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President: Mr. Hamilton Shirley AMERASINGHE
(Sri Lanka).

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Türkmen (Turkey),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

AGENDA ITEM 27

Question of Palestine (*continued*):

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the
 Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;
- (b) Report of the Secretary-General

1. The PRESIDENT: As agreed at this morning's meeting, we shall now hear those representatives who wish to explain their votes after the vote that was taken at the previous meeting.

2. Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan): The delegation of the Kingdom of Bhutan voted in favour of draft resolution A/31/L.20 and Add.1, which was adopted by the Assembly at the previous meeting. We did so because my delegation also believes that the Palestine question is at the heart of the problem of the Middle East.

3. Israel continues to occupy the Arab territories, disregarding the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Indeed, there can be no durable peace in the region unless Israel withdraws from all Arab territories occupied by it since 1967.

4. At the same time, the inalienable national rights of the people of Palestine must be restored, including their right to return to their homeland and establish an independent State in Palestine. However, we believe that the realities in the area must also be taken into account by recognizing the existence of all the States in the region. In this regard, as my Foreign Minister stated during the general debate:

"Any lasting settlement in the Middle East must also ensure that every State in the region has a right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries."
[24th meeting, para. 147.]

5. Mr. GALLARDO MORENO (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As we said in the general debate on the item

on Thursday, 18 November [71st meeting], Mexico deems it its duty as a Member of the Organization, whose fundamental goal is the maintenance of international peace, to state its views on the question of Palestine. This is an important element in the Middle East problem, which may seriously endanger world peace unless a speedy solution can be found. As we pointed out on that occasion, just as the obligation of recognizing the national identity of the Palestinian people is undeniable, and just as it is urgent to find a means whereby that people may exercise its right to self-determination and thus become a sovereign State in its own territory, so also it is essential for that process to be carried out with strict respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of the States of the region—which logically includes Israel—and, I repeat, always on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

6. We repeat that we have serious reservations as to the validity of some of the recommendations made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in its report [A/31/35], although we cannot fail to state our support, with certain limitations, of the provisions of section III of part two—paragraphs 70 to 72—of the Committee's report, concerning the right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty.

7. For those reasons, the Mexican delegation regrets that it had to abstain in the vote on draft resolution A/31/L.20 and that it could not cast a positive vote, as it would have wished to do. None the less, here and now, we wish to reiterate our political determination to continue our efforts in this forum so that the Palestinian people may soon have the country and homeland to which it is entitled, on the basis of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. In addition, we believe that the Committee whose report we have considered should continue its important work.

8. Mr. EL SHEIBANI (Libyan Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of the Libyan Arab Republic voted in favour of the draft resolution. We did so because that resolution has certain constructive features and, as I said already in the course of our discussion, the Committee's report and the important documents appended to it, which are both objective and well balanced, are in fact historic documents that shed light on the way in which the United Nations has dealt with the question of Palestine from the very outset.

9. We support many of the analyses and recommendations made by the Committee, particularly in connexion with the following points. The first point is the recognition that the problem of Palestine is the central element in the Middle East conflict; thus, there can be no solution in the Middle East so long as the wishes of the Palestinian people are not

fulfilled and their rights are not recognized. The second is the recognition that the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, their right to return to their homes, and their right to self-determination, independence and national sovereignty is the basis for a global and final solution of the problem of the Middle East. The third point is recognition of the right of the Palestinian Liberation Organization [PLO], the authentic representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with all other parties, on the basis of resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX), in all conferences on the Middle East held under the auspices of the United Nations. The fourth is the recognition of the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the need to restore the territorial integrity of Arab lands. The fifth is the recognition that all parties concerned should make it possible for the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable rights. And the sixth is the recognition that it is essential that the United Nations and its family of organizations play an increased role in bringing about a swift solution of the Palestinian question. It is particularly the duty of the Security Council to take adequate steps to enable the Palestinian people to return to their homes and recover their property.

10. I should like to state here for the record the position of my delegation since we do not agree with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) because events have transcended them and they can no longer lead to a lasting solution of the Middle East problem, particularly since the General Assembly, in resolution 3236 (XXIX), reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine; in resolution 3237 (XXIX) recognized the PLO; in resolution 3376 (XXX) again reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and asserted their right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and their right to return to their homes and property from which they had been displaced and uprooted; and in resolution 3379 (XXX) determined that Zionism was a form of racism.

11. Those resolutions mark a radical change in the General Assembly's position in connexion with the question of Palestine and reflect the changes that have occurred in world public opinion. Thus the problem is now being considered in a fairer and more objective way, taking into account the tragedy of the Palestinian people. Those developments are considered as an important step towards repairing the historical injustices for which the General Assembly itself was responsible after the Second World War, when there were only 51 States Members and the imperialist Powers dominated the General Assembly.

12. Mr. HALL (Jamaica): My delegation abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

13. In examining reports on matters related to the Palestine question, my delegation is concerned with the basic issue of the rights of both parties directly concerned, namely, those of the Palestinian people and those of the State of Israel. Since the recommendations of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People do not explicitly include the rights of the State of Israel, my delegation was unable to endorse the recommendations in the Committee's report, as called for in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution.

14. There are basic principles contained in the Committee's report which my Government fully supports. We feel that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be established without the achievement of a just solution of the problem of Palestine. We do not believe, therefore, that the international community can regard the problem of the Palestinian people merely as a refugee problem. In this regard, the Government of Jamaica fully recognizes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right of return and their right to national independence and sovereignty. Indeed, we have supported resolutions adopted at previous sessions of the Assembly which embody those basic principles.

15. The point of departure for Jamaica's policy on the Middle East is Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, which, *inter alia*, calls for:

"Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force".

Jamaica interprets that as a full recognition of the right of Israel to exist as a State and to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

16. We also fully support Security Council resolution 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, which, *inter alia*, called for the immediate "implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts". It also called for "... negotiations ... between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East". That is the basis for the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East, and the early resumption of that Conference with the full participation of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people is imperative.

17. The prime concern of my Government is that effective steps be taken to achieve a peaceful settlement. It follows, therefore, that a fundamental step towards a solution requires the reciprocal recognition of rights by the parties directly concerned: of Israel's right to exist as a State and of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, with the PLO as their legitimate representative. With that as a starting point and with a genuine desire for a peaceful settlement, there can be an early resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference.

18. Mr. RAM (Fiji): Draft resolution A/31/L.20 called on the Assembly to endorse the recommendations of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. My delegation recognizes and fully sympathizes with the problems of the Palestinian people. Indeed, we whole-heartedly support the legitimate right of the displaced Palestinians to self-determination, including their right to a national homeland. At the same time, however, we firmly believe that, for any just and durable peace in the Middle East, it is important to recognize the right of Israel and of every other State in the area to exist within secure and recognized boundaries.

19. My delegation regrets that the recommendations of the Committee made no mention of peaceful coexistence of all the parties concerned, no mention of Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries, and no mention of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which provide the essential framework for a negotiated settlement and which, we believe, should remain the basis on which a just and lasting peace in the Middle East can be achieved.

20. Because of this lack of balance and over-all objectivity in the Committee's report, my delegation had no option but to abstain in the vote on that important draft resolution.

21. Mr. YANGO (Philippines): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/31/L.20 and Add.1 in the hope that the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the People of Palestine would serve as a catalyst and help to bring about the early convening of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East. My delegation has always stood for a just and lasting solution of the problem of the Middle East, for which time is of the essence. It is in this light that my delegation views the Committee's report.

22. Having said this, I want it to be understood clearly that my delegation has adhered and continues to adhere to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the framework of the negotiations for a just and lasting solution of the Middle East problem; in other words, we want to reiterate our support for the following elements of such a solution: first, the withdrawal of Israel from the territories occupied during the 1967 war; second, the right of all States in the region to independence and to existence within secure and recognized boundaries, which means also the acceptance by the Arab States of the reality of the State of Israel, its right to exist and the termination of the state of war against it; and third, a solution to the refugee problem which would include the right of the people of Palestine to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination, independence and sovereignty and to return to their homes and properties from which they have been displaced and uprooted or to be compensated therefor.

23. My delegation is gratified to note that there looms on the horizon a move towards an early resumption of negotiations on the Middle East in the light of recent statements by President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt, of the statement of the delegation of Jordan in the debate on this item [69th meeting] and of the equally candid reply of the representative of Israel [70th meeting] that he was ready in his own small way to join with the representative of Jordan to begin discussions at any time and in any place on a settlement of the Middle East problem, as well as of the words of his Prime Minister, which he quoted today.

24. My delegation is hopeful that these encouraging signs will become a reality very soon and that at last we shall have realistic negotiations with the participation of all the parties concerned in order to resolve the long festering situation in the Middle East which, as everyone is fully aware, is a dangerous threat to international peace and security.

25. Mr. ABDULAH (Trinidad and Tobago): The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago voted in favour of the draft resolution as it considers that a just solution to the situation in the Middle East requires as one of its indispensable bases the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people. My delegation has consistently maintained the validity of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) as a basis for supporting the efforts of the international community to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Thus we have repeatedly called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from Arab occupied territories and for the termination of all claims or states of belligerency, for respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and for their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.

26. However, while affirming the necessity of achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem, resolution 242 (1967) failed to address itself to the more fundamental and important aspect, which is the just political needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The draft resolution which has been adopted by the Assembly does recognize this aspect and, in the view of my delegation, reinforces the view that no just solution to the problem of Palestine has yet been achieved, nor can it be achieved unless the legitimate aims and aspirations of the Palestinian people are satisfied. We support the Palestinian people in their just demand for full respect for and realization of their inalienable rights to national independence, self-determination and sovereignty.

27. My delegation wishes to make it clear that its support for the draft resolution is based on our belief that it is an important contribution to the process of bringing about change by which all States in the area, including Israel and the Palestinian State created in accordance with the wishes of the Palestinian people, can live in peace with mutual respect for their sovereignty, territorial integrity and national independence.

28. Mr. DA COSTA LOBO (Portugal) (*interpretation from French*): The Portuguese delegation in recent years has by its votes supported practically all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the question of Palestine. A few days ago [70th meeting] we repeated our position on this question.

29. Last year the Portuguese delegation abstained in the vote on the resolution which set up the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People because we felt that this was not the best way to resolve the problem. Now, irrespective of the reservations we have about this method, my delegation also believes that it cannot entirely support all the recommendations contained in the Committee's report. Our difficulties are due not so much to what the recommendations say as to what they do not say and, considering that the principles which we reiterated during our statement in the debate form an indissoluble whole, it is difficult for us to support some of them and to leave out others, or even only one. This being so, the Portuguese delegation was compelled to abstain in the vote.

30. Mr. GUNA-KASEM (Thailand): The Thai delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/31/L.20 and Add.1. We did so because we wished to demonstrate that we stand firmly for the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland or to be paid compensation for their lost properties. However, we have reservations concerning some parts of the report of the Committee which are not, in our opinion, conducive to an early and pragmatic solution of the problem at hand. It is regrettable that the report fails to refer, in many relevant cases, to the rights of Israel.

31. My delegation's approach to this question of Palestine is an even-handed one. We firmly believe that an acceptable solution to this question must take into account the respective rights of both sides. While we can support the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland or to be paid compensation, my delegation wishes to make it abundantly clear that we support also the right of Israel to exist within its own secure and recognized borders as a sovereign and independent State.

32. The final settlement of the questions of Palestine and of the Middle East must be realized within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as well as all other relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

33. The Thai delegation's positive vote therefore reflects qualified support of the Committee's report and should be interpreted in the light of the above statement.

34. Mr. ALGÅRD (Norway): The Norwegian Government holds the view that the Palestinian question is one of the fundamental issues in the Middle East conflict. A lasting peace will never be achieved unless the legitimate interests of the Palestinians are safeguarded.

35. The Norwegian Government recognizes the Palestinian question as being far more than a refugee problem. It is, above all, a question of national identity for a whole population. This identity can find no expression unless the national aspirations of the Palestinian people are understood and met. At the same time, it remains the firm conviction of the Norwegian Government that a peaceful and just solution to the Middle East conflict must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Such a solution must be based on the principle that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible, on respect for the sovereignty of all States in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, and on the recognition of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians.

36. Hence the Norwegian Government views the Palestinian question in an over-all political perspective as only one of the factors in the Middle East conflict. In our view, such a perspective has one very important implication: namely, that the recognition of the Palestinian question as a political issue implies a solution by political means, that is, a negotiated settlement based on the willingness of all parties concerned to meet and engage in a dialogue aiming at a just and peaceful solution for all.

37. Based on the developments of the last few years, the Norwegian Government believes that the time has come for

the parties concerned to start facing the problem of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. The more time elapses before the quest for peace is responded to in a constructive manner, the greater the responsibility to be shouldered by everybody. A comprehensive settlement in the Middle East makes it imperative for all of us to consider also the Palestinian question in such a wide perspective. It appears important at this point that no fundamental issue in the Middle East be considered without proper regard to its relationship to the conflict as a whole and to the legitimate interests of all parties concerned.

38. The draft resolution on which we voted earlier today does not, however, in the view of the Norwegian Government, fulfil the requirements I have outlined above. My Government was therefore compelled to cast a negative vote. The present resolution, like last year's resolution 3376 (XXX), introduces an element of uncertainty as to the framework of a negotiated settlement as outlined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), including the right of all States to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

39. M.. JANKOWITSCH (Austria): I should like to comment briefly on the vote cast by the Austrian delegation on draft resolution A/31/L.20 and Add.1. On a number—indeed, a large number—of previous occasions, either in the General Assembly or in the Security Council while Austria was a member of that body, my delegation has stressed that Austria is fully aware of the dimensions of the question of Palestine, which is essentially a question of the plight of the Palestinian people. None other than the Federal Chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kreisky, speaking in the General Assembly on 11 November 1974, expressed the view that

“... the intricate problem of bringing peace to the Middle East cannot be solved without taking account of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people”.¹

That is why the Austrian Government, now as it did then, regards thorough debate on the Palestine question in the United Nations as useful.

40. To this debate the report presented by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People constitutes a valuable contribution, adding to other efforts undertaken with a view to bringing about a solution to the problem in question. The Committee and its Chairman deserve an expression of our appreciation for the work accomplished and for trying to devise a process aimed at accommodating the legitimate interests and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

41. There is no doubt that many more such efforts—efforts of imagination and of political good will, efforts which can hope eventually to capture the assent of all the parties—will be needed for a negotiated settlement of the problems we face in the Middle East.

42. If, however, by our vote we had to express certain reservations, the reasons might not be difficult to find.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 2279th meeting.

43. On previous occasions—and I wish to refer in particular to Austria's communication in response to the Committee's invitation² to participate in its work, my delegation has consistently stressed the basic value which Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) possess, in our opinion, with regard to a just and lasting peaceful settlement of the problems in the Middle East. These resolutions—quite apart from the importance they have for the problems we are now dealing with—contain fundamental principles for the conduct of international relations in a peaceful manner. It is a matter of regret to my delegation, therefore, that the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People contains but an indirect reference to these Security Council resolutions and that the resolution adopted earlier today by the Assembly does not mention them, although they have found acceptance by the parties and offer a common ground for the efforts to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

44. In the view of my delegation, the rights of one party to a conflict can be recognized only to the extent that the rights of all the other parties are not infringed. My delegation thus deems it of the utmost importance that, in recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people, the rights of all other peoples of the region, including the Israeli people, should be equally acknowledged.

45. Austria will continue to follow the question of Palestine with keen interest and deep sympathy for the suffering of a people long deprived of some of its most basic national rights. Every true effort to further a just settlement of the question of the Palestinian people which will also be an important, fundamental step towards bringing peace and security to all peoples of the region will find strong and loyal support from my country.

46. The PRESIDENT: We have now heard the last representative who wished to explain his vote after the voting.

47. The representative of Malta wishes to speak in exercise of his right of reply, and I now call on him.

48. Mr. GAUCI (Malta): In an explanation of vote made this morning, reference was made to two statements in the general debate, and allegations made in one of them were repeated. I do not presume to speak on behalf of the Committee as a whole, but as one of its members and as its Rapporteur I, too, should like to be permitted to recall very briefly what I said in introducing the report before this Assembly.

49. The first quotation from that statement is the following:

"I do not feel we can make a significant advance through a mere repetition of the sterile series of acrimonious accusations and counter-accusations which have

characterized past debates on this question. The bitterness is understandable, but, difficult as it may sound, we need to put that phase behind us and to start a constructive dialogue in considering this item. It is now time for the General Assembly to look objectively at the question and to see whether we cannot, at this important session, make significant moves forward through a collective approach designed eventually to produce a lasting solution.

"This seems to me our best course of action. I invite all delegations to help us pursue this approach, under the guidance of our President, in the belief that moderation pays, and that encouragement of a just and workable approach to an international problem whose resolution would constitute a significant advance for peace is not beyond our capability." [66th meeting, paras. 43 and 44.]

I said also:

"The countries directly involved, and those in the region, have a particular stake in the search for a solution and cannot for ever remain immobilized. Furthermore, there is no incompatibility between the recommendations of the Committee and any other initiatives. As stated in paragraph 58 of the report, implementation of the recommendations 'would complement efforts towards the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region'." [Ibid., para. 56.]

Again, I said:

"It is now for this Assembly to determine whether the recommendations of the Committee fall within the previous decisions of this Organization, whether they serve the required purposes, and whether they respond to the will of the international community. It is important for the Assembly to consider the matter carefully and objectively, and then to pronounce its verdict, so that the approach will fully reflect international opinion and concern. After that, the Security Council would no doubt be called on to take up the matter afresh at a predetermined time." [Ibid., para. 58.]

Finally, I said:

"The approach suggested would bring out the latent capability of the United Nations and its organs in promoting, facilitating and overseeing, in all its stages, a graduated but comprehensive peaceful solution reflective of international opinion." [Ibid., para. 46.]

50. In the light of those explanations, and others which I could have quoted, and within the limited terms of reference of the Committee, I fail to see how the recommendations can be described either as bypassing the Security Council or as overlooking the legitimate interests and genuine preoccupations of any State. I was therefore surprised at the extraordinary conclusions reached in the explanation of vote to which I have referred and regret the extravagant language in which those opinions and allegations were expressed.

² See document A/AC.183/L.21/Add.2.

51. Again I leave it to the Assembly to decide which is the more realistic course: the one that conforms most to the purposes and principles of this Organization—the approach advocated by the Committee as part of an over-all peaceful settlement—or a continuation of the policies applied over the past three decades, policies which manifestly have brought no peace to the area.

52. Like the others, we hope and pray that wiser counsel will prevail in future. That is what my country, in an even-handed manner, has been advocating for the past several years.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.