**Mr. Al-Kidwa**:

1. At the outset allow me to convey to Mr. Holkeri our congratulations on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly, expressing our full confidence in him and wishing him every possible success.
2. This session has special importance for Palestine and we hope that during its proceedings and under his leadership historic steps will be taken in our favour.
3. I should also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the fifty-fourth session, a fighter for freedom and a fighter for peace, for his excellent leadership during the course of the past year.
4. I would be remiss if I failed to seize the opportunity to express our special thanks to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his effective leadership and for his special interest in the situation in the Middle East and the peace process there.
5. As we meet in the wake of the Millennium Summit, it is incumbent upon us to seek to build upon its outcome beginning with implementing the Millennium Declaration and adopting it as a guide for our work in the next era.
6. This should be the case not only with regard to globalization and future social and economic issues, but also with regard to one of the main tasks not fully achieved during the past era C namely, the achievement of self-determination by peoples under colonial domination and foreign occupation.
7. **That task will not be fully achieved until Israeli occupation comes to an end and the Palestinian State has been established in accordance with international legitimacy.**
8. **For us this is the step necessary to place ourselves side by side with other member States on the road to development, democracy and prosperity and so that we may be allowed to carry our small share of responsibility towards the international community and its future tasks.**
9. **As President Yasser Arafat mentioned in his address to the Millennium Summit, the Palestine Central Council met to consider the situation as the agreed date between the Palestinian and Israeli sides for reaching a final status agreement, 13 September 2000, approached;**
10. **that date was also the deadline of the agreed-upon extension of the five-year interim period that originally ended on 4 May 1999.**
11. **The Palestine Central Council addressed this situation with a high level of responsibility towards our people and towards the peace process and took a difficult decision seeking a balance between the natural and historic rights of the Palestinian people to their State, based on the partition resolution 181 and in accordance with the Declaration of Independence of 1988 and our right to establish this State at the end of the interim period, on the one hand, and preserving what some have called the last chance for the peace process and for reaching an agreement between the two sides through an additional extension and the decision to continue the negotiations for the next five or six weeks on the other.**
12. **The Council thus decided to delay the establishment of the State and at the same time mandated the Executive Committee and the presidency of the Palestine National Council and the Legislative Council to take the necessary steps in this regard, including completion of the constitutional declaration and laws for presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as the submission of an application for membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations, followed by a report on these steps to the Central Council no later than 15 November 2000, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.**
13. **That decision means first and foremost our desire and commitment to reach an agreement with the Israeli side if that side is truly ready for that.**
14. **Secondly, it also means the agreement by the Palestinian side to postpone the establishment of the State, not only until the end of the transitional period and its extension, but until the end of the realistic opportunity for achieving a possible final agreement at the present time.**
15. **We believe that no one can expect us to go beyond that and accept the continuation of the present transitional situation that is impossible to endure.**
16. **We further believe that all States, including those that have advised us to postpone, will understand this and will thus be ready to provide the necessary support for our steps, including support for the application of Palestine for membership in the United Nations.**
17. **The assumption of power by the current Israeli Government was coupled with a chorus of positive voices that led to increased hope for rapid and honest implementation of the agreements signed by the two sides aimed at achieving a final agreement in the agreed time.**
18. **We honestly wanted to believe this and dealt with that Government positively and with full commitment to the agreements.**
19. **But the stubborn realities began to impose themselves on the ground, regardless of the wishes and the artificial positive voices.**
20. **The current Government did not implement any of the provisions of these agreements except those provisions that the former Government had explicitly committed itself to in implementation of the Wye River Memorandum of October 1998.**
21. **This Government has not carried out one centimetre of redeployment more than Mr. Netanyahu had committed himself to, and it has also failed to carry out the third redeployment.**
22. **Illegal settlements, which are destructive to the peace process, have continued, even in Jabal Abu Ghneim, which was the reason the General Assembly convened its tenth emergency special session.**
23. **A number of other illegal measures and practices have also continued, creating a negative and tense climate.**
24. **Amidst all of that, final status negotiations started and we witnessed Israeli foot-dragging and procrastination that we could not understand and that has led to more doubts and tension.**
25. **Then came the Camp David Summit, for which thorough preparation was needed before being convened, something that was not accepted by the Israeli side.**
26. **Despite everything, the Summit represented a very important opportunity to move into a new, serious phase of negotiations through the personal involvement of President Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State and the rest of his team.**
27. **We highly appreciate all the efforts made for the success of the Summit.**
28. **For our part, we spared no effort in the same direction.**
29. **However, we believe that Israel’s lack of readiness to comply with the terms of reference of the peace process prevented the success of such efforts.**
30. **In the wake of the Summit a campaign was launched by some parties and some biased media organizations to absolve the Israeli side of its responsibility and to place undue pressure on the Palestinian side.**
31. **For example, some say that the Israeli side progressed from its original positions during the negotiations more than the Palestinian side.**
32. **That is factually incorrect, in addition to being the wrong yardstick to apply.**
33. **It is incorrect because the Palestinian side has progressed from its original position more than the Israeli side, but that happened with the start of the peace process and the acceptance of the bases of such a process.**
34. **The Palestinian side has accepted, despite the historic injustice, establishing its State in accordance with the partition plan, which gave us less than half of mandated Palestine, and has accepted as the basis for settlement Security Council resolution 242, which gives us less than a quarter of mandated Palestine.**
35. **Is there a more momentous concession than this?**
36. **Is it possible to forget that and only look at positions taken during the Camp David negotiations, regardless of the past?**
37. **It is also the wrong yardstick to apply because the appropriate yardstick should be the closeness of the sides to the agreed basis of the peace process and their commitment to Security Council resolution 242, the implementation of which is the goal of the peace process, and not the extent of their movement from original positions, especially if such positions were illegal and irrational**.
38. **Needless to say, the Palestinian side has fully adhered to this resolution and has never attempted to circumvent it, whereas the Israeli side has never stopped pursuing positions violating that resolution and aiming to usurp more and more Palestinian land and rights.**
39. **Let us have another look at the positions of the parties on some specific issues, so that all may be aware of the details of the situation.**
40. **With regard to Jerusalem, the first *kiblah* and the third of the holy sanctuaries and the cradle of Jesus Christ, the other side claims that it made substantial concessions while the Palestinians did not.**
41. **It also claims that we have not shown enough sensitivity towards the holy sites pertaining to Judaism.**
42. **All of this is incorrect.**
43. **The signed agreements state that Jerusalem will be an issue for negotiation, which means the whole of Jerusalem — occupied East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem, which is under de facto Israeli control.**
44. **For our part, we have accepted that West Jerusalem shall be under Israeli sovereignty and become the capital of Israel.**
45. **We have demanded the end of the occupation of East Jerusalem so that it may come under Palestinian sovereignty and be the capital of Palestine.**
46. **We have accepted that the city shall be open, and have accepted all kinds of guarantees for freedom of conscience, worship and access to all holy places under Palestinian sovereignty.**
47. **In return for such flexibility, Israel is not satisfied with recognized sovereignty over West Jerusalem, but seeks also to usurp parts of occupied East Jerusalem.**
48. **With regard to the Jewish holy places, we fully respect their sacredness, and Islam recognizes the three monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — and all their prophets.**
49. **Thus, we have shown every possible flexibility, even with regard to those places on lands in occupied East Jerusalem, to which resolution 242 is applicable.**
50. **We have accepted that the Western Wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which is known to the Arabs and Muslims as Al-Buraq Wall and to the Israelis and Jews as the Wailing Wall, shall be placed under Israeli control, bearing in mind its sacredness to Judaism and consistent with the situation since the British mandate on Palestine.**
51. **In return for our flexibility Israel not only seeks sovereignty over the Western Wall, but further challenges our sovereignty over Al-Haram Al-Sharif and seeks to maintain some form of sovereignty over it, something that will not be accepted by any Palestinian, Arab or Muslim leader, not now and not in the future.**
52. **We have recently taken a major additional step in this regard by indicating our readiness to accept a certain mechanism for ensuring that no excavations are conducted under Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or even our readiness to accept Muslim sovereignty over Al-Haram Al-Sharif through the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.**
53. **This represents the utmost that can be done in terms of dealing with an Arab and Muslim trust over Palestinian land.**
54. **With regard to another important issue, namely, Palestinian refugees and their rights, the Palestinian side has upheld their rights in accordance with international law, like any other** **refugees in the world, and in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 194, including their right to return and to compensation.**
55. **At the same time, we have shown our readiness to accept specific implementation mechanisms to be agreed upon.**
56. **In return for our flexibility, Israel refuses to recognize its responsibility for this human tragedy and refuses to recognize the rights of the refugees, including their right to return, and wants only to compensate them, and even that at the expense of others and not in its capacity as the party that seized their lands and properties.**
57. **Yesterday the Assembly heard Israel’s spokesman repeat what has been said, attempting not only to deny Israel’s responsibility but also denying the individual property of the refugees, more than 5.5 million dunams of land, legal and full property of individuals.**
58. **The Acting Foreign Minister attempted to put an end to that in an address to the Assembly.**
59. **The third important issue is that of settlements and borders.**
60. **We have affirmed that settlements are illegal and must not be built on Palestinian lands.**
61. **Furthermore, Israel must withdraw to the armistice lines of 1949, which are commonly known as the lines of 4 June 1967.**
62. **At the same time, and in order to resolve some of the demographic problems illegally created by Israel, we have shown our readiness to accept changes in the border lines on the basis of full reciprocity.**
63. **In return for such flexibility, Israel still attempts to appropriate more land and to annex other parts of occupied Palestinian territory.**
64. **However, we generally feel, or at least hope, that the differences on this and the remaining issues are less sharp than the differences I indicated regarding the two previous ones,**
65. **and it is hoped this might signify a real change in the Israeli position regarding all issues.**
66. **We have not lost hope yet.**
67. **We are still committed to the peace process and to serious and continuous negotiations in the coming weeks.**
68. **Yet this morning we were surprised to hear the spokesman of the Israeli Government announce that the negotiations are suspended.**
69. **We hope that the Israeli positions are tactical and that the Israeli side will in the final analysis respect its commitment to the bases of the peace process.**
70. **We want an agreement, an agreement that will remove us from the cycle of confrontation and that will carry forward both sides, and the entire region and its future generations, to a new era**.
71. **Such an agreement must be balanced, reasonable and based on international law, the basis of the peace process.**
72. **This requires a continuation of the necessary efforts and unbiased support of the two cosponsors of the peace process, particularly the United States of America, other concerned parties in the region, the European Union and interested parties throughout the world.**
73. **We are ready and look forward to such a historic agreement between the two States, Palestine and Israel.**
74. During the Millennium Summit much was said about the United Nations and its past and future role.
75. We wish to add that the United Nations is indispensable when it comes to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.
76. We have always emphasized the permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine until it is effectively resolved in all its aspects, and while we always called for more United Nations involvement in the Middle East peace process, others have attempted to exclude and neutralize it.
77. We are convinced that in the coming decisive period the role of the United Nations will become more important, no matter what the circumstances.
78. **If we were, God forbid, to arrive at a dead end despite all our strenuous efforts for the success of the peace process, then we would come to the United Nations and expect to receive its protection and support.**
79. **We will work to obtain membership and to contribute to the resolutions of the United Nations, the established committees and the relevant programmes so that all might provide an additional boost for the achievement of our people’s legitimate rights, including their right to the establishment of their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, after such a long period of trial and tribulation.**
80. **If our hope is fulfilled and we are successful in reaching a final agreement with our neighbours, then we expect that the need for the United Nations and its organs will be greater.**
81. The United Nations responsibility in all its forms will continue until the end of the implementation period and there will be a need to legitimize some aspects of the agreement and perhaps to complement them.
82. There will also be a need for United Nations assistance during the implementation period with regard to many aspects, in particular with regard to Palestinian refugees, including the continuation of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.
83. We will then propose the specific reactivation of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, which was established by resolution 194 and is composed of the United States, France and Turkey, and the use of the records of the Commission related to land ownership in Palestine.
84. These records were updated by the United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and can now be used.
85. In any case, the need for the United Nations will increase, and we call for preparedness for that eventuality.
86. **There are other aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict that must be resolved in order for a comprehensive peace to be achieved in the region.**
87. In this context, we reaffirm the necessity of reactivating the Syrian-Israeli track of the peace process as well as the need for Israel to accept the principle of full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967.
88. We declare our solidarity with our sister country, Syria,
89. and support its just demands, including Israeli adherence to the terms of reference of the peace process.
90. We also express our great happiness at the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.
91. We congratulate the brotherly Lebanese people on the liberation of their territories and support their other demands regarding the achievement of peace between Lebanon and Israel.
92. **In this context, we affirm our agreement with regard to rejecting the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the need for them to return to their homes,**
93. **and, until then, we expect them to benefit from normal living conditions.**
94. **With regard to Arab national security and the principle of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we reaffirm the need for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to put all its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.**
95. **We also support attempts aimed at establishing a region free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and believe this to be an essential condition for establishing a new reality in the region, which we all seek to achieve.**
96. In the context of the wider Arab region, the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people is still a source of real concern for us all.
97. We call for a speedy end to their suffering.
98. We also call for the total lifting of sanctions imposed on sisterly Libya and brotherly Sudan.
99. We also call for the peaceful settlement of the issue of the three islands between the United Arab Emirates and Iran in a way that preserves the rights of the United Arab Emirates in these islands.
100. We also express our happiness for the recent steps taken in Somalia and express our hope that the stability and reconciliation process will continue.
101. We reaffirm the need for efforts to be made to resolve problems everywhere, including, inter alia, those of Cyprus, of the great African continent, particularly the Horn of Africa, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of some of the surrounding countries.
102. The resolution of such problems will represent an important contribution towards placing that continent on the road to development and progress.
103. Before concluding I must once again express our deep thanks to our brothers and friends everywhere, particularly to fraternal Arab countries, Islamic countries and non-aligned countries, as well as to all other friends for their principled and continuous support.
104. **Let this year be the year that will bring to an end the historical injustice that has befallen our people,**
105. and let it be the beginning of a new life in the Middle East for all States, peoples and future generations.

**Mr. Ben-Ami**:

1. I stand here today as Israel’s messenger of peace.
2. The establishment of the State of Israel was the fulfilment of the dream of a people forced into exile 2,000 years ago.
3. The destruction of the Second Temple and the dissolution of Jewish statehood were the result of our failure as a nation to assume the proper political course, to opt for accommodation with reality instead of engaging in messianic hallucinations.
4. Our punishment was very severe indeed, but maybe it can serve as a lesson to those nations and leaders who today may be tragically led to believe that the dangerous inertia of romantic mythology and unrealistic dreams is preferable to the banality of a wise and prudent political course.
5. Most revolts are uprisings against a system.
6. Zionism was a revolt against destiny.
7. It is this expression of our re-encounter with the world of political realities that eventually led us to the restoration of Jewish statehood in 1948.
8. **Tragically, however, historical and geopolitical circumstances have put us in a prolonged, bitter conflict with the Palestinian people.**
9. **It was thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat that, seven years ago, Palestinians and Israelis were put on a track leading to peace and reconciliation.**
10. **We have been engaged in the past seven years, but more intensely in the last year, in a major effort, unprecedented in both scope and depth, to resolve this 100-year-old conflict.**
11. **This negotiating process, and it alone, should be the foundation of a peace agreement.**
12. **At this point, I would like to address my colleagues from the Arab and Muslim world.**
13. **I hope that my words will convince them of the Israeli Government’s sincere intentions to achieve a comprehensive peace based on respect, dignity and fairness, which will end the Middle East conflict and best serve the vital interests of the entire region.**
14. The Jewish people have no quarrel with Islam.
15. On the contrary, we have the deepest respect for that great Islamic civilization under whose wings Jewish history — from Al-Andalus to Turkey, from Egypt to Iraq, from the Jewish quarters of Tangier to Aleppo in Syria — has known some of its finest hours and most glorious cultural achievements.
16. But even at the height of the “Golden Age”, in the midst of the delights and wonders of Muslim Spain, our people never abandoned their dream of and yearning for Jerusalem,
17. as expressed in the words of the poet Yehuda Halevi more than 800 years ago:
18. “My heart is in the East, and I am in the furthest reaches of the West.
19. To thee my soul yearns from the depth of the West.”
20. We are a small nation decimated by holocaust and dispersion, but our heritage is rich.
21. It was from our eternal capital, Jerusalem — which, according to a Muslim source, “in the days of the people of Israel, was an area larger than Cairo and Baghdad” — that the message of monotheism was projected to humanity.
22. The Jewish holy sites and shrines in Jerusalem are the very heart of the Jewish faith, identity and history.
23. For the past 2,000 years, Jews have turned towards Temple Mount in prayer three times a day.
24. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning.
25. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not recall thee”,
26. they pledged in joy and in sorrow.
27. For the past 30 years, Israel has consistently demonstrated its commitment to freedom of religion and worship in Jerusalem.
28. Heads of the various religious denominations in Jerusalem will attest to the fact that the city has never been so open to all believers.
29. During the last month of Ramadan, a record number, unheard of in the annals of Islam in Jerusalem, of more than 400,000 Muslim worshippers attended Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
30. I note this as an example of the deep respect which Israel has for Islam and its followers.
31. Just as we do not question the sincerity of the sentiments of others towards their holy sites in Jerusalem, we expect that others will not question the Jewish people’s deep, awe-inspired attachment to Jerusalem and its holy sites, from which we will never again be parted.
32. Politicians need not distort God’s intentions for the sake of negotiations.
33. How refreshing it is that a great number of Muslim scholars should attest to the fact that, as the Supreme Court Judge Mujir el-din al-Hanbali wrote in his *History of Jerusalem and Hebron*,
34. “David reigned for 40 years and before he died he passed the monarchy on to his son Solomon and told him to build the *beit al-miqdas —* the Temple”.
35. The expression *beit al-miqdas —* that is, the House of the Temple — became in many Muslim sources a synonym of the word “Jerusalem”.
36. **It is a travesty of historical truth to present the Palestinian refugee problem as the result of mass expulsion.**
37. **There is no denying, however, that once the Jews — who for thousands of years waited with humility for their redemption — made their re-encounter with history as a sovereign nation, they had to assume the inherent immorality of war.**
38. **The suffering of the civilian population will always be a burden on the conscience of any nation at war.**
39. **The Arab-Israeli conflict has no monopoly on this maxim.**
40. **Clearly, the Palestinian refugees were victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict.**
41. **Israel, however, can assume neither political nor moral responsibility for this tragedy that was the direct result of the all-out onslaught against reborn Israel — an onslaught launched by the Arab armies in 1948.**
42. **The Palestinian refugee problem was born as the land was bisected by the sword — not by design, Jewish or Arab.**
43. **The problem was largely the inevitable by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and the protracted bitter fighting.**
44. **We believe that, once established, it is the Palestinian State that should provide for the vindication of the Palestinian claim for the right of return.**
45. **The notion is preposterous that a nation should create a State only in order to gather its exiles in a neighbouring State.**
46. **Israel, however, has expressed its willingness to actively participate in any international effort and fund aimed at providing the financial foundations for the resolution of the refugee problem.**
47. **Out of humanitarian considerations, Israel may also accept a small and limited number of refugees within a scheme of family reunification.**
48. **Let there be no doubt.**
49. **The peace process is not the objective, we need not sanctify the process.**
50. **Peace, not the process, is the objective.**
51. **Peace is not about more conventions, summits and resolutions; it is about the future of our children, and about the seemingly unattractive banalities of building the mechanisms of cohabitation.**
52. **To the Palestinians we say: we need to disentangle ourselves from this seemingly insoluble conundrum.**
53. **We know that unless your and our wounds are healed, peace — not only the political peace but also that of the mind and the conscience — will not be complete.**
54. **Yet, at the same time we realize that the total satisfaction of our respective dreams or presumed rights will lead us to perdition.**
55. **Hence it is incumbent on us to devise realistic ways to heal without opening new wounds, to dignify our existence as free peoples without putting into jeopardy the collective existence of each other.**
56. **Peace is not about twisting each other’s arms; it is about defining a common interest.**
57. **I believe that such an ideal compromise is not impossible to achieve, while banishing the sword from this land of God.**
58. **Peace has not materialized in full yet, but I believe that we are moving in the right direction.**
59. **In the past year the Government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak has made bold, courageous and unprecedented moves towards peace.**
60. **At Camp David we have contemplated ideas and explored concepts relating to the most sensitive and supposedly intractable issues.**
61. **Our sense is that breakthrough is possible, just as failure may lead to breakdown.**
62. **We have turned the sea that separated us into a river.**
63. **But, do we have the courage and the determination to cross it?**
64. **I know I may not sound too objective by vouching for Prime Minister Barak.**
65. **But, I have come here with the power of conviction that no Prime Minister before him — and let no illusions be harboured, no Prime Minister after him — will touch as he has the outer limits of his options as an Israeli and a Jew.**
66. **I do not underestimate the dilemmas facing Chairman Arafat.**
67. **He is the great leader of the Palestinian people,**
68. **and I know that the decision is not easy for him either.**
69. **But this is the destiny of leaders: to always be prophets without honour.**
70. **They should not expect the applause of their constituencies, what really matters is the judgement of future generations.**
71. **I call upon our Palestinian partners to realize that history has brought us to a moment of truth and decision from which we are not allowed to escape empty-handed without inflicting severe punishments on our own peoples.**
72. **Israel aspires to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region and help move it into the future.**
73. Twenty one years ago we signed a cornerstone peace treaty with Egypt, followed by a peace treaty with Jordan and an incipient but promising process of normalization with the Maghreb and Gulf States.
74. Eighteen years of Israeli military presence in Lebanon have been terminated by the Barak Government, in close cooperation with the United Nations, and thanks especially to the efforts and dedication of Secretary- General Kofi Annan.
75. We have also delved into the possibilities of reaching peace with Syria.
76. We hope that talks with Syria will resume as soon as possible and that a fair and equitable agreement can be achieved.
77. **Israel is determined to pursue peace and take the calculated risks attached to it.**
78. **But Israel will not compromise — not now and not ever — on those security and national interests that we deem vital.**
79. **While building our peace with the Palestinians we cannot ignore security concerns inherent in the fact that peace with the Palestinians is not our last peace.**
80. We still have a dispute pending with Syria, and we are still exposed to the most serious regional threats emanating from revolutionary powers in the area.
81. **Peace requires the active involvement of the international community.**
82. The critical role played by the United States, and especially the relentless dedication and unequivocal commitment of President Bill Clinton, has been massive and constructive.
83. Once again the United States has proven to be the indispensable nation.
84. We have also seen the European Union rising to the task, and we commend the role of the French Presidency and that of other key European Governments.
85. Peace needs the advice of the international community and it will need that support to cement peace once it is achieved.
86. We expect also to work closely with the Egyptian Government for the cause of regional peace.
87. I believe that it is also important that Russia and the Arab world express their opinions that now is the time to make historical decisions.
88. Time is an elusive and perishable commodity.
89. We are all running out of it.
90. **We are open to developing wide spaces of cooperation with our Palestinian neighbours and indeed with all the countries of the Middle East, with dignity and mutuality.**
91. **But, we do not intend to impose our experience on anybody, nor is it our intention to assert our economic or technological presence amidst those of our neighbours who do not want it.**
92. The leaders and the elites throughout the Middle East do not need our advice to know what are the real challenges ahead of us all: modernizing the economy and combating disease, hunger, poverty and illiteracy.
93. Indeed, small islands of excellence notwithstanding, the Middle East is in grave danger of being on the wrong side of the digital divide.
94. In his inaugural speech in 1961, the late President Kennedy invited his generation to join him in a struggle:
95. “Now the trumpet summons us again — not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are — but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, ... a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.”
96. Nothing will make us happier than joining hands with our Arab neighbours with dignity and mutuality in this most noble of struggles.
97. The Middle East is not tranquil yet.
98. It is still replete with armed conflicts, political hostilities and animosities.
99. Israel believes that regional arrangements are crucial for arms control.
100. A step-by-step approach, commensurate with progress towards comprehensive peace, is the right approach.
101. We are concerned by the expanding stockpiles of conventional weapons in the region, as well as by attempts made by Iran and Iraq to acquire and develop non-conventional weapons, and by an increasing missile threat.
102. Israel attaches great importance to the eventual establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region.
103. In order to reach that goal, direct negotiations between all States of the region must be held.
104. Last year saw a turnaround in Israel’s relations with the United Nations.
105. After years of anomaly, Israel was temporarily admitted to the Western European and Other Group in New York.
106. We hope that Israel’s admission to the Western Group in international organizations based outside New York will soon be secured.
107. The United Nations, and indeed most of its Member States, played a major role in demanding that Iran treat fairly the 13 Jews falsely accused, convicted and sentenced for ludicrous charges of espionage.
108. It is in such instances that the international community has the opportunity to express its discontent and exert pressure on countries that break the norms of behaviour.
109. On the issue of the reform of the Security Council, is our opinion that the Security Council should faithfully reflect the present geopolitical picture, a picture that has changed beyond recognition since the last enlargement of the Council in 1965.
110. We subscribe to the view that the right of veto — a safety net against the possible arbitrariness of the General Assembly — should remain in the hands of a limited number of States.
111. **Allow me a final reflection on the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma.**
112. **The tragedy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stemmed from discrepant historical rhythms.**
113. **The history of our modern national movement has been characterized by realistic responses to objective historical conditions.**
114. **The Palestinians have consistently fought for the solutions of yesterday — those they had rejected a generation or two earlier.**
115. **This persistent attempt to turn back the clock of history lies at the root of many of the misfortunes that have befallen the peoples of the region.**
116. **Now it is time for all of us to overcome dire memories and look forward.**
117. **Neither the physical nor the rhetorical war of images will bring us any closer to peace and reconciliation.**
118. **No one has a monopoly on the mythology of suffering and atrocities.**
119. **In this tragic dispute we have all committed acts of violence that we ought not to be proud of.**
120. **To the Palestinians we say, we are excited by the prospects to overcome the troubled history of our relations in order to shape our dreams of peace.**
121. **Let us then join hands in asking the world, which has been watching, perplexed at, and sometimes even fuelling our wars, to mobilize its resources for the benefit of our peoples.**
122. **And, let us be full partners in this international effort to lay down the foundations of the Middle East of the future.**
123. **The creative energies of our peoples should at long last be put to work in the service of peace, for as the wisest of kings, King Solomon, the builder of the Temple in Jerusalem, wrote thousands of years ago, there is:**
124. **“A time for slaying and a time for healing ... a time for war and a time for peace”.**