

The Secretary-General also notes in his report that the withdrawal of Israel forces has not yet extended to those forces in the Gaza strip, where the situation, we recognize, regarding territorial sovereignty, density of population and refugees differs from that in the areas of Egypt from which withdrawal has taken place. Perhaps in his next report the Secretary-General might also indicate his views on how the United Nations might assist in stabilizing this area and in ensuring that it will not be used as a base for attacks and incidents, or as a target for retaliation. In that way also the United Nations action might help to prevent a recurrence of hostilities.

Then, in paragraph 14 of his report, the Secretary-General has raised the question of "The international significance of the Gulf of Aqaba", which he thinks "may be considered to justify the right of innocent passage through the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf in accordance with recognized rules of international law". The uncertainty of the situation here and the unrest and fears arising from it have been and remain very disturbing factors. Therefore, in our view, this situation should also be considered by the Assembly and action taken to avoid trouble in the future.

The withdrawal of Israel forces from Sharm al-Shaikh, which is a strategic and important position for controlling the Straits leading to the Gulf and navigation through them, might be followed by the posting of observers of the United Nations Emergency Force at that point to assist in securing the peace and keeping navigation open, pending the determination of the legal and other issues involved.

In short, our view is that this Assembly, in its efforts to achieve complete withdrawal of Israel military forces behind the demarcation line as a matter of priority, has also an obligation to deal urgently and immediately with these other matters. The Secretary-General points out in his report that there is such an obligation. Perhaps I might read out paragraphs 16 and 17 of his report on that point, where he says:

The Assembly, in taking this position—that is, the position with regard to priority for withdrawal—"in no way disregarded all the other aims which must be achieved in order to create more satisfactory conditions than those prevailing during the period preceding the crisis. Some of these aims were mentioned by the Assembly. Others are to be found in previous decisions of the United Nations. All of them"—and I emphasize these words from the Secretary-General's report—"call for urgent attention. The basic function of the United Nations Emergency Force, 'to help maintain quiet', gives the Force great value as a background for efforts toward resolving such pending problems, although it is not in itself a means to that end.

And then the final paragraph of the Secretary-General's report has this to say:

It is essential that, through prompt conclusion of the first phases of implementation of the General Assembly resolution, Member Governments should now be enabled to turn to the constructive tasks to which the establishment and the maintenance of the cease-fire, a full withdrawal of forces behind the armistice lines, a desisting from raids and scrupulous observance of the armistice agreements, should open the way.

The cease-fire that has been achieved and the withdrawal of forces which is being achieved will have opened the way to us for the attainment of these other indispensable objectives. Therefore I hope that the Secretary-General, in his report next week, will give the Assembly his views on how we might take advantage here of the opportunity that is being afforded us.

Our hope is that these various moves will bring about some security and relief from tension in the areas concerned. Such an improvement is required not only to prevent a further armed conflict but also in order to create conditions and the atmosphere which are so vital if an enduring, honourable and peaceful settlement is to be achieved.

The debate on the report and the draft resolution went on into January 19. The last speakers were the representatives of Israel and Egypt. Extracts from their remarks will indicate the divergent views of the parties immediately concerned. Mr. Eban explained his general position:

There is nothing complicated or eccentric about our case. What is it that we say? We say that any withdrawal of military forces from the western coast of the Gulf of Aqaba and from the Gaza strip should be accompanied by related measures to prevent