries. Equal security was the basis of the stability and continuity of peace. In this context, the Ministers stressed the importance of making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and of Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and acceptance of a system of safeguards which would be supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

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