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LETTER DATED 26 FEBRUARY 1969 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ISRAEL

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter to me of 20 February 1969 relating to the attack upon an El Al aircraft in Zurich on 18 February. In pursuance of your request your letter was transmitted to all Members of the United Nations in the customary form of a note verbale. In response to a subsequent request by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, it has also been circulated as an official document of the General Assembly^{1/} and the Security Council.^{2/}

You have inquired as to what constructive international action is envisaged to prevent such acts of violence against international civil aviation in the future. Even before your letter was received, I was in contact with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Air Transport Association regarding the Zurich incident, and I have kept in close touch with ICAO since. I am also consulting with certain Members of the United Nations specially concerned, with a view to finding means to prevent such acts of violence.

There is no question that every effort should be made to put an end to attacks on civilian carriers which endanger innocent passengers and jeopardize international travel, from whatever quarter they may come. As I said through my spokesman on 18 February 1969 after the Zurich incident,

"Such attacks, involving as they do a great risk to innocent persons and the disruption of an important branch of international communication, are a matter of urgent concern to all Governments and peoples. If the hitherto

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peaceful world of civil aviation is to be saved from chaos and anarchy, Governments and peoples, regardless of their political views, must condemn acts of this kind and take all possible measures to prevent them."

In this connexion, improved methods of international police co-operation and regulations of a national as well as an international character may contribute towards the prevention of those acts of terrorism and violence. However, I believe that the only sure way to bring an end to terrorist acts would be some substantial movement towards a peaceful settlement of the major issues underlying the Middle East conflict. In the circumstances, I hope you will agree that, although there may be some scope for positive action by the Secretary-General in a matter of this kind, the most natural and proper recourse, and that which should hold the best promise for constructive international action, is clearly the Security Council.

It is my firm conviction that the Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967 offers the only practical basis for the promotion of a just and lasting peace in the area. I also remain convinced that progress towards this goal can be made through the dedicated efforts of Ambassador Jarring to assist and promote agreement between the parties with the active co-operation especially of the major Powers. An essential first step towards this end, in my view, would be a declared readiness by the parties to implement the Security Council resolution of 22 November 1967.

In this connexion let me recall what I have stated on another occasion, that "if only all the resolutions and decisions of the principal deliberative organs of the United Nations were heeded by the parties primarily concerned in the area, there would be no Middle East problem today".

In spite of the apparent lack of progress in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, my abiding faith in the United Nations as the instrument for obtaining ultimate success remains unshaken. Indeed I can see no practical alternative to the active continuation of this search.

Since your letter under reference has been circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council, I have arranged that this letter be circulated similarly. I am also arranging for my spokesman's statement of 18 February, to which you have referred in your letter, to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.^{3/}

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) U THANT

ANNEX

The Secretary-General has heard with dismay and deep concern of the attack on an El Al airliner at Zurich Airport on 18 February 1969. This is the second attack of this kind within two months and the third occasion within eight months on which the same airline has been the target of terrorist activities.

Such attacks, involving as they do a great risk to innocent persons and the disruption of an important branch of international communication, are a matter of urgent concern to all Governments and peoples. If the hitherto peaceful world of civil aviation is to be saved from chaos and anarchy, Governments and peoples, regardless of their political views, must condemn acts of this kind and take all possible measures to prevent them.

The Secretary-General strongly hopes that this criminal act, dastardly as it is, will not be followed by an act of retaliation such as the attack on the Beirut Airport, which was condemned by the Security Council in its resolution of 31 December 1968, but rather by constructive international action to prevent such acts of violence against international civil aviation in the future.
