

full implementation of the request for withdrawal of forces behind the armistice line is ensured, such reaffirmations should, therefore, in the Secretary-General's view, be solicited from all the parties.

The communication of 14 January from the Government of Israel, in making an exception for the Sharm al-Shaikh area as 'the strip on the western coast of the Gulf of Aqaba which at present ensures freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran and in the Gulf', indicates that the evacuation of the strip is anticipated, although further conversations with the Secretary-General are suggested in connexion with this evacuation. The area referred to and the islands opposite Sharm al-Shaikh are Egyptian territory, or territory under Egyptian jurisdiction on the basis of an agreement with Saudi Arabia. Under the terms of the General Assembly resolution, the forces should be withdrawn from these territories. The Israel declaration of 8 November stated that Israel would be willing to 'withdraw' its forces from Egypt." (A/3320).

The international significance of the Gulf of Aqaba 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 Secretary-General has not considered that a discussion of the various aspects of this matter, and its possible relation to the action requested in the General Assembly resolutions on the Middle East crisis, falls within the mandate established for him in the resolution of 4 November.

Like the cease-fire, withdrawal is a preliminary and essential phase in a development through which a stable basis may be laid for peaceful conditions in the area. When the General Assembly, in its various resolutions concerning the recent crisis in the Middle East, gave high priority to the cease-fire and the withdrawal, the position of the Assembly reflected both basic principles of the Charter and essential political considerations.

The Assembly, in taking this position, 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 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.

It is essential that, through prompt conclusion of the first phases of implementation of the General Assembly resolutions, 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."

Resolution Adopted

The General Assembly took up the discussion of this report on January 17. Twenty-five Asian-African delegations introduced a draft resolution, the operative portion of which noted "with regret and concern" the failure of Israel to comply with the terms of previous Assembly resolutions on withdrawal, and requested the Secretary-General "to continue his efforts for securing the complete withdrawal" of Israeli troops. It also asked him to "report on such compliance" to the General Assembly within five days. As