

4. MIDDLE EAST

In a statement on October 30, 1978 in the Special Political Committee, Mr. Maurice Dupras, M.P., Representative of Canada, disclosed Canada's policy with respect to the Middle East and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to the Near East (UNRWA). Mr. Dupras spoke about the future of the Palestinian people, the "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" adopted at Camp David and Israeli policy on providing shelter for Palestinian refugees. He also urged the member states of the United Nations to support the humanitarian work of the UNRWA. The following paragraphs are extracts from Mr. Dupras' statement.

The central element of the Middle Eastern problem is the future of the Palestinian people. My government considers that their legitimate concerns must be taken into account in any peace settlement and that they have the right to participate in any negotiations to determine their future. The Canadian Government further believes that there should be an appropriate territorial foundation for the political self expression of the Palestinians and that this should be implemented as part of an overall settlement. We consider that all other elements for a just and equitable peace in the Middle East, beyond those which I have just given, are contained in Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

We think that the "framework for peace in the Middle East" agreed at Camp David contains a good basis from which a just and equitable solution could be achieved. This framework was never intended to solve all outstanding questions, instead it provides the means for the parties concerned to reach agreement through further negotiations. With goodwill we expect that difficult problems can be surmounted and that peace for which we have longed can be achieved. We hope that our confidence is well placed and that a solution which does meet the concerns of the Palestinian people will be reached.

One of the resolutions with which we will be dealing will, we expect, be similar to resolution 32/90/C "Palestine Refugees in the Gaza Strip". Delegations will recall that my delegation changed its vote last year on that resolution. We had previously voted in favour but last year we detected a slight change in the Israeli position. In order to encourage what we hoped would be a change in their policy on providing shelter for the families whose homes were destroyed by demolition in July and August 1971, we changed our vote. Nations will recall that, in 1971, the Israeli occupying authorities demolished the shelters of 2554 families to provide access roads within the camps giving rise to the motion which calls, inter alia, for the return of the refugees concerned to the camps from which they were removed and for the provision of adequate shelters for their accomodation. Last year Israel was reported to have provided housing free of charge for the first time to some of the families on the hardship list. This year we see from the report of the Secretary-General in document A/33/285 that the offer of free housing was extended to additional families on the list. We hope Israel will continue to extend this policy. We will therefore continue to abstain on resolutions similar to 32/90/C so long as there is specific evidence of progress.

That having been said, UNRWA itself is apolitical, an organization which gives substance to the humanitarian concerns of the world community for