there is a fundamental revision of South Africa's policy of *apartheid*. In contrast to the preceding 1977/78 term, Canada will no longer be able to use its mediating role as a member of the Contact Group as a reason for deferring decisions on economic sanctions.

The Middle East promises to pose the greatest challenge, but also the greatest opportunity, for constructive engagement by the Security Council. The unpacified uprising by the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and the dramatic revision of the official PLO** position on recognition of Israel and the issue of terrorism, have infused a new dynamism into Middle East affairs. The rapidly changing scene gives rise to conflicting and distorted information. The Security Council might find it valuable to send a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories to determine the attitude of the Palestinians toward any Israeli-sponsored local autonomy schemes, or to UN-initiated peace plans. It is highly probable that Canada would serve on such a fact-finding commission, in view of the expertise and standing which it has gained in the region as the result of participation in UN peacekeeping and observer missions.

An even more significant involvement by the Security Council in the Middle East peace process would be a direct attempt at mediation between the Israeli government and the PLO. While Canada enjoys the added prestige and leverage that comes from occupying a seat on the Security Council, it should give highest priority to such a mediation role by the Security Council. This might best be organized in the form of a new Contact Group, comprised of Council members who share a commitment to a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, and have some credibility in the region. Furthermore, the composition of the Middle East Contact Group should not be confined to Western members as in the Namibian case. For its part, the Canadian government would have to clarify its position on the political rights of the Palestinians, rather than offer a vague acknowledgement of unspecified rights.

If mediation efforts should prove to be fruitful, it will become necessary to assess the prospects for an international conference on the Middle East. The procedure which the Diefenbaker government advocated during the 1958 Lebanon crisis deserves to be re-examined. At the time, the Canadian government supported a compromise plan designed to bridge the US and Soviet conference proposals. The compromise plan envisaged a three-stage process. At the first stage, the Security Council would meet in regular session to prepare the agenda and groundwork for a Middle East conference. This would be followed by a session of the Council, meeting at the heads of government level and setting general guidelines. A meeting of this kind would allow non-permanent members to give their perspective. The final stage would comprise a smaller summit conference attended by the permanent members and key actors from the Middle East.

** Palestine Liberation Organization

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CONCLUSION

During the next two years on the Security Council, Canada will be compelled to take a clear stand on a number of sensitive and controversial subjects. The immobilism and partial irrelevance which characterized much of the Council's work during preceding terms will no longer be sufficient to allow Canada to maintain its ambiguity on important issues. Thus membership will entail greater political risks. But at the same time it promises to be more worthwhile because of the very real opportunity for constructive action by the Security Council in the near future.

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive account of Security Council diplomacy during and following the 1967 Middle East war, see Arthur Lall, *The UN and the Middle East Crisis, 1967*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1968.

2. John Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957*, vol. 1, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1979, pp. 267-268.

3. Chester Ronning to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 10 January 1958; Department of External Affairs File 5475-CX-40(3).

4. Memo by the External Affairs Legal Division, 10 September 1954; File 5475-CX-40.

5. Response by the Canadian government to General Assembly Res. 2697 (XXV); A/8746.

6. Arthur Lall, "The Security Council in a Universal United Nations," *Occasional Paper*, no. 11, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, New York, 1971, p. 13.

7. George Ignatieff, "Sitting on the hot seat of the UN Security Council," *International Perspectives*, September/October 1976, p. 10.

8. Speech by Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Petrovsky, to the Queen's University Conference on the Reduction of the Risk of War through Multilateral Means, 7-8 October 1988.