



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.183/SR.243
10 June 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 243rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 9 February 1999, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Sir Kieran PRENDERGAST
(Under-Secretary-General
for Political Affairs)

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

CONTENTS

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF KING HUSSEIN IBN TALAL OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM
OF JORDAN

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT OBSERVER FOR PALESTINE /...

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be set within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza. Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

99-80195 (E) /...

CONTENTS (continued)

REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

BETHLEHEM 2000 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, TO BE HELD IN ROME, ON 18 AND
19 FEBRUARY 1999

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF KING HUSSEIN IBN TALAL OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM
OF JORDAN

1. At the invitation of the Temporary Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

2. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. Mr. YEL'CHENKO (Ukraine) nominated Mr. Ka (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chairman; Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) and Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba) for re-election to the offices of Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Saliba (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

4. Mr. HACHANI (Tunisia) seconded the nominations.

5. Mr. Ka (Senegal), Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba and Mr. Saliba (Malta) were elected by acclamation.

6. Mr. Ka (Senegal) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

7. Sir Kieran PRENDERGAST (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General who had travelled to Amman for the funeral of King Hussein, said that the General Assembly had remained actively involved at the fifty-third session, in matters relating to the question of Palestine, reflecting the abiding commitment of the United Nations to the cause of peace, security and stability in the Middle East. The Assembly had resumed its tenth emergency special session, demonstrating the international community's mounting alarm at the worsening of the situation on the ground and the lack of progress in the peace process. It had also adopted resolution 53/27, entitled "Bethlehem 2000", in support of efforts to mark the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. It was hoped that that event would be a powerful symbol of peace and reconciliation, within and beyond the region.

8. The past year had seen its share of frustration and despair. But it was also true that the Palestinian people have taken significant steps towards the achievement of their goals. At the United Nations, the General Assembly had conferred upon Palestine, in its capacity as observer, additional rights and privileges of participation. In Gaza, the opening of the international airport had been a landmark heralding new trade and cultural relations. As for the negotiating process, the signing of the Wye River Memorandum, following a protracted stalemate, offered hope that the momentum of peace would be recaptured. Regrettably, in the course of the past several weeks, there had been yet another standstill in the peace process. He appealed to the parties to

/...

summon again the will and the wisdom to move ahead without delay in accordance with the agreements already signed.

9. It was crucial for the parties to remain committed to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It was important not to lose sight of the gains which the peace process had brought thus far. It must not be forgotten that success in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations could lead to progress on the other tracks. Indeed, there was too much at stake for the process to falter yet again. Real progress must be the goal. Real, tangible progress was the best antidote to violence and the best answer to the forces of disruption, destruction and doubt.

10. Nearly one year ago, the Secretary-General had visited several countries in the Middle East, as well as the territory under the Palestinian Authority. The leaders and others with whom he had met had been unanimous in thinking that animosity and mistrust could be made a thing of the past through a resumption of bilateral negotiations. But there had also been considerable exasperation at the enormous difficulties encountered in achieving even the slightest headway, and real anguish at the failure to find a durable political solution.

11. He had also witnessed the hardship and deprivation caused to the Palestinian people by decades of conflict. He had come away more convinced than ever that the improvement of economic and social conditions was a central element of the peace process. Some progress had been made in that regard: in creating employment opportunities, in improving health and education facilities and in promoting industrial development and Palestinian institution-building. But much was yet to be accomplished.

12. That past November in Washington, D.C., 43 nations had participated in the Conference to Support Middle East Peace and Development. The meeting had brought an estimated \$3 billion in new pledges of assistance. That had been a welcome and encouraging contribution. The United Nations, for its part, continued to be fully engaged in helping to build the foundations of peace. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations entities were involved, providing vital services to millions of Palestinians.

13. The question of Palestine had been on the agenda of the United Nations since the earliest days of the Organization. Palestinians who had lost their homes and hopes found themselves in the tragic position of passing on to future generations only family histories and their unmet aspirations for peace.

14. He hoped that the current generation would know the end of a terrible, costly conflict; would find peace and prosperity; and would bequeath to its sons and daughters not the yearning for peace but peace itself.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

15. The CHAIRMAN speaking as the representative of Senegal, said that the members of the Bureau would make every effort to fulfil their responsibilities

/...

to the best of their ability, knowing that the United Nations had a primary role to play in the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

16. He welcomed the growing interest in the Committee's work as demonstrated by its growing membership. The Secretary-General had always taken a special interest in the Committee's work and the recent visit to the region and the important message he had delivered in Gaza, on Palestinian soil, testified to his immutable desire to contribute to the search for a lasting and comprehensive settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

17. In a little over a week, the Bethlehem 2000 International Conference would be taking place in Rome. It should provide an opportunity for representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, religious institutions and personalities, the private sector, the international donor community and non-governmental organizations to help relaunch the dialogue for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East region and for assessing the state of progress of the Bethlehem 2000 project and launching new initiatives to mobilize the financing required.

18. Mr. DAUSA (Cuba) stressed Cuba's support for the convening of a conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention as soon as possible in order to consider the application of the Convention in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and its hope that the Bethlehem 2000 International Conference would contribute to the international promotion of the just cause of the Palestinian people.

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT OBSERVER FOR PALESTINE

19. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that there was a growing feeling that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people would soon be achieved. On 4 May, the five-year transitional period would come to an end. The Palestinian people would need the Committee's solidarity and support more than ever before, in particular to convene a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to consider means of enforcing the provisions of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al Quds/Jerusalem.

REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS

20. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received a note verbale dated 17 November 1998 from the Permanent Mission of Yemen to the United Nations informing him that the Yemeni Government wished to take part as an observer in the Committee's work. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

21. It was so decided.

22. Mr. AL-SINDI (Observer for Yemen) said that Yemen had requested Observer status in recognition of the Committee's work. It was to be regretted that Israel was persisting with its settlement policy in occupied East Jerusalem and with repressive activities against Palestinians. Israel's attempts to have a "security for peace" formula and other unacceptable terms incorporated into

/...

recent peace accords threatened to increase tension and instability in the region and elsewhere. The United States, the Russian Federation and other interested States should be urged to press for a comprehensive and just solution based on the "land for peace" principle, with a view to promoting peace, prosperity and improved cooperation between the peoples of the region.

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (A/AC.183/1999/CRP.1)

23. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve its draft programme of work for 1999 which was contained in document A/AC.183/1999/CRP.1.

24. It was so decided.

BETHLEHEM 2000 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, TO BE HELD IN ROME, ON 18 AND 19 FEBRUARY 1999

25. The CHAIRMAN said that the Conference would be held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome and opened by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy. The aim of the Conference would be to promote the Bethlehem 2000 project launched by the Palestinian Authority. It was hoped that it would also lead to further international dialogue and to cooperation for the promotion of peace and reconciliation. Participants would include, inter alia, the Under-Secretary-General of Political Affairs, who would be representing the Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Under-Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. The President of the Palestinian Authority would also be attending.

26. Invitations had been sent to all States Members of the United Nations and Observer States, to the organizations of the United Nations system and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, local institutions and representatives of the media. The Committee's delegation to the Conference would include the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, Rapporteur and the Observer for Palestine. He took it that the Committee wished to approve those arrangements.

27. It was so decided.

28. Mr. FULCI (Italy) stressed the importance to the Middle East peace process of promoting the Bethlehem 2000 project and using international support to enhance cooperation between the countries of the region. The Committee's delegation would be received by the President of the Republic and by His Holiness the Pope. A large delegation of Italian parliamentarians would also be participating.

29. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) thanked everyone involved for their support and interest and welcomed the delegation of Yemen. The latter's participation as Observer would surely serve to enhance the Committee's ability to mobilize support for the Palestinian people.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.