

Speech by Michael O'Kennedy (New York, 25 September 1979)

Caption: On 25 September 1979, Michael O'Kennedy, Irish Foreign Minister and President-in-Office of the Council of the European Communities, delivers a speech during the 34th session of the United Nations General Assembly, on European Political Cooperation (EPC).

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[...]

Middle East

25. The nine continue to hope that it will be possible to achieve in the Middle East the just, lasting and comprehensive settlement to which this assembly is overwhelmingly committed. They believe that such a settlement must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, applied in all their parts and on all fronts. It must also be based on the principles set out by the nine in their statement on 29 June 1977 and on several occasions subsequently.

26. These principles are as follows:

(i) the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force

(ii) the need for Israel to end the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967,

(iii) respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries,

(iv) recognition that in the establishment of a just and lasting peace account must be taken of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.

27. The nine emphasise that it is essential that all parties to the negotiation of a settlement accept the right of all States in the area to live within secure and recognised boundaries with adequate guarantees. Equally, of course, it is essential that there be respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. These include the right to a homeland and the right, through its representatives, to play its full part in the negotiation of a comprehensive settlement.

28. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, together with the principles I have mentioned, taken as a whole, set the essential framework for a peace settlement. In the view of the nine it is necessary that they be accepted by all those involved – including the Palestine Liberation Organization - as the basis for negotiation of a comprehensive settlement in which all the parties will play their full part.

29. Such a settlement would win the endorsement and support of the international Community: and it would meet the legitimate rights and interests of all parties. This includes Israel, which is entitled to exist at peace within secure boundaries, accepted and adequately guaranteed, and the Palestinian people, who are entitled, within the framework set by a peace settlement, to exercise their right to determine their own future as a people.

30. The nine recognise of course that such a settlement is not easy to achieve. But they believe it must be the continuing aim of the international Community to promote it. They are convinced that such a comprehensive settlement would bring peace at last to the region. And they recall that they have already expressed their readiness to consider participating in guarantees in the framework of the United Nations.

31. The past year has seen some major developments to which the nine, in view of their close connections with the region, are particularly sensitive. One of these was the signature last March of agreements between Egypt and Israel. In their declaration of 26th March last, the nine stated their position on these agreements.

32. Since the signature of these agreements, which the nine see as a correct application of the principles of resolution 242 as far as Egyptian-Israeli relations are concerned, there has been progress towards improved relations between Egypt and Israel and there have been withdrawals of Israeli forces in Sinai. The nine note these recent developments and recall that one of the basic requirements of a comprehensive settlement is an end to the territorial occupation which Israel has maintained since the conflict of 1967. The nine will

continue to follow the situation closely and will seek in every way they can to advance the aim of a comprehensive and lasting peace settlement involving all parties and meeting all of the fundamental issues I have mentioned.

33. It follows that the nine must view with the greatest regret any action or statement which aggravates the present situation or places an obstacle in the way of a peace settlement. Accordingly, they strongly deplore continued acts of violence by any of those involved. The nine are opposed to the Israeli government's policy of establishing settlements in occupied territories in contravention of international law: and they cannot accept claims by Israel to sovereignty over occupied territories, since this would be incompatible with resolution 242-. The security of Israel, which the nine consider essential, can be guaranteed, and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians given effect, within the framework of a comprehensive settlement.

34. The nine are fully aware, too, of the importance of the question of Jerusalem to all parties. They know that an acceptable solution to this problem will be vital to an overall settlement on the basis I have indicated. They consider, in particular, that any agreement on the future status of Jerusalem should guarantee free access by all to the holy places, and they do not accept any unilateral moves which claim to change the status of the city.

35. The problem of the Lebanon is clearly related to the larger problem of the Middle East as a whole. The nine have frequently reaffirmed their support for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. They did so most recently in a statement issued by the nine foreign Ministers at their meeting in Dublin on 11 September. This statement also recognised the courageous efforts made by the Lebanese government to promote the security of its people and the restoration of its authority over the whole of its territory.

36. Violence was nevertheless continued in several parts of Lebanon. The nine recognise that there has been some improvement in the situation particularly in the South of the country since the recent meeting of the Security Council requested by the government of the Lebanon. They are concerned however about the constant harassment of Unifil of which certain members of the nine form part, and about the difficulties which have been placed in its way as it attempts to fulfil its mandate. They are particularly disturbed about the military and financial aid provided from outside Lebanon to those who have made it difficult for the United Nations force to carry out its mandate. They call on all parties to give full support to unifil and to respect the decisions of the Security Council.

37. The nine remain convinced that the United Nations peacekeeping operations can play a particularly useful role in helping to prevent violence between parties to a conflict, thus facilitating a peaceful settlement. They are ready to contribute to such operations in the future, as they have in the past.