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To: Permanent Representatives  
From: Secretary General.

Discussions of the Council on the Middle East

In the recent discussions of the Council on the Middle East, certain broad principles of agreement seem to have emerged, which might be summed up as follows:-

1. Arab Nationalism

There seemed to be general agreement that Arab nationalism has become a force which the Western Powers cannot stop, and to which they will therefore have to accommodate themselves; that they should avoid any appearance of opposing it, and should not interfere in the internal process of its development. Some members of the Council, however, warned that the West should not actively promote Arab nationalism, and should even, if need be, oppose it when it seems about to swallow up independent states against their will (Lebanon and Jordan). Arab nationalism should thus not be necessarily identified with the striving for national union in one Arab state, and even less with Nasserism. The nationalism of Iraqis who want their country to stay independent should be respected as much as any other Arab nationalist movement.

2. Arab neutralism

Some members of the Council pointed out that a neutral attitude between East and West is perhaps the best that can be hoped for from the Arab world at this juncture. Other members of the Council would go so far as to say that the West should, therefore, actively encourage Arab neutralism. No Council member has advocated that they should oppose it. It has been pointed out that sometimes an outspokenly pro-Western Government in an Arab country is a hindrance rather than a help to Western policy. (The Chamoun Government in Lebanon).

3. Non-interference in Arab affairs

The West having had to liquidate most of its position of direct responsibility in Middle Eastern affairs, most members of the Council seem to feel that a policy of non-interference should be strictly adhered to. The Arabs always seem to turn against those outside countries which happen to be most deeply involved in Arab

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affairs. An attitude of benevolent aloofness might, therefore, be indicated for the West. This would be all the more advantageous as the Soviet Union is beginning to become suspect in Arab eyes because of the strong interest it is taking in Arab affairs. Arab suspicion of the Soviet Union is aroused by Khrushchev's criticism of Nasser's anti-Communist domestic policies, by their strong support of Communist tendencies in the Iraq, by their uncertain attitude towards Arab unity (Syria and Iraq) and by the recent lifting of the ban on Jewish emigration from satellite countries. It has been suggested in the Council that it would be best to let this new Soviet-Arab antagonism develop in its own and to practice a "hands-off" policy on the part of the West.

4. Nasser

No very clear attitude has emerged in the Council as to whether the West should support Nasser or cold-shoulder him. The general tendency, however, seems to be in favour of a cautious and discreet support, since there seems, at present, no alternative to Nasser which would be more favourable to the West. Support for Nasser should be just strong enough to prevent him from falling entirely into Soviet hands, but should not be so strong as to arouse the suspicion in Iraqi minds that we were building up Nasser as a bulwark against Qasim. There was virtual unanimity in the Council that support for Nasser by the West must be very discreet in order not to discredit him in the eyes of some of his own supporters. One Council member strongly urged that the Western Powers should remain very suspicious of Nasser's alleged anti-communism; his anti-communist domestic policy had not so far prevented him from playing the Soviet game in foreign policy.

5. Iraq

No very clear conception exists as yet as to conditions in Iraq. The Council was therefore, in doubt as to whether the régime of General Qasim should be regarded as a bulwark against Communism or rather as a trojan horse of Moscow. There was unanimity in the Council that a communist Iraq would be a major blow to the West but there were no concrete suggestions as to actions which might prevent such a development. Some Council members felt that the absorption of Iraq by the United Arab Republic would not be a definite safeguard against communism and might carry other dangers in its wake. There thus seems a tendency to regard the ascendancy of Iraqi nationalists as the most favourable solution for the West.

6. Baghdad Pact

No criticism has been voiced in the Council recently against the Baghdad Pact as such. The strategic usefulness of a strong northern tier thus seems to be tacitly accepted. The views of the Council members diverged as to the amount of support which the West

should give to the Baghdad Pact; some felt that the defection of Iraq had shown the weakness of the Organization, and should thus warn the West not to give too much support; others felt that the Iraq crisis was, on the contrary, a strong argument for additional Western support to the Baghdad Pact. Council members were equally divided as to the intimacy of the links that should be established between NATO and the Baghdad Pact Organization.

7. Israel

The Council has taken no very clear attitude towards the Israel problem, except to state the general desirability of seeing tension between Israel and the Arab states diminish. One Council member suggested that it might be possible to persuade Israel to make some concessions to the Arabs such as permitting the return of a certain number of Arab refugees or putting limitations on Jewish immigration.

8. Oil

There seems general agreement that the oil resources of the Middle East are of vital interest, both strategically and economically, to the West and that Western policy must be so designed as best to protect these interests. It has been suggested that this need not necessarily bring the West into conflict with the Arabs, since the Arab countries themselves have a strong stake in the oil revenue and in the revenue from the transportation of oil (pipelines, Suez canal). Western Europe being, at present, the only effective customer for Middle East oil, it should be possible thus to establish a community of interest.

9. Economic Aid

There seems to be general agreement in the Council that Western economic aid to the under-developed countries of the Middle East is necessary. It has been suggested though, that the West should not run after the Arabs in offering this aid, but should wait for their demands and then respond. Such aid might take the form of purchases of crops (if necessary, above world market prices, as in the case of Sudanese cotton) or of investment projects. In the latter case, it has been suggested that it might be useful to utilise and support native Arab initiatives, such as the Arab Investment Bank. There was agreement in the Council as to the usefulness of co-ordinating such Western aid in NATO but also that it was essential that such aid under no circumstances should bear a NATO label, which would tend to make it suspect in the Arab world.

(Signed) P.-H. SPAAK