

Mr. James Baker, Secretary of State, Mr. Boris Pankin, Foreign Minister

The Jordanian position is based on sound moral grounds, adhering to principle, adhering to provisions of international law, United Nations resolutions, international legitimacy and the guarantees of the five permanent members of the Security Council, particularly the two co-sponsors. We had hoped that this would induce a sense of balance especially since we emphasized the need to structure a negotiated settlement based on an institutionalized, legal framework. Instead, it appears as if time stood still as far as Israel is concerned. We had hoped and still do, that the spirit of Madrid would cause a change of heart and attitude leading to the development of a substantive position. What we heard, however, was in fact a further retreat into the old ideological molds, clearly designed to distract, worse, derail the process.

Sadly enough, what we heard was a reiteration of past positions, emphasizing yet another retrenchment, another retreat from the spirit of compromise. Positions clearly designed to obfuscate not only historical annals to fit a particular prejudice, but worse still to push the other side to climb behind the rigid ideological trenches it has been attempting to scale. Surely, the Israelis must have known that when they arrived in Palestine it was not an empty territory. It was inhabited by the ancestors of the Palestinians. Even then it was already called "the land of milk and honey."

It is not our aim now, nor has it been when we first outlined our position, to indulge in an historical debate. We too have our own vision of history and our tale to tell. And while there is soft elegance in our culture there is also fierce durability that even now has an opinion about the bold stand we have taken. We had hoped that we will get out of our past, not in the spirit of denying it - never - but in the hope of looking towards the future: a better, brighter future for the children of the region. We hoped that all the participants will capture the present historic moment, and live up to it, instead of a process of selective rewriting of history.

The core of the present Arab-Israeli conflict revolves around the occupied territories. To say that "...the issue is not territory" is a gross reduction of the truth. We have come here prepared to make peace within the context of a comprehensive and just peace settlement. The time has come for Israel to recognize the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people on their own territory, their ancestral homeland. No amount of denying the fact will make it disappear.

The negatives embodied in the Israeli address were in stark contrast to the willingness on the Arab side to negotiate an honorable settlement. Again Israel said: no to Palestinian self-determination, no to withdrawal from the West Bank, including Arab Jerusalem; no to withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, Jordanian territory as well as the Lebanese South. Bluntly and publicly Israel effectively declared its intention to maintain its illegal position and continue its settlement program.

We hoped that the time may have come for Israel to overcome the heavy burden of its past wounds and to follow a path leading towards a better future. Instead it continues to cling to yesterday, nursing its mental and physical wounds. We have avoided negativism as well as

code words designed to irritate, hoping to take a first step towards bridging the great divide. We had hoped to silence the call of the wild and the absolutist rhetoric.

We emphasized our vision of an honorable, durable and comprehensive peace with which we and our children can live with. We too need to look ourselves in the mirror with pride and we will. That is we based our position on 242 and 338 while we emphasized our recognition, even these were less than ultimate justice.

Jordan is irrevocably committed to the noble cause of peace and we stand ready now, as we have always been, to pay our fair share for its realization. But, let me say it again, we are not seeking peace at any price. Far from it. We are seeking justice, fairness and legality. Israel can have either land or peace, but it cannot have both. It can have the true security that comes from a negotiated political solution. Force alone will never provide security. Only when accepted by its neighbors, as part of the region, not merely in it.

Let me reiterate Jordan's position, which rests on the simple and valid principle of "land for peace." That is why we call on Israel to abide by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425 pertaining to the occupied territories, the Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanon. Israel's refusal to abide by these resolutions undermines the credibility of the world body and seriously raises the issue of asymmetry and double standard in applying international law. The Palestinians must have and exercise the right of self-determination on their own soil. That is why the immediate halting of the establishment of settlements is an essential prerequisite of a comprehensive regional settlement.

Not only Israel is in need of security, but every country in the region too. Considering the imbalance in the military equation, it becomes obvious that the Arab side is the part in more need of security guarantees.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have not come to Madrid, the venue of this historic international conference, simply to debate, discuss, or score points against each other. We came here with the intention of seriously considering the elements of a comprehensive peace settlement. Our approach remains constructive, and our faith and confidence in the seriousness and commitment of the co-sponsors is unshakable.

It may be very well that Israel wants peace, but it wants the Arabs alone to pay the price. Again we find it necessary to emphasize that the issue is territory: an exchange of land for peace that carries with it the promise of a brighter future going far beyond mere existence. In firmly and clearly calling for an honorable and lasting settlement, we had hoped to move the region from the past into a promising future. Instead we find that Israel still has both its feet firmly planted in the past.