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AGENDA ITEM 5

Questions considered by the Security Council at
its 838th meeting on 7 August 1958 (*con-
tinued*)

115. Mr. PICCIONI (Italy):⁴ At the stage we have reached in the current debate, I believe we can already draw some positive conclusions. However, before setting forth the views of the delegation of Italy in this respect, I should like to express our sincere satisfaction for the fact that these discussions have taken place and that the survey connected with the recent crisis in the Near East has been kept within the framework of the United Nations, as my Government has suggested and recommended since the very beginning of the crisis. I wish to specify that at no time has Italy favoured the choice of one or the other body of the United Nations or raised objections against any one of them. I will not dwell on the circumstances which have brought about the calling of this special session of the General Assembly, for they are indeed too well known. Here I merely wish to emphasize that, if the Italian delegation is taking part in the current debate, we do so without pretence, convinced as we are that, owing to the geographical position of our country as well as to the traditional relations which we maintain with the Near East, we are in a position to offer some suggestions which may prove to be useful and constructive.

116. I have followed closely the statements made by the speakers who have taken the rostrum before me. I have noted with interest and satisfaction that the constructive and positive approach, which we consistently held to be the only way to cope with the problem of the Near East, has here been supported by many distinguished representatives, including in the first place the President of the United States.

117. It is quite clear that the reason for which we are meeting here is the situation in Lebanon and in Jordan. I believe that on this point, as well as on the need to undertake adequate measures in respect of this situation, there is an apparently general agreement in this Assembly. We should not, however, stop at a superficial diagnosis of the illness and merely try to eliminate its exterior symptoms and be satisfied with that. This would mean to lose sight of the real nature of the illness and to fail in our task. I feel, on the contrary, that this Assembly should face the basic problems. These problems should at least be approached in a realistic way if we are to meet the expectations of our respective nations and of the world.

118. First of all, due consideration should be given to the fact that a situation has arisen in the Near East which carries the risk of spreading over the whole region and of endangering the peace. It should be admitted, as a matter of fact, that the prompt response of the United States and the United Kingdom to the appeals of Lebanon and Jordan has had a timely stop-gag effect.

⁴ Mr. Piccioni spoke in Italian. The English version of his statement was supplied by the delegation.

119. In the second place, it should be kept in mind that, in the absence of an adequate international machinery which could be put into action speedily to cope with situations of this nature, it would appear, to say the least, unreasonable to challenge the right of every State to seek appropriate means of defence when its integrity and independence are imperilled. Failure to recognize such a right would be tantamount to denying one of the essential attributes of sovereignty and thus denying one of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, a principle upon which international relations rest.

120. Until the rules which govern international relations have provided otherwise, this right plainly entails an independence of judgement on the part of each individual State. Although the merit of each case might be subject to scrutiny on the basis of the practical forms of implementation, this principle should nevertheless be considered beyond challenge.

121. What is important for me is to keep close to the real facts. In my opinion, these facts should be examined in the light of the following circumstances: two countries, feeling their independence and integrity imperilled, made a formal appeal for help to two friendly Powers. But the United States and the United Kingdom were certainly not frivolous in responding to such a request. Suffice it to recall, in this connexion, the statement made by Mr. Lodge on 15 July 1958 in the Security Council⁵ in which he declared that this was not the ideal method and that the United States hoped to see the United Nations take over such responsibilities in the near future. May I also recall the statements of the representatives of the United States and of the United Kingdom in which they have declared repeatedly and specifically the intention of their respective Governments to withdraw their forces from Lebanon and Jordan.

122. In other words, the cases of Lebanon and Jordan should suggest the urgent necessity of defining, by means of international instruments, the measures applicable to similar cases in the future. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has already given some attention to the possibility of establishing a permanent specialized force and groups of observers that could speedily be sent to the spot upon the request of any legitimate Government. Italy feels that this idea should be promptly and seriously taken into consideration and is determined to offer its contribution if requested, in the belief that the creation of such bodies would precisely serve the purpose of eliminating the gap which we have noted. Such means would enable every Member State of the United Nations that might feel imperilled to have recourse to them rather than to individual Powers, thus discharging the latter from a serious responsibility.

123. It is our contention that the smaller States would apply for assistance to these new bodies of the United Nations all the more confidently, the more perfect the balance of the international composition of such units, which would be formed by nationals of countries having neither general political positions nor specific interests in the area in which the units are to operate.

124. We also realize that when such bodies are operating they might possibly entail a temptation for certain régimes to utilize them for their own purposes. Accordingly, at the same time, adequate rules should be

⁵ *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirteenth Year, 827th meeting.*

studied and devised—laying down specific engagements on the part of the States requesting the assistance—in order to ensure the possibility of orderly and peaceful evolution, which is indeed desirable.

125. The Italian delegation realizes that a problem of such magnitude cannot be dealt with during this special session of the General Assembly, but that it should be broached in the course of the forthcoming regular session. The Secretary-General, who has been so responsive in this respect, intends to submit a report on the matter then. We feel, however, that the current situation in the Near East should be considered in the light of these general ideas. In the first place, taking into account the gap in the present international order which we have noted and the desirability of adopting adequate measures to fill it, as well as the intention so explicitly expressed by the United States and the United Kingdom to proceed to the withdrawal of their forces, we feel that the most urgent task before us is to examine the procedure and means which would allow us to overcome the situation currently existing in Lebanon and in Jordan.

126. The Secretary-General has already submitted, at the opening meeting of this session [732nd meeting], some ideas and proposals which, in our opinion, should be considered and carried out in so far as they meet the wishes and the requests which will be set forth respectively by the Governments of these two countries. As Mr. Hammarskjöld said, such measures are merely measures of safeguard. The Italian delegation feels that it is advisable to pursue, within the framework of the United Nations, the search for permanent solutions which would take into adequate account the special characteristics of Lebanon and Jordan.

127. Secondly, we should take up the over-all political problem of this area. The Near East is today the scene of historical movements, sprung from the autonomous force of an Arab nationalism in full development. The attitude of Italy in respect of the changes which have taken place in the area under the impulse of the Arab national movement has been consistently inspired by an objective evaluation of this historical reality and by a full and impartial understanding of it. In this connexion I recall the prompt recognition by my Government of the union between Egypt and Syria as well as of the new Republic of Iraq. Italy, having the utmost interest in the events occurring in an area which is so close geographically, has equally at heart that such changes should take place in ways that will not affect order and peace and that will be fully consistent with the freely expressed will of the peoples concerned. Furthermore, we believe that this Assembly cannot but share this concern. Allow me, therefore, to point out in this regard that a settlement of the preceding specific cases would be precarious in the event of further disturbances occurring in the near future, and the autonomous strengthening of the internal structure of the Near East against new serious troubles would not be promoted.

128. The Italian delegation realizes that whatever the measures on which we may agree and whatever the powers to be delegated to appropriate United Nations bodies, these would be altogether ineffective should they lack the broadest and most spontaneous co-operation. I thus feel that the reference to prior resolutions approved by the General Assembly, calling upon the countries of the region and outside it to refrain from actions

or interference in the internal affairs of each other, is most wise indeed.

129. However, this is but one of the aspects of the basic problem. Aside from the political causes, there are others, just as important and real, which have to be eliminated in order to guarantee the orderly and peaceful evolution of this area.

130. I am referring to the aspirations of the Arab peoples to benefit from the material and moral advantages that higher standards of life offer to the individual and to populations economically more advanced. Italy has for a long time made clear its understanding of such legitimate aspirations, being convinced that the independence and freedom of the peoples are inseparable from certain standards of prosperity. The ideas that the Prime Minister of Italy, Mr. Fanfani, has offered on this subject on several occasions are well known. I therefore do not feel it necessary to repeat them. I wish merely to recall certain essential points which may help to focus the problem.

131. The ancient social structure of the Near East appears more and more inadequate under the pressure of the new needs which, for their satisfaction, demand bigger and bigger investments as well as a better use and a more equitable distribution of the local resources. Certain characteristics of the local production would also require the establishment of a special fund with the participation of the Near East countries themselves in order, first, to ensure stabilization of the economic life through periodic interventions in the purchasing and marketing of the products; and, secondly, to promote the relief and the rehabilitation of refugees.

132. My delegation wishes to confirm its opinion that the desired economic development of the Near East is a necessary element for a real and lasting recovery of the internal situation of those countries. We also feel that every initiative in this field belongs, in the first place, to the Arab countries themselves.

133. In this connexion we also believe that the proposals set forth by President Eisenhower [733rd meeting] deserve the most careful consideration, particularly where they call upon the Arab countries of the Near East to set up a regional institution for the development of their water, agricultural, mining and industrial resources, as well as to further progress in the fields of education and health. My delegation cannot but reject the suggestion advanced by the Head of the Soviet delegation [733rd meeting] that this proposal was aimed at diverting the attention of this Assembly from the question of the withdrawal of the Anglo-American forces from Lebanon and Jordan. And the more so inasmuch as my country had voiced this necessity a long time before the present emergency situation arose.

134. No one will fail to see that such an institution, if its establishment is decided upon by the countries concerned, would create the strongest basis for a strict and effective regional co-operation, the management and control of which would be in the hands of the Arabs themselves. It would be up to them, besides uniting their efforts in a development plan for their territories, to decide which international agencies and friendly Governments they should call upon for assistance in carrying out the specific projects.

135. As far as Italy is concerned, we would give favourable consideration to any request for co-operation, whether for aid or for the sharing of experience gained from the economic development of our own territory,

in the solution of similar problems now existing in the Near East.

136. In short, the Italian delegation is of the opinion that, firstly, the Secretary-General should be entrusted with the study of ways and means that would enable the United Nations to respond promptly to the plea of any State which felt that its security was endangered and to determine at the same time the conditions to which the granting of such assistance would be automatically subject. This would avert the danger that safeguarding the independence of a country might be confused with the maintenance of the protection of a given régime.

137. Secondly, we should take into account the reasons which have prompted the United States and the United Kingdom to take action in Lebanon and Jordan and to take note of their intention to withdraw their forces from these States.

138. Thirdly, we should entrust the Secretary-General with the adoption of the measures which would be suitable, taking into account the wishes expressed by Lebanon and Jordan and the characteristics of those two countries.

139. Fourthly, in conjunction with or in support of the above-mentioned measures or others that may seem fit, reference should be made to existing general provisions calling on the countries of an area as well as outside it to refrain from actions or initiatives which might foment new disorders and thereby hinder the peaceful development or evolution of this region.

140. Fifthly, immediate consultation between the Secretary-General and all Arab Governments of the

Near East should be recommended with a view to establishing an institution for regional economic development. This institution, pooling the resources of those States with contributions from other countries, international agencies, and private enterprise, would undertake the effective utilization of the resources of the area and would implement specific projects in order to raise the standards of living of the peoples concerned.

141. As I have already said, my country feels the deepest understanding for Arab aspirations. I was pleased to note that the statements of the heads of delegations who have gathered here show that these aspirations are meeting with increasing understanding. A chance has thus been given to the countries of the Near East to pool their forces, with the assistance of the friendly peoples, in order to raise their standards of living, strengthen and develop their political institutions, and promote a programme of economic development in the area to which they belong. They will thus be able to pursue peacefully and in full freedom of decision the political and economic aims which they have set for themselves.

142. If I may conclude by expressing a wish, this would be that this appeal be heeded by the Arab peoples of the Near East. It would be a great undertaking which they would assume, and its success would yield undeniable benefits for them and would also strengthen peace and well-being in one of the most vital areas of the world.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.