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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWO THOUSAND
EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 15 July 1988 at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. NOGUEIRA-BATISTA

(Brazil)

Algeria	Mr. DJOUDI
Argentina	Mr. DELPECH
China	Mr. LI Luye
France	Mr. BROCHAND
Germany, Federal Republic of	Mr. VERGAU
Italy	Mr. BUCCI
Japan	Mr. KAGAMI
Nepal	Mr. RANA
Senegal	Mr. SARRE
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	Mr. LOZINSKIY
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. BIRCH
United States of America	Miss BYRNE
Yugoslavia	Mr. PEJIC
Zambia	Mr. ZUZE

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

LETTER DATED 5 JULY 1988 FROM THE ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL (S/19981)

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with decisions taken at the 2818th meeting, I invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to take a place at the Council table; I invite the representatives of India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mr. Velayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) took a place at the Council table; Mr. Rath (India), Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Umer (Pakistan) and Mr. Al-Masri (Syrian Arab Republic) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Cuba, Gabon and the United Arab Emirates in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. San José (Cuba), Mr. Biffot (Gabon) and Mr. Al-Shaali (United Arab Emirates) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: The Security Council will now resume its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/20016, which contains the text of a letter dated 14 July 1988 from the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The first speaker is the representative of the United Kingdom, on whom I now call.

Mr. BIRCH (United Kingdom): We are fortunate, Sir, at this difficult time to have such a wise and experienced diplomat presiding over the Security Council. We admire your skill and judgement and we look forward to working with you. I should like also to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, for his wise and careful leadership during June. The Council has been generously served by your continent.

My delegation wishes to express its profound regret at the loss of life aboard the Iranian civil airliner destroyed on 3 July. It is a tragedy which has saddened us all. My Government sends its deepest sympathy and its most sincere condolences to the families of those who died.

The scale and suddenness of the tragedy have made a deep impression on international opinion and on the public in both Iran and the United States. Questions have rightly been raised about how it came to pass. We have paid close attention to the official statements from both Iran and the United States, including those made in this Chamber yesterday, concerning the facts. We await the results of further investigations and the outcome of deliberations by the executive Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

(Mr. Birch, United Kingdom)

In the meantime, this Council is called to consider the implications of the incident for international peace and security. The latest loss of life is a further tragic episode in a wider conflict, a conflict which has pitted two proud nations in a battle in which ordinary people can only be the losers, and which we in this Council, with our special responsibility for international peace and security, should have ended long ago. The victims of the appalling accident on 3 July must now be added to the hundreds of thousands of young servicemen, to the many civilians in towns and villages, far removed from both sides of the front line, and to the merchant seamen of all nations who have lost their lives. This Council has made determined but, sadly, unsuccessful efforts to bring about a complete end to the fighting and the restoration of peace and stability. The Council's mandatory resolution 598 (1987), adopted almost exactly a year ago, required an immediate cease-fire, an end to all military actions on land, at sea and in the air, and the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries without delay. Had that demand of the Security Council been met, we should not be considering here today another horror born of this senseless conflict. Despite resolution 598 (1987), fighting has continued between Iran and Iraq, with frequent attacks, contrary to international law, on merchant shipping in international waters.

My country, like others represented around this table, has continued to exercise its right to protect its shipping in international waters against such attacks. The role of our own naval forces in the Gulf is strictly non-confrontational, and is confined wholly to protection. It is entirely appropriate for any such forces to exercise the right to self-defence confirmed by Article 51 of the Charter. In common with all Member States, our concern is to uphold international law and the principle of freedom of navigation.

(Mr. Birch, United Kingdom)

There may be many lessons to be drawn from this incident: we must await the results of the investigations. But the main lesson is that the conflict which engendered them must end without further delay. The chief aim of this Council should continue to be to strive for a comprehensive, just and honourable settlement as provided for in resolution 598 (1987). My Government has worked actively to this end, and will continue to do so. We look to both parties fully to discharge their obligations under that resolution, and to co-operate in the attainment of a negotiated peace.

Though we deeply regret the incident that has brought him here, we welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of Iran in the Security Council. It gives us the opportunity to express to him and to his Government our condolences and our compassion for the families of the victims, as well as to show him that our concern, the common concern of this Council, is to end the bloodshed that has gone on far too long. Let us do something now to save this generation from the scourge of war.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. RANA (Nepal): Sir, it is indeed a matter of great satisfaction for my delegation to see such a distinguished diplomat from Brazil, a country with which my country, Nepal, has friendly and cordial relations, assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. It has always been a pleasure and privilege to work closely with you, Sir, and we are confident that you will guide the work of the Council with your customary skill and wisdom.

I avail myself of this opportunity also to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Marcelo Delpech, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the business of the Council during the month of June.

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

I have the honour of joining you, Mr. President, in welcoming Mr. George Bush, Vice-President of the United States of America, who was here with us yesterday, and Mr. Ali-Akbar Velayati, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Their presence underlines the importance of the subject under discussion. My delegation listened with great interest and attention to the statements made by the Vice-President of the United States and the Foreign Minister of Iran yesterday morning.

Nepal, like other Council members, well understands the deep sense of shock and outrage felt by the Government and people of Iran at the shooting down of its civilian aircraft on a scheduled flight from Bandar-Abbas to Dubai by United States naval forces on 3 July 1988. The loss of 290 innocent lives, as a consequence, makes this incident the worst of its kind in the history of civil aviation. Nepal deeply deplores this painful tragedy that has dismayed all humanity. On behalf of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, I express our profound grief and offer our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

Our sense of outrage at this tragedy has been somewhat muted by the growing perception that the aircraft was shot down as a result of mistaken identity. The realization that it was not a premeditated act of punishment or provocation has helped in limiting the gravity, if not lessening the grief. In this context, my delegation has noted the prompt acknowledgement of responsibility and expression of regret by the Government of the United States. We have also noted that the United States Government has decided to offer compensation, on an ex gratia basis, to the families of the victims of the ill-fated aircraft. We would have preferred an unqualified apology and the granting of full compensation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the members of the bereaved families. Such a step would be in keeping with the humanitarian values and traditions of the United States.

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

The skies over which the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 occurred are exceptionally busy: many airlines operate there, including our own flag carrier. This fact has only enhanced our belief that the Council should take the appropriate decision to prevent a recurrence of this kind of incident and to ensure respect for international norms protecting civil aviation. That can happen only if all the facts of the case are placed before this body following a full-scale investigation by an internationally recognized agency, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). For this important reason, we fully support the decision of the ICAO Council yesterday to conduct such an inquiry, following the request by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We note with satisfaction that the United States Government has agreed to co-operate with such an inquiry.

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

While this painful tragedy in its own right deserves the full and urgent attention of the Council, it highlights even further the need for restraint and reconciliation. The war between Iran and Iraq, two friends of Nepal and fellow-members of the Non-Aligned Movement, has already taken too heavy a toll in human life and suffering. My delegation wishes to reiterate the urgent need to co-ordinate our efforts to end this fratricidal conflict and to promote peace in that tense and troubled region.

On this sombre and solemn occasion, Nepal is convinced more than ever that the full implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) is the only viable avenue to the restoration of peace and normalcy in the Gulf. We therefore once again urge all concerned to contribute towards that laudable goal by co-operating with the Secretary-General in his continuing endeavours in that direction. In that context, my delegation wishes to underline the need for scrupulous adherence to and early implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) in all its provisions, including those of paragraph 5, which inter alia calls upon

"other States to exercise the utmost restraint and to refrain from any act which may lead to further escalation and widening of the conflict" (resolution 598 (1987), para. 5)

Ultimately, only a winding down of the conflict can put a stop to the needless suffering and anguish of the peoples of the region. Moreover, only a climate of stable peace in the region can ensure that avoidable tragedies such as that of 3 July 1988 will not recur.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Nepal for the kind words he addressed to my country and to me.

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia): First of all, Sir, may I convey to you the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Yugoslavia on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during this difficult period. You are an outstanding representative of Brazil, a country with which Yugoslavia shares a cherished and traditional friendship, and we are confident that the rich experience and great professional reputation that you have already demonstrated in this Council will serve well in the successful discharge of the complex tasks facing the Security Council in the coming days and weeks.

I should like also to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of friendly non-aligned Argentina, Ambassador Delpech, for his exceptional efficiency in directing the work of the Council during the month of June.

We extend a welcome to Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who has personally appeared before the Security Council to present his country's position regarding the tragic shooting down of the Iranian airliner by United States naval forces on 3 July 1988. The Security Council is indeed the right place to consider the dangerous situation prevailing in the Gulf region, and it has a special responsibility for finding a lasting and just overall solution. We take this opportunity as well to ask Mr. Velayati to convey to the Government and people of Iran and to the families of the innocent victims of this tragedy our expression of deepest condolences.

We appreciate the decision by the Vice-President of the United States, Mr. George Bush, personally to address the Security Council on this tragic event.

The downing of the Iranian airliner by United States naval forces, which took the lives of 290 innocent passengers, shocked the entire international community.

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

News of this tragic incident was received with profound dismay and indignation by the Yugoslav Government and people. Among the victims of this irrational act were six Yugoslav experts and workers employed in Iran by the Yugoslav enterprise Ivan Milutinovic, and their deaths cast all of Yugoslavia into deep grief and mourning.

Thus far, numerous explanations and comments of a military and technical nature have been offered regarding the circumstances leading to this tragic incident. They are hardly acceptable, for in effect this tragedy was a primary consequence of the great military tension and psychosis surrounding the region, transforming the situation there into one of the most perilous threats to world peace and security.

We believe that the investigations to be carried out by various international bodies will clarify the circumstances leading to this tragic incident and will contribute to the prevention of the recurrence of such tragedies in the future. This implies, in particular, full respect for the provisions of the 1944 Chicago Convention and for the safeguarding of civil air-navigation security during wartime.

We welcome the decision of the United States Government to compensate the families of the innocent victims of this tragedy, although it is obvious that there can be no compensation for the loss of human lives.

The shooting down of an Iranian passenger airliner, which defies any explanation, was a tragic, and perhaps the most serious, warning of the unforeseeable consequences of a continuation of the current tension and crisis in the Gulf region. There is no need to recall that from the very beginning of the Iran-Iraq war Yugoslavia warned that the conflict was assuming ever more dangerous dimensions. We also pointed out that the presence and concentration of numerous foreign fleets and the frequent incidents in the Gulf posed a constant threat of the escalation of the conflict and of interference by foreign Powers. For that

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

reason, Yugoslavia gave its full support to the adoption of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) for ending the Iraq-Iran war. In a statement issued on behalf of the Yugoslav Government by the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, it was pointed out, inter alia, that this irresponsible and incomprehensible act, the shooting down of an Iranian passenger airliner by United States naval forces in the Gulf - which is in contravention of international law - once again draws attention to the difficult and dangerous situation in the Gulf region, which is rapidly escaping control and directly jeopardizing not only the security of the countries of the region but also the peace and security of the entire region.

In the opinion of the Yugoslav Government, this tragic accident points to the necessity to eliminate without delay the conditions which have led to the tense and aggravated situation in the Gulf. Urgent international action is needed to put an immediate end to the Iraq-Iran war on the basis of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) and to effect a prompt cessation of the build-up and use of military forces in that turbulent region.

What is of the utmost importance now is for the parties involved to refrain from all acts that could lead to further escalation and tension; this would contribute to an intensification of the efforts so badly needed now for the solution of this grave crisis.

It would be tragic if the parties directly involved, as well as the broader international community, did not learn a lesson for the future from the present catastrophe. It is our deep conviction that it is high time to replace confrontation and mistrust with a genuine willingness and readiness to undertake resolute political efforts to eliminate the main sources of tension in the region. We are well aware that the roots of the problems are deep and that political courage and, I should say, wisdom are needed to create an atmosphere and conditions proper for substantive and constructive dialogue leading to an end to the conflict.

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

We all bear a historic responsibility and obligation, out of respect for the innocent victims of the Iranian airliner as well, to use this tragic incident for more resolute endeavours to that end. The course of events so far in the senseless conflict and bloodshed between Iran and Iraq that has taken a heavy toll in human life and inflicted vast material damage and destruction on the two non-aligned countries proves all the more illusory that existing problems and conflicts in the region can be settled on the battlefield and by the use of military force. It is to be hoped that all the parties directly involved are more aware of this now than ever before.

We also wish to believe that all the parties concerned will contribute to ensure that this series of Security Council meetings will mark a turning-point in the settlement of the Iran-Iraq conflict and provide a strong impetus to the efforts of the Security Council and the United Nations Secretary-General for the comprehensive and immediate implementation of resolution 598 (1987). Failure to do so would only increase the danger of further escalation of this needless conflict and endanger the peace and security not only of the region but of the entire world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Yugoslavia for the kind words he addressed to my country and to me.

Mr. LOZINSKIY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): First of all, I should like to congratulate you, Sir. Your country is one with which the Soviet Union has very good and developing relations. We congratulate you on your acceding to the presidency of the Security Council and are deeply convinced that your great professional abilities and standing will successfully help you in guiding the Council and dealing with the difficult and important tasks facing it.

(Mr. Lozinskiy, USSR)

We should also like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, Ambassador Marcelo Delpech, for his very able guidance of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today at the request of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran pursuant to the letter from its Foreign Minister, Mr. Velayati (S/19979). As stated in that letter, on 3 July 1988 an Iran Air passenger aircraft was the target of missile attacks from the American naval forces stationed in the Persian Gulf which resulted in the death of all passengers, including 66 children, and the crew of the aircraft. In his statement yesterday, the Foreign Minister cited additional facts describing the tragedy that occurred and how it happened.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, on behalf of the Soviet leadership and people, sent to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Sayed Ali Khamenei, a message expressing sincere and deeply felt condolences to the people of Iran and the bereaved families in connection with the tragic deaths of the aircraft's passengers and crew.

As stated in the TASS statement of 4 July of this year:

"The tragedy, responsibility for which lies wholly with the United States Command, was far from accidental. It was in effect a direct corollary of United States actions over the past year to increase its military presence in the Persian Gulf."

The tragic crash of the Iranian airliner - because of American missiles - and the deaths of almost 300 completely innocent people, a dramatic confirmation of repeated Soviet warnings about the unprecedented build-up of United States warships and aircraft in the area, perpetuates an explosive situation fraught with the most dreadful consequences.

(Mr. Lozinskiy, USSR)

The United States Fleet was introduced into the Persian Gulf on the grounds that it would be in the interest of establishing a security régime there. But the facts show that as a result of Pentagon actions in the Gulf it is not a security régime that has been established but rather one of heightened danger. There can be only one conclusion: relying on a policy of force cannot strengthen security; on the contrary, it simply whips up tension and results in the deaths of innocent people.

The Soviet Union has repeatedly warned in different forums that the path of military actions cannot lead to a normalized situation. If the warnings had been heeded in time, the Security Council would not today be discussing what happened on 3 July. The tragedy has demonstrated once again that the United States fleet must leave the Persian Gulf waters without delay.

Attempts are being made to justify what has happened by citing various movements of the Iranian airliner and invoking the right of self-defence. And yet at the same time within the United States itself and in other Western countries very serious doubts have been expressed by extremely competent sources over the technical data cited. As for the self-defence argument, how can one regard as self-defence the destruction of a passenger airliner flying within an established air corridor many thousands of kilometres away from the borders of the Power that is supposedly defending itself.

As was stated in the TASS statement of 4 July:

"Expressing deep condolences over the loss of life and condemning the actions of the American military that have led to it, the Soviet side hopes that the United States leadership will draw from what has happened urgent conclusions in relation to United States policy in the Persian Gulf."

(Mr. Lozinskiy, USSR)

It is our deep conviction that in the present explosive situation what is required is a responsible and carefully weighed approach and constructive co-operation consistently advocating political ways of settling conflicts, including the one in the Persian Gulf. The Soviet Union emphasizes the urgent need to reduce the acute tension there, to withdraw the United States fleet from the Gulf, and to resolve the problem of security in that waterway by using United Nations naval forces. As has been stated several times by the Soviet Union, the replacement of all warships of non-littoral States in the Persian Gulf by naval forces under the United Nations flag would improve the situation in the international waterways of the region and promote the establishment of some sort of mechanism for a political settlement of the Iran-Iraq conflict. We have recently given several detailed explanations of our proposal and are quite willing to resume discussion of it.

(Mr. Lozinskiy, USSR)

The Soviet Union, which advocates a normalization of the explosive situation in the Persian Gulf, supports the efforts made by the United Nations Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) in all its aspects, including paragraph 5, which calls upon all States to exercise the utmost restraint and to refrain from any act which may lead to further escalation and widening of the conflict.

As was emphasized at the recent nineteenth All-Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, ensuring the security of States must always be accompanied by political interaction and be in strict compliance with international obligations. The time has come for a gradual demilitarization and humanization of international relations so that new political thinking, commonsense, knowledge and moral norms, and not selfish ambition or prejudice, will finally guide States in finding solutions to the many contradictions in the world and in achieving a balance of interests.

The Soviet delegation considers that the Security Council must duly respond to Iran's appeal in connection with the tragic crash of the Iranian passenger airliner. The Council must also make a proper assessment of the incident and take measures to bring about the immediate normalization of the situation and to ensure security in that region.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for his kind words addressed to my country and to me.

Mr. BUCCI (Italy): I would like to begin by conveying to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of this body. Your personal capacities and qualities are a source of great encouragement at this delicate juncture in our work. I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to our Argentinian colleague, Ambassador Delpech, for the manner in which he carried out his duties as President last month.

(Mr. Bucci, Italy)

The importance of this debate is underlined by the participation of the Vice-President of the United States and the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, whom we warmly welcome.

My delegation would like to express again in this forum the condolences of the Italian Government to the families, Iranian and others, that have been stricken by a tragedy that resulted in the deaths of 290 people, including an Italian citizen. Our sympathy also extends to all the other countries that have suffered because of this incident.

Public opinion - and certainly not only that of my country - has been deeply affected by the events of 3 July. We feel a growing concern over military acts which, while originating in the intent to guarantee security, end up endangering civil communications and the safety of citizens who should be protected by internationally codified principles.

A naval presence whose purpose it is to ensure freedom of navigation has, even though unintentionally, turned out to affect an airflight guaranteed by the principles of the Chicago Convention, principles that were reaffirmed only a few years ago by the countries members of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The tragedy of 3 July cannot fail to affect the Security Council, an organ whose main task is the safeguarding of international peace and security. Yet our dismay over the incident has to be accompanied by attention to the interests that have been affected, with a view to making relations between the organs of the United Nations and the Gulf countries open to a greater sense of trust and to the idea of peace.

I believe that adequate recognition should be given to the fact that the Government of Teheran has turned to the Security Council. My Government interprets

(Mr. Bucci, Italy)

the presence in this Chamber of the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic as a sign of confidence in the Council.

We have also noted statements made by Iranian authorities, who spoke responsibly against the notion of reprisals. Those statements help reason to prevail over the turmoil of emotions.

The decision taken by the President of the United States to offer compensation to the families of the victims is in keeping with the humanitarian tradition of the American people and constitutes a timely step in the right direction.

We must build on those positive facts and prevent our debate from turning into a sterile exchange of accusations.

It is the view of my delegation that, as members of an essentially political organ, we should not enter into a technical examination of this grave incident, which has further complicated the situation in the Gulf, with all its implications for international security.

In this forum, as representatives of Italy, we affirm our clear conviction that there was no predetermination on the part of the naval units. A tragic error was committed. Still, the fact remains that a military unit destroyed a civilian airliner which had no hostile intent. The facts brought before the Council raise disquieting questions as to the limits of modern technologies and thus point to the need for stricter rules for the protection of civil airflights.

For those reasons, Italy welcomes the action taken yesterday by the International Civil Aviation Organization to undertake an enquiry into the causes and effects of the incident.

As the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed in Parliament, our grief over this tragic incident is compounded by frustration at the inability of the international community to intervene effectively in the Iran-Iraq conflict. We would hope that our debate, while providing a forum for the legitimate expression

(Mr. Bucci, Italy)

of the feelings and opinions of all participants, would also take heed of a lesson that history has imposed on us so that the search for a negotiated and peaceful settlement of the conflict may be encouraged.

It is true that each episode is to be judged on its own merits. But this is also an occasion for renewing those efforts that we set in motion, I should like to recall, one year ago. It is our duty to renew the peace effort. This incident and the many other episodes of the Gulf war with which the Security Council has had to deal in the past 12 months prove that only the success of a peace plan can resolve the issue.

The Security Council took up its responsibilities on 20 July last year. The Secretary-General's outline plan was endorsed by the Council on 24 December 1987. We believe that this is an opportunity to confirm our support for that plan, and we invite the two parties to adhere to it in order to pave the way for the implementation of resolution 598 (1987).

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. BROCHAND (France) (interpretation from French): On behalf of the French delegation I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I take this occasion to express my country's friendship with yours and to assure you of my delegation's full co-operation in the fulfilment of your important tasks. May I also place on record our deep gratitude to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, for the exemplary way in which he discharged his responsibilities last month.

Upon hearing the news of the destruction of an Iranian civil airliner on 3 July, the French Government expressed feelings of dismay and extended deep condolences to the families of the victims and the Iranian people and Government. We asked that light be shed on the conditions under which the tragic mistake occurred and urged the international community to unite its efforts to avoid the recurrence of such an incident and to ensure a settlement that would restore peace and security to the region.

Before making any further comment today, I should like to reaffirm to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the condolences of the French Government and people. May he be assured that we respect the bereavement of the victims' families and that of the entire Iranian nation. Our thoughts are also with the other nations that are in mourning.

The international community was unanimous in deploring this tragedy. In this respect, we welcome the frankness with which the United States Government promptly admitted the responsibility of one of its ships and expressed its regrets at the highest level. Note should also be taken of the fact that the United States Government has decided to pay compensation to the victims' families.

The first duty of the Council will be to express the feelings of nations by deploring this tragic occurrence and reiterating our sympathy for the victims and

(Mr. Brochand, France)

for Iran. Above all, the international community must see to it that such occurrences are not repeated. We must therefore better understand the circumstances of this tragedy so that the proper conclusions may be drawn as regards both the security of civil aviation and the behaviour of the parties involved. Above and beyond the facts submitted to us, we need to reflect on the underlying causes of the tragedy and seek their elimination. In other words, we must act to eliminate the tension that persists in that region of the world.

Hence our first objective is to research and gather as detailed and objective information as possible, with the co-operation, of course, of the parties directly concerned. Obviously, without knowing the results of such an inquiry the international community cannot pass judgement on what seems to be a tragic error. We note that such a process is already under way in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), but we remain open to any proposal that may be brought before the Council. We should, of course, take into account the conditions prevailing in the region where the Air Bus was destroyed.

Fundamentally, we cannot disregard the fact that the destruction of the Iranian Air Bus took place in a region fraught for years with insecurity because of the Iran-Iraq conflict. At the root of the many clashes between the naval and air forces, regardless of the nationalities involved, is the war being waged by two large countries. In the Gulf, freedom and security of navigation have been threatened, and special measures have had to be taken by very many countries in order to face this danger.

Because of its magnitude and seriousness, this latest occurrence, which involved the loss of almost 300 human lives, can only strengthen our conviction that it is more necessary than ever to put an end to an intolerable conflict.

(Mr. Brochand, France)

A year ago the Security Council, expressing the feelings of the community of nations, unanimously adopted resolution 598 (1987), which set down the terms of a balanced, comprehensive settlement. Many months have gone by without the objectives of that text, which aimed at restoring peace and stability, being attained. Today we grieve the civilian lives lost in the Iranian Air Bus. We want to ensure that such a tragedy never recurs and to see an end to the cycle of dangers, threats, counter-threats and possible mistakes.

In these painful circumstances, we believe that the United Nations must reaffirm with particular gravity its determination to secure a just and lasting peace settlement.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. LI Luye (China) (interpretation from Chinese): We are extremely pleased, Sir, to note that you assumed the presidency of the Council for this month at the time when the President of your country, Mr. Jose Sarney, was visiting China. His visit has further promoted the friendly co-operation between our two countries in various fields. I should also like to assure you of the Chinese delegation's full co-operation in the discharge of your duties as President and to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Argentina, Mr. Delpech, for his skilful and successful guidance of the Council's work last month.

On 3 July, a United States warship shot down with missiles an Iranian airliner in the Gulf region, causing the death of 290 innocent civilian passengers on board, including children. We were shocked by the tragedy and condemn that action. We express our profound condolences and deep sympathy to the bereaved families and to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

We are of the opinion that the United States Government has unshirkable responsibility for this incident. We share the Secretary-General's view, as expressed in his statement on the incident, that the question of responsibility should not be ignored if a repetition of such a tragedy is to be avoided. We hope that the United States will face this question squarely and take strict measures to avoid any recurrence of similar incidents.

The Chinese Government is much concerned about the safety of international civil aviation, which concerns the people of each and every country. In our view, the rules of international law that prohibit military actions and acts of violence that threaten the safety of international civil aviation and its normal operation must be strictly observed. The Chinese delegation, therefore, agrees to a full and fair investigation into the incident by relevant international bodies, so as to establish the facts and take measures to guarantee the safety of international civil aviation. We hope that the parties concerned will provide full co-operation in this respect. We are of the view that it is only right and proper that compensation be paid to the bereaved families.

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

I should like to reiterate the Chinese Government's opposition to big-Power military involvement in the Gulf region. Such involvement does not help peace and stability in the region; it only further complicates the situation there and may further exacerbate the conflict at any time. This has once again been proved by the latest developments. We therefore call for the withdrawal of big-Power military presence from the Gulf. We hope that peace in the Gulf and the safety of international air and sea lanes will be guaranteed. We hold that Gulf affairs should be handled by the Gulf countries themselves through consultations.

The downing of the Iranian airliner cannot but arouse the serious concern of the international community regarding the Iran-Iraq war, which has been going on for almost eight years, and the situation in the Gulf region. We once again sincerely appeal to Iran and Iraq to co-operate with the United Nations Secretary-General and the Security Council in good faith with a view to reaching a comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict between the two countries on the basis of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) and putting an end to the war at an early date.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to my country and to me.

Mr. DELPECH (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): First of all I should like to congratulate you very sincerely, Sir, and to tell you how pleased we are to see you presiding over the Security Council for the month of July. Your extensive diplomatic experience, your recognized professional qualifications and your skills of leadership represent a valuable contribution to our work, particularly in the present complex circumstances. Please rest assured of the co-operation and support of the Argentine delegation. We could not fail to observe that you represent a country with which Argentina is naturally united by profound

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

and important bonds. Recently Argentina and Brazil significantly increased those links quantitatively and qualitatively, laying the groundwork for important shared endeavours which open up encouraging prospects and are aimed at even further uniting the destinies of our two peoples.

I should like to welcome the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran, whose presence here enhances these urgent meetings. Although we regret the unfortunate circumstances that led to this meeting, we cannot fail to highlight as very positive the resumption of Iran's active participation in the work of the Council. We trust that Iran's relationship with the Council has definitively entered a new stage which may contribute to the establishment of appropriate conditions for the settlement of the problems affecting its region.

We also welcomed the presence yesterday in this Chamber of His Excellency the Vice-President of the United States, the Honourable George Bush. We interpret his participation in this debate as a confirmation of his Government's sincere sorrow concerning the issue we have under consideration, as well as reaffirmation of the interest of the United States in the resolution of the problems affecting the Gulf region.

On Sunday, 3 July, we were deeply disturbed by the tragic destruction, by a missile launched from the United States warship Vincennes, of an Iranian commercial aircraft on a scheduled flight in an international air corridor in the Gulf. That grave event, which took 290 civilian lives, should give us all cause to reflect and should serve as a basis for the redoubling of our efforts to ensure respect for and implementation of the goals and objectives of the Chicago Convention on international civil aviation and to put an end to the costly and prolonged conflict between Iran and Iraq, which has for eight years been a source of tension and violence in the Gulf region.

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

On this occasion my Government wishes to reiterate its dismay at this very painful occurrence and to transmit its most sincere condolences to the Government of Iran and the relatives of the many victims. We would ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey our condolences to those concerned. We extend the same deep sympathy to the families of those citizens of other countries that were also victims of this tragic event.

In a communiqué issued on 4 July my Government, in expressing those sentiments, underscored the need duly to clarify the events we are now considering and to establish respective responsibility. In this context we have noted the expressions of regret of the Government of the United States, as also its readiness to investigate the incident, to pay compensation ex gratia to the victims' relatives and to co-operate in an international investigation through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). That positive attitude should contribute to containing the damage caused by the serious incident in the Gulf.

It would be appropriate if, in addition to expressing regret at the human losses, the Council supported complete clarification of the incident and reaffirmed the need for the urgent adoption of effective, concrete measures in order to avoid its recurrence. In that respect, as a member of the Board of the ICAO, Argentina supports the idea of a technical investigation being set under way. That appropriate step would provide us with the central elements needed for an accurate assessment of what occurred and to prevent similar problems. It is clear that civil aviation in the Gulf region is at considerable risk. It is therefore indispensable that all do their utmost, and exercise the greatest degree of moderation, so that scheduled flights may be conducted as usual, and without danger, in the framework of full respect for the obligations of States under the Chicago Convention on international civil aviation.

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

Politically, what happened to Iran Air Flight 655 confirms and underscores the need for a prompt and definitive solution of the tragic conflict between Iran and Iraq, which has lasted more than eight years and has taken thousands of victims in both countries. My Government has repeatedly stated that it is essential that this war come to an end as soon as possible.

As members will recall, almost exactly a year ago the Security Council unanimously adopted its mandatory resolution 598 (1987). That highly important decision prompted the hope that it would be possible to end the war in the near future.

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

None the less, despite the fact that 12 months have passed since its adoption, and despite its mandatory nature, resolution 598 (1987) has not yet been implemented, and thus far the efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to obtain its implementation have been fruitless.

It would not be realistic to disregard the fact that the non-compliance with resolution 598 (1987) and the resulting continuation of the conflict between Iran and Iraq are the principal cause of the instability and violence in the Gulf. Like the immense majority of the international community, we are convinced that only through strict and prompt compliance with that resolution will it be possible to restore normalcy in the area.

Resolution 598 (1987), it is worth repeating, contains a balanced exposition of the elements necessary for a comprehensive settlement of the grave confrontation between Baghdad and Tehran. Naturally, it first calls for an immediate cease-fire, since stopping the bloodshed is a matter of priority. At the same time, it envisages the establishment of an appropriate mechanism to determine the responsibility for the conflict. It also calls for the withdrawal of the two countries to their internationally recognized boundaries without delay and lays the foundations for negotiations aimed at putting an end once and for all to the mutual accusations. Furthermore, in operative paragraph 5 the resolution sets clear guidelines for the conduct of third-party States with interests in the region.

If to all that we add the valuable and imaginative efforts by the Secretary-General to achieve the implementation of the resolution - efforts which my country firmly supports - we believe that we have the conceptual and political framework and the appropriate diplomatic conditions for steering this grave problem in a more rational direction. For the time being, until the political and psychological conditions necessary to begin to seek a lasting solution exist, it

(Mr. Delpech, Argentina)

will also be necessary for Iran and Iraq and the other international protagonists to exercise the utmost moderation and refrain from any action that could aggravate tensions and drag them and the region into an uncontrollable situation.

To summarize, events such as the tragic destruction of a civilian airliner with 290 passengers aboard, including elderly people and children, confirm that there is no valid or acceptable alternative to the urgent quest for peace between Iran and Iraq. It is a fact that nothing can justify the continuation of this cruel conflict, whose human and material cost should be unacceptable to the two countries and imposes a heavy burden on the conscience of the international community.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I thank the representative of Argentina for the kind words he addressed to me and also for his reference to the traditional links of friendship between our two countries.

Mr. KAGAMI (Japan): At the outset, Sir, I wish to express to you my sincere congratulations upon your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I am confident that under your able guidance, and with the benefit of your outstanding knowledge and experience of the United Nations institutions, the Council's deliberations will be truly meaningful.

I wish also to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Marcelo Delpech of Argentina for the excellent manner in which he guided the Council's work during the month of June.

Although I regret that his presence here today was occasioned by such tragic circumstances, I hasten to extend my warmest welcome to His Excellency Mr. Ali-Akbar Velayati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to offer him my deepest sympathy on the recent tragedy that has befallen

(Mr. Kagami, Japan)

his country. I am confident that with his active participation this series of meetings will prove to be positive and constructive.

Yesterday we were also honoured by the presence of His Excellency Mr. George Bush, Vice-President of the United States. I am sure his participation in the deliberations of the Council too will contribute to making these meetings even more significant.

Japan is deeply distressed at the tragic and unfortunate loss of so many precious lives in the downing of the Iranian jetliner on 3 July. On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I wish to express sincere condolences to the bereaved families of the victims and to the peoples of their home countries. Such a tragedy must never be repeated. Nor must this incident be permitted to lead to a further escalation of the tension in the Gulf region. Thus, we regard it as entirely appropriate that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran requested the convening of the Security Council and the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to consider this incident.

The tragic downing of the Iranian airliner was even more sorrowful in that it involved so many innocent civilians. We are all profoundly saddened by the human suffering and loss. If such suffering is never to be repeated, Japan believes that a thorough investigation of the incident should be conducted, and thus we welcome the decision by ICAO to conduct such an investigation. Japan urges all the States concerned to co-operate fully in the investigation. Japan appreciates the prompt acknowledgement by the United States Government that it downed the Iranian airliner as well as its decision also to conduct a full investigation of its own and to co-operate with the investigation by ICAO.

(Mr. Kagami, Japan)

While appropriate steps must be taken, following the findings of such investigations, to guard against the repetition of incidents such as this, we must not fail to consider the underlying cause of the recent tragedy - namely, the conflict between Iran and Iraq which has been raging for nearly eight years. I am also obliged to underline that a year is about to pass since the Security Council adopted mandatory resolution 598 (1987). Having worked actively together with the other members of the Council for the adoption of that resolution, Japan has continued to insist that the Iran-Iraq conflict should be brought to an end as soon as possible through its early and full implementation. I am confident that the members of the Security Council are unanimous in this regard. Nothing can bring back those who perished in the tragic incident. The international community should draw the due lessons from this tragedy and redouble its efforts to bring the conflict to an end and thus avoid further bloodshed and suffering.

In conclusion, I wish to add that my Government welcomes the decision by the Government of the United States to provide ex gratia compensation to the bereaved families of the victims.

Mr. VERGAU (Federal Republic of Germany): We are delighted to have this opportunity to address the representatives of two great countries of the South American Continent. From the very start of their nationhood, Brazil and Argentina have been linked to the Germans in heartfelt friendship and mutual respect. We appreciate the well-known diplomatic skill of Ambassador Nogueira-Batista and are therefore certain that this debate is in the best hands. We express our gratitude to Ambassador Delpech of Argentina for his fine work during the month of June.

I hasten to add, however, that we came to this debate yesterday in a spirit of profound sorrow. I believe that all of us here would greatly have preferred not having this tragic reason to speak.

We appreciate the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America have underscored the importance of this Security Council meeting by having their views presented by Foreign Minister Velayati and Vice-President Bush. We welcome the decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran to participate, for the first time in a very long period, in a meeting of the Security Council on its own behalf. Our impression is that all members of the Security Council welcome that decision.

The tragic event which prompted the Islamic Republic of Iran to appeal to the Security Council has stunned the world. My Government has expressed its great dismay at this incident. Its profound sympathy goes out to all relatives of the victims, to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to the Governments of all other countries that have citizens among the casualties.

We regret the terrible catastrophe of 3 July, which claimed the lives of nearly 300 women, men and children. I, too, wish to extend my delegation's deepest sympathy to Foreign Minister Velayati and to the bereaved families.

It is hardly possible to disregard the background to this tragedy. The terrible war between Iran and Iraq has been raging for nearly eight years, a war

(Mr. Vergau, Federal Republic
of Germany)

whose horror is exacerbated by the fact that ever more civilians are affected and chemical weapons are being used time and again. The Federal Republic of Germany has strongly advocated the implementation of Security Council resolution 612 (1988), which was adopted with a view to stopping this development. It also takes the opportunity to call for the earliest possible conclusion of a global, verifiable convention banning the use of chemical weapons.

The tragedy of 3 July makes a negotiated solution of the Iraq-Iran war even more urgent. Those negotiations should be conducted on the basis of resolution 598 (1987) and the Secretary-General's implementation plan, which was approved by the Security Council.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany is deeply convinced that it is indeed possible on this basis to achieve a solution which takes account of the legitimate interests of both sides. We are also convinced that the situation in the Gulf will greatly improve as soon as the Secretary-General's plan gets under way. My Government re-emphasizes the importance it attaches to the principle of free navigation in the Gulf as well.

My country has every confidence in the efforts of the Secretary-General and supports him without reserve. In this we are in agreement with all those who seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. We also encourage both parties to the conflict, Iraq and Iran, to place full trust in the Secretary-General as an honest broker. We are convinced that close and constructive co-operation with the Secretary-General in his efforts to implement his plan is also in the true interests of Iran and Iraq.

We also appreciate the fact that the Secretary-General is just now actively continuing his efforts in close consultation with the Security Council. We, the members of the Security Council, should give him our united support.

(Mr. Vergau, Federal Republic
of Germany)

During our debate on this tragic incident we should strive to generate a constructive impulse for the efforts to resolve the conflict between Iraq and Iran. This must not mean neglecting the subject which is the reason for today's meeting.

Immediately after the incident, the President of the United States of America spoke of the terrible human tragedy. He expressed his deep regret and conveyed his profound sympathy to the bereaved families. He also announced that the families of the victims would be offered compensation.

We have noted carefully that the Iranian side has appealed to the Security Council, thus opening the way to responsible and unemotional reaction.

It is important that the circumstances surrounding this incident should be the subject of a full international investigation, for everything must be done to prevent a repetition. For this reason, my Government urged a thorough investigation by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and is gratified by the ICAO Council's decision of yesterday to hold an immediate inquiry. My Government notes with satisfaction that the United States intends to co-operate with ICAO in its investigation. The results should, in our view, be made accessible to the Security Council.

Nothing can undo the tragic death of the 290 people aboard the Iranian aircraft or the suffering which this incident has inflicted upon so many families. It is now essential to learn the right lessons from this tragedy. Moderation and restraint should help ensure that the present tensions in the region are not heightened.

It is up to the Security Council, through constructive deliberations, to render an important contribution to peaceful solutions.

We are called upon to meet this responsibility.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany for the very kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. SARRE (Senegal) (interpretation from French): My delegation is sincerely pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over the Security Council for the month of July. I wish to extend to you our warm congratulations, to reaffirm our constant support and commitment and to assure you of our full and complete co-operation in the discharge of your important responsibilities. We are convinced that your outstanding qualities as an accomplished diplomat and the international renown and political influence of your great country, Brazil, are a sure guarantee of success in our work.

To your predecessor, our friend Ambassador Delpech of Argentina, we wish to convey our gratitude and appreciation for the exemplary ability, high-mindedness and dedication with which he satisfactorily guided the Council's deliberations last month.

Before turning to the subject of this statement I wish respectfully to welcome the presence yesterday of Mr. George Bush, Vice-President of the United States of America, and the presence of Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Their presence here and that of the large high-level delegations that accompanied them testified to the complexity and sensitivity of the question before the Council.

Their presence testified also to the importance the United States Government attaches both to the situation before the Council and to the need for a settlement of the situation in the Gulf region, as well as to Iran's readiness to co-operate fully with the Security Council.

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

The statements made here yesterday reflect a desire that the Security Council, as the conscience of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, should act with a view not only to dealing with the present matter but to going beyond it towards the settlement of a conflict that has lasted all too long.

The destruction of an Iran Air civil aircraft on 3 July plunged the entire world into distress and consternation. On behalf of my country, I wish first of all to repeat our profound condolences to the families, Governments and peoples of the many victims on the loss of life resulting from this tragic, regrettable and regretted accident in whose aftermath one of the parties has already decided to compensate the families of the victims. We are pleased by that decision of the United States Government and by the condolences expressed here through Vice-President Bush.

There is no doubt that this terrible accident was caused by the tension in the Gulf region, itself a result of the conflict that for many years has sadly pitted against each other two countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement, to which Senegal itself is proud to belong.

To be sure, it is necessary to shed full light on this catastrophe in order to avoid recurrence. In that context it is good that at its special meetings held at Montreal on 13 and 14 July the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations agency, decided to conduct an immediate, thorough investigation. As a member of ICAO, my country welcomes that decision.

But it is no less urgent, given the increasingly worrying situation in the Gulf, that the Security Council once again shoulder its responsibility to meet this difficult challenge to its credibility and authority. To that end there must be an

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

atmosphere of calm, restraint and open-mindedness in the Council: this matter demands this of us all, individually and collectively.

There is no need to recall that nearly a year ago the Security Council, aware of its primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, unanimously adopted historic resolution 598 (1987) with a view to finding a solution to the Gulf conflict that would be successful because it would be lasting.

With his usual wisdom and clear-sightedness, the Secretary-General, to whom we reiterate our support, formulated a plan for the implementation of that resolution.

It therefore seems to us that the Security Council has created an atmosphere and framework ideal and propitious in the impetus they engender for bringing international peace and security to that troubled region. We must play our part, inspired by true political will, by drawing with courage and determination on the boundless resources of the human race.

Indeed, as the President of the Republic of Senegal, Mr. Abdou Diouf, said in New York in 1985,

"Mankind has in the past given us too many examples of its ability to meet constant challenges for us to have any doubts that it will be able to overcome those that beset it today". (A/40/PV.42, p. 15)

That applies equally to the matter before the Council - the destruction of an Iran Air Airbus - and to the Iran-Iraq conflict. The Council should know its responsibilities and act as it always has in the past in the face of such situations: It should, with determination and objectivity, find just and lasting solutions.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I thank the representative of Senegal for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. DJOUDI (Algeria) (interpretation from French): I cannot fail at the outset, Sir, to state my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you presiding over the Security Council for the month of July. Your professional and personal qualities have earned the respect and friendship of your colleagues; they are qualities needed today for the able and experienced guidance of the work of the Council.

I convey to your predecessor, Mr. Marcelo Delpech, Permanent Representative of Argentina, my delegation's thanks for the enlightened and effective way in which he presided over the Council's work last month.

I welcome the presence of Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who yesterday in the Council delivered an extremely detailed statement describing the events that gave rise to these meetings.

We welcome too the participation in the debate of the Vice-President of the United States, Mr. George Bush, which demonstrated that his country regards this situation with seriousness and gravity.

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

On 3 July the world learned with great dismay of the destruction in flight, by United States naval forces, of an Iranian civilian aircraft which was on a regularly scheduled commercial flight between Bandar Abbas and Dubai, resulting in the death of the 290 passengers on board.

Because it was not unprecedented, that event, one of exceptional gravity, now occupies the Council's attention and deep concern, for the tragic death of almost 300 innocent persons in a part of the world where, alas, death strikes only too often has been a brutal reminder that what was never to happen again has indeed happened again - to the great sorrow of the bereaved families and the great consternation of world public opinion.

This tragedy affects the Iranian people first and foremost, but above and beyond the Islamic Republic of Iran and the other countries which had nationals on board the Iran Air aircraft it is the conscience of the international community as a whole that is called upon to refuse to accept as tolerable or justifiable the unwarranted sacrifice of innocent persons aboard an aircraft that was indisputably peaceful in its purpose, route and intent.

It was an unjustifiable action the gravity of which no one can underestimate - and nobody has sought to do so. The destructive of the Iran Air aircraft is a flagrant attack on the security of international civil aviation, a principle whose inviolability is enshrined as one essential to the preservation of civilized international order. Algeria is indeed sensitive to this irreparable loss to the fraternal Iranian people and the families of the victims. Once again we extend to them our sympathy and sincere condolences. Algeria cannot lose sight of the fact that the occurrence of this tragedy involves the unfortunate concentration of

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

foreign fleets in the Gulf region and its corollary, military activism, which does so little to promote the best conditions in the search for a negotiated and honourable solution to the conflict between Iraq and Iran.

At the same time, this tragedy cannot be separated from the continuation and widening of the Iran-Iraq conflict: this tragic and unexpected extension of it is evidence of the unpredictability of its awful dimensions and consequences.

It is thus to be hoped that this sudden appearance of a significant aggravating factor in the general picture of a conflict already marked by its perilous persistence will be grasped and that it will lead to the adoption of measures to limit the ever-present danger of recurrence. In other words, it is up to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations to shed light on this tragedy and to make sure that it can never again happen, so that international civil aviation can be made safe once again, for that is its natural and legal privilege, inseparable from the norms of civilized behaviour.

To that end, States must exercise the maximum restraint in their conduct, particularly when their actions, owing to their special responsibilities can help enhance conditions favourable to the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure the full implementation of resolution 598 (1987) and of the measures to bring that about. Today, once again, we must encourage and intensify those efforts in order, as soon as possible, to bring about a negotiated solution to the Iran-Iraq conflict. It is Algeria's hope that at this sensitive time the Secretary-General will obtain from each of the parties involved the decisive support that he needs to carry out his mission.

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

There is new propitious moment now that the initiative has been taken to seize the Security Council of this matter, even though the subject of this debate is undeniably tragic. The Council must take due account of this factor and conclude its deliberations by encouraging a convergence of wills towards the objective of a negotiated peace, responding in equity and justice to legitimate expectations.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I thank the representative of Algeria for the kind words he addressed to me.

(spoke in English)

The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): On behalf of my delegation, I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We are confident that your diplomatic skill will be a decisive factor, enabling the Security Council to do its job.

I should also like to pay tribute to the great effort made last month by Ambassador Marcelo Delpech, the Permanent Representative of Argentina.

At 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, 3 July 1988, the relatives of Mr. Mohammed Abdullah, a citizen of the United Arab Emirates, 70 years old, were at the Dubai Airport awaiting his arrival and that of his family, comprising his wife and four children, who were coming from Bandar Abbas to Dubai on flight 655, when they heard that that flight would never arrive. On board the same aircraft was another family from the United Arab Emirates comprising the father, the mother, and five children whose ages ranged from two to nine years. Thus among the 290 passengers - victims - on board the aircraft were 17 citizens of the United Arab Emirates.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United
Arab Emirates)

Iran Air flight 655, a civil aircraft, was on a scheduled flight from Bandar Abbas to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates when it was hit by two missiles from an American warship. The pilot and passengers never thought that the flight would be that short.

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United
Arab Emirates)

Thus, when countries lose trust amongst themselves, when suspicion becomes the prevailing factor in relations between countries and when political will becomes hostage to military confrontations, it can result in miscalculations that take the lives of innocent civilians. Each incident sets a precedent for the next. The Security Council has already discussed various other incidents, which arose from different motivations and circumstances. It is frightening that such incidents continue to occur, one after the other, and that the international community once again finds itself faced with collective murder.

Whatever the circumstances and justifications for the incident, the situation is due to more than mere technological error: It is due to an error of political will. Whatever our political affiliations, as human beings we cannot but condemn the act of aggression committed against the airliner. Despite all the reports and explanations we have heard concerning the tragedy, and even though we are still awaiting the results of the investigation, we cannot find any justification for making a civil airliner a military target. The United States therefore bears full responsibility for the tragedy because its forces did not make sure that their target was not a military one.

Although we are convinced that the airliner tragedy was unjustified, it is very difficult to speak about it without considering the situation prevailing in the area. No one can deny that the waters of the Persian Gulf, which has served international trade for centuries and which has been an ideal area of safe navigation, have in recent years been subjected to tension and insecurity, particularly because of the mining of the waterway and the attacks on neutral shipping. As a result of recent events, many civilians have lost their lives and navigation has become unsafe. There can be no doubt that that tension and the

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United Arab Emirates)

continuing dangerous situation prevailing in the Gulf, along with the presence of foreign military and naval forces there, are all connected with the continuation of the Iran-Iraq war and the failure of all efforts to bring it to a peaceful conclusion. We reject war and its use as justification for mining the waters of the Gulf or for committing aggression against maritime navigation or civilian airlines, but we continue to believe that the escalating tension in the Gulf is a result of the continuation of the Iran-Iraq war. Unless a peaceful end is put to it, we cannot conceive of the possibility of any lessening of tensions there.

On that basis, my country has supported every regional and international effort towards that end, including the efforts of the Secretary-General and the resolutions of the Security Council - in particular, Security Council resolution 598 (1987). My country contributed to the drafting and sponsoring of that resolution as a way out of the situation and a way of dealing with the war on an objective basis, preserving and safeguarding the legitimate rights of both parties.

Because of its geographical location close to international waterways, my country has suffered from this war and from the escalating tension. Some of the warships in the area have interfered with the airspace used by the United Arab Emirates, civil airlines. Such interference has come close to causing several air incidents. I cannot list them all here, but we have informed the American authorities of them. My country has also submitted a report on such incidents to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). It therefore does not consider itself responsible for any future consequences of such interference. We consider that the countries whose navies are interfering with international

(Mr. Al-Shaali, United
Arab Emirates)

aviation are responsible for that, particularly since some airliners do not have the equipment necessary to receive warning messages from warships.

In conclusion, I should like to express condolences to the families of the victims of the tragedy. Now, more than ever before, we are called upon to put an end to the escalating tension in the Gulf. Every country concerned should do its utmost to avoid such tragedies. We regard Iran's initiative in submitting its complaint to the Security Council as cause for hope that it will lead to co-operation with the Council and with the Secretary-General in implementing resolution 598 (1987).

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for his kind words addressed to me.

There are still a number of speakers. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend to adjourn the meeting now. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue consideration of the item on the agenda will take place on Monday, 18 July 1988, at 3.30 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.