



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 57/11 REQUIREMENTS FOR MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT

Statement made in the United Nations General Assembly February 2, by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Chairman of the Canadian Delegation.

We have before us, as members know, two draft resolutions: one on the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces and one on arrangements for peace and security in the area to follow such withdrawal.

The Canadian Delegation would have preferred these two draft resolutions to be separate parts of a single draft resolution which could be voted upon separately. Our reason for that view is a simple one. We think that these two matters are interconnected, and what we do about the second will help or hinder our efforts to bring about effective action in regard to the first -- withdrawal. This inter-relationship exists, in our view, not because it will assist Israel in achieving any objective of national policy, but because it will affect the chances of achieving our own objective of peace and security in the area. And that, I take it, is the objective of the Assembly. We do not expect the second draft resolution to result in anything that would not have been desirable if Israeli military action had not taken place.

There is in our minds no question of reward or approval. We do expect a satisfactory second draft resolution to result in the kind of United Nations action that will prevent military action in the future, and we look at this second draft resolution from that point of view, as well as from the point of view of the effect which it will have on the achievement of Israel withdrawal.

I recognize the force of the reasons that made one draft resolution impossible of acceptance by the necessary majority in this Assembly. I hope that others will realize the force of the argument that the views expressed on the second draft resolution and, even more important, on the meaning of that draft resolution, are bound to influence our feeling about the first.

Our position on these two questions has been stated already and I do not need to repeat it at length.

We agree with the view that there must be a full implementation of the Armistice Agreement of 1949, and that there must be a formal affirmation by the Governments concerned that they desist from raids and incursions across the demarcation line and take active measures to prevent these things happening. The Secretary-General, in his report, has called for these things. But they are not enough. The United Nations must take action to achieve as well as merely to proclaim these objectives; to secure and supervise arrangements to this end.

We have at hand an agency of the United Nations, our own agency, which can be used effectively for these purposes if we so desire. If we do not use it -- the United Nations Emergency Force -- all our work of last autumn will have been wasted, and our failure will extend far beyond this particular situation and will weaken, perhaps even destroy, the value of this Assembly for the supervision of and making secure the peace. The Security Council, in present circumstances, has become futile for these purposes. Is the Assembly to go the same way? It is for us to decide, and what we do on this occasion may make the decision.

We must, therefore, in any draft resolution which we are considering, such as the one before us, be sure that we are giving the Secretary-General clear and definite authority so that, in the subsequent discussions and consultations which are required, he can make the United Nations and the United Nations Emergency Force effective for the purpose of bringing about action, following withdrawal of Israel forces. This surely means -- at least it seems to us to mean -- that agreement should be reached under which UNEF can be used for keeping the peace along the demarcation line and in the Gaza Strip, if necessary, and for preventing conflict -- and that would be its only possible purpose in that area -- in the Gulf of Aqaba or the Straits of Tiran.

We are asking our Secretary-General to take on great and additional responsibilities. I hope that this second draft resolution -- which is not a very long one -- is not going to be the straw that will break this camel's back. But it is certainly our duty to give him as clear and precise a mandate as we can so that he can discharge these responsibilities with a minimum of confusion, controversy or delay.

I realize that it is the intention of the authors of this draft resolution to give the Secretary-General the authority necessary to discharge these new responsibilities and to perform this task that is of such vital importance to peace and the United Nations. I know something about the difficulties of the authors of these two draft resolutions in realizing this intention in words that will command the approval of the necessary majority of this Assembly which, after all, cannot act at all

without such approval. I know that the representative of the United States, in particular, has made persistent and tireless efforts, which deserve our gratitude, to overcome these difficulties.

But, while the purpose of this second draft resolution deserves and receives the unqualified support of our Delegation, we have had -- as I am sure other delegations have had, judging from what I have heard today -- some doubts about the language of the draft resolution in one or two places being best suited to achieve this purpose. I would have preferred it to be somewhat more precise and more complete. I think that it would then have been more effective, if its meaning had been clearer, in achieving the two objectives which we all have in mind: immediate withdrawal of Israel forces and, afterwards, United Nations arrangements which, to use the language of the preamble of the second draft resolution, "would assure progress towards the creation of peaceful conditions".

I realize, of course, that it would have been impracticable to have included in this draft resolution all the details of the actions which we wish the Secretary-General and the United Nations to take. But I had hoped that the principles which we mention might have been somewhat more specific. I realize also that the Secretary-General must be given reasonable freedom of action, room to manoeuvre, in an operation of this kind, which is as delicate as it is complicated and important. But we surely do not wish this freedom to include ambiguous injunctions which might invite differing interpretations and consequent confusion and frustration.

I am assured that my doubts on this score are unnecessary and that the wording of the second draft resolution makes possible the use, for instance, of the United Nations, especially the use of UNEF, for the pacification purposes mentioned by both the representative of the United States and myself in our interventions in this debate on 28 January, and to which he referred again at our meeting this morning. I hope that this can be done, and I have been strengthened in that hope by the statement which we heard from Mr. Lodge this morning.

That statement seems to me to strengthen the validity of the interpretation which we give to the words of the draft resolution, the aim of which we have wholeheartedly approved from the beginning, but the wording of which, in one or two places, has raised some doubts as to its exact meaning.

I assume, for instance, and I hope that my assumption is correct, that the scrupulous observance of the 1949 Armistice Agreement which is called for in paragraph 2 of the second draft resolution, requires the two Governments concerned to refrain from all acts of hostility, including the exercise by either party of any claim to belligerent rights, specifically in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran. My assumption on this

point seems to me to be supported by the language of paragraphs 27 and 28 of the Secretary-General's report (A/3512), which refers to certain measures that should be carried out -- and which, under paragraph 4 of this draft resolution, the Secretary-General is requested by this Assembly to carry out.

In regard to paragraph 3 of the second draft resolution, I take it that the word "other" in the phrase "the implementation of other measures" does not mean the exclusion of UNEF from these other measures by the fact that, under the preceding part of the paragraph, it is to be placed on the demarcation line. I also assume that the words "in the area" at the end of this paragraph include the Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza areas as well as the area of the demarcation line.

These may seem small points, but many an important resolution -- and this is a vitally important resolution -- has been ruined by subsequent differences of interpretation and meaning of points which seemed to be small but turned out to be very large indeed, and very ambiguous.

I think it is especially necessary that there should be no doubt about the meaning of this resolution because if and when it is passed it becomes the Secretary-General's "Bible" as he undertakes the duties based on it.

Our attitude to resolution II, then, has been conditioned by the interpretation I have given above and we think this is a reasonable and acceptable interpretation. The actual authority given the Secretary-General to carry out the provisions of this resolution is to be found in paragraph 4 where he is requested to take steps to carry out the measures which are in his report, which has been before us for some time. In other words, he is to implement his report on the basis of this resolution. It seems to me desirable therefore to recall the measures which are to be carried out by him, because they will be his responsibility.

It seems to me that a careful reading of this report indicates that these measures -- some of them would perhaps appear to be conclusions rather than measures -- include the following:

First, full respect for, full implementation of and a reaffirmation of the Armistice Agreement of 1949 which remains in force and the first article of which assimilates the agreement to a non-aggression pact providing for mutual and full abstention from belligerent acts;

Second, the restoration of the legal position of control in the Gaza Strip and the recognition that any change in this position -- a position which has practical and humanitarian as well as legal aspects -- can only be brought about through a settlement between the parties. The Secretary-General

recognizes that the deployment of the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza on any wider basis than its deployment along the Armistice line in the Sinai Peninsula would require the consent of Egypt under the Armistice Agreement. He also points out, however, in his report -- and I quote from that report -- that "the development of the situation in Gaza may require special attention and may impose added responsibilities on the United Nations" in particular in regard to refugees.

The third measure from this report is the deployment of UNEF on both sides of the demarcation line, to prevent incursions and raids across that line.

Fourth, El Auja to be demilitarized in accordance with the Armistice Agreement and Israeli and Egyptian forces not to take positions in contravention of that agreement;

Fifth, the assumption by the Emergency Force of the supervisory duties of the Truce Supervisory Organization;

Sixth, formal assurance from the parties concerned to desist from raids and to take active measures to prevent incursions;

Seventh, pending determination of the legal position of these waters, innocent passage through the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba in accordance with the recognized rules of international law, which passage is not to be interfered with by the exercise of any claim to belligerent rights;

The eighth and final measure which I have drawn from the report is that Israeli troops, on their withdrawal from the Sharm el-Sheikh area are to be followed by UNEF in the same way as in other parts of Sinai. The Force is not to be deployed there, as the Secretary-General points out, in such a way as to protect any special position on controversial questions, although, at least transitionally, it may function -- or special United Nations observers may function -- in support, and only in support, of mutual restraint and in maintaining quiet.

In these resolutions we are giving the United Nations Emergency Force very important functions in the pacification of the area. Perhaps it is already authorized to perform many of these functions. I agree, for instance, with the representative of Australia that in accepting the Secretary-General's second report on the establishment of the Emergency Force we have already, and with the consent of the Government of Egypt, authorized the Force to help maintain quiet after the withdrawal of non-Egyptian troops and to secure compliance with the other terms of the resolution of 2 November 1956. Whether the new functions we are suggesting require, in whole or in part, a new resolution of the Assembly is perhaps not very important now because such a resolution is before us, which is designed to remove any doubts on this score. In so far as is necessary, new arrangements will have to be worked out by agreement with Egypt and with Israel.

In this connexion, the scope and the nature of Egypt's earlier consent was brought up yesterday by the representative of Australia and referred to by more than one speaker this afternoon. On that point the Secretary-General made, I think, an important clarification yesterday when he said: "To all the extent that movements of the United Nations Force are supposed to follow from the duties of the Force in relation to the cease-fire and withdrawal, the matter ... has been regarded as non-controversial as it is covered by Egypt's general consent while, on the other hand, as regards activities of the United Nations Force which would extend beyond what is covered by this consent, an additional consent has been considered necessary."

The Secretary-General also said that whatever may be the legal situation under the Charter regarding consent, "in practice, the consent must obviously be qualified in such a way as to provide a reasonable basis for the operation of the United Nations Force."

I am satisfied myself that the United Nations Force, which has already operated effectively and non-controversially and has given us hope for the future role of the United Nations in the supervision of peace can, if it is given the opportunity and the authority, conduct these new peace supervision operations equally effectively. Absurd suspicions have been cast on this Force by the representative of the Soviet Union and by the representative of Bulgaria, I think it was, this afternoon; absurd suspicions were cast on this Force as an agency for the return of colonialism in a new form to this area. All I can say in this connexion is that the Force is under the control not of any one Power, either here in this Assembly or on the spot, but it is under the control of the United Nations and that it is a Force consisting of important elements from those well-known "colonial Powers" India, Indonesia, Yugoslavia and Finland.

When doubts about this Force are expressed by the countries of the Middle East, I accept the honesty of their doubts although I do not believe that they are justified. I can assure them that as far as our Delegation is concerned -- and I am sure that it is true of practically all other delegations that have supported this Force -- we have never at any time conceived of this Force as anything which could remotely be called an occupation force. It is not a national army or a collection of national contingents; it is an emergency force from the United Nations composed of units from countries -- the smaller countries -- of diverse backgrounds and policies, which is not in a position to enforce its will on any country, nor has it the power to do so under the Charter if it so desired. As a member of our Delegation said last December in his statement in the General Assembly, the United Nations Emergency Force is not an instrument for enforcing a settlement but it can be an instrument to assist in establishing conditions in the area which would be of benefit to both the parties concerned and advantageous to peace and security.

Its peaceful purpose was to assist in the withdrawal of invading forces. We think it can also be used to assist in the maintenance of the Armistice on which both parties have agreed. And I do not see how this function of the United Nations Emergency Force could possibly be considered as one of occupation in any way, shape or form.

Let us not be confused and misled by semantics, either exaggerating or unduly limiting the value and the functions of this Force. Our United Nations Force is in being. It is operating effectively now under the blue flag of peace of the United Nations. It is no threat to the sovereignty of any nation and, whatever we may say here in debate, it expects -- and I feel sure that it will receive -- the co-operation of the peoples and the Governments in the countries in which it operates for one purpose only: the prevention of conflict and the creation of an atmosphere which will make possible a peace settlement.

This Force can do a great new work for peace in the area if we give it the chance. I hope, in spite of the doubts that I have expressed about its ambiguous wording in one or two places and in spite of conflicting views about its meaning, that this draft resolution will give the United Nations and its Emergency Force that chance.

Such a hope will only be realized, however, if, first, Israel forces are withdrawn and, secondly, if we back up the Secretary-General firmly and constructively in the task we are giving him, a task which I know he will undertake with the energy, sincerity and devotion he has already shown. If we do this, then we can be sure, I think, that the Secretary-General will use the authority we are now giving him and through the Force for peace which we have created ourselves, in a way which will bring about better conditions of security in the area than have existed in the troublous and unhappy past, and thereby make an indispensable contribution to the peaceful and just political settlement which must come.

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