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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE  
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 247th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Wednesday, 27 October 1999, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON BETHLEHEM 2000

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED  
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.
2. The CHAIRMAN informed members that, on behalf of the Committee, on 22 September he had hosted a reception in honour of His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority. On 25 October, also on behalf of the Committee, he had participated in a meeting dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, organized by the Holy See, at which he had made a brief statement congratulating the Mission on 50 years of humanitarian service to Palestine refugees and other persons affected by hostilities in the Middle East.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON BETHLEHEM 2000

3. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the draft resolution submitted the previous year had been updated and approved by the Bureau, which recommended it to the Committee. He also drew the attention of members to the relevant letter from the Chairman of the Committee addressed to the Secretary-General (A/54/416), to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 36.
4. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the revised draft resolution on Bethlehem 2000.
5. It was so decided.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM

6. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Permanent Observer for Palestine) expressed his satisfaction at the recent, second release of Palestinian prisoners and at the opening of the first of two safe passage routes two days previously, although he noted that the latter had taken place four years behind the date originally agreed to and one month after the date set out in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum. Despite those positive developments, overall progress remained limited, since 2,000 Palestinian prisoners were still being held without legal justification and there had been no agreement on the second, more important safe passage route.
7. Final status negotiations had not begun because the head of the Israeli delegation had been appointed only the day before, and there was some uncertainty about the authority of the delegation to negotiate seriously and reach an agreement. His delegation was committed to achieving a framework for peace by the following February; it expressed concerns, however, about Israel's level of commitment and wished to stress that his delegation would not accept any agreement that would seek to replace the framework of international law and legitimacy.

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8. The situation on the ground was a source of concern, especially with regard to Israeli settlements. Although the new Government had ordered the removal of some settlements, 32 new settlements had nevertheless been approved in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; the Israeli Government was calling for tenders for new housing developments; and settlements were being enlarged even in the Gaza Strip. Land continued to be confiscated by the Israeli military, ostensibly for training purposes, and more bypass roads for Jewish settlers were being constructed. He noted that his delegation had expressed its concerns on these matters in a letter dated 21 October 1999 (A/54/485) addressed to the Secretary-General, in the hope that such violations of international law and relevant resolutions would end, a result that was essential in order for the peace process to succeed.

9. He reaffirmed his delegation's belief that the situation in the Middle East continued to be a permanent responsibility of the United Nations until such time as the outstanding issues were resolved, and that it was the duty of the international community to uphold international humanitarian law and the principles of the Charter and maintain and reaffirm all relevant instruments and resolutions.

10. He noted that the co-sponsors, the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Norway, had reintroduced their resolution on the Middle East peace process following the change of Government in Israel. He expressed his astonishment that the draft resolution did not enshrine the principle of land for peace, as set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which was the very basis for the current peace process, because that principle was still not accepted by the new Government in Israel. Unless the resolution was modified to include that basic principle, it would be unacceptable.

11. He deplored efforts to include Israel in the group of Western European and other countries. He pointed out that Switzerland, like Israel, was not a member of any group. In his opinion, the natural group for Israel would be the group of Asian countries, and existing obstacles to Israel's membership in that group would disappear once peace had been achieved. If the one-year time frame for a final settlement in the Middle East was a serious objective, he advised against moving too hastily to include Israel in the European group, a situation which would become permanent and impossible to correct in the future.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.