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Middle East

Meeting of Advisory Committee on UNEF

15 May 57

CONFIDENTIAL

No. 1 - Mr. Hammarskjöld

Meeting of the Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, 15 May 1957,
at Headquarters, New York.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Gentlemen, I invited you to this meeting mainly in order to inform you about further developments concerning the various steps in the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions which we have discussed at previous meetings.

One part of this report is very simple: So far I have not received any reply to any of the letters that were sent to Cairo or Jerusalem. I hope, however, that it will not be too long before I get a reaction from Cairo on the questions concerning so-called belligerency. The reason for this hope is not only that I believe that it is their general plan, but also that about a fortnight ago Dr. Fawzi indicated that as soon as he had the Suez trouble behind him he would like to revert to these various letters and send me a reply, or at least to bring them up for discussion for a reply. On the Israeli side, there has been no indication at all of any step in that direction. I take it that there are theories that, to quote statements to the Press here, both in time and in substance they are questions of priority. I quote, of course, without for that reason endorsing it.

The question which, however, certainly requires some consideration is where we stand on deployment on the two sides of the Armistice Demarcation Line -- a question which has attracted so much attention in this Committee and which, of course, is rather central to the future of UNEF. That question, in turn, has been very closely linked up with my recent visit to Jerusalem.

You will remember that at the previous meeting I mentioned to you that I had written a private letter to Mr. Ben-Gurion in which attention was drawn to this question and to the question of implementation of the Armistice Agreement. At that time it was felt that this Committee could not take any further step or had no reason for further consideration until we saw Mr. Ben-Gurion's reaction to that letter. No such reaction had come when I left for Geneva, and for that reason there was no possibility of having renewed discussion in this Committee.

I should now like to quote to you the relevant paragraphs in the letters which I mentioned earlier, as well as the relevant paragraphs of the reply which I received; also from the ensuing correspondence because, in fact, the first letter gave rise to the correspondence concerning the assumptions on which talks could be taken up in Jerusalem.

In the first letter, dated 19 April, I wrote to Mr. Ben-Gurion, in part, as follows:

"I am under the obligation in relation to the General Assembly to do all I possibly can for the implementation of the Armistice Agreement and for a deployment of the UNEF on the Armistice Demarcation Line. Having an opportunity to do so, it would, therefore, be my duty to discuss personally with you these matters which I have already raised in letters to the Prime Minister of 29 March and 1 April. It is, however, obviously for you to decide whether you consider a visit for that purpose at the present time useful. If that would be the case, I would readily come for talks about the subjects mentioned. If not, neither Israel or the UN would gain anything by a visit to Jerusalem, which public opinion would come to regard as a failure.

"Were you to consider the approach to which I thus am professionally obligated, as of little or doubtful value in the present circumstances, there still remains the broader question between you and me, which I referred to above." -- that is, the question of what can be done in order to pave the way for more constructive development. -- "If it were to be discussed, the new talks would be directly linked up with our meetings last July."

In reply, I received a letter dated 28 April. I quote the following paragraphs:

"I shall of course be happy to see you here after your stay in Geneva. But frankness to you personally and in your capacity as representative of the United Nations obliges me to tell you quite clearly that our discussion will not touch upon the two questions of detail mentioned in your letter." -- that is to day, the implementation of the Armistice Agreement and the question of deployment on both sides of the Armistice Demarcation Line -- "I am, of course, aware of the recommendations of the General Assembly in recent months, but these were preceded by the Security Council decision of 1951, which was directed against Egypt's interference with Israeli's shipping in the Suez Canal. Prior to and above even that decision is the Charter of the United Nations, which binds all its members to settle their disputes by peaceful means. For nine years Egypt has in its relations with Israel violated the United Nations Charter, defying the Security Council, and playing the leading part in the Arab boycott and blockade of Israel. Hence

the essential, basic and inescapable issue remains whether Egypt will put an end to the state of war which it continues to maintain against us, and particularly terminate its blockade of Israel shipping and commerce, and abandon the dispatch of 'fedayeen' gangs into our country.

"Now that I have told you all this with complete frankness, I hope that you will come here, for I am certain that there are things that you have to tell and explain to me, and perhaps I too may have something to tell you." To that letter, I replied on 3 May. I quote the following paragraphs:

"You state that 'our discussions will not touch upon the two questions of detail' mentioned in my last letter, which is wording that appears to be quite definitive. However, the first of these questions is the continued validity and implementation of the Armistice Agreement, and the other one is basic to the United Nations efforts in the area, and, in particular, to the effectiveness of the United Nations Emergency Force as conceived by the General Assembly and the contributing governments. Both of the two questions are covered by requests from the General Assembly, for the implementation of which I have 'to do all I possibly can'.

"As suggested in my letter to you of 19 April, it was for you to decide whether you would consider a visit by me at the present time likely to prove useful for a discussion of the two issues mentioned. It seems obvious from your reply that you do not find that to be the case. I can reach no other conclusion from what you have said. Even so, however, I agree with you that a visit might prove helpful.

"On the other hand, your observations on the two issues may be read as implying a considered refusal to meet the requests of the General Assembly. If that would be correct, a visit by me now might carry the implication that I accept from you a negative reply, which, in turn, could be interpreted as closing the matter. You will fully realize that, as Secretary-General, I would have no right to do this. I hope that you will also see that as one deeply interested in peaceful progress, irrespective of my professional obligations, I could not find very promising a discussion on 'whether there is a chance of peace in the Middle East' if it had to rest on the assumptions that the armistice regime, as based on the agreement, is no longer valid and that co-operation in support of the UNEF is rejected.

"Interpreting your letter and my obligations as I do here, I will be glad to visit Jerusalem for the wider purpose you have indicated, which is in line with my own suggestion. If it must be assumed that during this visit we are not likely to get very far on the two General Assembly requests, I agree with you that there would still be scope for a joint exploration of the issue of peace in the Middle East. In my view, however, this could be fruitful only provided the requests of the General Assembly are recognized as having undiminished validity and as aiming at measures which require further consideration by you and for the implementation of which I must continue to work."

To this letter, I received a reply dated the very next day, 4 May:

"I must, however, again make it quite clear that I shall not be prepared to discuss either verbally or in writing the two questions raised in your previous letter. By doing so I would be countenancing the double standard to which I have already referred and which has in the past been adopted in regard to Israel and Egypt respectively. Before entering into any such discussion I would first have to know from you and the relevant UN bodies that the implementation by Egypt of her obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of the Security Council was assured. These obligations have priority both in time and relative weight to the recommendations of the recent General Assembly and in my view are of more vital importance to peace in the Middle East.

"I have, of course, no right to lay down the procedure which you should adopt in talks with myself or anyone else and I do not presume to do so. At the same time I am sure that you would not claim to prescribe what procedure should be adopted by me. It follows that in your visit here we can discuss only those matters, the discussion of which is agreed upon by both of us. The two items referred to in your first letter do not fall within this category and can under no circumstances come within the ambit of our conversations."

In reply to this letter, I sent an oral message which reads as follows:

"I gratefully acknowledge receipt of your letter of 4 May. In the light of our reply, I wish to confirm our travel plans as tentatively indicated in my own last letter to you. Colonel Leary will inform you of the details.

"I note what you say in your letter concerning the two requests of the General Assembly. However, as you do not comment on the assumptions on which I go to Jerusalem, I conclude that these assumptions are fully understood and noted."

As you see, I thus had to face a refusal of the Government of Israel even to discuss the items I had mentioned as flowing directly from the decisions of the General Assembly, that is to say, the implementation of the General Armistice Agreement and deployment on both sides.

What I could do in this situation, since I did consider that the contact was essential in order to straighten a few things out, was of course to see to it that my going to Jerusalem could not be interpreted as in any way weakening the requests of the General Assembly. As you see, that was done, I think, with sufficient clarity. In the talks the two matters were not raised at the table. However, of course the matters were mentioned, and had to be mentioned, privately. I do not feel entitled to go into what happened in private discussions, but there is one point to which I have to refer.

I mentioned both privately and in the official meetings that sooner or later I would have to go on record with the positions of the two Governments concerned to the resolution of the General Assembly. Given this situation, how would I put on record the stand of Israel? Should I in such circumstances conclude and say that for the time being Israel did not wish to follow the requests, or what should I say? The reply was that I could not say that -- I could not say anything more than was in the letters -- that for the time being they refused to discuss it. I said that in such circumstances it seemed to me that the proper way of giving an account of the situation, if an account had to be given, would be the publication of the correspondence, because that did not add anything on either side. I also had interests to safeguard, which were not mine but those of the General Assembly and those of the Organization, quite aside from the general interests which the matters had in their own right.

Mr. Ben-Gurion had, in the course of those discussions, nothing against the publication of the letters; on the contrary. However, I feel that this is a matter which must be further considered and explored. I do not believe that any of us is very keen on getting somewhat uncontrollable newspaper analyses of these letters, which in themselves are very professional in the sense that they do require professional interpretation in order to arrive at the right conclusions. I have absolutely nothing against the publication of the correspondence and I myself consider it in a certain situation as being the cleanest way out. There is, for the time being, not only no opposition from Mr. Ben-Gurion to the matter, but even a certain wish to get it on record. However, as I said -- and I repeat it -- I think that this is a matter which on both sides and jointly does deserve some further consideration before any final decision is reached. If the Israel Government should insist on publication, I would consider it as a matter of course and accept it. The problem is from the UN side, whether we have any reason to take a similar stand in which case the Israel Government would have to follow suit.

This is in fact all that can be said about the question of deployment and implementation of the Armistice Agreement for the present. I think it is in a sense quite eloquent as an illustration of the problems which we are facing. Therefore, there are two very minor questions, to which we may revert later on -- the question of the famous fence and the question of the rights of UNEF along the Armistice Demarcation Line. On the main issue, this is what I have to tell you for the moment.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): I think, Sir, in the state of affairs described, it would be highly inadvisable to publish the documents, because it would not help understanding but would only create a little more tension for the simple reason that, as you rightly said, they must be professionally interpreted in a certain way. Publicity may not be in the way in which you and I would expect it to be, and lots of inferences may be drawn. It would probably give the impression that the whole chapter is closed, and it would only stiffen the attitude on the other side too. In those circumstances, it is my considered view that publication at this stage, at any rate, would be undesirable, unless of course Mr. Ben-Gurion himself wants to publish them and let the world know his attitude.

It is unfortunate that on the very important question of deployment of forces not much headway has been made. I do not know whether much purpose is served in retaining the UN forces if that is so. I suppose a purpose is served, but I wonder whether any effective purpose is served if we cannot have the forces deployed in the manner called for by the resolution of the Assembly. That is a matter which should give us a great deal of concern. I am sorry that the Israel Government was unco-operative in that direction. With regard to the implementation of the Armistice Agreement, yes, that is an important thing, but with regard to the immediate objective, that there should be a negative attitude is something which I think should give us a great deal of concern.

Possibly apart from official correspondence there are the impressions which the Secretary-General must have gained. You are not free for reasons of confidence -- confidential talks are not meant to be divulged -- but I think it would be a good thing for us to know your general impressions, whether you consider it worthwhile pursuing it in this way, or what we might do, without giving any details of the conversations.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I intended later to get back to that in general terms. I have no hesitation in saying that experience proved that it was very well advised to go. It was, as I said to the Press, most useful and most satisfying, although in other respects we must examine the practical steps that can be taken. I might explain later why I feel that this proved to be the right thing to do. But with your permission, I think that perhaps we should concentrate on the concrete problem before us, because there I've covered the ground fully in what I said in referring to their comments on these letters and on the two points.

Mr. LALL (India): Mr. Secretary-General, thank you very much for your remarks on your talks in Israel, which, from the point of view which directly concerns this Committee, were not particularly fruitful. But behind these talks and behind the specific points in resolution 461 is the actual factual situation (1) in Gaza, (2) along the rest of the Demarcation Line, and (3) in Aqaba, in the Straits. I think it would help us considerably, therefore, if we could be given a brief rundown of the situation on these three points. Because one way of looking at this is that though there is very limited implementation of the General Assembly resolutions in one sense, in another sense if the situation at

these three points is distinctly an improvement over the pre-October 1956 position and in fact is a de facto peaceful situation, then there has been an achievement. It would be very nice if we could be given a rundown on these three facts of the situation.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I can do it very briefly, and I would ask Dr. Bunche later on to complete the picture if there is anything to be said.

There are no new developments on the Gaza side. I think the situation as described earlier to you still prevails. I would add, and I think this is an important element, that there is no basic concern in Israel about it. Of course the criticism of the Gaza policy remains. But that is one thing. Another thing is whether they really feel that things are going wrong. For the time being they do not; that is to say, we have in fact pacification around Gaza which makes that a minor issue in discussions -- a minor issue not politically but practically.

Along the Armistice Demarcation Line there is nothing -- absolutely no observation to make in general.

As regards Aqaba the situation is unchanged. In all modesty, some kind of traffic is trickling both ways. The UNEF troops are sitting at Sharm-el Sheikh. The question has not been raised by the Egyptians. Nothing has happened to that traffic whether it goes to Elath or whether it carries this or that kind of cargo. That is to say, after two months we still have the de facto situation which really was the one envisaged in the basic report on the Aqaba situation.

That does not, of course, in any way mean that things may not change, but for the time being what is true of Gaza is true here. The situation is peaceful. I would not say with the same assurance that there is for the moment no feeling of concern about Aqaba, as I stated about Gaza, because the unknowns in the Aqaba situation are of a different character and potentially more far-reaching than they are in the Gaza situation, short of a rather unlikely switch in Egyptian policy.

Mr. BUNCHE: That is certainly the true picture. On Gaza and the Armistice Demarcation Line, the sort of reports we now get are typified by the one we received this morning: "An Israeli patrol fired at two cows grazing on the Eastern side of the Armistice Demarcation Line and it is reported that the animals were unhurt."

Just to supplement what the Secretary-General said, last Friday afternoon in Jerusalem I had a talk with three members of the Foreign Office, and they all confirmed that the situation was very quiet along the Gaza front, that there had been no major incidents of any kind, that this was a period of calm, free of tension.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think there is a definite chance to preserve that state of affairs. I don't see any immediate threat to it from either side. The concern I feel, and strongly, about this deployment matter is of course that the very fact of one-sided deployment may, at a certain stage, with the usual dynamism of politics be the starting point for at least a discussion ending up in a change of policy.

Mr. LALL (India) There is a day-to-day maintenance of the de facto situation.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: More than that -- it is a situation where, as I said, short of something which provokes a change of policy on either side, I don't see any reason why there should be a break-down.

Mr. LALL (India): Well that is something.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): The de facto situation is satisfactory.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. BUNCHE: But not on a day-to-day basis because there is no feeling of day-to-day insecurity about it.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is definitely better than that, but it is not the feeling of safety which led me to say that we could turn our backs on it. That is another matter, because there is always the possibility, of course, of a switch of basic policy for some reason. I don't see the reason now. I leave that to the political imagination of my friends around the table.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): I would say that in the Gulf of Aqaba the situation cannot be described as equally satisfactory.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is quite satisfactory de facto, but that is of a different character. After all, the Gaza situation is one where we know very well these elements, the interests involved and the possible risks. The other question is much more of a purely political one, where for that reason we have a curious de facto situation with a basic conflict between the views held on both sides, which does not exist in the case of Gaza. Of course, it may be shaken by a manifestation of either one of the two sides, which we know only too well, the too much propagandized passage of interesting cargoes to Elath, on the one side, or, on the other, by the Egyptians which may use whatever means they have to interfere with the traffic which is going on. I think I make myself clear by saying that there is no basic contradiction between the two stands as to Gaza, and that is why I feel we can look at it the way I indicated, while there is, as we well know, a basic contradiction as to Aqaba. For how long the basic contradiction can be kept under a lid, is of course always a problem. There is no indication at all of a change on either side. I can say, as I said before, the very fact that there hasn't been a word said by the Egyptians concerning the continued presence of our troops in Sharm-el Sheikh is a sufficient indication that there is no political debate in Egypt concerning that issue. But that does not give, on a longer perspective, the same kind of feeling which I think we are entitled to have in the case of Gaza.

Mr. LALL (India): Did the question of adjudication of the Aqaba position not come up at all?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: No, it did not. But as this discussion, so to speak, is a little bit stuck, it may be the right moment to go a bit further into the story of the Jerusalem talks.

The most striking fact is that it did not even prove a problem to re-establish an atmosphere of, I would even say, mutual trust on the top level in spite of the basic and sharp difference of views held on quite a few issues. For that reason, while all the wounds remain they are no longer infected. You see what I mean. That is, with a man of the type and character of Mr. Ben-Gurion, this is essential because if he feels that he does not understand why reactions are what they are, and for that reason suspects wider motives or undue influences, the possibility of reaching whatever results are possible is reduced and a dangerous added element of distrust is introduced. On the other hand, if Mr. Ben-Gurion feels that he understands the arguments and why action has been taken, for that reason, although he may disapprove of the basic analysis and disapprove of the conclusions, he does not hesitate in his trust, so to say, as to the purity of the motives and the consistency of the line held -- even if we live in a slightly different world. These few meetings of a sum total of about ten hours or so certainly achieved this latter state of affairs. I left with the feeling that with the divergences being what they are, there was no sense of anything being, so to say, emotionally or politically wrong. It was just a clean case of different attitudes explained by different backgrounds and different views as to the character of the situation and as to the best means to handle that situation. In this respect, I felt that it was extremely useful because it brought us out of that somewhat sickly atmosphere in which these matters have been discussed for six months.

I should like to add that -- and this may surprise you, but I think it is worth putting on record -- the reception was one which I cannot characterize as anything less than "warm". That too, I must say, certainly means that the body politic is a little bit less sick than it was.

Mr. BUNCHE: I would add two or three comments in support of that. I think that there were three particularly significant and impressive aspects of the visit:

One has been mentioned, and I would put it in this form: the contrast between the tone of Mr. Ben-Gurion's second letter, which was cold and even uninviting, and the reception received from the very beginning on our arrival in Jerusalem, in which the Foreign Minister wholeheartedly participated.

Secondly, as an observer of what was happening in the official talks and watching the by-play across the table, the strikingly obvious high regard -- I think one might even say fondness -- that characterized Mr. Ben-Gurion's attitude towards the Secretary-General. This, perhaps, was the most interesting aspect of all in the talks.

Thirdly, the attitude of the public, quite apart from the change in the attitude in the press. After each meeting a crowd gathered. It was not a huge crowd, but they were always congregated across the street from the Prime Minister's office building and from his home at the time of the reception, waiting for the meetings to end. On each such occasion there was spontaneous applause as the Secretary-General came out. There was no single incident or any hostile manifestation of any kind. There was always very warm applause, which seemed to indicate that the press propaganda had not registered with that segment of the population. So it certainly was a very warm reception in all respects from the officials, from the press, whose tone changed very markedly -- the local press, that is -- and from the population.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Any way, it provides the proper setting for consideration of the question I raised when I said that I feel one should give a second thought to any noises being made at all, while on the other hand I do feel that if Mr. Ben-Gurion should say that he wants to have this correspondence published, I would reply, "Yes, of course."

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): In the light of this information, I am all the more convinced that the correspondence should not be published. From our experience in politics it would seem they appear to be quite unconcerned about certain issues. You have had the experience of a feeling of warmth on their part and no desire to change the situation.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Short of what I said - that they require it. And they may require it for reasons very much of their own because a newspaper debate is one of considerable confusion, and it may be that Mr. Ben-Gurion would like to have on record what really was the scope and what was the basis. I would leave that to him.

My only concern on our side is that there is one point, with the deployment question being what it is, at which people may start wondering what really is happening. There is another question, and that is that if the Israelis were to insist on publication of the belligerency correspondence I feel that we must have some kind of equal treatment of the sides. These questions are so closely related that I do not consider it possible to put on public record what has happened in the discussion without giving a more complete picture of the whole operation in the implementation of the Assembly resolution. This latter question does not arise now because we are not there. There is no request for it. The first question depends very much on you and further, of course, on what kind of pressure is made to apply. I have not sensed any political pressures for an accounting on these matters so far.

Mr. ENGEN (Norway): With respect to the publication of these letters, if the Prime Minister desires to publish them, then it is up to him to decide what he wishes to do. The Secretary-General would then of course come into the picture.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: May I intervene and say that on that point I have already said in Jerusalem "as a matter of course you do not need any authorization. If you desire to do it, I have everything written from my side. I am perfectly willing to have the correspondence published. I just want to know what you want to do."

Mr. ENGEN (Norway): In that connexion I would also hold that the Secretary-General would have the right and the complete discretion to make any supplementary publications of correspondence.

Mr. LALL (India): The real problem about publication of these letters is another one in my opinion. After all, you went to Israel after the letters had been written and there were some developments in your talks in Israel which are not reflected in the present letters which would be published. So the real sadness, I would say, in the publication of this story to the last word of the last letter is that it stops short of what really happened. That is the real story and the psychological disadvantage of publication, in my opinion. I would have thought, considering the warmth we have heard about from the Israel side, that Mr. Ben-Gurion might have two views now about publication.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would not be surprised. You see, the real snag in it from his angle and from our angle is the same one. It is this question of deployment because deployment on the Israeli side obviously is considered likely to develop into a very complicated question in domestic politics just as, on the other hand, the lack of deployment on the Israeli side certainly does present us with what is politically a very serious problem because of the implied threat against the sound development of the UNEF. If Mr. Ben-Gurion wishes publication, it is certainly only because he wants to make it clear that he safeguarded their position. In the same sense, I must make it clear that our position is fully safeguarded.

Mr. de FREITAS-VALLE (Brazil): May I suggest, Mr. Secretary-General, that you could give authorization to make publication of the letters simultaneously. In that case they might be published here with a statement from you or with an explanatory preliminary note about what the letters meant. I think that would complete it a little bit and it would not be just a cold impression that the letters would give. Thus there would be no impression that the talks had not been fruitful -- not as fruitful as we wished but that they had been fruitful.

If the letters were simply published, it could give the impression that nothing was arrived at.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I quite agree. In fact, I think I indicated it, but I would like to mention it again so that you are perfectly clear on how we stand, with the feeling I had and in the somewhat inconclusive way in which the talks on this point ended. Now this last stage was on Mr. Ben-Gurion's initiative. I felt that the right thing to do was to take it up with the delegation here and ask them to check with Jerusalem on what their stand was on afterthought; the matter is in fact under discussion. That opens the door to what you say, that if they were to feel the need for publication from their angle, there is the possibility to propose some kind of covering memorandum or what-not, which puts it in the right perspective.

Mr. de FREITAS-VALLE (Brazil): May I add also: simultaneous publication.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Yes, that is a matter of course.

Mr. de FREITAS-VALLE (Brazil): That should be done so as not to give the impression that it was published by Israel only. I think it would be important that there should be simultaneous publication.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: That is understood. It would never be done one-sidedly, and never be done so as to give the impression of anyone's challenging the other one. If there is publication, it would be perfectly clear that publication would be agreed upon by both sides.

Mr. MACKAY (Canada): Mr. Secretary-General, I certainly agree with the general view which seems to have been expressed that deliberate publication on the part of the United Nations would at this time be undesirable. It would seem to me that it would do no particular good and might do some harm, perhaps stiffening attitudes on the other side. It is desirable to avoid publication if we can. Of course, as you pointed out, it depends, for the time being, on the attitude of the Israel Government.

Mr. AHMED (Pakistan): In support of Mr. Mackay, may I also say that the question of publication of correspondence might be considered in this way: as to whether the publication is intended to score a point or to further a cause. It seems to me that, as the Secretary-General remarked, there is no political debate on this question at the moment. It is dormant. Whether we might set off a debate which might worsen the general situation is a point which I think this Committee should consider before deciding on publication. Of course, if Israel publishes the letters we cannot help it, in which case of course we should also be prepared to present our side of the case in a covering memorandum, or some such means, in the correct light. I think that from this point one would have to consider that it is obvious that things cannot be left where they are. If publication is not decided upon, we must consider whether anything else is possible.

At the last meeting there were three or four suggestions, if I remember correctly. One was that Members of the General Assembly might be informed in some form or other that the resolution of the General Assembly is not being properly implemented by the Israel Government. I think the other suggestion was that the participating Governments might -- they will have to face their legislatures before long; in the case of the Scandinavian countries it will most certainly be in the next few weeks or so; in the case of others there may be debates -- be informed of the situation as it has developed. After all, they cannot be expected to keep their forces in that area indefinitely and a refusal of the Israeli Government to appreciate the strategic situation as it obtains, if there is no deployment on the Israeli side, means that the forces may have to be kept there much longer than was visualized by anybody at the moment. Therefore, I think that the participating Governments -- all of them are not represented on this Committee -- should certainly be informed, and they might themselves wish to clarify the position either in their legislatures or by some other means to their own publics, saying "Well, the position is developing in which our forces may have to be kept much longer than we anticipated." Finally, I think there was an idea put forward last time which is worth considering again: that Governments which are friendly to Israel or in some kind of

diplomatic relationship with Israel might wish to exert a certain amount of informal pressure on that Government with a view to seeing whether they will go a little further than they have so far with the Secretary-General. I do not think they will, but at any rate it may be worth trying. In any case, I do not think that matters should be left absolutely where they are -- that is to say, that we do nothing at all about it. I do not think that would be correct.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I should like to say by way of clarification that the difficulty of course is that any way of characterizing the present Israel stand on deployment which differs from the very wording of the letters is directly unacceptable. It is a rather subtle nuance. They do not say they do not accept it for the present; they say, they do not wish to discuss it for the present.

Mr. AHMED (Pakistan): Is not the effect the same?

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): It is relative.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I said that there was some subtlety in it. It is a Government which, speaking for itself, has chosen this wording. I have no right to express it in any other way if they do not accept my expressing it in another way; a paraphrase is impossible from our side. This gives rise to the whole question of the correspondence, because I have not read to you the paragraphs which were irrelevant. I must say that that gives a little bit harsher impression of the total because the other paragraphs are concerned with long-time matters which I may revert to later on. I may perhaps do it now in order to correct what may have given, on afterthought, a false impression. I stress the fact that there was a change if not of atmosphere, at least of the degree of trust and understanding which is of course the basic fact in this kind of discussion. I say that that was quite possible even with considerable divergences of view as to substance or policies. What I would like to say is that this later reservation as to divergences of views refers in fact mainly to the past. When we come to the question of what may be fruitful ways forward -- not in detail but in broad outlines -- I would not like to give you the impression that there is any basic difference of views. There is not in fact, and I would not say that

there is more of a difference of views between Jerusalem and myself or between Mr. Ben-Gurion and myself than there has proved to be between Cairo and myself on this score. The difficulty refers mainly to the past and to what are more the technical issues for the future. I want to avoid the impression that there is a sweeping disagreement, that we do not see eye to eye. That is not the case.

Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon): With regard to the position of participating Governments, I think that that is a matter which can be rectified in a different way short of the publication of the documents. The Secretary-General himself, in his usual tactful way, may send a confidential memorandum setting out the position to the participating Governments. If the documents are available, and if they were not to be treated in a confidential way, it might give the world a different impression of the situation. In the circumstances, I would suggest that the Secretary-General, without publishing the documents, could inform the participating Governments of the situation. As for the General Assembly, that is a matter to be taken up. This is not the moment for us to decide what kind of report should be submitted to the General Assembly. There should be a little more time and we should be more patient with regard to that aspect of it.

Mr. MACKAY (Canada): I am inclined to agree with the Pakistani view that perhaps the participating Governments not represented here must be informed about this. On the other hand, I am inclined to feel that we should accept the Israel position that they do not want to discuss the matter now as not being an Israel denial and not an Israel refusal to accept ultimately the force on their side of the demarcation line. For that reason, I would feel that perhaps it is undesirable to indicate publicly in any way that there is any refusal or give the public any chance of thinking there is a complete refusal. That is perhaps the reason for not pressing it too strongly at the moment.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: The reaction which you had corresponds very closely to my own personal feelings about this matter. I do not consider this to be the moment to introduce any new elements publicly into the picture at all if it can be avoided. There is a good effect also on public opinion of this visit to Jerusalem. There is no reason to confuse the issue by things which are, on the whole, rather professional and that have to be read in a professional way.

I want to repeat what I said at the beginning that the question for me personally is at present reduced to two problems: do the Israelis want it? Well, then, the reply is obvious. On the other hand, is there serious pressure for information on what really has happened to these General Assembly initiatives? I think the reply here is quite obvious: that you do not feel that there is any such pressure as would cause us to take this step. What then remains is the concern which we all must share, that the lack of deployment on the other side gives rise to developments which are very difficult to handle. We are not there yet but that may happen.

That leads to the other two questions which I think could be mentioned on this occasion.

I should not like to go into them in any detail, but I think they should be on record as it is our ambition to see to it that you are au courant with the major developments: the question of shooting and the right of the UNEF to use force to prevent incursions. There is now, you will remember, the question which was put to the Government of Israel. It was put in a letter some time ago which was then at that stage discussed within this Committee. We have now received a reply dated 6 May which in the relevant part reads as follows:

"The Government of Israel recognizes the competence of the United Nations Emergency Force to open fire on persons who enter from Israel territory into the UNEF security zone established along the Gaza side of the UNEF lines when such persons do not halt on being challenged by UNEF patrols."

"The above declaration is made on the basis of the information given by the Secretary-General that such authority will also be exercised by UNEF with respect to persons entering into the UNEF security zone from the direction of Gaza."

The last point is obviously just a reference to the necessity of reciprocity.

By way of comment, I should like to emphasize only one thing. They do not say persons who enter from Israel territory across the armistice demarcation line. They say "persons who enter from Israel territory into the UNEF security zone."

Mr. BUNCHE: This is a new expression.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: A completely new expression. In the second paragraph they use an expression in an even more remarkable way "entering into the UNEF security zone from the direction of Gaza". That is to say, they make a distinction between the security zone and Gaza territory. Nothing is further from the construction in the field. How can we suddenly establish a new demilitarized zone exclusively on the Egyptian side of the demarcation line?

As to the question of the fence, it emerged in the talks Mr. Bunche and I had with General Burns. What he had, so to say, planned, was a double fence with mines in between on the relevant parts of the demarcation line, along the general paths of the demarcation line but exclusively on the Egyptian side. If we want to be a little bit on the Cassandra side, I would say that the fact that we have no deployment on the Israel side of the demarcation line, that Israel in recognizing the authority of the UNEF to use force introduces the new notion of the UNEF security zone which is obviously separate from Gaza territory, and the fact that the discussion on the fence has been concerned exclusively with the fence on the Egyptian side does give me reason for worry because I think that if we place ourselves in the position of the Egyptian Government we can easily see that we may arrive at very negative conclusions.

Mr. AHMED (Pakistan): Is it the intention of the Israeli Government to go back on this point and explain it is not the security zone but the demarcation line?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: We have to follow up both with Egypt and with Israel. I wanted to mention it only for information. I think the situation is not ripe for any discussion because we do not have sufficient clarity about the stands on the respective sides. I just want to put on record where we are.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): I should like to comment on that. I agree with you that it is a very difficult situation. Fortunately, our UNEF troops have been understanding, but I was told by Mr. Angel that when he visited the demarcation line, UNEF personnel reported that some people from Israel had come to the line, and they asked their officer what could be done.

He said: "Throw stones at them. That is the only thing we can do." Of course, it is an impossible situation. I admire the work that General Burns has done there, but it is a miracle that the situation is not worse.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Now they have the right to shoot -- not in the daytime.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): The point is that they must wait until they are at the demarcation line when it is too late. I understand that the troops of several countries throw stones to prevent their coming across the demarcation line.

Mr. BUNCHE: It is interesting to note that the Israel communication does not limit the firing to night-time.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It also states the concept of a UNEF security zone.

Mr. CORDIER: You can't fire on them before they cross the line because you do not know if they are going to cross it.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It does show that, short of having a security zone on both sides, deployment on both sides, we will never reach a solution that makes real sense.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): The point is that it is very difficult for the soldiers there to understand the situation. I agree with you that the best thing is to be quiet and to do our best, but something must come before the Assembly to improve the situation. If not, we are going to get into trouble.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: For the moment, as I said, I think that you should be aware of this situation which certainly gives us a headache.

But as we have never yielded to the temptation to give up so far, I do not think we can do so now. I must say that there is an inherent absurdity in some of the combinations of facts here.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): But there is progress.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: We have not taken any step backwards so far; why should we drop the ball now?

Have we anything more to raise on this occasion?

Mr. BUNCHE: I merely wish to say that we have had another casualty from a road accident, a Canadian officer.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: But taking into account the fact that it had been a heavily-mined territory with 6,000 men there, I must say that even the number of accidents are very very small.

Mr. BUNCHE: From all causes we now have had nine deaths and five wounded.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: In the course of six months and with 6,000 men in the field -- and again all the mines have not been removed.

Mr. BUNCHE: Today is the fifteenth. We are in the seventh month now.

The meeting rose at 11.50 p.m.