

UN leader stresses need for Afro-Arab cooperation

By Michael Fernandez

Abu Dhabi, Jan. 31 (EN): President of the current session of the United Nations General Assembly Salem Ahmed Salem of Tanzania said today that he was visiting the Arab Gulf states to stress the importance of "Afro-Arab cooperation in the political, economic and cultural fields."

At a televised news conference at the Abu Dhabi Hilton Hotel here, Salem told newsmen that he believed this cooperation (between Arab and African states) was also vital not only in the struggle of the two continents but was also vital "to strengthen the efforts of the United Nations in the pursuit of its objectives."

Salem said he had come to the Gulf at the invitations of the Arab governments. He has already visited Oman and Kuwait. His next stop will be Qatar where he will arrive on Feb 4 on a one-day visit returning to Abu Dhabi on Feb. 5, to fly to home to Dar es Salaam via Dubai.

"Essentially my visit to the Arab Gulf countries is to make contacts with leaders and officials of these countries, to familiarise myself with these countries and to learn from what I might call first-hand position some of the problems of the area as well as get an idea of the perspectives of the Middle East problem," Salem said in reply to a question from Emirates News.

Salem said that as a result of his visit to the Arab Gulf countries, he would be in a position to know more about how the people and the governments of the area foresee the international situation. "This is generally the main interest of my visit and, at the same time, as an African occupying the post of the presidency of the U.N. General Assembly visiting these important Arab states, I would also be stressing the importance of Afro-Arab cooperation in the political, economic and cultural fields," Salem said.

During his four-day stay in the UAE the U.N. Assembly President said he would be seeing Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Rashid Abdalla, His Highness General Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Mohamed Al Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah, and officials from the UAE Foreign Office.

Salem said he would also visit Al Ain and Dubai.

In reply to a question on Israel's continued aggression on Arab lands and the Palestinian problem, Salem said the 34th session of the U.N. General Assembly took a number of decisions on the Middle East and Palestine.

He said the most far-reaching of them was the re-affirmation of the support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to create an independent state of their own. Another was a reaffirmation of the principle that the core of the problem in the Middle East was the question of Palestine. There can be no meaningful solution to this problem which does not take into account and which does not involve the representatives of the

Palestinian people - the Palestinian Liberation Organisation - in that exercise, he said.

Salem said the United Nations General Assembly had also made it very clear that there cannot be an acceptance of the principle of recognition of occupation by "conquest."

In this connection, Salem said, the U.N. had "unequivocally condemned the illegal settlements" which have been created in Arab territories and also condemned the "wanton destruction that has been committed by the bombing of civilian areas in South Lebanon." Salem also commended the resolutions adopted by the Islamic "they are important because they represent a collective position by about 40 Islamic countries."

He added that the present situation in Afghanistan was having a negative effect on other problems of the Third World countries.

"I believe this situation has side-tracked a number of crucial questions, such as the Middle East problem, southern Africa and many others."

Salem expressed the General Assembly's appreciation of the "positive and constructive role by the UAE."

"The U.A.E. has and is still playing an important role in Arab, African and international problems," he added.

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